

# TRE PRESS IN TRANSYLVANIA UNDER THE COMMUNIST CONTROL (1968–1969)

CARMEN UNGUR-BREHOI\*

## PRESA TRANSILVANĂ SUB CONTROL COMUNIST (1968–1969)

**ABSTRACT:** *The Directorship of the Central Presswork was a communist institution that functioned day and night, in all the fields of activity, to stop and control all that could not be or appear to be „wrong” in the eyes of the political structure in the 60s and the 70s. The Directorship of the Central Presswork, was a part of a greater structure – The Press and Print General Directorship, and was synonymous with „censorship”.*

*This article shows with many examples how this structure acted during the period 1968–1969, over the press in Transylvania. Oradea, Cluj, Timisoara, Brasov, Tirgu Mures, Baia Mare... were just a few of the cities that were strongly verified by the local censors and by those in the capital city.*

*The paper presents cases of censorship in the newspapers, in the magazines of all kinds, for different public, starting with the publications for children and for the youth, to those for the mature public, intellectual (the literary publications, the religious magazines).*

**KEYWORDS:** *Communism, censorship, press, magazines, Transylvania.*

**REZUMAT:** *Orice informație, subiect sau știre erau controlate de sistemul comunist. Publicul afla din presă doar ce era prielnic partidului și propagandei, adevărul era trunchiat iar realitatea deformată de către organele puterii. Oamenii care făceau aceste lucruri posibile erau cenzorii, angajați ai Direcției Tipărirea Presei Centrale din capitală. Aceștia răspundea nu doar de ziarele și tipăriturile din București, ci și de cele mai importante publicații din țară, ajutați de organele de partid locale și de sediile de cenzură din provincie. Toate dispozițiile, comunicările, indicațiile ori noutăți de serviciu plecau de la sediul central al cenzurii către structurile*

*interne (servicii și direcții), urmate de sediile de împuterniciți din țară. Primele informații de acest fel erau transmise spre nord-vestul României, în următoarea ordine: Arad, Brașov, Baia Mare, Bistrița, Cluj, Deva, Oradea, Reșița, Sibiu, Satu Mare, Timișoara, Țirgu Mureș, Țărgoviște, Miercurea Ciuc. Din aceste centre se executau o parte din acțiunile asupra presei, cele mai importante fiind trimise către sediul din București al cenzurii. DTPC dădea verdictul final, după un control inițial realizat precar de colectivele de împuterniciți. Cele mai elocvente cazuri din partea de nord-vest a țării priveau Drapelul roșu, Zsabad Szo, (cotidiane, Timișoara), Die Wahrheit, Pravda (apăreau de trei ori pe săptămână, Timișoara), Flacăra Roșie, Voros Lobogo (cotidiane, Arad), Drum nou (cotidian, Brașov), Uj Ido (săptămânal, Brașov), Volkszeitung (bisăptămânal, Brașov), Făclia, Igazsag (cotidiane, Cluj), Drapelul roșu, Dolgozo Nep (bisăptămânale, Satu Mare), Crișana, Faklya (cotidiane, Oradea), Drumul socialismului (cotidian, Deva), Pentru socialism, Banyavideki Faklya (cotidiane, Baia Mare), Steaua roșie, Voros Zaszlo (cotidiane, Țirgu Mureș), Flacăra Sibiului (bisăptămânal), Siderurgistul (Reșița).*

*Lucrarea de față prezintă câteva din zecile de sesizări și intervenții ale DTPC asupra presei transilvane, în intervalul 1968–1969. Am ales această perioadă deoarece pare să fie cea mai bogată în materiale oprite de la tipar sau refăcute de lectorii direcției, pentru această zonă a țării. Momentul avea loc înainte de celebrele Teze din iunie 1971, care reprezintă granița dintre anii 60, cu o mai mare libertate a cuvântului, a puterii de exprimare și anii 70, când dictatura devine tot mai apăsătoare, iar cenzura tot mai stringentă.*

**CUVINTE-CHEIE:** *comunism, cenzură, presă, reviste, Transylvania*

\* Profesor de limba italiană și limba engleză la Liceul de Arte Oradea, doctorand la Universitatea din Oradea, Școala Doctorală în Istorie, adresă de email: carmenbrehoi@yahoo.com

Any information, or news topic was controlled by the communist system. The public found out from the media only what was useful for the propaganda and the party. The truth was truncated and the reality distorted by the power. The people who made this possible were the censors, employees of The Directorship of the Central Presswork, part of a greater structure – The Press and Print General Directorship, that prohibited many things in all the fields of the communist life: arts, cinema, prints, literature... The censors responded not only for controlling of the newspapers and the magazines in Bucharest, but also for the most important publications in the country, aided by local party bodies and provincial offices of censorship.

All the commands, notices, instructions left from the center to the censorship headquarters all over the country (called services and directions)<sup>1</sup>. The first information of this type were usually sent to the North-Western part of Romania, in the following order: Arad, Brasov, Baia Mare, Bistrita, Cluj, Deva, Oradea, Resita, Sibiu, Satu Mare, Timisoara, Tirgu Mures, Targoviste, Miercurea Ciuc. The trajectory functioned also in reverse order, regarding the checking of the major prints and media materials. The Directorship of the Central Presswork gave the final verdict, after an initial inspection conducted by teams of empowered from these cities.

The most important publications controlled by the Directorship in Transylvania were: *Drapelul rosu*, *Zsabad Szo*, (quotidians, Timisoara), *Die Wahrheit*, *Pravda* (appeared three times a week, Timisoara), *Flacara rosie*, *Voros Lobogo* (quotidians, Arad), *Drum nou* (quotidian, Brasov), *Uj Ido* (weekly newspaper, Brasov), *Volkszeitung* (twice a week, Brasov), *Faclia*, *Igazsag* (quotidians, Cluj), *Drapelul rosu*, *Dolgozo Nep* (twice a week, Satu Mare), *Crisana*, *Faklya* (quotidians, Oradea), *Drumul socialismului* (quotidian, Deva), *Pentru socialism*, *Banyavideki Faklya* (quotidians, Baia Mare), *Steaua rosie*, *Voros Zaszlo* (quotidians, Tirgu Mures), *Flacara Sibiului* (twice a week, Sibiu), *Siderurgistul* (Resita)<sup>2</sup>.

My work presents some of the dozens of the interventions into the media in Transylvania, between 1968–1969. I've chosen this period because it seems to be the richest in this sort of materials, in the North-West of the country. The moment was crucial, before the famous Teze of June 1971, at the boundary between the 60s, with greater freedom of speech, and the 70s, when dictatorship is becoming more oppressive and more stringent.

## THE CONTROL OF THE NEWSPAPERS AND OF THE CULTURAL MAGAZINES

A city where censorship performed continuously was Oradea, near the border with Hungary, where media was double checked – not only by the local team, but also by the center. The newspaper *Crisana*<sup>3</sup>, the number 51 of March 1, 1968 was such an example. The article *Si totusi exista o posibilitate* by Florica Mastei, talked about the operating conditions of a special school in Oradea, for disabled children. For treating the subject in a „negative“ manner, which today we consider realistic, presenting the miserable conditions in which the education of students with special needs was placed, the article was refused by the censors and never published again. In Oradea appeared also the newspaper *Faklya*, the Hungarian version of *Crisana*, which was monitored especially for the correct translation of the official information, Agerpres (Romania Press Agency) and the accuracy of the materials from the daily *Crisana*. The newspaper was also controlled on ethnic and minority issues. In an article of the series *Portrete bihorene*, the Hungarian daily wrote about a representative of the Baroque period, Pazmany Peter. The article stated: he „was the life-giving sun of the planetary system, of our homeland literature in the eighteenth century.“ This paragraph was highlighted by local censors due to the ambiguity of the word „homeland“, and at their request, the editorial office gave up at printing the entire phrase<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Zainea 2005, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> These publications were governed directly by the local formations of the Communist Party, who was then sending their materials to the institution of control.

<sup>3</sup> Founded in Oradea, in 1945, the newspaper *Crisana* is one of the oldest publications, with an uninterrupted appearance so far. [www.crisana.ro](http://www.crisana.ro)

<sup>4</sup> Zsuzsa 2012, p. 16, 19.

The newspaper *Pentru socialism* from Baia Mare, „organ of the Communist Party – The Committee of Maramures and of the People’s County Council“, sent in 1969 more requests for publishing a cultural, social and political supplement. The first address was sent to the media sector and prints of the Party, where was provided the consent. The second address was issued to the Publications Department of the Directorship, asking them to „favour the issue of a license“ for the supplement. The editorial office presented the conditions of occurrence in this sense: the title of the supplement was *Maramures*, it had a twice a year frequency, the format was 31/43 cm, in 30 pages, the paper was flat, the language of the writing was Romanian, and the price would have been 0,3 Lei. The signatory address was of the editor of the newspaper, Retegan Ioan<sup>5</sup>. After numerous written communications, the newspaper received the long desired approval.

In the same situation was the newspaper *Drapelul rosu* from Timisoara, organ of The Culture and Art Committee, who wanted to print four supplements in May, August, September and December 1969. The supplement was in 32 pages, with subjects of cultural, social and political interest, in 10,000 copies, with a price of 2 lei per copy. The first number was ready to appear in late April. The editorial office argued that the proceeds from the realization of the supplement would exceeded the state’s investment<sup>6</sup>. So the newspaper obtained the initial approval of the County Committee of PCR and had to wait for the Directorship’s approval.

The communist control was overstretched over the cultural magazines, literary or scientific ones, for which the local censors demanded support from the center, because they were being not very trained in discerning the topics of these publications. The censorship had an ideological basis, its ultimately purpose being „the production of literature in accordance with the requirements of the Communist Party ideology and will”<sup>7</sup>. For the censors, the literary and artistic criticism meant ideological intolerance. *Familia*<sup>8</sup>, a famous magazine from Oradea was recognized by the censors as „the most comprehensive, the hardest and with the most difficult issues“. It was one of the best magazines in the country, checked in Bucharest after the initial control of Oradea, for a complete verification. Poetry was considered coded and prose could not be penetrated by the unqualified staff in Oradea. The literary criticism in the magazine caused „damage of the ideological orientation“, said the censors. The plays were censored not only as text, but also as shows<sup>9</sup>.

In Cluj appeared another cultural magazine<sup>10</sup>, written in Hungarian, called *Korunk*<sup>11</sup>. In 1968, the editorial office received the decision of the Directorship, in which was written that the magazine can be printed in 144 pages, in 4000 copies, at 4 Lei each. Initially, *Korunk* addressed to the State Publishing House for Prints and Publications, which mediated the request near the censures. The magazine asked for an appearance in 160 pages, from March 1968. After analyzing the request, the censors arrived at the following conclusion: „due to the increasing number of pages, it will need an additional consumption of paper, around 1.7 tons and an additional annual cost of about 32,000 Lei.“ Because it exceeded the allocated sums, the answer was negative<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Arhivele Nationale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Bucharest, fund *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri (1944–1977)*, folder 40/1969, f. 81–82

<sup>6</sup> The state investment was of 2000 lei and the benefit was getting to more than 10,000 lei. A news in the era are the financial advantages coming from the advertising.

<sup>7</sup> Zainea, Ungur-Brehoi 2013, p. 375–386

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.revistafamilia.ro/>

<sup>9</sup> Arhivele Nationale –Serviciul Județean Bihor, fund *Directia Generala pentru presa si Tiparituri – Unitatea Oradea*, folder 12/1968, f. 6, folder 10/1968, f. 31; Ioan Laza, *Anatomia cenzurii. O perspectivă asupra presei din Bihor (1966–1977)*, PhD work unpublished (2013), coord. by the prof.univ.dr. Mihai Drecin, University of Oradea, Doctoral School of History, p. 189

<sup>10</sup> Ungur-Brehoi 2014.

<sup>11</sup> [www.korunk.ro](http://www.korunk.ro)

<sup>12</sup> Two other similar cases occurred with the Hungarian magazines *Igas Szo* and *Új Élet*, from Tirgu Mureș. Any editorial change had to be presented first to the censorship, who took the definite decision about such change. Each material was read by the censors that spoke Hungarian, and modified after the will of the ideology.

With great concern were also read the publications in German. In Brasov for instance, the German minority was able to read the magazine *Karpaten Rundschau* in German, since 1968. This publication replaced the newspaper *Volkszeitung*, which ceased its activities on the basis of the decision taken by the Secretary of the Communist Party. *Karpaten Rundschau* was printed in small format, in 16 pages, with 1 Leu per copy. The new publication requested the censorship the change of the paper's quality. The censors, afraid to endorse this claim because „economic and financial situation will change“, and worse, because it „will set a precedent for Pravda“, a similar magazine in Timisoara, issued in Serb<sup>13</sup> denied the request.

### FROM THE CHILDREN AND STUDENTS MAGAZINES...

Child and youth media reflected any ideological change, being the „means of indoctrination and megalomaniac glorification“. The communism flooded all poems, the folkloric texts, riddles, the cartoons, the photos and the drawings, all the logic games and even the crosswords<sup>14</sup>.

*Napsugár*<sup>15</sup> was a Hungarian version for children of the Romanian magazine *Luminita* and appeared in Cluj. The materials reviewed were standard, following the same pioneer pattern, the poetry being borrowed from the Romanian version of *Luminita*. On the first page were usually the texts of the propaganda, as in all the communist media. In the number 8/1968, the article entitled *Sarbatoarea eliberarii* was „corrected“ after the reading of the censor Krokos A, because of the wrong usage and repetition of the name „Party of the Communists in Romania“. The editorial office was asked to make the changes in order to publish the text. The changes were made exactly after the power's will.

The control over the students' publications in Transylvania was very well organized. Censors dealt with what was supposed the media to express and destroyed everything that was not possible to appear in their pages. Students magazines were clearly a point of interest for censors because through their materials was formed the intellectual conscience of the „new man“. The Directorship was responsible during 1968–1969 for the checking and the inception of no less than 19 students journal, ten of which from North-West of the country. The academic centers that were always under the censors' eyeglass were: Timisoara (with *Micron* of The Polytechnic Institute, *Scalpelul* of The Medicine and Pharmacy Institute, *Agraria* of The Agronomical Institute, *Forum* of The Timisoara University, *Timisoara medicala*), Cluj (with the magazines *Echinox* of The Babes-Bolyai University, *Dialog* of The Medicine and Pharmacy Institute, *Traietorii* of The Polytechnic Institute, *Clujul medical*, *Buletinul Institutului Politehnic Cluj*), Tirgu Mures (the magazines *Athenium* of The Pedagogical Institute, *Aesculap* of The Medicine and Pharmacy Institute, *Revista medicala*), Brasov (*Buletinul Institutului Politehnic Braşov*) and Oradea (with the publication *Gaudeamus* of The Pedagogical Institute).

*Echinox*, the magazine edited by The Babes-Bolyai University, was said to be „maintained almost exclusively outside its profile“, distancing itself from all the other magazines, because of the wide space of the theoretical articles, philosophy, aesthetics and literary criticism. *Echinox* presented in the theoretical materials „foreign current, foreign ideas from the ideology of the working class“, said the censors. Some articles were directed to the phenomena of the Western culture, „sometimes authors were reserved“, avoided the direct references to The Marxist-Leninist Theses. Because the reference lacked the criticism of the activity of some political personalities (Sextil Puşcariu) or some reviews of works were too „eulogistic“ (*Miss Cristina* by Mircea Eliade), because the poetry „very widespread“ in the magazine and this released a „pessimistic atmosphere“ of „complaint“, „unfulfillment“, „lack of any perspective“ ..., many of these texts were never approved for printing. The situation had to be corrected to avoid becoming it a „platform for the politically retarded elements“. Students journals had to be transformed into a „good factor“, a „support

<sup>13</sup> A.N.I.C., Bucharest, fund *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* (1944–1977), folder 8/1968, f. 6, 20

<sup>14</sup> Rad 2007, p. 251

<sup>15</sup> In Hungarian, meaning „sunshine“.

for education“ with a „combative and militant character“. The purpose of these magazines was to inform students about the political and ideological activities of the academic institution, to debate issues of ethics, conduct and citizenship after the Marxist-Leninist principles, to reflect the main aspects of the Communist Party’s policy<sup>16</sup>.

In order to appear on the market, the magazines and the newspapers made great efforts near the state institutions, sending requests and addresses for everything, in order to receive a „favorable“. These addresses contained explanations and the reasons why the editorial office wanted the appearance of those publications, as well as the justification of such actions, for getting the right of publication. An institution approaching to the censorship was the Ministry of Education. In 1969 this ministry was seeking the censors’ approval to emergence new publications issued by the universities in Romania, the splitting of the existing ones into sections or the changing conditions of the academic prints. The reasons invoked were a „better exploitation of the scientific research“ conducted in universities, an „increased volume of work in different faculties“ and to „enhance the exchange of publications, with the foreign countries“. The *Note* that contains all these details, was transmitted to The Directorship of the Central Presswork, under the signature of the Minister of Education, Miron Constantinescu<sup>17</sup>, which stated that „Leonte Rautu<sup>18</sup>, the prime minister, agrees with the appearance of these publications under the new conditions“<sup>19</sup>.

In this sense, The Timisoara University required the censors to allow the appearance of the *Analele Universității Timisoara*. The series *Mathematics and Physics* required to split into two different series (*Mathematics* and *Mechanics and Physics*). Being a publication with budgetary deficit, it was stated in the request that editing the two series „will not increase the existing deficit“ (which was of 40,000 Lei per year). Their requirement was not accepted by the Directorship, the series remained *Mathematics and Physics*, with annual appearance and not semestral, as The Timisoara University asked for, and with a number of 300 pages (instead of 100 for each series). The censors didn’t touch the magazine’s format (17 × 24 cm), nor the paper’s quality (vellum). Instead the circulation was set to 1,000 copies (not 750 for each set) and the price of 12 Lei (instead of 6 Lei per series)<sup>20</sup>.

Another institution in the North of the country, that called for the censorship’s „help“ was the Pedagogical Institute of Oradea. *Lucrarile stiintifice ale Institutului Pedagogic Oradea* was a publication that wanted to appear in two series, depending on the profile work of the magazine: natural sciences and social sciences brochures. 50,000 Lei was the amount needed for the printing, and only 25,000 lei were recuperated from the selling. The other money were to be recovered from the publications’ foreign exchange. In this case the Directorship accepted to supports all the requirements of The Pedagogical Institute (the publication had an annual periodicity, the format was 17 × 24 cm, the number of pages – 500 per set, 1000 pieces for each profile, the price of 25 lei / copy, and all the editorial costs)<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> A.N.I.C., Bucharest, fund *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* (1944–1977), folder 40/1969, f. 19–24.

<sup>17</sup> Miron Constantinescu was a Romanian communist politician, a leading member of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR, known as PMR for a period of his lifetime), as well as a Marxist sociologist, historian, academic, and journalist. Initially close to Communist Romania’s leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, he became increasingly critical of the latter’s Stalinist policies during the 1950s. Reinstated under Nicolae Ceaușescu, he became Minister of Education for a short period, was elected a member of the Central Committee Secretariat and deputy member of the Executive Political Committee, a member of the Romanian Academy and President of the Great National Assembly.

<sup>18</sup> Leonte Rautu was a communist activist and propagandist. He was chief ideologist of the Romanian Communist Party („Workers’ Party“) during the rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and one of his country’s few high-ranking communists to have studied Marxism from the source. After Ceaușescu’s ascent in 1965, Rautu’s positions included membership on the central committee secretariat and the executive committee, deputy prime minister supervising education (1969 to 1972) and, from 1974 to 1981, rector of the Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy.

<sup>19</sup> A.N.I.C., Bucharest, fund *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* (1944–1977), folder 40/1969, f. 202–204

<sup>20</sup> These kind of requests were made also by The Conservatory Gheorghe Dima of Cluj *Revista de pedagogie și educație muzicală*, The Babes-Bolyai University for editing *Studia Universitatis Babeș Bolyai* and by The Polytechnic Institute of Cluj for *Buletinul Științific al Institutului Politehnic Cluj*.

<sup>21</sup> A.N.I.C., Bucharest, fund *Comitetul pentru Presa si Tiparituri* (1944–1977), f 40/1969, f. 70–72.

### ... TO THE RELIGIOUS PUBLICATIONS

The censorship was also responsible for the religious-themed magazines in the country. The censors were making tables and lists that monitored the activities of these publications, with their thematic material, the authors of the texts, and all the institutions holding the publishing of such magazines, with frequency, number of copies, price of these prints. From a secret *List* dated 4.III.1969, it appears that at that time appeared no less than 15 such prints, of the Orthodox Church (nine publications), Reformed Church (one publication), Pentecostal Church (one publication), Evangelical Christian Church (one publication), Seventh Day Adventist Church (one publication), Baptist Church (one publication) and of the Jewish Church (one publication). Of all these, only one was in Hungarian (of the Reformed Church), one in Romanian, Yiddish and Hebrew (of the Jewish Church) and the other 13 were written in Romanian. Four of these publications appeared in Transylvania. *Mitropolia Ardealului* (Sibiu) was the official magazine of The Archdiocese of Sibiu and of the Archdiocese of Cluj and Oradea, emerged each two months in 3000 copies. *Mitropolia Banatului* (Caransebes) was the official magazine of The Archdiocese of Timisoara and Caransebes and of The Diocese of Transylvania, and appeared together with the *Mitropolia Ardealului*, in 3000 copies, every two months. *Telegraful Roman* (Sibiu), „religious folio edited by Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Sibiu“, was a bimonthly in 4000 copies. *Reformatus Szemle*<sup>22</sup> was the official organ of the Reformed Church and of the Evangelical Presbyterian Synod of Romania, founded in 1907 and issued by the Governing Council of the Reformed Diocese of Cluj. It appeared in Cluj-Napoca in Hungarian, twice a month, in 1000 copies. The communist authorities have imposed numerous restrictions of occurrence of these magazines, in order to see the light of day they were all being sent to Bucharest, at The Religious Affairs Department, to receive an order of appearance, “ready to print” mark. After successive readings sent to the Directorship, the specimens were submitted to the editorial offices, together with the corrections and the right indications of the censors.. To resist on the market, the religious magazines included some pages with religious content, the rest were materials about the struggle for peace, the local meetings, the national and international supporters of peace, in general propaganda articles.

The Religious Affairs Department, near The Council of Ministers required the censorship’s approval for editing new religious magazines. In 1969, The Romania Unitarian Church through The Unitarian Bishop of Cluj wanted to launch a new magazine in Hungarian entitled *Keresztény Magveto*<sup>23</sup>. This publication was taken care by an editorial board, whose chairman was Bishop Kiss Elek and the responsible editor was the professor Janos Kovacs. This was to appear quarterly, in 64 pages, with a format of 17X24cm, in 500 copies each number. After addressing to the forum of The Religious Affairs Department, the magazine obtained the censorship’s approval. Another approval that The Unitarian Church has to receive is that of Emil Bodnaras. The ultimate consent had to be given by the most important institution of control: The Directorship of the Central Presswork.

### CONCLUSION

During the communism, every print, newspaper, book or brochure had to have the acknowledgement and acceptance of The Directorship of the Central Presswork, and of The Press and Print General Directorship. Nothing could be communicated to the public without following the rules of this organism, and without its successive control.

The censors in the country, as those in Transylvania, were not so well trained, so they always asked for the help of the central, that is the censorship in Bucharest. This is way all the important prints in this area were verificated again and again, first by the local censors and then by the censors of The Directorship.

<sup>22</sup> In Hungarian, the title can be translated as *The Reformed Chronic*.

<sup>23</sup> I.e. *The Christian Sower*

The materials were diversified, from those in newspapers to those of the magazines, from the media for children, students to the specific publications (religious, literary, scientific...).

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