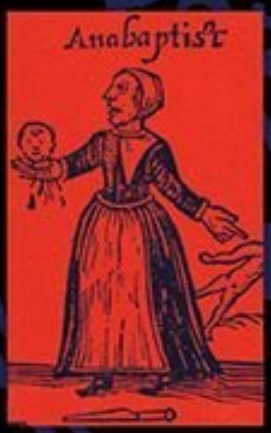
Censorship

Censorship

A World Encyclopedia



EDITED BY

DEREK JONES

Censorship

A World Encyclopedia

Volume 1-4

Hardy, Friedhelm, *The Religious Culture of India: Power, Love and Wisdom,* Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, [1993]
Jaffrelot, Christophe, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1915 to the 1990s,* London: Hurst, 1996;
as *The H.N.M. in India,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1996
Klostermaier, Klaus K., *Hinduism:* A *Short History,* Oxford, Oneworld, *zooo*
Monier-Williams, Monier, *Hinduism,* London: SPCK, and New York: Pott Young, 1877
Tripathi, Salil, "The March of Visnu", *Index on Censorship, 16/6* (November-December 1997)
Waghorne, Joanne Punzo, Norman Cutler and Vasudha Narayanan (editors), *Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone,* Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Anima, 1985

History: Historians

This entry documents the commitment of historians, and the ways in which they have resisted censorship and persecution, directly or indirectly, in a variety of regimes.

In prison

Time, suddenly available, has provided some prisoners with the chance to teach themselves history. Between 19x1 and 1945, for example, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's future premier, was regularly imprisoned by the British. He read and wrote about Indian and world history, and between October 1930 and August 1933 sent almost 200 letters on world history to his daughter, Indira Gandhi. Their publication in 1934 as *Glimpses of World History* made him the first non-western world historian. Other historians wrote letters (Adam Michnik, Poland), kept notebooks (Antonio Gramsci, Italy), or even carried out historical research (Adolfo Gilly, Mexico). Others drew on the powers of memory; French historian Fernand Braudel is said to have written from memory large portions of his work on the Mediterranean while interned in German camps. Thai historian Jit Phumisak wrote songs and essays while imprisoned for his Marxist views; most were smuggled out and published under various pen-names. The African National Congress (ANC) leader Govan Mbeki, father of the current president of South Africa, during his 13-year prison term at Robben Island established a programme of political education and wrote two syllabuses: a detailed history of the ANC and a materialist account of the development of human society, both based on material taken from newspapers and texts that he received as part of correspondence courses.

Some historians started teaching in prison. As a prisoner of war in Siberia during World War I, Hans Kohn, later a famous historian of nationalism, organized a series of cultural activities to exercise the minds of his fellow prisoners. In 1916, while captive in German internment camps, the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne lectured several days a week on history to a camp audience of more than 200. Even the German soldiers who were supposed to monitor what he said became so interested that they joined the prisoners in asking questions after the lectures. Later, isolated in a German village, Pirenne wrote a famous history of medieval Europe. The historian and co-founder of the *Annates* school, Marc Bloch,

executed by the Gestapo near Lyons in June 1944, taught French history to one of the young inmates while incarcerated and tortured in the months before his death. Polish historian Wladislaw Bartoszewski delivered some 70 hours of lectures during his five-month internment after the declaration of martial law in December 1981. Sudanese school teacher Suleiman Mohamed Soail, detained in 1985 for his research on the 1885 Mahdist Revolution, taught history to his fellow prisoners. In 1973, while imprisoned at Buru island, the Indonesian novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer, forbidden to write, told his fellow inmates stories about the incipient nationalist movement in early 10th-century Indonesia entirely from memory. When in 1975 he was allowed to write, the other inmates carried out his duties and gave him paper, and he transformed the stories into a set of four historical novels. When the quartet was published after his release in 1979, each of the volumes was banned, partly out of fear that analogies would be drawn between the historical abuses of power and those occurring at the time.

Rebellion

Numerous historians in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and, to a lesser degree, in other central and eastern European countries, preferred to fight censorship by publishing their manuscripts clandestinely. Many also taught forbidden historical subjects at "flying universities", educational self-help lectures given at private homes. Similar classes had existed in tsarist Russia in the late 19th and early 2.0th centuries, and under German occupation during World War II. Often intense communication existed between the *satnizdat* (underground) and émigr/l=e/ publishers. In Czechoslovakia, many of the first *samizdat* manuscripts were composed while their authors were still in their posts, i.e. before the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion that led to the dismissal of hundreds of historians. *Samizdat* historians were able to organize large historical debates, such as the 1984 one on "The Right to History", in which several episodes and persons in Czechoslovak history were re-evaluated. In Iran, similarly, hundreds of titles known as *câp-e saf*/l=i^/*d* (with blank covers), including many previously banned books on the political history of Persia, were published between late 1977 and the final collapse of the monarchy in February 1979.

There were other acts of courage, including that of German medievalist Percy Schramm, official record keeper for the High Command of the Wehrmacht (1943-45), who rescued much of the records by disobeying explicit orders to destroy them. He published them in 1961-65. Whatever one may think of his behaviour (in 1945, he was suspended for a trimester for his Nazi affiliations), he complied with the historian's obligation to rescue archives.

Another type of challenge arose from refusals to take loyalty oaths. In Italy, historians Gaetano De Sanctis, Giorgio Levi Delia Vida, and Ernesto Buonaiuti, and art historian Lionello Venturi were among *iz* professors (out of 1225 university lecturers) who, in November 1931, refused to take the fascist oath and were consequently dismissed. In August 1950 historians John Caughey, Ludwig Edelstein, Ernst Kantorowicz, and Charles Mowat refused, on grounds of conscience, to sign the text of an anticommunist loyalty oath circulated at the University of California, Berkeley, and, as a result, lost their jobs.

Historians occasionally left their traditional field of study to write about current events. World War II, the fall of the Berlin Wall, or the defence of a friend were, for example, compelling reasons to record

their observations. Censorship, too, proved to be such an incentive. A few historians reoriented their writings when they came under fire, and gradually shifted their attention and research towards the eras and topics under embargo. The Japanese historian lenaga Saburo sued the state in three different cases, to protest against the Ministry of Education's censorship of his history textbooks. The cases, begun in 1965, were partially won in 1997. Through the years, lenaga also started writing about history textbook censorship. In March 2001 lenaga was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In Czechoslovakia, historians Vilem Precan and Milan Otahal compiled an illegal Black Book about the first week of the Warsaw Pact occupation and, in the autumn of 1968, distributed 2900 copies of it. Both were dismissed and indicted on charges of subversion. The book was withdrawn.

Despite such persecution, some historians stubbornly continued to study sensitive topics. For more than 15 years, Jozef Jablonicky was constantly harassed because, in his writings, he systematically revised the official word on the 1944 Slovak national uprising. Each time the police confiscated his manuscripts and documents, he would begin his research again.

Aesopian language

Historians have regularly disguised their attacks on current conditions by writing or lecturing on similar situations in the distant past. In the 1920s and 1930s Victor Ehrenberg, an historian at the German University of Prague, warned against the rise of the Nazis by lecturing about anti-Semitism, militarism, war, and dictatorship in ancient Greece. In Iran, historian and sociologist Ali Shariati, the ideologue of the Iranian Revolution, compared the Shah to the Pharaoh or to Umayyad caliph Yazid; it took the secret police (Savak) six months to realize what was going on. Under martial law in Poland (1981-83), no discussion of current political affairs was possible, but substitute historical polemics did occur; analogies were clearly made with the introduction of martial law in the Polish Kingdom in 1861 and the repercussions of the Targowica Confederation (1792-93) when Polish traitors had called in the Russian Army.

Nowhere has Aesopian writing reached such heights as in China, where for centuries it was a frequently used technique. The most notorious modern case was perhaps that of Ming historian Wu Han. In the 1940s, when the Guomindang and Chiang Kai-shek suppressed open discussion of contemporary problems, Wu Han made use of historical allegories in short satirical essays as a form of indirect criticism. In 1961, he wrote a play, *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office,* in which the upright Ming official Hai Rui defends the peasants against bureaucratic arbitrariness and, as a result, is dismissed. At the time of its appearance, the play created no great stir. Although Mao Zedong originally urged that Hai Rui's criticism be emulated, he later believed - possibly erroneously - that Wu Han's Hai Rui was a historical symbol for Peng Dehuai, the minister of defence whom he had dismissed in July 1959 for his criticism of the Great Leap Forward policies. Thus the play was read as an indirect criticism of Mao. In 1965, Wu Han became the first victim of the Cultural Revolution.

Insider protest

In India, Japan, Colombia, and the United States, the authors of history textbooks threatened with censorship were defended by petitions from academics, teachers, and students. In 1982, 30 Polish historians protested to president Henryk Jabloński, also a historian, against the detention of medievalist Bronislaw Geremek who had gone on a 15-day hunger strike in prison. In 1987, 36 professors, including historians, signed an open letter calling for an end to political interference in their work and citing the Geremek case. In February 1988, 59 leading Polish intellectuals, including at least four historians, demanded in an open letter that the 1940 Katyń massacres be investigated. In Romania, prominent intellectuals protested against the widespread demolition of historical monuments in the 1980s. In Czechoslovakia, historian Vilém Prečan documented the persecution of his profession in detail, risking police reprisal and punishment. In 1975 he wrote an open letter to the participants of the 14th International Congress of Historical Sciences in San Francisco, a fierce complaint against "normalization". The day after the congress he was interrogated by the police. After his exile in West Germany in 1976, he started an archive of *samizdat* manuscripts. In 1985 the British historian and civil servant Clive Ponting was acquitted on charges of unauthorized disclosure of some Falklands/Malvinas War documents. He immediately began to study the culture of official secrecy in Great Britain and published the results in such books as *The Right To Know* and *Secrecy in Britain.*

Public action may also be undertaken against falsified history. In 1979 a declaration signed by 34 leading French historians appeared in *Le Monde,* vigorously condemning those who denied that the Holocaust had taken place. However, in 1994, 76 Belgian academics, including many historians, signed a petition in support of moral philosopher Gie van den Berghe, who had written a work on Holocaust denial and was himself unjustly accused by a Dutch journalist of minimizing the Holocaust because of his critical views of Israel.

Stronger actions have brought personal risks. Italian historian Federico Chabod actively supported colleagues who fell out of favour after the fascist race laws of November 1938. In 1982, Hasan Kakar, head of the history department at Kabul University in Afghanistan, was imprisoned for five years for his membership of a campus group that suggested peaceful solutions to the armed conflict and protested against the arbitrary arrest of a number of teachers and students. Elsewhere, historians resigned in protest against the treatment of their colleagues. Such was the case in the United States when Arthur Lovejoy, around 1900, renounced his chair when an economist was dismissed at Stanford University. Charles Beard resigned from Columbia University in 1917, in protest against the failure to reappoint one faculty member and the dismissal of two others who opposed World War I. Sergio Buarque de Holanda resigned his chair in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1969 to protest against the dictatorial government's mass dismissal of staff. Jan Vansina, the doyen of oral history, resigned in 1971 in Zaire (now Congo) to protest against the disappearance of three of his students when Lovanium University was closed.

As deans and vice-chancellors, historians have sometimes been **in** a strong position to protest against inhumane treatment. In 1933 Johan Huizinga, rector of Leiden University, the Netherlands, expelled from the university the leader of a German delegation, the Nazi historian Johann von Leers, who had written an anti-Semitic pamphlet. Constantine Zurayq resigned in the 1950s after the military had invaded the campus in Damascus. In 1962 Marcello Caetano, Portugal's future premier, at a time when he was not noted for his liberalism resigned as Lisbon University's rector following a clash between students opposing the regime and the political police, and in protest at the latter's invasion of the campus. In

Warsaw, Poland, Henryk Samsonowicz was dismissed in 1982 because he disagreed with the "verification" of university staff. Enrique Barba, alone and unarmed, expelled Juan Carlos Ongani'a's police along with their dogs from the campus of the Universidad Nacional of La Plata, Argentina, in the late 1960s. When Soviet troops encircled the Hungarian parliament building on 4 November 1956, Hungarian minister of state, jurist, and historian István Bibó was the only one to remain at his post, writing a famous appeal for passive resistance. Bibó was sentenced to life imprisonment, but amnestied in 1963.

Human rights activists

Many historians have involved themselves in human rights work, some risking dismissal and persecution. German historian and archivist Veit Valentin was an active defender of the democratic constitutional state and a pacifist during the Weimar Republic who headed the history department of the German League for Human Rights. He was dismissed twice, in 191? and 1933, the year he went into exile. After many years he returned to Germany to help prepare the Nuremberg trials. In 1960, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a French historian of the ancient world, was suspended for having signed a Declaration on the Right of Insubordination in the War in Algeria. In 1963 he published a work about torture in colonial Algeria and later incessantly opposed those who denied the Holocaust.

The Soviet historian Petr Iakir, who spent 17 years of his youth in prisons and camps, spoke in support of Aleksandr Nekrich's beleaguered book *June 22, 1941* at a special meeting at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in the mid-1960s. A member of the Action Group for the Defence of Civil Rights in the Soviet Union, he defended another historian, Andrei Amalrik, author of the essay *Will the Soviet Union Survive until* 1984? and many other dissidents. Between June 1972 and September 1974 he was in prison where, broken, he co-operated with the Committee of State Security, known as the KGB. Ostracized by dissident circles upon his release, he died, isolated, in 1982. Between 1975 and 1987, historian and literary specialist Sergei Grigoriants spent nine years in Soviet jails for the publication of *samiizdat* human rights bulletins. The original charter of the Czechoslovak human rights organization Charter 77 was signed by 40 historians, comprising one sixth of all signatories. After months of harassment, historian Pablo Arturo Fuenzalida, a member of the Chilean Human Rights Commission, was arrested on 10 December 1981, Human Rights Day, and tortured for five days. In 1986-87, Cuban historian Ariel Hidalgo Guillen, serving a prison term for "enemy propaganda" for criticizing the regime, became vice-president of a human rights organization while in jail and began hunger strikes to ameliorate prison conditions.

In May 1989, South African social anthropologist and historian David Webster was shot dead in Johannesburg because, as a member of the Detainees' Parents Support Committee, he was engaged in research into death squads. In May 1992, Bosnian historian Fadila Memisević and others started a research centre in Zenica to document war crimes in Bosnia. When, after presenting a list of 1350 perpetrators to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1993, she was unable to return from Geneva, she continued her work in Goötingen, Germany, and provided the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia with valuable information. In June 1994, Brazilian historian Hermógenes Da Silva Almeida Filho was shot dead in Rio de Janeiro, apparently in retaliation for his investigation into massacres of street children. In 1996, Croatian historian Ivo Banac, a member of the

Croatian Helsinki Committee, was labelled an "internal enemy" by President Franjo Tudjman, also a historian, because Banac pleaded for the repatriation of Croatian Serbs.

Once in exile, historians sometimes became human rights activists. In 1967, Yugoslav historian Vladimir Dedijer, who had fallen into disgrace in the 1950s and moved to the United States, served as co-president of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal. The Algerian Front de Liberation Nationale leader Mohammed Harbi spent eight years in prison and under house arrest for criticizing Boumedienne's 1965 coup, escaped to France, became a historian in Paris and campaigned for human rights in the Islamic world.

Historians also participated in civic groups that probed into the truth about past abuses. In 1904-05, Belgian historian Henri Grégoire was the secretary of a commission of inquiry into King Leopold IPs misgovernment of the Congo Free State (1885-1908). As his critical report was not well received by the king, he was obliged to leave Belgium. He returned only in 1909. Active in the anti-German resistance in World War I, he helped gather French and Belgian refugee scholars into the New School for Social Research, New York, during World War II.

In the late 1930s, French historian, co-founder of the *Annates,* and active antifascist Lucien Febvre was the president of a commission of enquiry into the April 1937 destruction of Guérnica, Spain. In the Soviet Union, Iurii Afanasiev and Roy Medvedev were among the 16 founders of Memorial in 1987; others, such as Dmitrii Iurasov and Arsenii Roginskii, soon joined in its activities. In countries that have toppled their dictators and moved towards democracy, opportunities for commitment have gradually increased. There, newly installed official Truth Commissions were writing, as it were, a first version of history, and some historians participated in them. They included Gonzalo Vial, a former minister of education under Pinochet in Chile, or Joan Kakwenziri, a historian from Makerere University, in Uganda. Some experts and researchers for the El Salvador commission had received a historical training.

Outsider solidarity

Even where their freedoms or lives have not been threatened, historians have exposed the falsified history of tyrannical countries. In addition, they have tried to apply the difficult principle of universality to the core right of the historical profession: freedom of information and expression. The principle implies that wherever a colleague's freedom is threatened, so, too, is theirs. By the same token, historians enjoying freedom also have an obligation to use it for those who do not possess it.

Solidarity has taken various forms. The tragic fate of historians in exile has sometimes been alleviated by the welcome of their colleagues. Mexican and other Latin American historians helped their colleagues who had fled Spain during or after the Civil War of 1936-39. Many refugee historians from Nazi Germany were given assistance in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere. For example, archivist Ernst Posner could escape Nazi Germany in 1939 with the help of such American historians as Eugene Anderson, Waldo Leland, Merle Curti, and Solon Buck, to became the dean of American archivists.

Petition and letter writing campaigns were launched against the detention of historians, as in the case of Belgian historians Henri Pirenne and Paul Fréd/l=e'/ricq, detained because they resisted the reopening of Ghent University by the German authorities as a Flemish university in 1916. Even president Woodrow Wilson, himself a historian, twice requested the Kaiser to release them. Other campaigns included

supporters of Luís Vitale (Chile), Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (Zaire/Congo), Andrei Amalrik, Petr Iakir and Arsenii Roginskii (Soviet Union), and Mushirul Hasan (India).

The International Committee of Historical Sciences (CISH) was always aware of both the crucial importance and problematic character of the freedom of historians elsewhere, but it was not always able or willing to campaign for individual cases. CISH was often presented with a dilemma: either to speak out in order to help colleagues under attack or to remain silent in order to avoid conflict with the official delegation of the new, abusive, regime that usually tried to downplay the situation. But, despite lack of official collective intervention in individual cases, several CISH Bureau members made individual *ex officio* efforts on behalf of their endangered colleagues, such as the Austrian Alfons Dopsch in 1935 and the Hungarian Domokos Kosary in 1958. Kosáry, a professor of history at the University of Budapest, had been dismissed as director of the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1949, and sent to work as a librarian at the Agrarian Sciences University in Gödöllő. He participated in the 1956 revolution, and, in 1958, he was arrested and imprisoned because he had compiled a document about the events of 1956 and deposited it at the university library. He was released in 1960, after two and a half years, and later rehabilitated after intervention by the CISH president and secretary-general.

In 1997 the International Council on Archives published a report for Unesco on the archives of the security services of former repressive regimes. For the first time it formulated three rights crucial to the profession: the right to historical truth, the right of the people to the integrity of their written memory, and the right to historical research.

In October 1995, the international Network of Concerned Historians was established to provide a bridge between historians and human rights organizations, forwarding to its members annual information about the persecuted and censored historians mentioned in various human rights reports. In addition, it participates in urgent action requests on behalf of historians issued by the American Association for the Advancement of Science Amnesty International, and other international organizations. As of May 2001, the Network of Concerned Historians campaigned for 19 historians and others concerned with the past in 10 countries.

Many outside the historical profession have made efforts on behalf of persecuted historians. Moreover, novelists, playwrights, journalists, storytellers, and singers often keep the historical truth alive when the silenced and silent historians are not able to refute official historical propaganda. A precondition for the work of historians is that they defend their human rights, particularly the freedoms of information and expression central to their profession. Without these freedoms, historians cannot discharge their first professional obligation - the pursuit of historical truth - nor their social obligations towards past, present, and future society. Shortly before his murder by a Gestapo officer on 8 December 1941, the Jewish historian Simon Dubnow is said to have exclaimed, "People, do not forget. Speak of this, people. Record it all."

Antoon De Baets

Further Reading

Bédarida, Francois (editor), "The Social Responsibility of the Historian", *Diogenes,* 168 (1994): 1-104

De Baets, Antoon, *Censorship of Historical Thought: A World Guide,* 1945-2000, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001
Dubnov-Erlich, Sophie, *The Life and Work of S.M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991
Erdmann, Karl Dietrich, *Die ökumene der Historiker: Geschichte der Internationalen Historikerkongresse und des Comite International des Sciences Historiques,* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987
Shils, Edward, "Academic Freedom" in *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Philip G. Altbach, 2 vols, New York: Garland, 1991
Shils, Edward, *The Calling of Education: The Academic Ethic and Other Essays on Higher Education,* edited by Steven Grosby, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997

Website

Network of Concerned Historians: http://www.let.rug.nl/ahc/nch/nch.htrn

History: Historical Taboos

Historical taboos cannot simply be associated with neglected aspects of past experience. At a given moment historians always select from among the infinity of topics a limited number, which are judged relevant and are considered as having, as Max Weber called it, a cultural meaning. What is deemed at a given moment irrelevant or culturally insignificant, and how related this may be to prevailing values and norms, is not always relevant: that a history of the Dutch train ticket remains to be written is surely not caused by a historical taboo, but because it seems (perhaps wrongly) a culturally unmeaningful topic.

Material that is taboo must consciously or unconsciously (or maybe by a mixture of these two) be feared as a challenge or a threat to prevailing norms and values. In this sense historical taboos are always and necessarily part of our historical consciousness, however forcefully or inadvertently the past experience in question may be repressed or banished from awareness. Historical taboos prevent what R.G. Collingwood called the re-enactment of past experience, a hermeneutic task that is proclaimed as the ultimate goal of historical practice. Because historical taboos transfer crucial events into the sphere of the forbidden, or the regrettable, because they surround essential parts of the past by a host of prohibitions, both fearful and potentially destructive or destabilizing, they cut short any open-minded and detached identification with past experience.

The threatening nature of certain past experiences, the striking way in which historical discourse is thwarted, and, consequently, its obvious lack of open-mindedness all point to a fundamental characteristic of historical taboos. Indeed, whenever we speak of historical taboos some kind of "sacred" prohibition is involved, which makes certain elements of the past, if not unmentionable, at least untouchable. The concept of historical taboos is intimately linked to the original use of the word among Polynesian peoples (the Tongan word *tabu)* and likewise refers implicitly to the Greek *anathema* and the Roman *sacrum.* As Freud has emphasized, the concept of taboo refers, on the one hand, to the "sacred"