Censorship and Freedom of the Press
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Censorship as a means of controlling communication has existed since classical antiquity. However, it became significantly more important in the early modern period with the invention of printing, which enabled the easy reproduction of texts in large quantities. Initially, it was the church which imposed censorship, though institutions of the state soon became involved as well. In the 17th century, the campaign against censorship and for freedom of the press began in England, where substantial success was achieved as early as 1695. In France and Germany, on the other hand, freedom of the press was not achieved until (considerably) later. Temporary progress was repeatedly followed by backlashes. In the 20th century, the newly emerging media (film, radio, and television) also became subject to censorship and control measures, and modern totalitarian regimes engaged in the massive suppression of freedom of expression in these media. In European history, censorship was not only used as a means of political, intellectual and cultural control within the state, but was also used to prevent the cross-border transfer of information and ideas deemed unwelcome. Freedom of the press, on the other hand, opened the gates for transfer of this kind. However, a paradox existed in this regard: For a long time, state authorities allowed political newspapers to report on events abroad (indeed these reports formed a large part of the content) precisely because they distracted from domestic political circumstances.

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Origins and Beginnings of Censorship in Germany

From the very beginning, the development of printing (Media Link #ab) in Europe was accompanied and influenced – albeit to varying degrees – by measures aimed at controlling it. This is particularly true of Germany. While Germany was initially similar to other European countries and to the rest of the world as regards the censorship of printing, the gradual removal of such measures and the emergence of freedom of the press began earlier in many other countries. In Germany, this process took more time and was characterized not only by occasional progress, but also by the repeated reversion to an authoritarian relationship between the state and the press.

Censorship had always been the primary means of controlling the press. The word "censor" is derived from the Latin verb censere, which means "to evaluate, to examine, to check". In the Roman Empire, censors were officials who were appointed for a limited time period, and who adjudicated on public morality, besides estimating the value of property. Though there was no printed press in antiquity, restrictions regarding public utterances existed. For example, the Roman "Law of the Twelve Tables" from the 5th century BC made libel punishable by death.1 By contrast, something akin to freedom of expression existed during the period of classical Greek democracy and during the Roman Republic.2

However, the need for the supervision of communication within society only became urgent after the invention of printing with movable type by Johannes Gutenberg (ca. 1400–1468) (Media Link #ac). From this point, it was possible to make and distribute numerous copies of any text. To prevent the dissemination of a text, it was necessary to prevent it being printed at all. Thus, the first measures to control printing were introduced just a few decades after the emergence of printing technology. In 1486, Berthold von Henneberg (1441–1504) (Media Link #ad), the archbishop-elector of Mainz, issued the first decree establishing a censorship
Censorship had its origins in the religious realm because it was initially primarily religious works and texts for liturgical purposes that were printed. The aim of the prescribed supervision was to maintain doctrinal consistency, but moral and educative concerns also entered into these considerations. The printing of a proscribed text resulted in serious penalties, including excommunication. Censorship emerged in three main stages: Initially, the supervision of printing was organized solely by the church. This supervision was subsequently increasingly adopted by secular institutions also. Finally, censorship by secular authorities became the dominant kind.

However, even after secular control of censorship had been established, the Catholic Church by no means relinquished its own censorship measures. Indeed, censorship by the Catholic Church reached its apogee during the Counter Reformation. In 1557, an index of proscribed books was introduced, the Index librorum prohibitorum (Media Link #ae), which gave a permanent form to the censorship policies of the church. This Index was only abolished in 1966 by Pope Paul VI (1897–1978) (Media Link #af).

Over the centuries, the number of texts in the Index grew as new titles were added, and it contained – in addition to theological works – many scientific and literary works which the Inquisition or the Congregation of the Index believed to be in contravention of church doctrine or the opinions of the church. In spite of these central directives, Catholic censorship also depended on the judgement of the local church officials, i.e. of the local bishops and the committees and censors appointed by them.

**Transition to Secular Censorship and its Implementation**

The transition to secular censorship occurred in the early modern period during the reign of Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) (Media Link #ag). This process was primarily driven by the Reformation (Media Link #ah), which gave rise to a flood of pamphlets (Media Link #ai) and polemical texts, which raised tensions among the population of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The primary aim of resolutions passed at various Imperial Diets was to suppress these publications. An imperial edict of 1521 banned the writings of Martin Luther (1483–1546) (Media Link #aj). The Diet of Speyer of 1529 decreed pre-publication (or preventative) censorship.

From this point on, every text had to be approved by an officially appointed censor prior to printing. This was particularly effective in preventing the production and dissemination of printed texts. Conversely, the post-publication censorship of works which were already in print, which was also decreed, had the disadvantage that it was difficult, if not impossible, to retrieve all of the copies of a banned text. However, the supervision of printing was by no means limited to censorship. The means of controlling printing were repeatedly supplemented and enhanced during the course of the 16th century by decrees of Imperial Diets and by judicial and policing ordinances. This indicates that the existing preventative measures were not having the desired effect. For instance, from 1530 onward printed works were obliged to carry the name of the publisher and the place of publication (Impressumspflicht). And the authorities did not restrict themselves to the censorship of printed texts, but extended censorship provisions to images, and even mold casts and wood carvings (in 1548). Ultimately, printing was restricted to imperial cities, the cities of residence of territorial rulers and university cities, and printers had to swear an oath to adhere to the relevant ordinances of Imperial Diets (both in 1570). Printing shops were subject to unannounced inspections, and contravention of the legal provisions could result in punishments, which included imprisonment and even exclusion from the printing profession. A particularly dramatic form of censorship was the public burning of books (Media Link #ak).

In order to ensure that the regulations were being adhered to and to provide for the practical implementation of censorship, it was necessary to establish a bureaucratic apparatus. As early as 1496, Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) (Media Link #al) had appointed a general superintendent of printing and books for the whole of Germany. The emperor claimed supreme authority over censorship on the basis of the imperial Bücherregal ("prerogative over books"), a prerogative of the ruler which was understood in a similar way to the ruler’s prerogative to control the currency and the postal system. The imperial right to supervise books and printing was exercised by the Aulic Council (Reichshofrat) in Vienna, which combined both judicial and governmental functions. The Imperial Court Prosecutor (Reichshofskal) was charged with representing the interests of the empire in the Aulic Council and, in the event of the contravention of imperial laws, he served as the complainant. The imperial prosecutor (kaiserlicher Fiskal) had similar duties in the Imperial Chamber Court (Reichskammergericht). An important instrument in the implementation of censorship was the Frankfurt Book Commission, which existed as a permanent institution from 1597 and which inspected the books which were sold at the book fairs in the city. The commission was only allowed to check whether books had been authorized by the censor but did not...
The implementation of censorship was assigned to the imperial princes and the imperial estates by the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530.\(^1\) Thus, the territorial rulers, of which there were many in the politically fragmented Holy Roman Empire, were in practice responsible for censorship. In the subsequent centuries, the division of powers between the imperial authorities and the territorial rulers had far-reaching consequences for the implementation of censorship in Germany\(^2\) as it acted counter to centralism and it caused Germany to develop differently to other European countries. Consequently, the emperor had to repeatedly admonish territorial rulers to implement censorship measures. The prosecutor was even authorized to investigate territorial rulers suspected of not enforcing imperial censorship provisions, and the emperor claimed the right to intervene directly in such cases. These circumstances suggest that censorship was not implemented in the Holy Roman Empire in as uniform a manner as the imperial laws provided for. This was due, on the one hand, to the general weakness of the early modern state when it came to implementing its will, which meant that censorship often lacked effectiveness. On the other hand, the individual territorial rulers, who adhered to different confessions, also claimed their own right to supervise printing. In some cases, texts that were proscribed in one territory could be printed in other territories, though it was not the case that censorship was implemented radically differently in the Protestant territories compared with the Catholic territories.\(^3\)

The censorship of individual texts occurred in the imperial cities, the cities where territorial rulers had their residences and the university cities, which were the only locations where printing shops were allowed to exist after 1570. One of the motivations behind this prohibition of so-called “remote printing shops” (Winkeldruckereien) was to make censorship more practicable. Censorship was implemented by senior city and communal officials, council lawyers (Ratskonsulenten), and, in particular, the Syndikus (general counsel), whose duties were primarily legal in nature. In some cases where it was possible (i.e. in university cities), the duty of censorship was entrusted to university professors. The members of the different faculties were consulted depending on the subject matter of the book in question. However, the Syndikus usually retained responsibility for the censorship of legal and political texts.

Secular censorship was primarily guided by the interests of the state, and was thus intended to prevent disturbances to peace and order in the polity, and to prevent libel and breaches of public morality. However, external concerns also played a central role in censorship. The dissemination of state secrets (treason) was strictly forbidden. The entitlement of the ruler to establish official control over printing was not at all controversial when it was first posited because it was viewed as belonging to the God-given privileges of a ruler, whose power also provides protection for his subjects. Additionally, in the context of absolutism the concept of arcania imperii, i.e. the right of the court to make political decisions without the interference of the public, justified the right of the ruler to censor.\(^4\)

However, control of printing was not only exercised negatively, i.e. by means of prohibition and suppression, but also positively. This occurred in particular by means of the granting of privileges to individual printers, which gave the printers a kind of proof of legality and authorization.\(^5\) These privileges were also justified on the basis of the ruler’s prerogative to control printing and books. The privileges were very sought after because they granted protection against reprinting by other printers, and offered economic advantages. As these privileges could be withdrawn again, they undoubtedly promoted good behaviour.

**Censorship and the Periodical Press**

The system of censorship and control of communication had already fully developed and consolidated before the periodical press, which reported on current events, appeared on the scene in Germany in the early 17th century. It was not difficult to transfer and apply the tried and tested methods of censorship to this new mass medium, which was published at regular intervals. However, the content and frequency of publication – weekly initially, and in the late 17th and 18th centuries increasingly twice or three times weekly – placed greater demands on the censors. Political reporting had an altogether different significance than learned treatises. The censors not only had to be up to date with political events, but also had to make decisions quickly on coverage that was increasingly treating current issues. Additionally, the rapidly growing number of newspapers (Media Link #an) in the German-speaking territory (there were already 70 of them in the late 17th century, more than in all the other European countries together) made it difficult to maintain an overview. A text that one censor wished to suppress had sometimes been printed somewhere else already, and this fact could be cited as a defence against the suppression of the text. Consequently, controversies over censorship occurred repeatedly, and sometimes resulted in censors being removed from their posts or being punished.
The effects of censorship manifested themselves in different ways in the German press of the 17th and 18th centuries. The fact that newspapers predominantly reported on events outside of the Holy Roman Empire, that is happenings "abroad", while barely mentioning "internal political" events is attributable at least in part to censorship. Censors clearly saw reports on events beyond the borders of the empire as less problematic than reports on events closer to home. However, foreign potentates did complain to other rulers about disparaging reportage, and no ruler wished to be drawn into conflict for the sake of the latter. The fact that newspapers frequently reported on events in a superficial way and rarely discussed the deeper causes is presumably also attributable (at least in part) to censorship. Censorship strongly discouraged the newspaper correspondents from expressing their personal opinions about the facts that they were reporting.

The system of censorship and control of communication which was established in the 16th century, and which was also applied to the periodical press from the 17th century, remained largely intact until the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. However, during the course of this period it had become more porous in some regards. Particularism contributed to this process politically (as already referred to), as did the Enlightenment philosophically. The Prussian king Frederick the Great (1712–1786) has often been described as having a progressive attitude, though this was a myth. The freedom from censorship which he granted to the Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen in 1740 was revoked after just half a year, and censorship laws in Prussia were even renewed and made stricter on a number of occasions in the subsequent decades. In contrast to the granting of favour by Frederick the Great, which could be revoked at any time, the censorship edict of Joseph II of Austria (1741–1790) in 1781 at least formally introduced a guarantee under law. From this point, one was allowed to print anything which one was prepared to take responsibility for.

The Emergence of Censorship in Other European Countries and the Struggle for Freedom of the Press

In other European countries, the church and the state also reacted to the spread of printing technology with censorship. In England, a system of control was established during the reign of the Tudors (1485–1603). Henry VIII (1491–1547) issued the first list of proscribed books in 1529. During the reign of Mary I (1516–1558), the Stationers' Company, the guild of the printers which was established by royal charter in 1557, was charged with providing under its own auspices for the supervision of printing and the granting of privileges in the printing trade. The Star Chamber Decree, which was issued in 1586 during the reign of Elizabeth I (1533–1603), brought comprehensive regulation of the printing trade, placing multiple complementary control and licensing measures in the hands of the Stationers' Company. The first Stuart kings of England (1603–1714) inherited and retained this system of control.

In France, the first royal decree on printing in 1521 made theological books subject to pre-publication censorship by the university in Paris. In 1535, the number of printers was restricted. A decree of 1583 stated that a new text could not be printed without the permission of the king. As a result of state centralism, book production and the press became primarily concentrated in the capital, Paris (though Lyon was also initially a centre of printing), which made supervision easier. In 1542, the regulations regarding printing were revised (particularly with respect to Protestant texts), and in 1547 a decree made it compulsory for all books to carry the name of the publisher and the place of publication. Pre-publication censorship was codified in 1551, and the theological faculty of the university retained its censorship role. A further ordinance of 1571 made the granting of a royal privilege a prerequisite for printing any text. The first French newspaper published periodically, the Gazette, was founded by royal privilege in 1631 in Paris.

Control measures were not applied with the same strictness in all countries. The Netherlands was comparatively liberal in this regard, which contributed to a blossoming of printing there (the first newspapers appeared there earlier than elsewhere). Works which had been proscribed in France were published in Holland, giving rise to a flourishing exile printing trade. For example, Discours de la méthode by the French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) was published in Leiden in 1637, albeit anonymously.

In the large Italian city republics, the local printing industry was subject to local supervision (including by the church). In 1471, the Spanish Inquisition was founded, and in 1536, the Portuguese Inquisition was established. In the 16th and 17th centuries, these performed the censorship function in the Iberian countries under the authority of the states. The first Spanish index of proscribed books was issued in 1551. The first printed index in Portugal was published in the same year. The Inquisition was abolished in Portugal in 1820 and in Spain in 1834. In 1477, the Spanish state had initially acknowledged the printing press in a positive way, and
had even granted a tax exemption to printers three years later. However, pre-publication censorship was introduced in Castile in 1502,25 and the censorship authorities established for this purpose were strict and made the printing process cumbersome. Charles V and Philip II (1527–1598) (Media Link #av) expanded the control regulations in the 16th century with the aim – among other things – of preventing the importation of printed works, and of shutting Spain off from the outside world. Neighbouring Portugal only established a separate state censorship authority (in addition to the Inquisition) in 1768, i.e. the Real Mesa Censória (“Royal Censorship Committee”).26

The campaign against censorship and for freedom of the press in Europe originated in England.27 On the basis of older legal traditions (Habeas Corpus Act) and the separation of powers between the crown and parliament, which emerged there earlier than elsewhere, censorship was abolished and a free press permitted for the first time at the beginning of the 1640s in the context of the Puritan Revolution. This was due in part to the numerous sects which had formed in England during the course of the Reformation and which asserted their right to freely exercise their religion. John Milton’s (1608–1674) (Media Link #av) Areopagitica (Media Link #aw) of 1644 was the first great treatise of modern European history defending freedom of the press. It presented both individualistic and anthropological arguments (human rights) and collective sociological arguments (societal benefits).28 The length of time which it took for this fictional speech to be published in other countries is instructive. Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti de Mirabeau (1749–1791) (Media Link #ax) published an annotated version in France in 1788, the year before the French Revolution. The first German translation was not published until after the Revolution of 1848, in 1851.

But even in England Milton’s call for freedom of the press did not prove effective, at least not initially. Instead, the legislature assumed censorship duties itself for a period. It was not until 1695, when the parliament allowed the Printing Act to lapse, that pre-publication censorship came to an end, and England had – to this extent at least – freedom of the press.29 The contest regarding the limits of freedom of expression was then transferred to the courts, where charges of “seditious libel” were levelled. Defendants who were found guilty in such cases faced a range of sanctions, and the means of post-publication censorship were employed.30 The government had no intention of ceasing the suppression of oppositional and objectionable works, or of relinquishing the means of influencing the press. The latter occurred – among other things – by means of economic measures such as the stamp duty, and by “buying” compliant journalists by means of subventions.31

Outside mainland Britain, it was the citizens of the British North American Colonies (Media Link #ay) who were the first to achieve press freedom in the 18th century. In spite of all resistance,32 the demand for a free press was reflected in the first constitution which the American states adopted after attaining their independence. In continental Europe, on the other hand, a radical break with absolutist monarchy was necessary. In France, the control functions had become concentrated in the royal censorship authority during the 18th century. The number of censors had been increased; the names of 367 censors have been established for the period between 1742 and 1789.33 As the Enlightenment movement grew, there were intermittent increasingly forceful measures to suppress subversive texts.34 However, a somewhat laissez-faire attitude was adopted in the middle of the century – as long as there was no slander or objectionable arguments – under the stewardship of the supreme censor Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (1721–1794) (Media Link #b0).35 With so-called “permission tacite” (“tacit permission”), it was even possible to print some proscribed texts illicitly in France, and to print other texts abroad and re-import them. This was tolerated because of the economic benefit.36 Thus, Enlightenment and anti-royalist ideas were allowed to circulate within France, and these contributed to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of August 26, 1789, states:

"La libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l’homme: tout citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l’abus de cette liberté, dans les cas déterminés par la loi."37

The French constitution (Media Link #b2) which was adopted in 1791 codified this guarantee. However, the revolutionary leaders soon restricted freedom of expression and freedom of the press to their supporters, and pre-publication censorship was re-introduced in 1793 as a means of suppressing opponents.

The Struggle for Freedom of the Press in Germany

The struggle for freedom of the press did not begin in Germany until the late 18th century. The oldest records for the use of the
term Pressefreiheit are from the year 1774. However, the expression Freiheit der Presse is somewhat older. For example, this expression is contained in the Rescript, betreffend die Aufhebung der Censur of the Danish king Christian VII (1749–1808) (Media Link #b3) of 14/9/1770. As this decree also applied to the dukedoms of Schleswig and Holstein, which were part of the Holy Roman Empire, this represented the first legal guarantee of press freedom in the German-speaking territories. While this formal lifting of censorship remained an isolated case for some time, the application of censorship measures nonetheless became less stringent in many other places. This was the case in Hamburg, for example, where multiple newspapers were in publication simultaneously in the late 18th century.

The French Revolution (Media Link #b4) brought a reversal of press freedom in Germany. German society – particularly intellectual circles – took great interest in events in neighbouring France. Consequently, German rulers feared the transfer of revolutionary ideas and methods, and they attempted to counteract this threat with new and stricter censorship laws. This occurred in Prussia as early as 1788 by means of the infamous Erneuerte Zensuredikt ("Renewed Censorship Edict") issued by the minister for education and religion, Johann Christoph von Wöllner (1732–1800) (Media Link #b5). In Austria, Leopold II (1747–1792) (Media Link #b6) issued a press decree in 1791, which explicitly cited the relevant provisions of the decrees of the imperial diets from the 16th century. However, the reversion to a more stringent censorship policy in Germany could not silence the debate about press freedom (Media Link #b7), which had been conducted in print from the 1780s. While the authorities initially only attempted to tighten up existing censorship, this resulted in increasing calls for freedom of expression and freedom of the press as a human right.36

As soon as the danger posed by the French Revolution appeared to have abated, there were renewed attempts to liberalize censorship laws in individual German states. However, the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) (Media Link #b8) saw the renewed introduction of more strict regulation of the press in Germany and elsewhere. Even before he officially reintroduced censorship in France in 1810, he had developed forms of press control which were characterized by extreme centralization and strict penalties. However, Napoleon's influence varied from the German territories (Media Link #b9) west of the Rhine which had been incorporated into Imperial France, to the affiliated states of the Confederation of the Rhine, and the other German states, which were officially independent. However, even in the latter, there was an eagerness not to incur the displeasure of the French emperor, as evidenced – among other things – by the Prussian government's suppression of the Berliner Abendblätter which were published by Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811) (Media Link #ba) in 1810–1811.39 The execution of the Nuremberg book merchant Johann Philipp Palm (1766–1806) (Media Link #bb) in 1806, which Napoleon had personally ordered because Palm had published the pamphlet Deutschland in seiner tiefen Erniedrigung ("Germany in its Deep Humiliation"), 40 had already been greeted with dismay by the public. The Moniteur was elevated to the status of French state newspaper and was declared the model which all other newspapers had to follow – even in the occupied German territories.

Progress and Backlashes in the 19th Century

The victory over Napoleon which had been attained in the Wars of Emancipation (Media Link #bc) of 1813–1815 led to demands for greater political participation in the German-speaking territories. These demands not only resulted in press laws which gave rise to a blossoming of the press in various regions, but were also expressed in article 18 d) of the "Final Act" (Bundesakte) of the Congress of Vienna of June 18 1815, which envisaged that "[die] Bundesversammlung [wird] sich bei ihrer ersten Zusammenkunft mit der Abfassung gleichförmiger Verfügungen über die Preßfreiheit und die Sicherstellung der Rechte der Schriftsteller und Verleger gegen den Nachdruck beschäftigen".41 This was understood at the time by many as an assurance that freedom of the press would be introduced throughout the German states.

However, the implementation of this assurance was delayed. Two years passed before the Federal Assembly decided to commission a report on the regulations currently in force in the various federal states. When the state councillor Günther Heinrich von Berg (1765–1843) (Media Link #bd) presented his report in October 1818, it disclosed that the principle of retrospective responsibility before the courts (justice system) was already being applied in about one-third of the states, while the principle of preventative censorship (police system) was still being applied in two-thirds of the states. However, before it was possible to take practical action on the basis of these findings, another new phase of suppression of the press began.

With growing concern, the rulers in Germany (and particularly in Austria) observed the campaign for emancipation and the manifestations of a German national consciousness, which were becoming increasingly overt. When the student Carl Ludwig Sand (1795–1820) (Media Link #be) stabbed August von Kotzebue (1761–1819) (Media Link #bf), the poet and Russian state con-
However, special restrictions remained in force for the event of war, the threat of war, or internal upheavals, and these provided the
press in article 45, and this guarantee was adopted unchanged into the federal constitution of Switzerland in 1874.

Soon after the Revolution, individual states of the German Confederation began to re-introduce press laws with increasingly restric-
tive provisions, which ultimately resulted in the Allgemeine Bundesbestimmungen, die Verhältnisse des Mißbrauchs der Presse be-
treffen (“General Federal Provisions Regarding the Abuse of the Press”) of July 6, 1854. These regulations no longer prescribed pre-publication censorship, but they continued to hamper and regulate the press by making printing subject to state concessions, by imposing a bailment requirement, as well as by imposing stamp duty and distribution restrictions. Nonetheless, there was no complete reversion to the old Vormärz system after 1848, particularly since not all states implemented the federal provisions in their domestic laws. Additionally, the opinion and party press began to develop during this period, making it impossible to prevent the formation of a liberal public sphere.

However, this public sphere was ultimately only established in the German Empire after the German Unification in 1871 (and four
years earlier in Austria-Hungary by means of the Imperial Constitution). The German parliament was slow in agreeing the Imperial Press Law (1874), which replaced the 27 state press laws and abolished restrictions on the freedom of the press based in state law. The law removed the state concessions and the bailment requirement, as well as special taxes imposed on the press. Judicial and, in particular, police confiscation was limited to a small number of cases, which were defined by the law. However, special restrictions remained in force for the event of war, the threat of war, or internal upheavals, and these provided the
Development in Other European Countries

During the blossoming of the press in England which began in 1695, numerous new newspapers and other periodical publications came into existence. In these, the predominance of reports from abroad declined and domestic issues were increasingly discussed. There was no other country in 18th-century Europe in which the press enjoyed (and utilized) such a degree of freedom as in England. Bitter political and personal feuds were conducted through the press, resulting in many court cases. Initially, judges (state officials) adjudicated on these matters. Then, after the passing of the Libel Act in 1792, these matters were adjudicated upon by independent juries. The freedom to report on parliament was initially also controversial, but it was granted in 1772.

In France, there were frequent changes in the law regarding the press during the 19th century as a result of the frequent upheavals in the political order. A multitude of constitutional articles, laws and decrees replaced one another. The rigid press regulation under Napoleon Bonaparte was followed by liberalization through the Charte constitutionnelle, which was issued by Louis XVIII (1755–1824) in June 1814. Article 8 of this charter guaranteed to the French population the right to express their opinions publicly and to commit them to print "en se conformant aux lois qui doivent réprimer les abus de cette liberté". However, this constitution was repeatedly modified by means of ordinary laws. As early as October of the same year, one such law made the publication of all texts longer than 20 pages subject to royal authorization, thereby subjecting them to pre-publication censorship once more. A separate ordinance followed soon after, which contained detailed provisions.

After the accession of the "Citizen King" Louis-Philippe (1773–1850) in 1830, the Charte constitutionnelle of 1814 came back into effect, though it did not remain so for long on this occasion either. In 1835, a repressive censorship was extended to drawings, caricatures, the press, books and the theatre. Furthermore, during the entire period of the July Monarchy, financial impositions on newspapers made life difficult for them. The February Revolution of 1848 brought pre-publication censorship to an end in France once more, only for it to be re-introduced scarcely two years later, even before the fall of the Second Republic. In 1851, Louis Napoléon, who had been elected president, grabbed power by means of a coup d'état, and taking the title of Napoleon III (1856–1879), he became the head of the Second Empire. This system did not envisage freedom of the press, and a decree of February 1852 transferred control of the press to the owners of the printing patents. However, in September 1870, under pressure from a growing opposition, the emperor finally agreed to abolish preventative censorship and to allow freedom to print.

After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/1871, the National Assembly in Bordeaux initially assumed the government of France, while the Commune in Paris attempted a rebellion. Consequently, a new censorship decree was issued on March 18, 1871. Not until 1881 did the Third Republic receive its own press law, which guaranteed freedom of publication (and lifted all restrictions on becoming a printer) and which finally replaced the law of 1819. Of course, debates and controversies regarding the legal limits of press freedom continued to occur.

In the very changeable political climate of 19th-century France with its sudden changes in the laws regarding the press, the press developed slowly and in a disrupted fashion. New publications were repeatedly established in an attempt to oppose censorship and to promote freedom of the press. One of the first organs to do this took the title Le Censeur (1814) ("the censor"). It was quickly suppressed, but it soon reappeared. Other publications had a similar fate. Among the new publications which attracted the attention of the censors in France in the 1830s were the caricature newspapers (La Caricature, Le Charivari).

In many parts of Europe, the French Revolution had awakened hopes of political and civil liberties and of freedom of the press, for example in the Republic of Mainz which was founded in Germany under French occupation in 1792/1793. There were similar aspirations in Switzerland, where freedom of the press was proclaimed in article 7 of the constitution of the Helvetic Republic of 1798, and intellectuals and journalists in the dukedoms of (northern) Italy also hoped to attain freedom of the press and other liberties. However, governments feared the danger emanating from France, and tended to make the existing control measures more strict instead, as happened for example in Milan. New restrictions were particularly aimed at preventing the distribution of newspapers.
The French troops were temporarily expelled from northern Italy during the War of the Second Coalition before returning in 1799. This time Napoleon, who had since gained absolute power in France by means of a coup d'état, arrived not as a liberator, but as a dictator. He now initiated a political re-ordering of Italy, which resulted in the strict regime which governed Imperial France being applied in Italy as well, including in the area of press control. As a result of the Congress of Vienna of 1815 (Media Link #bw), the political circumstances which had prevailed prior to 1789 were re-established in (northern) Italy, thereby re-establishing the influence of the Habsburg Empire. This also had an effect on the press. It was not until Italian Unification in 1861 that there was a radical break with the past. As unification was initiated by the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Sardinian constitution of 1848 became the constitution of the Kingdom of Italy. Article 28 stated that the press was free, but subject to legal provisions for the suppression of abuses of that freedom.

In Spain, there was also a growing tension during the 18th century between the censorship regime and Enlightenment aspirations, which became increasingly apparent there. In 1785, Charles III (1716–1788) (Media Link #bx) transferred responsibility for the censorship to the periodical press itself and granted greater publishing freedom in the process. However, his successor Charles IV (1748–1819) (Media Link #by) reintroduced pre-publication censorship, which resulted in a financial decline in printing and the press. Thus, freedom of the press was proclaimed for the first time in Spain during the struggle for independence against Napoleon, who had imposed an autocratic system on the country in 1808 with the Statute of Bayonne. In March 1812, the Cádiz Cortes (assembly of the estates), which sat in the part of Spain which was not occupied by the French, proclaimed the first modern constitution for Spain which had been drafted by the Spaniards themselves. Article 371 guaranteed to all Spaniards the right to write, print and publish without any prior permission or approval, subject of course to all restrictions and responsibilities arising from the laws of the land. After the end of the French occupation and the return of the absolutist monarchy, this constitution and other laws which had been issued in the interim were nullified. However, similar to France, the changing political circumstances in Spain resulted in the constitution of Cádiz being reinstated in 1820–1823 and in 1836/1837.

Censorship and Freedom of the Press in the 20th Century

At the end of the 19th century, the centuries-long struggle against censorship and for freedom of the press seemed to have been won in large parts of Europe, at least in terms of the formal legal position, even if the limits of freedom were still contested in many cases, and conflicts repeatedly arose for political and moral reasons and as a result of the provisions of criminal law (such as the provisions regarding lèse-majesty in section 95 of the criminal law code of the German Empire). It could not have been predicted at that stage that the 20th century would witness another radical reversal in press freedom as a result of the totalitarian movements which followed the First World War, but the war itself led to the re-establishment of (military) censorship and other control measures.

In Germany, as stipulated in section 30 of the Imperial Press Law, freedom of the press was suspended after the declaration of war on August 1, 1914, and the old Prussian law of 1851 pertaining to a state of emergency came back into force. Besides, on the preceding day, the chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921) (Media Link #bz) had issued a catalogue of 26 items which it was forbidden to report on. In addition to military matters in the narrower sense, these items included other information regarding the economy, transportation, etc. which were deemed of relevance to the war. The censorship offices of the military authorities were responsible for enforcing these provisions. Acknowledging the necessity of the state to defend itself, and in the spirit of "inner political accord" (innerer Burgfrieden), the opposition and the press in Germany accepted this censorship fairly readily. What was new was that the authorities were not content with the traditional pre-publication censorship, but also tried to exert direct influence over the content of the press reports. An official press apparatus, which had proved relatively ineffective, had already been established and developed in Germany in the 19th century for this purpose. It was not until the First World War that an instrument of this kind was established on a permanent basis.

Similar measures were introduced by the Entente Powers. In France, freedom of the press was suspended by a decree of August 2, 1914. The prescribed censorship lasted until 1919. The ministry of war had a Bureau de la Presse ("Press Office"); the military
After the outbreak of war, the British government immediately took control of the telegraph network, the cable connections, and the radio stations, and thus gained control of the flow of information which these technological advances had given rise to. Additionally, the state Press Bureau was upgraded to a control centre for the government's information policy with regard to the press. Parliament also passed a series of laws which forbade the dissemination of false information, the passing of military secrets to the enemy, and the promotion of discontent. Newspapers were indeed prosecuted and temporarily suppressed for contravening these provisions, but this did not last long. Thus, the British press retained its freedom during the war and was even able to voice criticism of the military and the government. In any case, the press's cooperation with the Press Bureau made preventative measures unnecessary.

After the end of the war, the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941) (Media Link #c1) resulted in a radical change in the political system in Germany. The constitution adopted on August 11, 1919, formed the basis for the Weimar Republic. Article 118 guaranteed freedom of opinion “innerhalb der Schranken der allgemeinen Gesetze”. The constitution also contained a ban on censorship, though it allowed for special legal provisions for the new medium of film, which was viewed with suspicions for reasons of public morality. In 1920, the German parliament made use of this latitude by passing a Lichtspielgesetz (film law), which stipulated that movies which were to be shown in public had to be authorized by the official inspection centres. The showing of films in public had become a common occurrence since the late 19th century, and in Germany – but also elsewhere in Europe – these events had been monitored by the local police (similar to theatre censorship). However, the proliferation of cinemas demanded a centralization of measures regarding the medium. In the United Kingdom, the first Cinematographic Act was passed in 1909, and in 1913 the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) was founded as the first institution for the self-supervision of the film industry.

In Germany, article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which gave the president quasi-dictatorial powers, proved problematic. In the event of serious breaches of public order and threats to public safety, he was able to temporarily suspend fundamental rights (such as article 118 on freedom of opinion) by emergency decree. The Weimar constitution did not expressly guarantee freedom of the press, which was viewed by the press and its supporters as a big disadvantage. The Imperial Press Law from before the First World War still remained in force, and technical considerations dictated that radio, which emerged from the 1920s, had to be placed under state control from the beginning.

To prevent extremists on the left (Communists) and the right (National Socialists) from destroying the political order of the Weimar Republic, the Republikschutzgesetze (“laws for the protection of the republic”) were passed in 1922 and 1930. These gave the authorities the right to suppress newspapers if they expressed contempt for the existing state structure, the national flag, or members of the government, or if they advocated violence. The range of circumstances under which the suppression of newspapers was permitted was repeatedly extended, latterly by the emergency decrees of the president in 1931 and 1932. In Prussia alone, 284 newspapers were suppressed in the course of one year. Some of them were suppressed for just a few days, while others were shut down for up to eight weeks.

After the National Socialists “seized” power on January 30, 1933, a tight system of control encompassing all media gradually emerged which was unprecedented in Germany. Although preventative censorship was not even introduced, other measures had the same effect. First of all, the communist and social democratic newspapers were eliminated by means of emergency decrees. Then the Gesetz zur Behebung von Volk und Reich (“Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich”, Enabling Act) of March 1933 rescinded the fundamental rights contained in the Weimar constitution (including article 118). The remaining liberal middle-class newspapers were then harassed financially. The Schriftleitergesetz (“Editor Law”) (Media Link #c3) restricted access to the profession of journalism. These legal measures were supplemented with organizational measures. For example, all journalists were compelled to join the Reichskulturkammer (“Imperial Cultural Chamber”) or one of its affiliated chambers. The Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (“Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda”) under Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) (Media Link #c4) assumed the task of influencing the perceptions of the population, and it reactivated or intensified...
Similar conditions as in Germany existed in Italy and Spain at that time. In Italy, the fascist "seizure" of power under Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) had begun 10 years earlier than in Germany with the March on Rome of October 28, 1922. The Italian state was subsequently transformed from a liberal regime to a dictatorship of the party and the leader. The new fascist laws suppressed freedom of opinion and of the press. However, the gradual institutionalization of propaganda did not occur until the 1930s, when the Italian regime followed the example of the Nazis in Germany. Right-wing forces also came to power in Spain at this time, and they defeated the supporters of the Republic in the Civil War of 1936–1939. Under General Francisco Franco (1892–1975), an authoritarian political regime emerged, which survived for decades. It issued a law on censorship and the control of information as early as 1938. This law remained in force until 1966.

In Russia, the October Revolution of the Bolsheviks in 1917 brought an end to the Tsarist regime. Over the centuries, the Tsarist regime had maintained pre-publication controls in the absolutist tradition, though a gradual liberalization began after the death of Tsar Nicholas I (1796–1855). Although Karl Marx (1818–1883), the originator of the Communist ideology, had argued in favour of an independent liberal press in Vormärz Germany, the Russian supporters of his ideology, the Bolsheviks, reintroduced censorship. The central institution Glavlit was founded for this purpose in 1922. While freedom of the press was reintroduced in the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War (article 5 of the constitution), a system of control modelled on the Soviet example existed in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) up to its dissolution in 1990. This was also the case in the other Soviet satellite states in eastern and south-eastern Europe.

Appendix

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Notes

2. See: Schneider, Die Freiheit 1962, pp. 6–14.
4. See: Schneider, Pressefreiheit 1966, pp. 16f.
6. Academic research on this topic only began in the last few years after the archive of the Inquisition in the Vatican had been opened. The decrees on the basis of which the books were condemned (the so called Bandi) have been published; see: Wolf, Römische Inquisition 2005–2006, vol. 1–7; idem, Römische Inquisition 2009–2010, vol. 1–4.
12. For this reason, many regional studies on the history of censorship in Germany have been published. For example, see: Freund, Die Bücher- und Pressezensur 1971; Pauls, Zur Geschichte 1900, pp. 36–117; Lorenz, Zur Geschichte 1904, pp. 318–489; Costa, Die Rechtseinrichtung 1916, pp. 1–182; Sommer, Die Zensurgeschichte 1929; Muckel, Die Entwicklung 1932; Müller, Zensurpolitik 1959, pp. 66–169; Neumann, Staatliche Bücherzensur 1977; Schreiner-Eickhoff, Die Bücher- und Pressezensur 1982; Wüst, Censur 1998; idem, Zensur und Konfession 2007, pp. 275–303.
22. On the following, see: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Livre et Censure 2007.
34. See: Wilke, Entdeckung 1994, pp. 121–139.
36. A famous example of this is the Société typographique de Neuchâtel founded in 1769, which had Enlightenment, anti-clerical, and socially critical literature brought across the border into France; see: Darnton, Glänzende Geschäfte 1993.
37. "The free expression of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious human rights. Therefore, every citizen can speak, write and publish freely on the condition that he will be held responsible for any abuse of this freedom as stipulated by the law" (Ministère de la Justice, Déclaration 2001, transl. by N.W.).
40. See: [Palm], Deutschland in seiner tiefen Erniedrigung 1877 [1806].
41. "When it convenes for the first time, the Federal Assembly will engage in the drafting of consistent regulations regarding freedom of the press and the protection of the rights of authors and publishers against reprinting by others," (transl. by N.W.).
43. See: Wilke, Im Kampf 2011, pp. 507–520.
44. See: Naujoks, Die parlamentarische Entstehung 1975.
46. From the beginning of August 1914, so called Pressebesprechungen (press meetings) occurred in Berlin, at which the journalists present were provided with information and received instructions on how they should present information and comment on it. This system was maintained throughout the war in spite of increasing criticism from the press. (See: Wilke, Presseanweisungen 2007, pp. 16–107; Koszyk, Deutsche Pressepolitik 1968.)
52. These laws were temporarily abolished during the 100 days of Napoleon's return in 1815, before the previous controls were re-established in the second phase of the Restoration. Liberal concessions which were made from time to time were withdrawn again in the subsequent years. As early as during the July Revolution of 1830, freedom of the press was suspended again.
53. Freedom of the press and the ban on censorship were now contained in article 7.
70. See: Jasper, Schutz der Republik 1963.
71. See: Petersen, Zensur in der Weimarer Republik 1995.
72. See: Abel, Presselenkung im NS-Staat 1968.
73. See: Wilke, Presseanweisungen 2007, pp. 115–255.
77. *Glavlit* is the unofficial abbreviation for *Glavnoe upravlenie po okhrane gosudarstvenich tain v pechati pri SM SSSR*, which means "Central administration for the protection of state secrets in the press under the supervision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR". See: Bljum, Zensur in der UdSSR 1999.
78. See: Bock, Scharf überwachte Kommunikation 2011.

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