

An Example of Censorship of A Scholarly Periodical

ONE ASPECT of the plans for the new letters and science college of the University of California at Riverside was that students in the upper division were to be expected to read the literature of their major fields in a foreign language. In practice this goal is not always reached, but it does provide additional justification for acquiring the back files of scholarly journals so essential to research. The initial complement for the library was liberal enough to permit requesting a few such back files before instruction began at the new college.

As a geographer I took the opportunity to request a complete back file of *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*, should such a file or a major fraction thereof appear on the market. This distinguished journal has been in existence for more than a century and is a mine of accurate information on all aspects of geography. If some of the older physical geography is deficient in terms of modern concepts, the scholarly descriptions of landscapes of the past have an appreciating worth to the historical geographer. Great numbers of excellent original maps of all sorts have been published there only. Today, despite its publication at Gotha behind the Iron Curtain, the journal's prestige is such that it gets the cream of the non-political articles written in West as well as in East Germany. It now also features a fine bibliography of recent geographical publi-

cations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

It was a happy event then when a British dealer with connections in Germany—Lange, Maxwell and Springer (now Maxwell's)—offered at a good price a nearly complete back file, and funds were available to purchase it. Bindings of the older volumes proved to be in bad shape, and careful collation by the library staff located a few torn and missing maps, but down to 1933 the set proved to be in good condition. The volumes from 1933 to 1938 and that for 1942 told another story. They had been thoroughly censored with many pages removed and others pasted over in whole or part. Great care had been taken to cover not only certain articles and reviews, but their titles as well. All non-censored material, however, was protected. Sometimes only phrases or paragraphs were covered. The soft but fully opaque covering paper was attached with an adhesive that resisted completely all the solvents the library tried.

The initial suspicion that the Nazi government had carried out the censorship was groundless, of course. Since the magazine was published in Germany, censorship before publication would have been feasible and more economic. In one instance in 1944 a map was prepared, but a printed notation in the table of contents indicated that the government had refused to permit it to be distributed at that time.

As a student at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1930's, I had consulted this journal and recalled no defacement of the issues in question. The

Dr. Aschmann is assistant professor of geography, Division of Social Sciences, University of California (Riverside).

relevant part of the file at UCLA could be borrowed, and the contents of the censored material were determined. *Petermanns* is a remarkably non-political geographical journal. Its editors never acquired much interest in or respect for geopolitics, and published very little in that field. What they did publish was completely excised by the censor.

A geopolitical survey of the world by Manfred Langhans-Ratzeburg which ran in six parts in the 1935 volume was completely removed. The one paper by Karl Haushofer, published in 1942, was similarly treated. In 1935 a department in the magazine called "Military Geography" was instituted and ran in several issues through World War II. The department consisted primarily of a running bibliography of newly published topographic maps; in most countries such maps are produced under the direction of military engineers. The censorship consisted of covering the title word "Militär-Geographie" wherever it appeared. Occasionally items in the bibliography were covered, but the bulk of the cartographic information was allowed to remain. A rather good and not flagrantly propagandistic article on the former German Colonies by the distinguished geographer Albrecht Penck was cut out of the 1936 volume.

Other items censored were fourteen short reviews of books on geopolitics, military geography, those which questioned the frontiers which placed German minorities in other countries, a category that might be identified as irredentist literature, and one review of a book on Spanish politics and the then active Spanish Civil War. It is difficult to recall precisely what might have been especially objectionable from a political standpoint in 1945, but I got the feeling that the censor was diligent but not notably literate, politically or geographically, in selecting the book reviews to be deleted. If the title said something

about geopolitics, or military geography, if the author was a well known member of Karl Haushofer's Geopolitical Institute, or if the title said something about German minorities in Eastern Europe, the review was likely to be pasted over. Reviews of other books on the same subjects, especially when the title was less explicit, were not covered. Often the censored reviews were critical and had something of an anti-Nazi flavor, more so than some of those which were allowed to remain.

The remainder of the censoring was even more selective. Paragraphs, sentences, and even phrases were carefully pasted over. These deletions occurred primarily in the professional reports and news notes sections that reported on conventions of geographers or the position of geography in the German public school curricula. The paragraphs deleted generally dealt with the organization of geographic education so as to promote a feeling of patriotism on the part of the students, though it is hard to see that the statements on the subject were as flamboyant as those that appear regularly in American educational journals. The phrases and sentences censored commonly referred to the presence of a governmental dignitary such as Reichsminister for Culture Bernhard Rust, or the participation of the association of geography teachers in the *Nationalsozialistischen Lehrerbund*.

From an article on recent Arctic explorations a sentence was covered which made reference to the political mania involved in establishing as place names off Northern Siberia such expressions as "Sound of the Red Army," etc. (The apparent pun does not exist in German.) In one instance in the 1937 volume a rather insignificant article was ended with the salutation, "Heil Hitler." Those two words only were carefully pasted over.

My first suspicion was that this labori-

ous censoring operation had been carried out as a big boondoggle by the American Military Government in Germany on some private library in 1945-46, not being able to imagine that any other country would have the money to waste on such a project. A complaint to the British dealer who had represented the set as in perfect condition, however, was in order. At the same time the dealer was queried as to the provenience of the set. The dealer promised to try to replace the damaged volumes, and also stated that those published after 1933 had been obtained from the stock of the publisher, Justus Perthes, in Gotha.

Gotha is in the Russian Zone, and although the city was occupied by American forces for a few weeks in 1945, there was practically no chance that so painstaking a censorship operation could have been organized in such a brief time. A subsequent development showed clearly that the censorship had been done under Soviet sponsorship.

Some eight months after complaint about the condition of the censored volumes had been made, Maxwell's notified the library that it had acquired replacements for several volumes and was forwarding them. They arrived as absolutely unused, unbound copies directly from Eastern Germany. Obviously they had come from the publisher's stock. The volume for 1912, where some missing maps had caused a replacement to be requested, was in perfect shape. All the numbers of the four volumes for 1933-36 appeared to be perfectly new, but inspection showed them to have been censored in precisely the same way as those we had first received. When a paragraph, sentence, or phrase was covered, the result was identical down to the last word. The tables of contents on the covers of these unbound numbers even had the titles of censored articles pasted over with color matched paper. All record of the offending article had been erased.

A reconstruction of the whole censorship project was possible. The censor had gone into the publishing house with instructions to denazify all material published from 1933 to 1945. He had prepared a master index of items to be deleted and methodically proceeded to remove or obscure all the unacceptable items from every unsold copy of the magazine in the publisher's hands. I have not obtained any data concerning what efforts were made to eliminate the offending material or to restrict its circulation from private, university, or public libraries. Restriction of circulation rather than destruction is the more probable technique employed on the major research collections. In any event, the censorship was a project of such scope that in the short period of American occupation of Gotha, just as the war was ending, it could not have been achieved. It was unquestionably a Soviet act, though to what extent it was carried out by the East German puppet government is not known.

The problem for our library remains unsolved, and the chances of ever finding uncensored volumes now seems to be pretty small. For those volumes where no pages were actually cut out, we may ask the chemistry department to try to find solvents for the all too successful glue, without at the same time taking the print off the pages. More likely we will get photostatic copies of the damaged or removed pages from the perfect copies at UCLA, trying to get the seller to foot the bill.

A few philosophic comments on censorship in general and this act in particular may be appropriate. The most menacing aspect intellectually is the mechanical thoroughness with which the work was done. The replacement of the volumes we had complained about with others damaged in just the same way implies that the publisher has become convinced that the politically unacceptable

material never existed or at least no longer exists. The rewriting of history seems now to be an established practice, and Eastern Europe is already enjoying the intellectual life of 1984. The collection of evidence of similar censorship of other books and journals, as it can be gathered, could provide a vital insight into what has gone on in Eastern Europe since 1945.

My limited investigation has produced the following data. This kind of censorship did not affect a considerable store of periodicals to which American universities had subscriptions through such dealers as Harrassowitz in Leipzig, and which accumulated during the war. After negotiations carried on by the American Cooperative Acquisitions Project with the Soviet authorities, a considerable amount of this material was released to the American owners in 1946 and 1947.¹ The files ultimately received by the UCLA library were far from complete, but publication and delivery in Germany during the later war years was so erratic that there are many other likely causes for broken files. Specifically, the 1942 volume of *Petermanns* was received complete at UCLA after the war, while the one obtained later by the Riverside campus was censored.

In a letter, Mr. Robert Vosper, Director of Libraries of the University of Kansas, has advised me of another example of censorship of the same nature on a different kind of material. The University of Kansas recently purchased fill-in volumes of the *Almanach de Gotha* for the years 1936 through 1939. The volumes were obtained in New York, with no record of their earlier history, but the sections on Germany and Italy had been cut out or inked over.

My supposition is that the Soviet censorship project in Germany developed its thorough detailed form and began to

go through publisher's stocks of slightly objectionable material after 1946. It may well be continuing at present.

On the brighter side, it is good to be able to exonerate the American and British military governments in Germany from this anti-intellectual activity. I cannot help but feel more secure from the threat from the Soviets. Their willingness to go to such tremendous effort to prevent the reading of unapproved material betokens not only insecurity but also a level of bureaucratic stupidity and inefficiency that can afford some confidence to their opponents.

MILC Chemical Abstracts Project

(Continued from page 192)

Thanks to this happy turn of events, and thanks to the cooperation of the MILC member librarians during the tedious preliminaries, the project got off the ground last December, when the first subscriptions were placed. The geographic spread of the 837 periodicals reaches to fifty countries, with places like Trinidad and Mozambique represented, and with Italy leading the list. An attempt is being made to have all subscriptions begin with January 1957 issues.

The National Science Foundation support has had the effect of moving the project from the regional into the national scene, since it has underscored the obligation which the MILC group recognizes of making obscure and hard-to-find journals available to bona fide research workers outside the MILC membership. It is anticipated, therefore, that as files build up at the Center there will be an increasing interest in them and use of them by scholars and laboratories everywhere in the nation.

¹Robert B. Downs, "Wartime Cooperative Acquisitions," *Library Quarterly*, XIX (1949), 157-65.