SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECT OF INVESTIGATION OF CENSORSHIP

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Abstract

In the context of the transformation of social institutions and the ideological reconstruction of Russian society, the social and philosophical interpretation of censorship is regarded as the basis for the development of a new information policy. The term of censorship is considered ambiguous in the modern world. Censorship as a form of state control of mass media content does not correspond to the declared values of a democratic society. However, censorship also acts as the most important condition for the functioning of the state. Censorship has, furthermore, the property of adapting to a changing social reality, to the peculiarities of social being, and, due to this circumstance, a study of the existence and functioning of censorship in the societies at different stages of state development has both theoretical and practical significance.

Key words: *censorship, manipulation of social consciousness, power, mass media, policy, mediocracy, worldview*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world censorship is not considered the direct act of ban on undesirable opinions disseminated via printed press, films, music or Internet sites although certain components of this traditional censorship continue to exist as far as the security of the state or obscenity are concerned. In general censorship has moved from the explicit act of prohibition to implicit forms of restriction on access to information. The research of new forms of censorship in its sociocultural aspect can aid in deeper understanding of modern social processes.

Investigations of censorship in sociocultural aspect include a variety of interrelated problems: censorship as a phenomenon of consciousness, censorship as a social phenomenon, manipulation of consciousness as a form of censorship.

The problem of consciousness in philosophical science has a deep scientific tradition and a quite wide range: from researches of prerequisites for mental development to philosophical understanding of the nature of thinking as a basis for cognition of the world and myths which can be used for the influence on consciousness for the formation of altered perception of reality. In modern times the philosophical studies are focused on the finding of the interrelation between informational and cultural worldview, informational strategies of the formation of consciousness, resolving of questions of social engineering.

Censorship, viewed as a sociocultural phenomenon, appears as an invention of society, however the studies of society include such components as the analysis of the structure of society; the genesis of the concept of the information society; civilizational specificity of societies. Censorship, therefore, is considered as a kind of synthesis of values and factors that affects the transformation of society, values and their formation in the public consciousness; factors of the consolidation process. In addition, increasing importance is given to the regulatory function of censorship as a basis for ensuring stability in society.

From this fact follows the necessity to consider the manipulation of mass consciousness as a form of censorship. This tradition was laid down in foreign science with the investigations of the mass culture defined in opposition to the individual: from Nietzsche's herd mentality in opposition to the overman (Übermenschen) (Nietzsche 1901) to Ortega y Gasset's quantity of masses (cantitad de muchedumbre y masa) in opposition to quality of individuals (calidad de las minorías) (Ortega y Gasset 1996, 55). Social processes are regarded as a result of collective moods and attitudes which influence social development through negative energy of masses. The accumulation of researches in this direction leads to the gradual

crystallization of the concept of "mass consciousness" which includes ideological views, emotional and value orientations, as well as emotions, feelings, certain components of the collective unconscious.

In the Russian socio-philosophical conceptions the problems of public consciousness have been regarded trough the analysis of its two levels, identified in Marxism, public ideology and social psychology. In the works of such researchers as D.P. Havre, M.K. Gorshkov, V.B. Zhitenev, T.I. Zaslavskaya, V.N. Ivanova, V.G. Horos, the emphasis is already placed on identifying the relationship of mass consciousness with public opinion. The Russian modern science study actively the problems of the relationship between mass media and censorship, the form transformation of manifestations of mass consciousness (public opinion, mass sentiment) in the media space.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF CENSORSHIP IN DIFFERENT FORMS OF STATE ORDER

Censorship as a sociocultural practice changes in its forms. This change is natural and relates to the historical development of societies. The specificity of censorship as a sociocultural practice is determined by the system of prohibitions on the deviation from the established standard of behavior, regardless of the area of the behavioral manifestation.

It is determined that the foundation of any power over millennia is a monopoly on knowledge, and censorship, in this case, acts as a special element and mechanism of culture. The task of censorship in all its forms is to prevent the dissemination of information that can lead to an undesirable reaction from members of society.

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that censorship as a system of supervision and control is an integral part of culture, power and the state. Censorship is an instrument of power by means of which control over the mindset and sentiment of citizens is exercised. The power fixes officially approved morals, and establishes the canons of the arts that correspond to ideology, and, therefore, are safe for the state. Censorship should keep track of all these processes as a specific filter contributing to the life of society. However, being under the jurisdiction of the state, censorship is not sufficiently effective. On the other hand, the abolition of censorship, as practice shows, inevitably leads to the priority of the tastes of the crowd. All information flows circulating in society are regulated by means of censorship or implicit censorship which is passing into the field of manipulative technologies. At a certain stage of its functioning censorship becomes ideological and merges with ideology as an idealized form of politics.

Thus, censorship as an element of the system of state regulation evolves in parallel with the sociopolitical system. We can single out five periods of development of censorship as an element of the system of political and state regulation, coinciding in their periodization with the stages of development of state power: theocratic, patrimonial, police, constitutional, oligarchic.

The role of censorship at the theocratic stage is played by various kinds of taboos and bans which regulate the life of society and form fields of permissions and prohibitions based on supernatural. Magical-mystical thinking attributed special power to the word as the denominations of objects. It was believed that the pronunciation of certain words and phrases (spells, magic formulas, conjurations) could cause irreparable consequences. That is why there was a ban on uttering a person's real name, since it made possible to gain power over the bearer of that name (Berndt 2017, 32)

The real censorship appears at the patrimonial stage, and the public thought is under state pressure. In other words, power, considering thought and knowledge as its fiefdom, controls the order of giving knowledge in small doses, persuading that a person needs rather faith and blind obedience than knowledge. Thus, censorship at this stage is reduced to dosing of information, and in extreme cases – to prosecutions and prohibitions. Public thought becomes the property of power, and the printing press becomes one of the instruments of activity.

At the police stage of development, the censorship policy becomes tougher, the state power acts against citizens in the name of state interests, and citizens against the authorities – for the sake of individual interests: censorship repressions against other opinions increase, and government arbitrariness and police order become a symbol of the epoch. In the history of mankind, Nazi Germany and the Soviet

Union are examples of such police states. In Nazi Germany, the ban on the oeuvre of authors considered to be dangerous and deleterious by the government had the ugliest form, from the book burnings to the physical destruction of writers. In the Soviet Union, state censorship vigilantly monitored the activities of the creative intellectuals. In the case of finding of subversive freethinking the dissemination of a creative product was forbidden and the person who spread these ideas could be repressed or criminally punished.

At the constitutional stage, the punitive apparatus of censorship changes to rule of law and self-censorship by means of a system of social measures, such as upbringing, education, and the organization of social safety of citizens. The transition to the constitutional stage occurs with the accumulation of experience and observations, when public thought is impacted by the factors that are determined by both external nature and the social order.

The oligarchy as a form of governance do not necessarily assume direct influence of oligarchs on government, "oligarchy can exist with respect to certain limited but crucial policy issues at the same time that many other important issues are governed through pluralistic competition or even populistic democracy" (Jeffrey 2009, 731). At the oligarchic stage, the declared freedom of speech and the abolition of censorship are not a legal fact because the functions of censorship are carried out by political technologies, whose tasks include manipulation of the mass consciousness.

Thus, changes in authorities and its obligatory attribute – censorship – are a consequence of changes in public consciousness, therefore, the actions of state power are secondary: to maintain its influence, the power adapts to the requirements of society. This is the main reason for the increased interest in thought, the press, and then the media. The adaptation of censorship to the solution of the main task – to retain power – is possible only with spiritual submission.

Since culture generates civilization, consequently, the state, with the destruction of culture, ceases to exist as such. That is, to maintain the state, there is a need for a system of rules, norms, prohibitions, laws, which are a mechanism for suppression of the individual, for the sake of preserving the whole. Hence, censorship is a necessary element of any culture and civilization that performs a protective function in the system of state regulation and contributes to the development of a truly creative thought, which is reflected both in the material and spiritual spheres of human existence.

III. CENSORSHIP AS MANIPULATION OF MASS CONSIOUSNESS IN THE MODERN MASS MEDIA

A distinctive feature of the modern world is the transition to a new qualitative state of society, which is characterized by a sharp increase in information processes and the creation of an entire industry of information production, the use of manipulative technologies, and in this connection the media becomes a specific social institution to which government censorship can be applied in three different forms. In the first case "the government issues licenses with the power of revocation", the second form assumes "outright government ownership of them media" and the third form consists in cooperation of media owners with the government "under the appearance of divergent viewpoints" (Caso 2008, 18). Namely the last form can be found in each country independent on its political order.

To create the illusion of pluralism, information comes from various organizations that however define common stereotypes. One of the most important rules for manipulating the mass consciousness is the totalitarian influence, that is, providing information only from fully controlled sources. "Unnecessary" information is hushed up, the flow of advertising destroys the holistic perception of information, the analysis and the concentration on a serious event become impossible. The flow of empty information complicates the search for meaning. Together, these factors standardize thinking. As a result, there is no need for direct censorship bans, because information technologies emasculate critical and reflective thinking.

Thus, in the modern society, the preventive and punitive censorship loses its effectiveness, but as the function of the government is to control the processes taking place in society, the role and functions of

censorship are performed by the manipulation of the mass consciousness. That is, censorship does not disappear, but is transformed into more effective ways of controlling and filtering mass consciousness.

Manipulation of mass consciousness as a form of censorship performs several functions that the traditional censorship did not have, namely the diagnostic function as an act of recognition, confirming a certain identity; the function of administration, which includes a system of symbolizing norms that confirm the right of citizens to behave corresponding to their symbolic status; function of the production of point of view.

Thus, the realities of the modern world, the formation of the informational noosphere have led to complex consequences: the audience has almost an unlimited access to any information by which using creates a convenient parallel world. It rivets a person to multimedia, throwing him out of real life. This simplifies seriously the operation of manipulative technologies, which in many cases replace censorship

In modern democracies, including Russia, censorship (the realities of the 21st century demonstrate that the existence of censorship institutions is not necessary to exercise censorship), has moved to a qualitatively new level and has acquired a total character due to its integration into the world information space. Censorship in modern Russian society as a part of the global information space is manifested in the volume and quality of information circulating in the society, accessible to the masses. Power, solving the problem of access to information in modern conditions, uses the wording – the regulation of information flows – to disguise censorship. Censorship in modern Russian society is exercised more rigidly as a form of manipulation in three spheres that are basic in any state: ideological, economic, social, including upbringing and education.

There was a real revolution in the ways of social and political management: the main direction of the evolution of authority's technologies and the purpose of their changes and improvements are to get the maximum effect of influence on people, using the minimal expenditure of funds and ensuring of voluntary subordination of the people. At the post-industrial stage of development, the power of knowledge and information becomes decisive in the management of society, putting the influence of state coercion into the background. In other words, violent state coercion is replaced with information and psychological impact.

The mass media has always been an important part of human life, scientific and technological progress has given an impetus to their development, and, as a result, to the development of psychological means of influencing people. The field for working with public opinion has recently grown hundreds of times, knowledge of psychology and Public Relations has been deepened, what leads to the coinage of the term "manipulation". This term has its origins in Latin and comes from the word "manipulus" (handful, sheaf) which is derived from "manus" (hand) with the root "plere" (to fill). In English, the noun "manipulation" appears in the 19th century, meaning "skillful handling of objects". The modern meaning of the term "manipulation" in the scientific literature is highly ambiguous because different scientists fill it with its specific content. In addition, most researchers focus on the processual component of manipulation, especially, on the processes of socialization and legitimation because namely these processes turn individuals and groups into standardized masses.

This interest is quite reasonable, since the freedom of information, which was declared in the 90s in Russia, was the main principle of atomization of society and the establishment of a liberal order of life. Thus, the adoption of such ideas has become a cultural and spiritual shift of colossal importance. The media are turning into the main tool for the dissemination of messages designed to influence public consciousness. As a matter of fact, the media become a kind of filter passing ideas while increasing the value of one and devaluing the other, polarizing, thus, the whole cultural field. To achieve these goals, there are methodological procedures such as fact-fabrication or direct lie, the selection of events for messages, gray and black propaganda, big psychoses, changing of words' and concept's meaning, simplification and stereotypization, affirmation and repetition, sensationalism, etc.

One of the most important rules of consciousness manipulation becomes the exercise of totalitarian impact, i.e. dissemination of information only from fully controlled sources. To ensure the illusion of pluralism, information messages are generated from different organizations, but form common stereotypes.

The common stereotypes are formed not only by selection of events for messages and control of information content but by the careful choice of verbal expressions. In order to form the public opinion, journalists choose the words with negative or positive connotation while covering an issue. A good example is the choice of words while describing the government activities of different states. If the government of certain state is considered critically by the media owners the style of governance may be characterized as "the regime", "style of authoritarian leadership", "one´s autocratic rule", "authoritarianism", "the governing elite" in anglophone media; as "Machthaber", "das Regime", "autoritär geführte Staaten", "Diktaturen", "Autokratie", "demokratiefeindliche Politik" in German media; "режим", "иррациональная политика", "политическая элита" in Russian media. If the policy of the authorities is upheld by the media owner or correspond to general guidelines in this society the choice of denominations is more neutral or even positive, for example, "the government", "officials", "leaders" in anglophone media; "die Regierung", "die international anerkannte Regierung", "Partner" in German media; "правительство", "руководство" in Russian media. Very often the denomination of the state leader is accompanied by a label that gives his categorical assessment, instead of the neutral "president" is used "dictator", "autocrat", "nationalist". In other cases, the nouns "president" or "prime minister" are accompanied by an expressive epithet such as "brutal", "authoritarian", "right-wing". For the purpose of clear distinction between black and white the modern mass media use the compounds one of which components is a geographical denomination of country or world parts and the second varies from "pro-" to "-supported" and "-oriented". One of the form of manipulation is also the giving a completely different meaning to words. All words which activate negative associations are excluded from the language, and neutral words are used instead. These euphemisms are formed from rarely used or new words, the meaning of which for most people is unknown. The constant repetition of these expressions in the same context persuades the recipients of messages of veracity of information.

Manipulation of consciousness by means of the media is aimed especially at the average person as a bearer of consumer culture, but not as a bearer of high culture. Chaotification of information is only a pretense, the media organize information flows in such a way as to create the image of reality required by the owners of these media. The criteria for selecting information are based on scientific achievements in psychophysiology, neurolinguistics, cybernetics. One of the main methods is the method of fragmentation of information: information is presented in such small and disjointed parts that the person does not receive completed knowledge.

All these methods are designed to maintain the necessary level of nervousness in society, which reduces the ability to critically evaluate incoming information and increases suggestibility. The society turns into a manageable mass which consumes mass culture and is obsesses with the attainment of pleasure at any cost. It is fair to assume that a modern society is shaping purposefully a mass person. Finally, it leads to formation of a way of life that dominates most people of this society. This way of life does not suppose any intellectual training, as a result the status of education has significantly decreased, the person is judged solely according his material possessions. New manipulative technologies brought to the forefront huge masses of people – technically equipped and spiritual deprived, for whom mass culture is the only option of culture possible under similar conditions, and also a special means of such organization of this person that allows his control.

A person of mass culture (the mass-men) is a special reality without desire for any change and movement. The process of thinking is replaced by a spontaneous manifestation of the unconscious, motives by impulses, definiteness by intolerance. The cultural and creative position loses its status and value, its place is taken by the consumer position aimed at the material, external world. Thus, in modern society there is a tendency to replace deep feelings with enough superficial reactions, a person becomes mechanistic, loses the integrity of his own nature and, as a result, loses his ability to adequately deal with the changing world. Such a society is easily manageable, most people for whom the purpose and sense of being consist only in earning a profit, are not able to adequately analyze and resist manipulative technologies.

Manipulation is possible only through the control of information and communication, which determine the attitudes, ideas, rules and patterns of human activity. In other words, manipulation is possible if strict censorship is imposed. In modern society, all forms of censorship (preventive, punitive, etc.) are not

effective, but the authorities must control the processes taking place in society, therefore the role and functions of censorship are taken up by the manipulation of consciousness, because this kind of impact is one of the basic means of social control and is based, above all, on the rigid use of the information apparatus. Thus, censorship does not disappear (due to the adoption of laws on its abolition), but is transformed into more effective ways to control and filter public consciousness.

The information disseminated to the public passes at least three information filters (censorship is a filter in itself), the first filter is the primary selection of real events, phenomena, processes and their transformation into meaningful images. At this stage, the subjects of the filtration are correspondents, news agencies and other providers of information selected in accordance with the interests of media owners. As a result, a weakly structured primary space appears. The second filter carries out the systematization of the primary space and divides its thematic flows. The subjects of filtering are information agencies, the messages are ranked according to the goals and interests of media owners, a secondary space is created that covers the created image of problems and events. The third filter carries out additional filtering and transformation of the secondary space, the subjects of which are the main editors of newspapers, TV channels, Internet resources. The principle of message selection at the same time corresponds to the interests and goals of media owners who form public opinion and depict the "necessary" world view. Thus, we see that the principle of selection includes selection of events as well as selection of viewpoints from which these facts should be described even while striving to be objective: "The perspective from which the issue is illuminated can be varied according to ideological or normative prejudices, but even with the most strenuous efforts at neutrality it is unavoidable, given conflicts of values with which we are familiar" (Luhmann 2000, 77).

Such a mechanism of information filters affect the cognitive level of consciousness of individuals, which begin to repeat quite exactly the placement of emphases produced by the media. Thus, in the modern information society, control institutions, inherent in authoritarian forms of governance, including the institution of censorship, can be replaced by the dictatorship of the mediacracy. There is an opinion that in modern democratic states, including Russia, there is no censorship. But we think, this opinion is erroneous, and it is based on a narrow definition of censorship, as a certain institution with limited functions, which can be absent in some countries. However, the realities of the 21st century demonstrate that the existence of a censorship institution is not necessary to exercise censorship control. Censorship, having moved to a qualitatively new level, has acquired a total character due to its integration into the context of the global information space. In other words, the evolution of censorship in the XX-XXI centuries has led to more perfect, not always visible forms of punitive, subsequent censorship, veiled in articles of laws, court decisions, which are forms of state control. So, under the new conditions, a new information regulator appears – market, commercial, economic control of information, which in many ways replaces the usual censorship. Throughout the history of the society's existence, a huge and complex historical material has been accumulated in the field of regulation and restriction of freedom of speech, freedom of information.

IV. CONCLUSION

The modern censorship regime, created in the new conditions, is marked by ambiguity. However, it is undoubted that the main participant in the creation of the censorship regime in the society became the financial capital, merged with the authority, where the use of manipulative technologies enhances the regulation of information flows accessible to the public. But with a strict approach, the fact of selection is, by nature, a fact of censorship. So, any selection can be perceived by interested parties as violence, but life is a constant choice, i.e. rejection of something can be considered the mechanism of survival. Censorship in the modern world, and especially in Russia, is complicated, it is multifaceted and takes various forms.

Thus, a person exists in the world of unlimited censorship forms of various degrees of intensity. The most serious censorship mechanism in the modern world are stereotypes created via manipulative technologies in the media. This invisible, daily censorship is the most effective, it involves all of us, forming reality that is required by the authorities. The essence of manipulation in this case is a system

of methods of ideological and socio-psychological influence with the aim of changing people's thinking and behavior, contrary to their interests. However, if in a generally accepted opinion censorship is associated with violence and prohibition, i.e. with a lack of free choice for controlled persons, then manipulation is the transformation of the world model in accordance with the goals and tasks of authorities, while preserving the illusion of free choice. Referring to the principle of Vilfredo Pareto (1935), according to which a variety of methods, forms and methods of management can be reduced to two main types: force or fraud, it can be concluded that the authorities of all times relied on its management of the masses either by violence, or by manipulation, or the synthesis of both.

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