

CENSORSHIP IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TOTALITARIAN AND POST-TOTALITARIAN SOCIETY*

Tetiana Kachak

Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University,
Shevchenka St, 57, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine, 76000
E-mail: tetiana.kachak@pnu.edu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6863-1736>

Tetyana Blyznyuk

Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University,
Shevchenka St, 57, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine, 76000
E-mail: tetyana.blyznyuk@pnu.edu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0558-2201>

Roman Golod

Vasyl Stefanyk Carpathian National University,
Shevchenka St, 57, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine, 76000
E-mail: roman.golod@pnu.edu.ua
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2394-0869>

Summary. *This article contains an overview of the censorship of Ukrainian children's literature of the 20th – 21st centuries, which is largely related to socio-political processes and the dominant ideology. Another factor of pro-*

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hibitions is contradictions with the accepted social, religious or sexual norms, as well as the traditional stereotypes about the upbringing of young people.

The outline of the scope of ideological censorship, under the pressure of which Ukrainian children's literature found itself during the totalitarian Soviet regime from 1922 to 1990, is presented. It is noted that censorship bodies were set up in the USSR to ban certain works in order to prevent the spread of national ideas and/or information that contradicted the communist ideology and the Soviet propaganda. For decades, special instructions were issued for recommended reading for children and for removing 'harmful literature' from reading rooms, bookstores, and the market in general.

Simultaneously, bans and manifestations of censorship in children's literature since the restoration of Ukraine's independence (from the 1990s to today) are analyzed. It is asserted that the situation changed with the beginning of the post-totalitarian period in the history of Ukraine. Ideological involvement disappeared, whereas topics of national history, culture and traditions developed. Gradually, there was a conditional removal of taboos on 'difficult' topics for children (death, illness, sexual experience, psychological problems, etc.). New and non-stereotypical patterns of child behavior emerged in literature. Various genres of children's literature actively developed, and writers learned to talk to young readers about everything while using 'their' language. The ratio of utilitarian and artistic in texts for children has been changing in favor of the latter.

Keywords: *censorship, Ukrainian children's literature, totalitarian society, post-totalitarian society, ideology, ban on fairy tales.*

Vaikų literatūros cenzūra totalitarinėje ir posttotalitarinėje Ukrainos visuomenėje

Santrauka. Autoriai aptaria XX–XXI a. ukrainiečių vaikų literatūros cenzūrą, kuri didele dalimi yra susijusi su socialiniais-politiniais procesais ir dominuojančia ideologija. Kitas draudimų veiksnys yra prieštaravimai priimtoms socialinėms, religinėms ar seksualinėms normoms, taip pat tradiciniams stereotipams apie jaunimo auklėjimą. Straipsnyje pateikiamas ideologinės cenzūros, kurios spaudimą patyrė ukrainiečių vaikų literatūra totalitarinio sovietinio režimo laikotarpiu nuo 1922 iki 1990 m., masto aprašas. Pažymima, kad SSRS buvo įkurtos cenzūros

įstaigos, draudžiančios tam tikrus kūrinius, siekiant užkirsti kelią nacionalinių idėjų ir / ar informacijos, prieštaraujančios komunistinei ideologijai ir sovietinei propagandai, plitimui. Dešimtmečiais buvo leidžiamos specialios instrukcijos dėl rekomenduojamos vaikų literatūros ir dėl „žalingos literatūros“ pašalinimo iš skaityklų, knygynų ir apskritai iš rinkos. Straipsnyje analizuojami draudimai ir cenzūros apraiškos vaikų literatūroje po Ukrainos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo (nuo 1990-ųjų iki šiandien). Pastebėta, kad situacija pasikeitė prasidėjus posttotalitarijam laikotarpiai Ukrainos istorijoje: išnyko ideologinis įsitraukimas, o vietoj to plėtotos nacionalinės istorijos, kultūros ir tradicijų temos. Palaipsniui įvyko sąlyginis tabu „sudėtingoms“ temoms vaikams (mirtis, liga, seksualinė patirtis, psichologinės problemos ir kt.) panaikinimas. Literatūroje atsirado naujų ir nestandardinių vaiko elgesio modelių. Aktyviai plėtojosi įvairūs vaikų literatūros žanrai, o rašytojai išmoko kalbėtis su jaunaisiais skaitytojais apie viską, vartodami „jų“ kalbą. Kintantis utilitarizmo ir meninės raiškos santykis vaikams skirtuose tekstuose pasislinko pastarosios naudai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: cenzūra, ukrainiečių vaikų literatūra, totalitarinė visuomenė, posttotalitarinė visuomenė, ideologija, pasakų draudimas.

INTRODUCTION

Children's literature, by virtue of its nature, has always been an instrument of a certain influence on the child, and the models of behavior and values promoted in the texts are models for imitation and formation of world-view positions. Grown-up writers create for children, grown-up publishers print books, grown-up librarians and teachers manage children's reading and define the limits of what is allowed and what is forbidden, that is, what children should be protected from. Eventually, “[a]s children's books are written mostly by adults for non-adult readers, children's literature and its critical response are defined not only by the needs of children, but mostly by the attitudes and beliefs of adults”¹. Smiljana Narančić Kovač summarizes the opinions of various researchers and claims that “in children's literature, adults really have the main

¹ ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. Such Books Should be Burned! Same-Sex Parenting and the Stretchable Definition of the Family in Larysa Denysenko's and Mariia Foya's *Maya and Her Mums*. *Children's Literature in Education*, 2020, vol. 51, p. 534–543.

word”². This is confirmed by Glazer’s opinion: “[C]hildren’s needs usually mean those that adults at some historical moment consider important and positive for their upbringing and education”³. Children’s literature is constantly a subject to certain censorship by adults, while children’s voices in discussions are either absent or muffled.

The issue of censorship in children’s literature was repeatedly raised at the discussion platforms of scientific conferences, and was covered in many ways in collective publications. An important contribution in this regard is the issue of “Para.doxa” *Censorship in Children’s Literature* (1996) – a collection of 26 essays (eds. Alleen Pace Nilsen and Hamida Bosmajian) devoted to the analysis of censorship of children’s literature not only in the United States of America and Canada, but also in Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Australia, and the former Soviet Union.

There are many fundamental works by prominent scientists in this field. They can be conditionally divided into several groups: those that explore the theory of censorship as a phenomenon and not only as a mechanism of restricting speech but also as a tool of power, ideology, and cultural control (for example Pierre Bourdieu (“*Language and Symbolic Power*”), Michel Foucault (“*The History of Sexuality*”), Judith Butler (“*Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*”), Stanley Fish (“*There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech: And It’s a Good Thing, Too*”), Noam Chomsky (“*Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*”), and Laura Kipnis (“*Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*”), etc.; as well as those that explore censorship in different fields (literature, art, journalism, etc.) in different eras and different countries (Péter Hajdu⁴, Victor Zaslavsky⁵, Olga Mastianica⁶, Edita Sédaitytė⁷ and others). There is a group of scientists who investigate the history and theory of the issue of censorship of children’s literature, record manifestations, types, chang-

- 2 NARANČIĆ KOVAC, Smiljana. Slučaj dječje književnosti. In: TURK, Marija; SRDOČ-KONESTRA, Ines. *Peti hrvatski slavistički kongres: Zbornik radova. Knjiga 2.* Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, 2012, p. 645.
- 3 GLAZER, Joan I. *Introduction to Children’s Literature*. 2nd edition. Boston: Pearson Education, 1997. p. 493.
- 4 HAJDU, Péter. 2023. The Horror of Censorship in Fin-de-Siècle Hungarian Journalism. *Neohelicon*, 2023, vol. 50, p. 603–612.
- 5 ZASLAVSKY, Victor. Censorship in the Soviet Union. *Society*, 2022, vol. 59(3), p. 288–294.
- 6 MASTIANICA, Olga. Censorship of the Polish Periodical Press in Vilnius in the Years 1905–1914. *Knygotyra*, 2023, t. 81 (December), p. 65–108.
- 7 SÉDAITYTĖ, Edita. Historiography of Soviet Censorship: Main Trends of the Research Studies and Concepts of Censorship. *Knygotyra*, 2017, t. 69, p. 84–102.

es in the content and role of censorship (Peter Hunt⁸, Anne Scott MacLeod⁹, Mark. I West¹⁰, Hamida Bosmajian¹¹, Emily J. M. Knox¹²). There are also the ones, which highlight censorship in certain national children's literature or culture (Judith Saltman¹³, Iram Khan¹⁴, Peter Barry¹⁵, Edin Badić and Sandra Ljubas¹⁶, Berislav Majhut¹⁷, María Bermúdez¹⁸, Katarzyna Biernacka-Licznar and Natalia Paprocka¹⁹, Elena Lindholm²⁰, Smiljana Narančić Kovač²¹, Anna

- 8 HUNT, Peter. Censorship. In: *Children's Literature*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 255–258.
- 9 MACLEOD, Anne Scott. Censorship and Children's Literature. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 1983, vol. 53(1), p. 26–38.
- 10 WEST, Mark I. Censorship. In: HUNT, P. *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 680–690; WEST, Mark I. *Trust Your Children: Voices against Censorship in Children's Literature*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1998. 176 p.
- 11 BOSMAJIAN, Hamida. Children's Literature and Censorship. *Para *doxa* 2, 1996, vol. 3–4, p. 313–317.
- 12 KNOX, Emily J.M. Censorship and Children's Literature. In: COATS, K.; STEVENSON, D.; YENIKA-AGBAW, V. (eds.) *A Companion to Children's Literature*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2022, p. 414–425.
- 13 SALTMAN, Judith. Censoring the Imagination: Challenges to Children's Books. *Emergency Librarian* 25, 1998, No. 3 (January–February), p. 8–12.
- 14 KHAN, Iram. The Censorship of Canadian Children's Literature. *Canadian Content* (online journal), 1999. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <http://www.canadiancontent.ca/issues/0699censor.html>
- 15 BARRY, Peter. Censorship and Children's Literature: Some Post-War Trends. In: HYLAND, Paul; SAMMELLS, Neil (eds.). *Writing and Censorship in Britain*. London: Routledge, 1992, p. 232–242.
- 16 BADIĆ, Edin; LJUBAS, Sandra. Pipi Duga Čarapa u cenzuriranom hrvatskom ruhu. *SIC: A Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation*, 2020, vol. 11(1).
- 17 MAJHUT, Berislav. Censorship in Croatian Children's Literature 1945–1950. *Libri & Liberi*, 2023, vol. 12(2), p. 331–395. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/en/clanak/454088>
- 18 BERMÚDEZ, María. Take away the Word: Ways of Censorship in Children's Literature. *Estudios de Teoría Literaria*, 2023, vol. 12(27), p. 113–124.
- 19 BIERNACKA-LICZNAR, Katarzyna; PAPROCKA, Natalia. Translations' Publishers and Censors: Transformations of Western Children's and Young Adult Literature in People's Poland under Stalinism (1945–1956) In: KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, Bettina; SCHULZ, Farriba (eds.). *Political and Cultural Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Children's Literature*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2023, p. 179–197.
- 20 LINDHOLM, Elena. The Censorship of a Closeted Spain: The Case of Elena Fortún (1886–1952). *Primerjalna Knjizevnost*, 2023, vol. 46(1), p. 133–150.
- 21 NARANČIĆ KOVAC, Smiljana. Storyworld Transformations in mid-20th-Century Croatian

Wiśniewska-Grabarczyk²² and many more). Others study censorship in public libraries (mostly in America, with the involvement of data of the American Library Association, e.g., Alvin Schrader²³). There are also those who critically consider the issue of censorship regarding works of a specific subject, genre or individual books, their removal from school programs and free access in libraries (for example, Pamela Hunt Steinle about J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye*; Michael O. Tunnell about works of the fantasy genre) and convince that "restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions"²⁴, "Book banning is a civilized form of the vice of book-burning which is a sure symptom of fascism"²⁵, and "if someone does not step forward to take control of this over-the-top out-of-control pursuit of censorship in schools, children may never have the inspiration they need to imagine a world better than this one"²⁶.

However, material about censorship in many national literatures for children, including Ukrainian, has not yet been systematized and comprehensively understood.

In Ukrainian scientific discourse, the phenomenon of Soviet ideological censorship in the system of the totalitarian regime has been actively researched by V. Baran²⁷ (1994; 2000), O. Fedotova²⁸ and Yu. Shapoval²⁹. They draw atten-

Picturebooks. In: KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, Bettina; SCHULZ, Farriba (eds.). *Political and Cultural Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Children's Literature*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2023, p. 55–80.

22 WIŚNIEWSKA-GRABARCZYK, Anna. How to Censor a Board Game The Case of Przygody w dżungli [Jungle Adventures], A Polish Board Game Censored in 1954. *Libri & Liberi*, 2023, vol. 12(2), p. 315–327.

23 SCHRADER, Alvin. M. Too Young to Know? The Censorship of Children's Materials in Canadian Public Libraries. *CCL: Canadian Children's Literature*, 1992, No. 68, p. 71–86.

24 About Banned & Challenged Books. *American Library Association*. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/aboutbannedbooks>

25 NOORANI, A. G. Book Banning. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2007, vol. 42(48), p. 10–11. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40276707>

26 BAILEY, Laura A. Censorship of Children's Literature. Why we should Fight back – for our Children's Sake. *Medium*. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://medium.com/a-writing-editing-collection/censorship-of-childrens-literature-e37d/acbad00>

27 BARAN, Volodymyr. Tsenzura v systemi totalitaryzmu [Censorship in the Totalitarian System]. *Suchasnist*, 1994, No. 6, p. 104–117; BARAN, Volodymyr. Tsenzura ta ideolohichnyi kontrol v Ukrainsi (1946–1960-ti roky) [Censorship and Ideological Control in Ukraine (1946–1960s)]. *Ukraina: kulturna spadshchyna, natsionalna svidomist, derzhavnist*. Vyp. 7. Zbirnyk na poshanu profesora Yuriiia Slyvky. Lviv: Instytut ukrainoznavstva NAN im. I. Krypakiyevycha, 2000. p. 497–509.

tion to censorship control of the works of Ukrainian writers, review lists and indexes of banned publications, as well as lists of authors whose works were subject to removal from the library and bookselling network³⁰.

In their articles, V. Babiukh³¹, V. Ocheretyanko³², and O. Karakoz³³ occasionally mention censorship in publications in the 1920s and 1930s, in-

²⁸ FEDOTOVA, Oksana. Knyha yak ob'iekt tsenzurnoi polityky [*The Book as an Object of Censorship Policy*]. *Visnyk Knyzhkovoi palaty*, 2002, No. 6, p. 30–36; FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura drukovanykh vydan v USRR–URSR (1917–1990 rr.)* [Political censorship of printed publications in the Ukrainian SSR (1917–1990)]: Monohr. K.: Parlamentske vyd-vo, 2009. 352 p. ISBN 978-966-611-669-0. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Fedotova_Oksana/Politychna_tsenzura_drukovanykh_vydan_v_USRR-URSR_1917-1990_rr.pdf; FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura v USRR–URSR: praktyka obmezhenia drukovanoi produktsii* [Political Censorship in the Ukrainian SSR: Practice of Restricting Printed Publications]. *Visnyk Knyzhkovoi palaty*, 2012, No. 2, p. 45–47; FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Tsenzura uchbovoi literatury v USRR–URSR u 1920–1930-kh rr.* [Censorship of Educational Literature in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s and 1930s]. *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I.F. Kurasa NAN Ukrayny*, 2012, vol. 2, p. 385–393. http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Nziplend_2012_2_31

²⁹ FEDOTOVA, Oksana; SHAPOVAL, Yurii. Proskriptsii yak tsinne dzherelo z istorii tsenzury v radianskii Ukrayni [*Proscriptions as Valuable Sources for the History of Censorship in Soviet Ukraine*]. *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 2017, No. 2, p. 142. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?I21DBN=EJRN&P21DBN=EJRN&Z21ID=&S21REF=10&S21CNR=20&S21STN=1&S21FMT=A&SP_meta&C21COM=S&2_S21P03=IDP=&2_S21STR=UIJ_2017_2_11; FEDOTOVA, Oksana; SHAPOVAL, Yurii. Taras Shevchenko i radianska tsenzura [*Taras Shevchenko and Soviet Censorship*]. *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 2014, no. 2, p. 70–86. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?I21DBN=EJRN&P21DBN=EJRN&Z21ID=&S21REF=10&S21CNR=20&S21STN=1&S21FMT=ASP_meta&C21COM=S&2_S21P03=IDP=&2_S21STR=UIJ_2014_2_8; SHAPOVAL, Yurii; FEDOTOVA, Oksana. Tsentzurnyi kontrol tvoriv M. Hrushevskoho ta V. Vynnychenka v USRR–URSR [Censorship Control over the Works of M. Hrushevskyi and V. Vynnychenko in the Ukrainian SSR]. *Ukrainian Historical Journal*, 2021, No. 5, p. 50; SHAPOVAL, Yurii. Komunistichna tsenzura v Ukrayni: shtrykhyy do portreta [Communist Censorship in Ukraine: Features of the Portrait]. *Ukraina XX stolittia (Osoby ta podii v konteksti vazhkoi istorii)*, 2001. p. 158–207.

³⁰ FEDOTOVA, Oksana; SHAPOVAL, Yurii. Proskriptsii yak tsinne dzherelo z istorii tsenzury v radianskii Ukrayni [*Proscriptions as Valuable Sources for the History of Censorship in Soviet Ukraine*]. *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 2017, No. 2, p. 142.

³¹ BABIUKH, Vitalii. Politichna tsenzura 1920-kh–1930-kh rr. v Ukrayni: funktsii, formy ta normatyvne zabezpechennia [*Political Censorship in Ukraine in the 1920s–1930s: Functions, Forms, and Regulatory Framework*]. *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zbirnyk*, 2006, vol. 9, p. 211–222.

³² OCHERETIANKO, V. Caged Books. Establishment of Party-State Control over the

cluding the works addressed to children. The issue of censorship of children's books and literature was extensively explored by M. Spodarets³⁴ and S. Didukh-Romanenko³⁵. There are several findings by O. Fedotova³⁶ about Ukrainian children's literature of the 1920s and 1930s under censorship bans, as well as works by Mateusz Świetlicki³⁷ about the manifestations of censorship in relation to contemporary children's books.

Until now, in the world scientific discourse of children's literature research, there has been no mention of censorship of children's literature in totalitarian and post-totalitarian Ukraine. Such research is particularly relevant, as it complements the mosaic picture of manifestations of censorship of children's literature in the world with another national experience, and can become a platform for further comparative studies.

Publication, Distribution, and Use of Literature in Ukraine in the 1920s–1930s. *From the Archives of the VUChK-GPU-NKVD-KGB*. Kyiv, 1996. No. 1, p. 128–141.

33 KARAKOZ, Olena. The Genesis of Library Censorship in the Thirties of the XX Century Within the Context of Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Formation. *Bulletin of the National Academy of Managerial Staff of Culture and Arts*, 2019, No. 3, p. 101–105.

34 SPODARETS, M. Kazka ta dytyacha literatura v moduliatsiakh ideolohichnoho dyskursu 1920-kh – pochatku 1930-kh rokiv [Fairy Tales and Children's Literature in the Modulations of Ideological Discourse in the 1920s and Early 1930s]. *Redaktsiina kolehia*, 2014, p. 126; SPODARETS, M. Problemy kazky ta dytyachoi literatury *Literatura v ukraïnskomu ideolohichnomu dyskursi 1920-kh i pochatku 1930-kh* [The Problems of Fairy Tales and Children's Literature. Literature in the Ukrainian Ideological Discourse of the 1920s and Early 1930s]. *The Journal of VN Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series "Philology"*, 2014, vol. 71(1127), p. 273–278. <https://periodicals.karazin.ua/philology/article/view/2013>

35 DIDUKH-ROMANENKO, Svitlana. Tsenzura v dytiachii literaturi: nediytiachi pristrasti [Censorship in Children's Literature: Adult Passions]. *Kolo*, 2014, No. 7, p. 40–46. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: https://issuu.com/irynakurylo/docs/kolo_7_2014_

36 FEDOTOVA, Oksana. Dolia dytiachoi kazky v Ukrainsi za bilshovytskoi doby (za materialamy "Visnyka Narodnoho komisaratu osvity" 1925–1933 rr.) [The Fate of Children's Fairy Tales in Ukraine in the Bolshevik Era (Based on the Materials of the "Bulletin of the People's Commissariat of Education" 1925–1933)]. *Visnyk Knyzhhkovoi palaty*, 2003, No. 12, p. 35–37; FEDOTOVA, Oksana. Tsenzura uchbovoi literatury v USRR–URSR u 1920–1930-kh rr. [Censorship of Educational Literature in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s and 1930s]. *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I.F. Kurasa NAN Ukrayny*, 2012, vol. 2, p. 385–393. http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Nzipiend_2012_2_31

37 ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. "Dzieci imperium..." – postkolonialny wymiar ukraińskiego rynku książek i prasy dla dzieci i młodzieży. *Porównania*, 2014, vol. 15, p. 233–244; ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. Such Books Should be Burned! Same-Sex Parenting and the Stretchable Definition of the Family in Larysa Denysenko's and Mariia Foya's *Maya and Her Mums. Children's Literature in Education*, 2020, vol. 51, p. 534–543.

METHODOLOGY. This study investigates the censorship of Ukrainian children's literature in the 20th–21st centuries by combining historical, cultural, and literary approaches. The research was conducted through a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, official decrees and regulation orders, literary texts, publishing records, memoirs, and critical conclusions. These materials allowed us to trace both explicit and implicit forms of censorship and their influence on the thematic and genre development of children's literature.

The methodological framework relies on a combination of synchronic and diachronic analysis. The synchronic approach makes it possible to examine the functioning of censorship mechanisms within a specific historical period, while the diachronic approach enables us to identify the continuity and transformation of censorship practices from the Soviet era (1922–1990) through the period of Ukraine's independence (from the 1990s till the present time).

While analyzing the Soviet period, special attention is paid to ideological censorship as a tool of totalitarian control, which imposed restrictions on the themes, images, and genres of children's literature. As for the post-Soviet era, we consider the persistence of certain restrictive mechanisms alongside the new challenges such as market-driven censorship and editorial self-censorship. The analysis also incorporates a postcolonial perspective, which helps evaluate how Ukrainian children's literature has responded to the processes of 'detabooing' and the rethinking of the national identity in the aftermath of colonial domination.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, we define censorship as institutional control or control imposed by the state over the content and dissemination of information, printed materials, works of art, and media, with the aim of limiting or preventing the spread of ideas deemed undesirable by the authorities. Following the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, censorship is understood as "the changing, suppression, or prohibition of speech or writing that is considered subversive of the common good". In our research, censorship is considered in its multiple forms: legal or illegal, direct or covert, editorial censorship, self-censorship, and the one induced by market pressures.

By applying these approaches, the study aims to demonstrate the ways in which censorship has shaped Ukrainian children's literature, turning it into both a vehicle of ideological influence under the Soviet regime and, later, into a field of negotiation between the tradition, ideology, and new cultural freedoms in independent Ukraine.

CENSORSHIP IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE OF THE SOVIET PERIOD (1922–1990)

In 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed, which was a totalitarian state that became a prison for peoples of various nationalities. From 1917 to 1920, there were three attempts to establish the Soviet power in Ukraine. Ultimately, as a result of the occupation of 1919 and the annexation of the Eastern, Southern and Northern parts of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic was formed and annexed to the USSR. The Soviet occupation of the Western part of Ukraine took place in 1939, right after the beginning of World War Two.

In the conditions of the totalitarian regime, Ukrainian children's literature was under the total control of the *authorities and close supervision of censorship* bodies. In the words of Edita Sédaityté, the "Soviet censorship is not only control over the public sector (press and media), it is a complex phenomenon that includes many spheres – from public to private space, from institutional, regulated control to internal self-censorship"³⁸. It was public ideological and political censorship, which turned into ideological terror and ideological dictatorship. According to Oksana Fedotova, "[p]olitical censorship is a system of actions and measures aimed at ensuring and serving the interests of the authorities. At the same time, the system of actions and measures refers to structural and non-structural activities, which are far from those guaranteed by the law"³⁹.

Numerous censorship bodies were created in the USSR, which banned certain works in order to prevent the spread of national ideas and other information that contradicted the communist ideology and Soviet propaganda. From 1922 to 1991, censorship of printed works was being carried out by the specially created state administration body "*Holovlit*" – the Main Directorate for Literature and Publishing. Its names changed, but its functions remained the same. According to Fedotova, "[t]he practice of preparing at the federal and republican levels proscription indexes and lists of banned publications, which were subject to removal from bookstores, libraries, and school networks, belongs to the aforementioned *ministry of truth*"⁴⁰.

³⁸ SÉDAITYTÉ, Edita. Historiography of Soviet Censorship: Main Trends of the Research Studies and Concepts of Censorship. *Knygotyra*, 2017, t. 69, p. 84.

³⁹ FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura drukovanykh vydan v USRR-USR (1917–1990 rr.)* [Political Censorship of Printed Publications in the Ukrainian SSR (1917–1990)]: Monohr. K.: Parlamentske vyd-vo, 2009. p. 69–70.

⁴⁰ FEDOTOVA, Oksana; SHAPOVAL, Yurii. Proskriptsii yak tsinne dzherelo z istorii tsenzury

The local bodies of this administration were supposed to stop the distribution of publications not authorized by “*Holovlit*”, as well as to ensure their removal. Censorship was also carried out by control committees under the People’s Commissariats for Education (People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment)⁴¹ and bodies established by the political party. Therefore, it was also *departmental censorship* (when each department, for example, the People’s Commissariat for Education, carried out its own censorship in relation to its documents⁴²). The Communist Party, together with the authorities, formed a political censorship.

This body was responsible for:

- previewing all works intended for publication or distribution, both handwritten and printed, periodical and non-periodical publications, photographs, drawings, maps, etc.;
- granting the permission for the right to publish individual works, as well as periodical and non-periodical bodies;
- creation of lists of works prohibited for sale and distribution;
- announcement of rules, orders and instructions in the field of printing, publishing and printing houses, libraries and bookstores.

Meanwhile, the Main Directorate for Literature and Publishing received the right to ban the publication and distribution of works:

- containing propaganda against the Soviet authorities and the Communist Party;
- containing facts, figures, and characteristics that compromise the Soviet government and the Communist Party;
- revealing military secrets of the Soviet Union;
- representing public opinion by presenting false information;
- arising national and religious fanaticism;
- pornographic in nature.

These principles also governed the People’s Commissariat for Education, which carried out censorship in education and controlled the publication of books for children.

v radianskii Ukrainsi [Proscriptions as Valuable Sources for the History of Censorship in Soviet Ukraine], *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 2017, No. 2, p. 143.

⁴¹ People’s Commissariat for Education was a state body for managing pre-school, school, out-of-school and higher education in the Ukrainian SSR, established in 1917.

⁴² FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura drukovanykh vydan v USRR-URSR (1917–1990 rr.)* [Political Censorship of Printed Publications in the Ukrainian SSR (1917–1990)]: Monohr. K.: Parlamentske vyd-vo, 2009. p. 68.

Starting from 1923 and until the 1990s, special instructions were issued regarding the recommended literature for children's reading and the removal of 'harmful literature' from reading rooms, bookstores, the market, or the banning of printing. These lists were printed in the *Bulletin of the People's Commissariat for Education*⁴³ to 1934. Later on, the lists were kept secret and were no longer published on its pages. After the World War Two, *Holovlit* began to prepare comprehensive consolidated indexes of banned publications.

Since the 1920s and 1930s, the People's Commissariat for Education has strictly controlled the publication and distribution of children's literature, considering it as the main means of ideological education of the younger generation. In various documents, the tasks set before the Ukrainian children's book were defined. The printed word was considered to be one of the most powerful tools of the party's influence on the masses, and "children's literature was one of the most important tools in the process of the creation of *homo sovieticus*"⁴⁴. One should note the close link that, from its origins, connects children's literature with the didactic-moralizing factor, a fundamental element of consideration to understand that various types of censorship have been exercised over it throughout its not overly extensive history⁴⁵.

That is why, the subject of books addressed to the young generation can be clearly formulated and defined:

- class struggle in all its manifestations;
- socialist construction;
- industrial reconstruction;
- reconstruction of agriculture;
- forms of human labor;
- socialist competition;
- electrification and spread of radio sets;
- problems of Pioneer organizations and schools;
- depiction of the socialist present, while the past should have been depicted as a revolutionary confrontation with the capitalist world.

⁴³ Individual issues of Bulletins of the People's Commissariat for Education can be found on the website: *DSpace of Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University* available at: <http://dspace.pnpu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/5036/browse?type=dateissued>

⁴⁴ ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. "Dzieci imperium..." – postkolonialny wymiar ukraińskiego rynku książek i prasy dla dzieci i młodzieży. *Porównania*, 2014, vol. 15, p. 233–244.

⁴⁵ BERMÚDEZ, María. Take away the Word: Ways of Censorship in Children's Literature. *Estudios de Teoría Literaria*, 2023, vol. 12(27), p. 115.

It was allowed to highlight the problems of Pioneer organizations and schools. Emphasis was placed on the depiction of the socialist present, while the past was to be depicted as a revolutionary confrontation with the capitalist world.

Requirements were also set for characters in children's books. It was necessary to depict children as part of civil society. The center of attention should have been ideologically correct behavior, not the inner world, experiences, romantic or 'problem moods'. Adults had to be depicted in the books as well, since limiting the content of children's books to only coverage of children's life and work, according to the representatives of the Central Council of out-of-School Education, could lead to a 'distortion of reality'.

Regarding the techniques and methods of artistic representation of reality, a struggle was declared "against any misinterpretation of the world", "against supernatural fiction", with calls to writers "to build children's literature using the means of a realistic interpretation of reality"⁴⁶. Sentimentalism and romanticism were criticized.

In the special *Instructions for the Removal of Harmful Literature from Reading Rooms, Bookstores and Market Stalls* (1925), there was a ban on books that "mix science with religious fictions, reflections on God's wisdom", and foster nationalism and religiosity⁴⁷. A special commission was created to review book funds, which was engaged in identifying and removing "class-hostile nationalist literature" from libraries, and had to report to *Holovlit* on their effort⁴⁸. This was *preliminary censorship*, but the Soviet government also practiced *punitive censorship*.

There was a whole campaign against the fairy tale as a genre. Under the pressure of the teachers of the Institute of Public Education, fairy tales were removed from school programs, because the features of the genre (distortion

⁴⁶ FEDOTOVA, Oksana. Dytiacha literatura Ukrayiny pid tsenzurnymy zaboronamy 20–30-kh rr. XX st. [Children's Literature of Ukraine under Censorship Bans of the 20s and 30s of the 20th Century] *Ukrainoznavstvo*, 2007, No. 1, p. 94–96.

⁴⁷ Instruktsiia NKO USRR po vyluchenniu shkidlyvoi literatury z knyhozbiren, chytalen ta kioskiv rynku, pidhotovlena 21 hrudnia 1925 r. [Instruction of the NGO of the USSR on the Removal of Harmful Literature from Book Collections, Reading Rooms and Market Stalls, Prepared on December 21, 1925]. *Arkhiv Natsionalnoi biblioteki Ukrayiny im. V. Vernadskoho*, Opys 1, Sprava 160, Ark. 56–57.

⁴⁸ Nakaz narkoma osvity USRR V. Zatonskoho [Order of People's Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian SSR V. Zatonskyi] (1934). In: *Zbirnyk nakaziv Narodnogo Komisariatu osvity*, 1934, No. 7, p. 3.

of reality, abstraction in time and space, ignoring the causal relationship, supernatural fiction) “interfered with the process of raising a materialistic worldview in the younger generation”⁴⁹.

M. Spodarets analyzes the arguments for the banning of this genre, given by one of the leading ideologists of the fight against fairy tales in Ukraine, E. Yanovska, in her article “*The Fairy Tale as a Factor of Class Education*” (1923). “The harmfulness of works of this genre for communist ideology, in her opinion, was that fairy tales reflected ‘folk ideals’⁵⁰, promoted absurdity, cruelty and anti-aestheticism (“Little Red Riding Hood”), fear, humility, religious mood (“Baba Yaga”, “Vasylisa the Beautiful”, “Koshchey the Immortal”, “Sivka Burka”, “Cinderella”), bourgeois superstitions, “the desire for wealth and respectability”, belief in supernatural forces (“Cinderella”, “Little Girl-Khavroshechka”)⁵¹. M. Spodarets also characterizes O. Popov’s article “*Children’s Literature at a Turning Point*” (1930), which was also a “manifesto of an anti-fairy tale campaign” and contained a list of negative features (“belief in mysterious supernatural forces”, “senseless and inconsistent behavior of characters”, “realization of kulak prosperity”, “preaching petty-bourgeois ideology”) based on the material of the Ukrainian folk tale “Ivasyk-Telesyk”⁵².

The list published in the *Bulletin of the People’s Commissariat for Education* (1929) provided for the removal of 187 children’s works, among them *Tales for Youth* by H. Chr. Andersen, *Belgian Folk Tales*, *English Tales*, *Fairy Tales*, and *New Foreign Fairy Tales for Children*. In general, foreign children’s literature was prohibited, with the exception of fairy tales, which were also strictly censored and often published in an adapted and revised version. Similar censorship of foreign children’s literature and their censored translations in Croatian literature are mentioned by the researchers Edin Badić and Sandra Ljubas. They rightly emphasize that “censored works rarely undergo critical evaluation, therefore, in addition to taboo topics, it is extremely important to focus on the ways in which their content was changed to better fit the ideological currents of the

⁴⁹ KACHAK, Tetiana. *Ukrai’ns’ka literatura dlja ditej ta junactva: pidruchnyk*. [Ukrainian Literature for Children and Youth: Textbook]. Kyiv: Akademija, 2016. p. 138.

⁵⁰ SPODARETS, M. Problemy kazky ta dytyachoi literatury *Literatura v ukraainskomu ideoloohichnomu dyskursi 1920-kh i pochatku 1930-kh*. [The Problems of Fairy Tales and Children’s Literature. Literature in the Ukrainian Ideological Discourse of the 1920s and Early 1930s]. *The Journal of VN Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series “Philology”*, 2015, vol. 71(1127), p. 274.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 274.

⁵² Ibid. p. 275.

time in which the translation was created”⁵³. Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk offers such examples: “traditional fairy tale motifs across the USSR underwent ideological reinterpretation. For instance, the *Little Red Riding Hood* was repurposed so that the main character was a *komsomolka* (or a Communist member of the youth movement), and the wolf was depicted as a kulak (or a moderately wealthy small landholder)”⁵⁴.

In 1930, the Commission on children’s literature recommended to exclude from institutions of social education, libraries and sales the *Fairy Tales and Stories* by Isak Kipnis, *The Christmas Tree* by Oleksandr Oles, the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stow and other works.

Censorship of the fairy tale genre can occasionally be found in other societies as well. Michael O. Tunnell sees the reason for this in the fact that “there are adults who fear that fairy tales and fantasy will lead children to be somehow out of touch with reality, that they will be less likely to distinguish fact from fancy if they are read too many fairy stories”⁵⁵.

Meaningful and personalized censorship was also functioning. Thus, in 1933, the People’s Commissariat for Education adopted the decree “On Children’s Literature”, according to which, all children’s books that did not fit into the ideological context were banned from publication. They were withdrawn from circulation and sent to special library funds or simply destroyed. In the late 1930s, personal responsibility of library managers for the ‘ideological purity’ of book collections was strengthened. Until the end of the Soviet regime, one of the main functions of libraries was to monitor children’s reading interests. They offered selected books according to the ideology and not to the child’s interests⁵⁶. Such selection was carried out by schools, Komsomol and Pioneer organizations.

During the literary discussion of 1925–1928, in which the ways of development of Ukrainian literature were discussed, Mykola Khvyliovyi and his like-minded colleagues convinced of the need to focus on European models and

⁵³ BADIĆ, Edin; LJUBAS, Sandra. Pipi Duga Čarapa u cenzuriranom hrvatskom ruhu. *SIC: A Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation*, 2020, vol. 11(1).

⁵⁴ JAKUBOWSKA-KRAWCZYK, Katarzyna. Fairy Tales, Folk Traditions, and the Formation of Ukrainian National Identity. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANOWICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children’s Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 26.

⁵⁵ TUNNELL, Michael O. The Double-Edged Sword: Fantasy and Censorship. *Language Arts*, 1994, vol. 71(8), p. 606–612.

⁵⁶ ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. “Dzieci imperium...” – postkolonialny wymiar ukraińskiego rynku książek i prasy dla dzieci i młodzieży. *Porównania*, 2014, vol. 15, p. 236–237.

not on the Russian culture, which indirectly touched children's literature⁵⁷. However, this was ignored, and the writers who supported anti-Soviet sentiments were banned or imprisoned.

Back at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, misunderstandings between literature and pedagogical criticism increased. This, in the assessment of artistic works, often proceeded from the extent to which they can illustrate various fields of knowledge and whether they have a direct connection with production⁵⁸. "Children's literature of the 1920s and 1930s became a tool of social engineering of the 'new Soviet citizen'. This involved the formation of a materialistic worldview, political engagement, heroism in labor, and the defense of the Soviet interests"⁵⁹.

In 1930, the People's Commissariats for Education published circulars *On the Management of the List of Children's Plays* and *On the Requirements for a Children's Play*. Requirements as such were published as well. Dramatic children's literature had to use all forms and means determined by the achievements of theatrical art. Naturalism and domesticity were condemned, against which, plays that "stimulated activity" were opposed.

The following tasks were set to be met by the children's book, as it had to:

1. Form a material-dialectical worldview, actively fight against attempts to impose on them a "hostile worldview", an idealistic vision of the world.
2. Promote the formation of proletarian class consciousness, acute hatred of the class enemy.
3. Educate in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, exposing chauvinism and national enmity.
4. Organize the younger generation to participate in socialist construction, teach them to actively overcome obstacles.
5. Ensure polytechnic education of children by giving them skills of collective work.

As Snizhana Zhygun notes, "Ukrainian children's literature of the 1920s and 1930s corresponded to the Soviet project of transformation of man, society, and nature. Its leading themes were the participation of children in the revolu-

⁵⁷ KACHAK, Tetiana. *Ukrain's'ka literatura dlya ditej ta junactva: pidruchnyk* [Ukrainian Literature for Children and Youth: Textbook]. Kyiv: Akademija, 2016. p. 139.

⁵⁸ KILICHENKO, Lubov. *Ukrainska dytiacha literatura* [Ukrainian Children's Literature]. K.: Vyshcha shkola, 1988. 264 p.

⁵⁹ ZHYGUN, Snizhana. Moms at Factories: Ukrainian Children's Literature of the 1920s and 1930s. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANOWICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 87.

tion and civil war, industrialization, collectivization, and the spread of Soviet influence. Most of the topics were implemented within reproducible schemes, of which adventure formulas with new didactic accents became the most widely used. Manifestations of the author's originality in the interpretation of topics were either edited according to generally accepted schemes or were forgotten”⁶⁰.

Sometimes, discussions took place on the pages of periodical literary publications. Writers who wrote for children advocated expanding the subject matter of books. They opposed the ignoring of children's specific requests, as well as the stereotyped nature of the narrative in children's books. The American writer and social activist Nat Hentoff is convinced that children's books cannot be included in a politically correct framework and be a tool for promoting social values or changes, and this is obvious, because “literature cannot breathe if it is forced to be utilitarian in this or any other sense.... [T]ruly creative tellers of tales ... cannot be fitted into neat, sanitized, newly 'proper' molds”⁶¹.

The analysis of contemporary readers has shown a sharp change in value orientations. *Clear Dawns* by Mykhailo Rudynskyi, *Rainbow: First Book after the ABC*, *Ray* by Yakiv Chepiga, *October Flowers* by Mykhailo Panchenko, *First ABC-Book* by Lidiia Depolovich, *Second ABC-Book for Labor Schools* by Tymofii Lubenets and Nataliia Lubenets were the textbooks published with the markings 'for labor schools' or 'for use in social welfare institutions'⁶².

The use of literature as a springboard for the proclamation of communist ideas, and as a means of educating the young generation of citizens of the Soviet Union, repressed the development of both prose and poetry for children. The content of most of the poems was reduced to praising the leader, the Soviet system, promoting the ideas of equality and brotherhood of all the peoples, dedicated work for the benefit of the Motherland, etc. This is evidenced by books and textbooks of that time.

As Bohdanets-Biloskalenko notes, “the universal human values of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty were quite noticeably deformed, which was determined by political circumstances in the country. In particular, the category of Truth

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ HENTOFF, Nat. Any Writer Who Follows anyone Else's Guidelines Ought to be in Advertising. *School Library Journal*, 1977, No. 24, p. 27–29.

⁶² BOHDANETS-BILOSKALENKO, Natalia. 2014. *Problema formuvannia osobystosti u zmisti pidruchnykiv z chytannia dla pochatkovoi shkoly (50-ti roky XIX st. – 50-ti roky XX st.)* [The Problem of Personality Formation in the Content of Reading Textbooks for Primary School (50s of the 19th Century – 50s of the 20th Century)]: monohr. Kyiv: NVF Slavutych-Delfin, 2014. 150 p.

is represented only by the achievements of the Soviet state, the reflection of Soviet reality and holidays, the glorification of the revolution and statesmen. The first attempts to shift Ukrainian identification in the Russian direction appeared”⁶³. This is how the Soviet government implemented a totalitarian and colonial policy towards the Ukrainian people.

In 1934, an All-Ukrainian conference on children’s literature was held in Kharkiv, at which, People’s Commissar for Education Volodymyr Zatonsky delivered a speech “*Tasks of Children’s Literature at the Current Stage of Socialist Construction*”. The author claimed that any depiction of nationalists, Ukrainian hetmans, and lords in children’s literature was harmful. At the same time, he defended the fairy tale genre: “There is nothing to be afraid of the fairy tale or fable form, where cats speak human language and act like people. But this form is interesting, attractive and should be used by us. The child fully imagines what is behind this fairy tale, just as when playing with a doll, fully understanding that it is a doll and nothing more. Of course, we reject all kinds of mysticism, angels, mermaids, etc. But the fairy-tale form, fantasy is not only possible for us, but also necessary”⁶⁴.

At the same time, the leading children’s writers of the Soviet Union noted. “They took care not only of the content of the books that would be published soon. A thorough inventory of the existing literature was carried out: all ‘harmful’ works were removed from the libraries, pages with the names and portraits of yesterday’s leaders and today’s enemies were pasted in the collections. The destruction of the *intelligentsia* was accompanied by the confiscation of private libraries. What followed was the end of the literary debate, the trial against the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (Soyuz vyzvolennia Ukrayiny, SVU)⁶⁵, the Holodomor, mass terror against the creative intelligentsia of 1934”⁶⁶.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 81, p. 106.

⁶⁴ IVANIUK, Serhii. *Istoria prekrasnoi zalozhnytsi*. [The Story of a Beautiful Concubine]. In: DONCHYK, V. H. (ed.). *Dvadsiatyi roky: literaturni dyskusii, polemiky. Literaturno-krytychni stati* [Twenties: Literary Discussions, Polemics. Literary and Critical Articles]. Kyiv: Dnipro, 1991, p. 291.

⁶⁵ *Union for the Liberation of Ukraine* – a political organization formed in Eastern Galicia on August 4, 1914, the main goal of which was to proclaim the independence and unity of Ukraine. The main task of this organization was to declare the unity and independence of Ukraine and to promote the defeat of the Russian Empire for the sake of reviving the independence of the Ukrainian state. The Union was mainly created by political emigrants from Trans-Dnieper Ukraine. Its chairman was the famous publicist Dmytro Dontsov.

⁶⁶ IVANIUK, Serhii. *Konseptsiia yunoho heroia v ukrainskii literaturi dla ditei* [The Concept of a Young Protagonist in Ukrainian Children’s Literature]. *Inozemna filolohiia*, 2007, vol. 119, p. 77–83.

The crisis period in the history of children's literature involved the war and post-war times. World War Two deprived children of books, the right to education, and even childhood as such. The unhappy childhood destroyed by the war will become one of the central themes in children's literature for many decades – as a story of witnesses, as one's own memories, as an analysis of historical events and facts (Oles Honchar *Tvoya Zorya*; Gryhir Tyutyunnik *Obloga, Klymko, The Fire is far in the Steppe*; Volodymyr Rutkivskyi *Poterchata*). However, these works will become available only after the restoration of Ukraine's independence.

In the 1940s and 1960s, the theme of war in children's literature unfolded in a different way. In the center of many works, there was the life of tank crewmen, pilots, border guards, and sailors, which was supposed to form children's patriotic feelings and responsibilities towards the Soviet Union. Oles Honchar's stories *An Apple of Longevity* (1940) and *Song of Smonyan* (1940) were about it. Many works focus on heroism of children and youth in the fight against the German invaders. Writers were not concerned with the inner world of the child, or children's experiences, but the priority was the image of idealized and hyperbolized heroism, euphoria from victory. The main character was positive and 'correct', devotedly working for the good of the homeland. Oleksandr Kopylenko's story *Little Boy's House* is indicative in this regard (1947).

The pathetic voice of poetry most often brought the topic of peace and love for the Soviet country to the fore. The party sharply condemned and criticized Volodymyr Sosiura's poetic appeals *Love Ukraine!* (1944): "Love your Ukraine with all your heart – and we will be with it forever".

The crisis manifested itself in the small number of quality texts addressed to children, their thematic and genre limitation, and ideological commitment. Many writers who could write for children were accused of nationalism, lack of ideas, violation of the prescriptions of 'social realism', and were eliminated as early as the 1930s. Those who survived fell silent under political and ideological pressure (Volodymyr Vladko). The anti-Ukrainian vector of Stalin's policy became even stronger in connection with the activities of the *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary and partisan formation). 'Nationalism' was seen even in the work of those writers who did not stand away from the authorities – Maksym Rylskyi, Yurii Yanovskyi, Oleksandr Dovzhenko, and others.

After World War II, the Head of the Soviet Union introduced a new regulation on special literature funds, which intensified the inspection and 'cleaning' of the book funds of Ukraine. Therefore, the Ukrainian literature for children

in the 20th century developed within certain ideological limits in accordance with the requirements of *external censorship*. Only ‘ideologically correct’ works of the Soviet writers Oleksandr Kopylenko, Oles Donchenko, Nataliia Zabila, Pavlo Tychyna, and Volodymyr Sosiura were published in books, almanacs, and collections. Not only fairy tales were banned, but also science fiction, detective works, works on religious themes and those related to folk beliefs, folklore, mythology, and mysticism.

Writers practiced *self-censorship* or internal censorship. It was manifested in the fact that the authors limited themselves in the process of creating the text, and, according to Oksana Fedotova, were guided by “some taboos imposed by the state, society, the specifics of the readership or their own aesthetic taste and moral principles”⁶⁷.

In the second half of the 20th century, the thematic range of children’s literature somewhat expanded: Vsevolod Nestayko, Viktor Blyznets, Lina Kostenko, Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, Mykola Vinhranovskyi, Yevhen Hutsalo, Dmytro Pavlychko and others described childhood, delving into the psychology of the young protagonist – a fully developed individual with distinctive qualities, behavior, moral and ethical views, and aesthetic preferences. They revealed the social conditions of children’s existence, and created a fairy-tale artistic world based on folklore motifs, plots, and images. However, the ideological control remained strong, and the policy of Russification continued⁶⁸. The taboo continued to be imposed on books about the national history or its personalities. It was impossible to write the truth about the horrors of the war, or to mention the struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence. “Any mention of the name of a person who was recognized as an ‘enemy of the people’ was to be destroyed, even if it was a neutral and even a negative description. To do this, pages were glued, names were crossed out in the texts, portraits were cut out, or even entire editions of books were destroyed. Most of the banned literature was turned into waste paper, and only some copies were moved to special funds – closed rooms in libraries or museums where censored materials were stored. Only those with permits had access to them”⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura drukovanykh vydan v USRR-URSR (1917–1990 rr.)* [Political Censorship of Printed Publications in the Ukrainian SSR (1917–1990)]. Monogr. K.: Parlamentske vyd-vo, 2009.

⁶⁸ ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. Children of Genocide and War. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; UŁANOWICZ, A. (eds.). Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children’s Literature. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 125.

⁶⁹ LIMINA, Polina. Tsenzura ta literatura. Pro shcho ne mohly pysaty ukrainski pysmennyyky

As mentioned above, there were two types of prohibition – *meaningful* and *personalized*. The books of repressed writers and those recognized as ‘enemies of the Soviet state’ (Grygoriy Epik, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Stepan Vasylchenko, Michael Johansen, Bohdan Lepky, Mariyka Pidhryanka, Vasyl Koroliv-Starogota, etc.) were banned. Their books were not allowed to be published, in the content of which the censors revealed anti-Soviet motives, showing the historical development, linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity of the nation, as well as the consequences of violent collectivization, depicting pictures of famine or mass murders and the suffering of the people during the war, mentioning the existence of filtration camps, deportation of the population and other atrocities committed by the Soviet authorities. It was not allowed to write about decadent attitudes, motives of hopelessness, to develop religious themes, to show affection for the West. Berislav Majhut writes about such personified censorship in Croatian literature and the ‘black lists’ of writers whose works could not be printed or even mentioned⁷⁰.

The relative weakening of censorship took place in the 1960s, during the so-called ‘Khrushchev Time’. With the condemnation of Stalinism and the elimination of the ‘cult of personality’ in the late 1950s and early 1960s there was softening of the ideological regime and partial rehabilitation of some repressed writers and public figures, representatives of the *Shot Revival*. Ukrainian children’s literature was enriched with the works of Viktor Blyznets, Yevgeny Hutsalo, Hryhir Tyutyunnyk, Dmytro Pavlychko, Lina Kostenko, Mykola Vingranovsky, and other writers.

Unfortunately, in the second half of the 1960s, totalitarianism and dictatorship strengthened again. In 1965, the resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)⁷¹ “On Censorship” were issued, and, in 1969 – “On Measures for the further Development of Soviet Children’s Literature”; also in 1969, the resolution was passed “On Increasing the Responsibility of Heads of Print Media, Radio, Television, Cinematography, Cultural and Art Institutions for the Ideological and Political Level of Printed

v XX–XIX stolitti? [Censorship and literature. What could Ukrainian Writers not Write about in the 20th–19th Centuries?]. *BIT:UA*, 2020. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://bit.ua/2020/02/censorship/>

70 MAJHUT, Berislav. Censorship in Croatian Children’s Literature 1945–1950. *Libri & Liberi*, 2023, vol. 12(2), p. 339. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/en/clanak/454088>

71 CPSU – the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the only legal political party (from the mid-1920s to 1991) in the Soviet Union.

Materials and Repertoire”, which contributed to the introduction of self-censorship and forced authors to get rid of ambiguous moments in the text; in 1972, “*On Literary and Artistic Criticism*” followed; whereas, in 1976, the resolution “*On Work with Creative Youth*” was imposed as well. Again, these prescriptive documents spoke about the image of a positive person, “a protagonist from the middle of the working class or the class of the collective farm peasantry”. In recent years, special commissions on children’s literature have been created at all-Union congresses. Ideology prevailed over the artistic and aesthetic quality of literature.

Some works were published in a censored version, i.e., with removed fragments. This is how, for example, Vsevolod Nestayko’s famous story *Toreadors from Vasyukivka* and his other works were published in the 1960s and 1980s. And only later, at the beginning of the 21st century, the author made some editorial corrections himself, removed the details added at the request of the censors in the first version (in particular, “remove any ideological references, including the glorification of Soviet soldiers and heroes like Vasily Chapayev”⁷²), and the work was republished. The author himself admitted that it was difficult to write in the Soviet times. “My trilogy *Toreadors from Vasyukivka*, which was published in 1973, was highly successful. Despite the fact that, in 1979, the International Children’s and Young People’s Literature included *Toreadors from Vasyukivka* into the Special Honor List of Hans Christian Andersen “as one of the outstanding works of contemporary children’s literature”, however, on the part of some literary figures and organizations, it received devastating criticism as anti-Soviet, even with letters of appeal to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine”⁷³.

The film based on the first part of the story *The Adventures of Robinson Corn* was also not produced because a discussion on the film script at the Collegium of the Ministry of Culture of the Ukrainian SSR recognized the film as not appropriate for the Soviet children due to being ideologically harmful. Even after the film based on the story of the same name was shot in 1965, and after it won

72 ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. Children of Genocide and War. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANO-WICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children’s Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 135.

73 MAINAIA, Nadiia. Vsevolod Nestaiko: vid radyanskoi tsenzury naibilshe distalosia “Toreadoram”. [Vsevolod Nestaiko: “Toreadors” got the most from Soviet Censorship]. *Hlavred*, 2013. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <https://glavred.info/kultura/242695-vsevolod-nestayko-vid-radyanskoi-cenzuri-naybilshe-distalosya-toreadoram.html>

the *Grand Prix* at the *Munich International Festival of Television Films for Children and Youth* in 1968, the film was not broadcast on Ukrainian television. The reason for the ban was that the author showed not pioneers, but poorly dressed boys in the pasture.

Against the background of ideological pressure on the consciousness of young people by means of fiction, in the 1970s, Russian literature began to dominate the Ukrainian book space. This was one of the directions of the colonialist Russification policy, which was implemented through an increased study of the Russian language in Ukrainian schools, as well as the creation of Russian-language schools. The share of books in the Ukrainian language decreased by almost three times.

Soviet cultural colonialism in children's literature from the 1920s to the 1980s manifested itself in various aspects, including the following:

- promotion of Russian-language literature for children;
- perception of Ukrainian writers as provincial, and their works as inferior;
- banning the works of writers who discussed the national issues;
- strict censorship and ideological engagement of works;
- a clearly defined range of topics and problems (the so-called 'colonial themes') for children's writers;
- in the 1920s and 1930s, the fairy tale genre was banned;
- functional limitation of literature (educational and educational aspects were taken into account, while other aspects remained irrelevant).

Thus, ideological censorship had a negative impact on the development of children's literature in the Soviet period. According to Raisa Movchan, the aesthetic quality of children's literature "played a secondary role, priority was given to ideological clichés, false pathos, varnishing of reality"⁷⁴. The promotion of socialist realism blocked the evolution of the genre system. A taboo was imposed on many topics, and an ideological utopia called 'a realistic reflection of life' prevailed. Everything else was cut off by censorship.

⁷⁴ MOVCHAN, Raisa. Literatura dlia ditei ta yunatstva v systemi istorii ukraïnskoi literatury XX stolittia. [Literature for Children and Youth in the System of the History of Ukrainian Literature of the 20th Century]. *Literatura. Dity. Chas.* Visnyk Tsentru doslidzhennia literatury dlia ditei ta yunatstva. Ternopil: Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, 2011, No.1, p. 12–17.

PROHIBITIONS AND TABOOS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE SINCE THE RESTORATION OF UKRAINE'S INDEPENDENCE (FROM THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT DAY)

The situation changed in 1991 with the restoration of Ukraine's independence and the beginning of the post-totalitarian period in its history. The democratic system became a priority and got approved by law. The *Constitution of Ukraine* (Article 34) guarantees every citizen the right to freedom of thought and speech, to the free expression of one's views and beliefs, to the free collection, storage, use and dissemination of information. This important statement fully complies with Art. 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and Art. 10 of the *Conventions on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. "The evolution of the Ukrainian children's book market since the 1990s has been directly linked to the affirmation of democratic values, the active creativity of children's writers and their understanding of the problems and needs of children in modern society, the renewal of the school literary canon, and the strengthening of public attention to children's reading practices"⁷⁵.

Unlike in the Soviet era, when censorship functioned as a legal and institutionalized mechanism of the state and party control, in independent Ukraine, the term 'censorship' acquires a broader, socio-cultural meaning. It refers not to direct prohibitions by state authorities, but rather to various soft forms of regulation: self-censorship by authors, editorial restrictions, market-driven decisions of publishers, and pressure from parents, educators, religious or public organizations. These mechanisms, although not legally binding, still influence what is published, and how the sensitive topics are represented. Thus, in our study, the concept of censorship is applied in a multidimensional way: as institutionalized legal censorship in the Soviet period, and as indirect, socially induced restrictions in the post-independence era.

After 1990, the ideological involvement was gradually disappearing, whereas the topics of the national history, culture and traditions were developing. Under the influence of active translations of foreign literature for children and youth, taboos on 'difficult' topics for children (death, illness, sexual experience,

⁷⁵ KACHAK, Tetiana; BLYZNYUK, Tetyana. Contemporary Ukrainian Children's Poetry and Prose. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANOWICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 191.

psychological problems, etc.) were steadily being lifted⁷⁶. New and non-stereotypical models of children's behavior appeared in the literature.

It is precisely the translations of works by the Polish writers Barbara Kosmowska, Joanna Jagiełło, Małgorzata Gutowska-Adamczyk, the Swedish author Ulf Stark, the Norwegian writer Vigdis Hjorth, and the Italian author Angela Nanetti which obviously gained popularity. They shape the readers' interest in realistic, school-themed, and socio-psychological stories, which is also observed as the Ukrainian authors Valentyn Berest, Serhiy Hrydin, Oksana Lushchevska, Oksana Saiko, Olena Ryzhko and others gained prominence. Such demand generates the publishing supply and fosters the development of the Ukrainian young adult literature⁷⁷.

Similarly, the emergence of Ukrainian fiction on inclusive topics (the prose of Andriy Bachynskyi, Anastasia Nikulina, Larysa Nitsoy, Oksana Radushynska) was preceded by translations of foreign works (e.g., *A Miracle* by R. J. Palacio, or *Poczwarka* by Dorota Terakowska), which became popular among Ukrainian readers.

Different genres of children's literature were actively developing, and the writers learned to speak about everything in 'children's' language. In the era of open access to information, prohibitions no longer make sense. V. Yeshkilev speaks about this quite frankly: "A today's teenager browsing the internet is practically unrestricted in their attempts to find something out. In other words, today, the notion of taboo, which existed in Soviet times, has been lifted. Conversations about prohibitions for children and adolescents are nothing more than adult games, the construction of limitations that teenagers will bypass anyway"⁷⁸. This point is also emphasized by Emilia Ohar: "Most of the topics that concern contemporary teenagers were, until recently, marked with the label 'forbidden to those under 18'. It is enough to look at the list of categories: 'Dating and intimacy', 'Drug use and abuse', 'Pregnancy', 'Suicide',

76 KACHAK, Tetiana. Evoliutsia ukrainskoi prozy dlia ditei ta yunatstva pid vplyvom zarubizhnoi literatury. [Evolution of Ukrainian Prose for Children and Youth Influenced by Foreign Literature]. *Ukraińskie Światy Dzieciństwa i Młodości*. Pod red. Katarzyny Jakubowska-Krawczyk. Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski. Katedra Ukrainistyki, 2020, t. XVI, p. 70–92.

77 PAVLYSHYN, Halyna. The Coming of Age of Ukrainian Young Adult Literature After 1991. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANOWICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 197.

78 BARABOOKA. Pro tabu bez tabu. [About Taboo without Taboo]. [Accessed September 11, 2025]. Access online: <http://www.barabooka.com.ua/pro-tabu-bez-tabu/>

and ‘Violence.’ The depth and seriousness of young people’s interest in these topics are striking, shattering all stereotypes about what can or cannot be discussed with a child”⁷⁹. Therefore, it is no longer surprising to encounter in young adult novellas such subjects as an early pregnancy (e.g., *Adults Unexpectedly* by S. Hrydin, *The Dream Came Too Soon* by M. Morozenko), the first sexual experience of school students (*The Kiss Was Not the Last* by O. Burlaka, *Sixteenth Spring* by V. Teremko, *The Cool Company* by N. Bila), intersexuality (*Leprykony* by V. Zakhabura), suicide attempts (*And Parallels Intersect* by S. Hrydin, *Through the Looking Glass* by O. Lushchevska), or instances of cruel behaviour toward classmates (*Revenge* by Yu. Cherniienko, *Pampukha* by A. Shavlach), among others.

In the educational scenario of the 21st century, children’s and youth literature has been consolidated as an aesthetic expression, erasing the borders between children’s writing, enclosed and limited once, and adult literature⁸⁰.

The post-colonial status of Ukrainian culture gave modern writers the opportunity, firstly, to develop topics that the Soviet censorship did not allow to be discussed in literature for children and youth, and secondly, to develop new topics and problems that arise in the process of social existence ‘here and now’⁸¹. We use the term ‘post-colonial’ in the sense described by Marko Pavlyshyn. He notes that, in English, the adjective ‘post-colonial’ has come to refer to the period following the regaining of independence⁸². This approach is particularly relevant for Ukraine, where the legacy of the Soviet cultural colonialism persisted for decades, influencing the literary field and imposing hierarchies of value. As Oksana Hrabovych emphasizes, the “historical practice of political subjugation, manifested in the systematic destruction by colonizers of Ukrainian social and cultural institutions and even the denial of the very existence of Ukraine

79 OHAR, Emilia. Osoblyvosti chytatskoi povedinky suchasnykh pidlitkiv. [Features of Reading Behavior of Modern Teenagers]. *Visnyk Dnipropetrovskoho natsionalnoho universytetu. Seriia: Zhurnalistyka. Literaturoznavstvo*, 2008, vol. 9, No. 1, p. 112.

80 BERMÚDEZ, María. Take away the Word: Ways of Censorship in Children’s Literature. *Estudios de Teoría Literaria*, 2023, vol. 12(27), p. 122.

81 KACHAK, Tetiana. Podolannia tematichnykh tabu u suchasnii ukrainskii prozi dlia ditei ta yunatstva: postkolonialna praktyka. [Overcoming Thematic Taboos in Modern Ukrainian Prose for Children and Youth: Postcolonial Practice] *Naukovi pratsi. Filolohiia. Literaturoznavstvo: naukovo-metodychnyi zhurnal*. Mykolaiv: Vydavnytstvo ChDU im. P. Mohyla, 2014, No. 228(240), p. 51–58. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <http://litstudies.chdu.edu.ua/article/view/35751>

82 PAVLYSHYN, Marko. Postkolonialna krytyka i teoriia. [Postcolonial Criticism and Theory]. In: *Antolohiia svitovoi literaturno-krytychnoi dumky XX st.* [ed. M. Zubrytska]. Lviv: Litospys, 2002, p. 703.

and Ukrainians, has long shaped the social and cultural realities of the country and ultimately the national character of its people”⁸³. Pavlyshyn also notes that “The potential for geographical expansion of the object of post-colonial studies is considerable. Their conceptual apparatus can be used in deciphering the cultures of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the countries that emerged after it”⁸⁴. Furthermore, as Mykola Riabchuk argues, applying a post-colonial approach to post-Soviet Ukraine helps to understand the legacies of Russo-Soviet internal colonialism, including the country’s regional diversity and historical ambivalence, while also recognizing the limits of the approach, particularly the absence of a racialized dimension in Soviet imperialism, which makes its post-colonial analysis only partially and conditionally applicable⁸⁵.

Based on the analysis of the contemporary Ukrainian literature for teenagers and young adults, we can determine the general trends of its evolution:

- active and multi-dimensional development of fiction;
- the variety of themes and genres;
- the increasing artistic and aesthetic quality;
- inspirations from foreign writers;
- the evolution of the functional aspects of the literary text – rejection of didacticism and ideological involvement;
- combination of tradition and innovation;
- focus on the child and intergenerational and transcultural solidarity⁸⁶.

In addition, it is worth noting the active development of picture books⁸⁷, stories and fairy tales for the youngest readers, historical and adventure literature and socio-psychological prose for teenagers, and school prose. The

⁸³ GRABOVICZ, Oksana. Kolonialna spadshchyna v sohodnishiui Ukrainsi. [Colonial Legacy in Contemporary Ukraine]. *Patriarkhat*, 2011, No. 6(427). [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <https://www.patriarkhat.org.ua/statti-zhurnalu/colonialna-spadshchyna-v-sohodnishiui-ukraini/>

⁸⁴ PAVLYSHYN, Marko. Postkolonialna krytyka i teoriia. [Postcolonial Criticism and Theory]. In: *Antolohia svitovoi literaturno-krytychnoi dumky XX st.* [ed. M. Zubrytska]. Lviv: Litospys, 2002, p. 706–707.

⁸⁵ RIABCHUK, Mykola. Colonialism in Another Way. On the Applicability of Postcolonial Methodology for the Study of Postcommunist Europe. *Porównania*, 2013, vol. XIII, p. 47–59.

⁸⁶ KACHAK, Tetiana. *Tendentsii rozvityku ukrainskoi prozy dlia ditei ta yunatstva pochatku XXI st.* [Trends in the Development of Ukrainian Prose for Children and Youth at the Beginning of the 21st Century]: Monogr. Kyiv: Akademvydav, 2018. 320 p.

⁸⁷ ULANOWICZ, Anastasia. Ukraine’s Cultural Ambassadors: Contemporary Ukrainian Picturebooks. In: ŚWIETLICKI, M.; ULANOWICZ, A. (eds.). *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children’s Literature*. 1st ed. London – New York: Routledge, 2025, p. 217–242.

subject matter of contemporary children's literature is extremely broad. These are the topics of childhood, growing up, school, relationships with friends and adults, as well as the understanding of social and psychological problems, updating topics from the history of Ukraine, playing Ukrainian myths, cultural traditions, etc. As Nataliia Marchenko observes, "[T]here has been a significant proliferation of therapeutic fairy tales, as well as works addressing war, gender, and ecological issues, inclusive texts, biographies, vacation-themed prose, travel narratives, dystopian literature, and both urban and authentic fantasy"⁸⁸. Today, the genre system is also actively developing, in particular, Ukrainian fiction and fantasy for children. These are the works of Natalia Devyatko, Volodymyr Arenev, Anna Bagryana, Natalia Dovgopol, Natalia Manolitets, Mia Marchenko, and others. And Andriy Kokotyukha is famous for his popular detective stories for children.

It is worth noting that, from 2004 to 2015, the *National Expert Commission of Ukraine on the Protection of Public Morals* was functioning. It was a permanent state-run expert and control body. Among the main tasks of the *Commission* was the examination of printed and other products, popular events of a sexual or erotic nature, and products containing elements or propaganda of the cult of violence, cruelty, and/or pornography. The *Commission* made a decision to ban 9 books. These were books for adult readers. However, this decision had no legal force, and, only after a court decision to ban these books, they could be removed from sale. There were no such precedents with children's literature.

The *Commission* was ultimately discontinued. Olha Chervakova, the author of the draft law on the termination of the commission, noted: "This is the most odious state structure, which, in its 10 years of existence, was remembered only for scandalous decisions, attempts to ban cartoons about the Simpsons, Scriabin's songs, and searches for pornography in artistic works"⁸⁹. In this context, the observations of a well-known researcher of children's literature, Peter Hunt, are extremely relevant: "[C]ensorship of children's literature is a texture of paradoxes: between benevolent control and fearful repression; between common-sense attitudes to words and meanings and necessary freedom of inter-

⁸⁸ MARCHENKO, Nataliia. Literature for Children and Youth of Independent Ukraine (1991–2023): Sociocultural Aspect. *Children's Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse*, 2024, vol. 1, No. 1, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Rada likviduvala Natsionalnu komisiu z pytan morali. [The Council Liquidated the National Commission on Morality]. *Radio Svoboda*, 2015. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26839747.html>

pretation; between a ‘trivial’ subject and a far-from-trivial reaction to it – and, as we have seen in contemporary Britain, between the overt and the covert”⁹⁰.

The main type of censorship that exists in the contemporary Ukrainian children’s literature since 2015 is *self-censorship*. Self-censorship has been practiced in the field of children’s and youth’s literary creativity for a long time⁹¹ because authors had to be sure that their books do not contain anything provocative or harmful to ‘innocent’ children (Lavrenčić Vrabec⁹²). Writers were guided by reader requests and their own, as well as public ideas about the topics and problems to be covered in terms of their own aesthetic taste and moral principles. However, they took into account the specific age of the readers, which meant that certain conditional taboos regarding the topics and methods of their coverage still existed. Yet, this has nothing to do with prior or punitive censorship. Today, external censorship is not some punitive administrative body, but society with its condemnation, criticism, and rejection. Therefore, the writer can only fear the reaction of the public.

Today, the source of censorship in the contemporary Ukrainian literature for children can be the publishing houses (at the stage of selecting the material for publication, when publishers avoid ‘uncomfortable topics’⁹³), as well as parents, public organizations, educational institutes, that is, representatives of society, and not the authorities. This type of censorship does not require a system of administrative institutions, it is not the Soviet political, state and party censorship, but rather a certain “view of society that regulates human rights, freedom of speech and press”⁹⁴.

Currently, there are no banned books for children and youth. Some sporadic manifestations that can cause discussions or disputes have become an obstacle to the inclusion of a work or book in a school curriculum or a children’s reading program, but they do not have the legal force to prohibit the publication or

⁹⁰ HUNT, Peter. Censorship and Children’s Literature in Britain now, or The Return of Abigail. *Children’s Literature in Education*, 1997, vol. 28(2), p. 95–103.

⁹¹ BADIĆ, Edin; LJUBAS, Sandra. Pipi Duga Čarapa u cenzuriranom hrvatskom ruhu. *SIC: A Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation*, 2020, vol. 11(1).

⁹² LAVRENČIĆ VRABEC, Darja. “Bol od rastanja: droge, seks i...” Tabu teme u književnosti za djecu i mladež, uredila Ranka Javor. *Knjižnice grada Zagreba*, 2002, p. 10.

⁹³ DIDUKH-ROMANENKO, Svitlana. Tsenzura v dityiachii literaturi: nediyiachi pristrasti [Censorship in Children’s Literature: Adult Passions]. *Kolo*, 2014, No. 7, p. 44. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: https://issuu.com/irynakurylo/docs/kolo_7_2014_

⁹⁴ FEDOTOVA, Oksana. *Politychna tsenzura drukovanykh vydan v USRR-URSR (1917–1990 rr.)* [Political Censorship of Printed Publications in the Ukrainian SSR (1917–1990)]: Monohr. K.: Parlamentske vyd-vo, 2009. p. 64.

sale of the book. Examples of this phenomenon are the statements of religious communities and some public organizations regarding the banning of books about Harry Potter due to the author's promotion of the practice of the occult. However, these books are freely available and are actively distributed in libraries to children readers.

Larysa Denysenko's book *Maya and her Mothers* also received public criticism for showing same-sex marriages. Mateusz Świetlicki mentions this in the article: "[T]he short mention of a family headed by a same-sex couple in *Maya and Her Mums*, a picturebook for primary school children, written in Ukrainian by a straight author, was enough for the right-wing critics to call it a "nail in the coffin of the Ukrainian family" (Zhuravel)"⁹⁵. He connects the fact of the rejection of this book and the heated debate in homophobic Ukraine caused by it not only with the topic, but also with the features of the picture book format. He noted that this fact "makes it problematic in the context of the aforementioned Ukrainian ideological dilemma as pictures can be seen as a way of challenging or evading censorship", and claims that "the title is a way of making *Maya and Her Mums* more immediately radical, even though it operates, in fact, on a much more progressive and careful level"⁹⁶.

Some parents and educators were indignant about the works of the modern authors Sashko Dermanskyi (fairy tale *Biliachok*) and Maryna Pavlenko (story from the collection *Mykolchyny Stories*) included in school textbooks and textbooks for primary school, in particular, those episodes in the books that describe a drunkard stepfather, or smoking and alcohol consumption by children. However, experts expressed the opinion that such things could be written in children's books, but presented in a different way. Proponents of 'undistilled' children's literature, in particular Nadiya Shvadchak, believe that "[i]t is better to gain immunity with a book than by facing situations in real life, about which parents were so diligently silent"⁹⁷. Ambiguous plot episodes are suggested to be accompanied by interpretation or comments of adults, tabs on caution, safe-

⁹⁵ ŚWIETLICKI, Mateusz. Such Books Should be Burned! Same-Sex Parenting and the Stretchable Definition of the Family in Larysa Denysenko's and Mariia Foya's *Maya and Her Mums*. *Children's Literature in Education*, 2020, vol. 51, p. 534–543.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ SHVADCHAK, Nadiia. Bilshe tsenzury chy bilshe humoru? – yak buty z hlintveinamy y pyiakamy v dytiachykh knyzhkakh. [More Censorship or more Humor? – What to do with Mulled Wine and Beer in Children's Books. Nush]. *NUSH*, 2021. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <https://nus.org.ua/articles/bilshe-tsenzury-chy-bilshe-gumoru-yak-buty-z-glintveinamy-j-pyyakamy-v-dytiachyh-knyzhkah/>

ty, borders. As, for example, Serhiy Hrydin's book *And Parallels Intersect* about the suicidal behavior of the protagonist is accompanied by the comments of a psychologist. Iram Khan aptly writes about similar cases, censorship in schools and the task of teachers to open the world of books to children: "Schools must respect the censorial rights of groups and individuals, but schools must equally try to ensure that such people do not succeed in extending their prohibitions to everyone's children. If not, children's authors will be unable to write about controversial or unexplored issues. Children's literature will go back to the boring educational texts of the past. Every child should be allowed access to these controversial books, so that thoughts and questions can be raised about the world that we live in"⁹⁸.

Practice of parental control over children's literature is widespread in other countries, including the United States. The *American Library Association* (ALA) records many appeals every year. In total, for the period from 1990 to 2010, the ALA has data on 10,676 cases of book bans, and, in 2022, the Association reported a record number of them: "ALA documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago"⁹⁹. Some of them are classic cases of censorship in its worst manifestations, some cases are anecdotal in nature, but most are a specific form of parental control. As noted by the Association, "Throughout history, books have been challenged for many reasons, including political content, sexual expression, or language offensive to some people's racial, cultural, or ethnic background, gender or sexuality, or political or religious beliefs. Materials considered heretical, blasphemous, seditious, obscene or inappropriate for children have often been censored"¹⁰⁰.

The reasons for banning books by parents are most often the display of cruelty, inappropriateness for the age group (presence of explicitly sexual scenes, illustrations, racial discrimination), occultism and propaganda of homosexuality. Nevertheless, there are other reasons to be seen as well. For example, be-

⁹⁸ KHAN, Iram. The Censorship of Canadian Children's Literature. *Canadian Content* (online journal), 1999. [Accessed 2025 January 7]. Access online: <http://www.canadian-content.ca/issues/0699censor.html>

⁹⁹ GARCIA, Raymond. American Library Association reports record number of demands to censor library books and materials in 2022. *American Library Association*. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/03/record-book-bans-2022>

¹⁰⁰ Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A. *American Library Association*. [Accessed January 7, 2025]. Access online: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq>

cause of confusion and profanity, the book *Bridge to Terabithia* by the winner of the *Newbery* award Catherine Peterson was banned. In 1992, the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* was banned due to its poor portrayal of witches. Because of animals that talk and do not respect God, parents banned the book *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White.

In Ukraine, there can only be occasional cases of appeals, and this phenomenon does not take on such a scale because there are not many books on these topics. Today, the prejudiced attitude of a significant part of society to certain topics in children's literature still persists: these are the topics of early sexual experience, formation of non-traditional orientation in children or manifestations of sexual behavior that do not correspond to the stereotypical gender ideas. As noted by Bettina Kümmeling-Meibauer, "Children's and young adult literature has always been closely connected with political and societal issues. Due to its inherent pedagogical program, literature for children and young people was subdued to contemporary conceptualizations of childhood to a greater or lesser extent. These went hand in hand with political and cultural ideas about proper child-rearing, which in turn was linked to educating children as future adult citizens"¹⁰¹. In children's literature, there is a certain limit to what is allowed: it is not customary to depict violence, although the topic of school bullying is common, where there are partial descriptions of these phenomena, without excessive detail (for example, Julia Cherpnienko's *Revenge* or Alevtina Shavlach's *Pampukh*). The taboo is conditionally preserved on the depiction in children's literature of scenes, situations, plots and images that do not correspond to the age characteristics of the children's perception and can traumatize their psyche. Profanity is unacceptable. As S. Didukh-Romanenko notes, "[C]urrently, censorship in children's literature is directed mainly against depictions of erotic scenes and violence, the use of profanity, insults to the believers' feelings, and inconsistencies of the plot with children's age"¹⁰². Difficult topics are often discussed while using metaphorical language, fairy-tale plots, role-playing situations, etc. That is why Ukrainian children's literature is often called 'virtuous', especially in comparison to translated books by foreign authors.

¹⁰¹ KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, Bettina; SCHULZ, Farriba. Introduction: Political Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Children's Literature. In: KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER, Bettina; SCHULZ, Farriba (eds.). *Political and Cultural Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Children's Literature*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag 2023, p. 9–36.

¹⁰² DIDUKH-ROMANENKO, Svitlana. Tsenzura v dytiachii literaturi: nediytiachi pristrasti [Censorship in Children's Literature: Adult Passions]. *Kolo*, 2014, No. 7, p. 42.

CONCLUSION

Ukrainian children's literature of the 20th century is literature whose development is marked by being political, ideological, public; preliminary and punitive; and featuring open and hidden censorship. Censorship was one of the most important elements of the totalitarian system of the Soviet state. The functions of censorship control were consistent with the functions of repressive bodies that violated the rights and freedoms of the members of society.

The totalitarian state in which Ukrainians had to live, through ideological censorship, political pressure and terror, subordinated children's literature to the goals of the state. This turned children's literature into a tool of ideological education of the young generation of citizens, as well as tried to destroy national manifestations of literary tradition and culture. However, this tradition was being kept by writers in the diaspora and those whose works were banned. It was revived with Ukraine's independence in 1991. The banned names and works were revealed, and a new generation of children's writers appeared. They ensured the multi-thematic and multi-genre development of modern children's literature. They overcame the taboo on fantasy and detective genres, while offering deeply psychological realistic prose, adventure-historical and school stories.

The main characters of contemporary Ukrainian children's literature are no longer expected to be always a "perfect cog in the Soviet machine", and the artistic world is no longer limited to the problems of a colonial, ideologically engaged society. Nowadays, the historical stage of overcoming Soviet cultural colonialism is coming to an end, and we are experiencing the rapid revival of the unique Ukrainian literature, culture, and nation.

Sources and Literature

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