

East European Literary Magazines 1945–2004 in Poland and Lithuania

ONLINE LECTURE 2

Date: 19 December 2022, 1:00 PM (CET) via ZOOM

Moderator: dr. Agnieszka Będkowska-Kopczyk, University of Bielsko-Biala

First lecture

TITLE:

Polish Press for Freedom:

Writers in Exile, Second and Third Publishing Circuit. An Overview.

LECTURERS:

**Dr. AGNIESZKA BĘDKOWSKA-KOPCZYK, Ph.D., (assistant professor),
University of Bielsko-Biala**

**Dr. hab. MICHAŁ KOPCZYK, prof. ATH (associate professor),
University of Bielsko-Biala**

The lecture addresses the role of the Polish post-war underground literary magazines paving the road to democracy in the Polish People's Republic. In this period, i.e., from 1947 to 1989, the Polish independent magazines were published in emigrant circles, mostly in France and Great Britain. After the Polish workers' strikes during the summer of 1976, independent literary magazines began to occur in the conspiracy in Poland. They became part of the so-called publishing and cultural second circuit. It was an illegal movement whose goal was to circumvent government censorship. In the 1980s, the demand for unofficial magazines related to a variety of subcultures and their fans began to expand, in large part due to the rising popularity of the photocopier. The so-called fanzines and artzines were published with little financial investment and usually did not have an obvious political motive. This movement is referred to as the *third publishing circuit*. The lecture reflects on the activities of the independent publishing houses as well as dissidents, editors, and writers who influenced democratic changes in Poland.

Second lecture

TITLE:

**The Role and Significance of the Polish Second Circulation Magazines
in the Years 1976–1989/1990**

LECTURER:

**Dr. hab. CECYLIA KUTA, The Institute of National Remembrance/The Pontifical
University of John Paul II**

Publishing without the permission of the communist regime that took place in Poland in the years 1976-1980 is called: the second circulation, independent publishing, underground publishing, uncensored publishing, publishing devoid of communication debit and publishing outside the official circulation. The terms 'tissue paper' [bibuła] and 'samizdat' are also used. Notwithstanding the terminology, the connotation is always the same: publishing books, editions, various prints which, due to the system of the communist censorship, were issued without the permission of the authorities, and were often critical of the regime. The character of the publications was political, historical, literary, socio-cultural and religious.

Fighting communism with 'the free word' did not originate in Poland. It took place earlier in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, and subsequently developed in other countries of the Eastern Bloc e.g. in Hungary and the German Democratic Republic. However, it was in Poland that the circulation had the broadest reach. Moreover, only in Poland, the advanced printing techniques were used on a large scale, being then translated into high edition. Using duplicators was a characteristic feature of the Polish anti-communist opposition. As a result, the independent publishing did not reach only a narrow circle of readers (which was the case in other countries of the Bloc), but also a broader audience. Operating in big cities as well as in towns was yet another trait which distinguished Polish second circulation from samizdat abroad. The second circulation in Poland broke the information monopoly of the communists and their policy of blocking all content which was inconsistent with the current ideology. It also revealed the truth inconvenient for the authorities and played an important role in preserving the national identity of Poles. Moreover, it made the émigré literature and the works of world classics available to Polish readers. Last but not least, it helped to restore and shape the historical awareness and spread the knowledge of the Polish history, especially the events that were distorted or concealed by the communist propaganda.

Third lecture

TITLE:

**Official Literary Magazine and Self-publication of Younger Generation:
Case of *Pergalė* and *Sietynas***

LECTURER:

**Dr. SAULIUS VASILIAUSKAS, Ph.D., writer and literary scholar working at the
Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore**

In considering the official publications in Lithuania during all or almost all of the Soviet era, it is difficult to talk about any pronounced opposition to the socialist system. It would be more accurate to note the balancing act between the clichés of the imposed socialist-realist rhetoric, and the attempts to slowly break free from that rhetoric by expanding the boundaries of literature - and, through it, of a freer way of thinking.

Pergalė (founded in 1942 and published as a magazine in Vilnius from 1945), the monthly cultural journal of the Lithuanian Writers' Union covering literature and the arts, was the main and, perhaps, the most important space for publishing literary texts during the Soviet era in Lithuania. Although during this time the magazine published some serious texts that challenged the framework of ideology, the most intensive loosening of its content naturally coincided with the period of Sąjūdis, the Lithuanian independence movement, and the fall of the Soviet Empire. The magazine retained its prestige amongst writers right up to the present day, after the change of its name to *Metai* in 1991.

There were almost no notable examples of literary self-publishing in Lithuania during the Soviet period, so the history of the young people's cultural monthly *Sietynas* (published irregularly from 1988 to 1991, with a total of 10 issues) can be regarded as a unique story of determination and courage to act independently. Published without censorship, under difficult conditions, the magazine broadened cultural horizons, instilled freedom of thought, and led the way towards a free national community.

This presentation briefly outlines the history of two different but significant Lithuanian literary magazines. It discusses their symbolic role in the processes of literary and cultural liberation and the democratisation of Lithuanian society.

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