

KRZYSZTOF MIGOŃ  
Wrocław, Poland

## BOOK POLICY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

### 1. Introduction

The notion "book policy" or "book politics" rarely appears in the bibliological literature. More often we can read about some approximate equivalents such as "book strategy", "book promotion", "book culture". Anyhow, there exists a field of book studies concerning the impact of politics on the production, distribution and use of books. Clearly, the fate of the book as a medium of human communication depends, to some extent, on politics, on legal systems, on governmental rules, on cultural and educational policy of any given state. The book theory and history has taken these issues into consideration for a long time. Impact of politics on the book world was described from the point of view of ideology, sociology (bibliosociology), pedagogic (bibliopedagogics), legislation and economy. Yet, there has been no complex vision of political bibliography that, indeed, has its own subject of studies – processes involved in book policy. This area of book studies has achieved a certain level of relative autonomy within the realm of bibliography only not long ago.

I am not able to say who was the first to use the term "book policy", or its equivalents in other languages such as "Buchpolitik", "politique du livre", or "polityka książki". The new German book encyclopaedia *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens* links this notion with the name of Paul Ladewig and his book *Politik der Bücherei* (1912)<sup>1</sup>. I would like to mention here Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński the Polish bibliologist, who in 1951 distinguished "bibliological politics" in his classification of the book science (bibliology). His idea of bibliological politics encompasses, at a more general level, firstly – the attitude to the book shown by states, societies, corporations, associations, and individuals, and, secondly, book system and international co-operation and exchange. More specifically, he talks about bibliological laws, book laws, copyright law, press law, etc. To my knowledge, this is the first presentation of the scope of "book policy" as a term in the world bibliological literature<sup>2</sup>.

Recently, book policy has found its place in the concept of bibliology as a science about written communication, presented by Robert Estivals<sup>3</sup>. He points out that political influences may be seen in all aspects of the book world, whether ancient or modern. Consequently, "book policy" is a kind of methodological approach that enables

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<sup>1</sup> Steinberg H. *Buchpolitik // Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*. Stuttgart, 1987. 2. Aufl. Bd. 1. P. 630.

<sup>2</sup> Vrtel-Wierczyński S. *Teoria bibliografii w zarysie*. Wrocław, 1951. P. 204.

<sup>3</sup> Estivals R. *La bibliologie*. Paris, 1987. P. 100-103; *Bibliologie et politique : les systemes politiques et la communication écrite // Revue de bibliologie*. No 34 (1991), p. 7-13.

one to describe and explain the world of book from the point of view of political sciences. It is clear that such an approach significantly widens the scope of bibliological research. This may remind us of some innovative bibliological works which, by adopting methods and concepts used in sociology, psychology and pedagogic, have opened new avenues in theory, history and practice of bibliological science.

## **2. *On the Origin and Nature of Book Policy***

Political thoughts have been associated with, and influenced the book culture since the beginning of the book as a means of communication, promoting its rapid development or bringing it into standstill. Literacy has always been regarded as an indicator of higher cultural level and an attribute of upper social classes. In the past in particular, it was closely associated with authorities, enabling ones to rule effectively. Therefore there is no doubt that people of the book world, and the books themselves, have become focus of interest of political rulers. The influence of politics on the book world has then got even more pronounced, because book culture has been constantly being made accessible to larger and larger groups of people and the number of people creating this world, that is authors, readers and producers, has been steadily increasing. Certainly, no ruler and no politician would abandon or neglect this powerful tool that may be used to control societal life and to direct people.

In the more distant times, book policy tended to be more prohibitive than creative. At least, we know much more about the former aspect as each epoch and almost every political system has left its own register of "prohibited books", record of persecuted and punished authors, purges in libraries, etc. However, we also have some information about consciously realised book policy, that has encompassed either the entire book system or its selected components. For example, the rulers of the Hellenistic Mediterranean realm widely used books to achieve their political goals; big libraries established across the ancient world clearly illustrate this point. Political motivations can be identified in the positive attitude of secular and religious authorities towards typographic art, present since its origin, and expressed in a number of privileges granted for various people and institutions active in production and distribution of book. In the modern world, book issues have become one of the most important aspects of country's home policy as they are unavoidably present in the world of culture, education, science and nationality. Step by step, contrasting models of book policy have been evolving in different states, ranging from extremely liberal, almost non-political, up to one strongly influenced by ideology, restrictive, tightly linked with current political systems.

State – book system relationships are not the only ones, where effects of book policy may be seen. Book policy may have a suprastate character if it is accomplished by international, non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, many scientific and cultural institutions, local councils, social and religious organisations follow their own book policies. Thus, book policy reflects both the world of global, "big" politics and equally that of local politics. It includes general philosophies and programmes, and specific procedures of their implementation, which often do not quite match each other.

### **3. Factors Controlling Book Policy**

Book policy, in both macro- and microscale, in other words – at the global and national level and that accomplished by particular institutions of the books system respectively, is controlled by a number of factors of various relative weight and importance. It seems quite impossible to construct a general, universally valid ranking list of these factors. In some cases local cultural tradition proves more important, yet in others temporary ideological aims, economic situation or technical conditions of book production would exert major influence. With general political processes proceeding, each factor may be subjected to change itself and it would result in modification of book policy that often becomes much deviated from the originally envisaged.

Creation of book policy often stems from philosophical and ideological principles of a state. Their derivatives are the attitude to cultural tradition, that may be either its continuation or abandonment, and evolutionary or revolutionary nature of the respective changes. These ideological factors have clearly dominated book policy in the Soviet Russia and they still dominate book systems in the communist China or fundamentalist Iran.

Book policy is further controlled by the degree of literacy in a society. Educational programmes cannot be carried out effectively without appropriately designed books, particularly spelling books and textbooks. In turn, "new readers" cannot be supplied with suitable literature without planned attempt of a number of writers, translators, publishers, booksellers, teachers and social workers. This aspect of book policy was brought to light in the seventies and eighties thanks to efforts of UNESCO, the most spectacular events in this context being the International Book Year in 1972, with the motto "Books For All", and 1982 World Congress on Books in London, whose principal theme was "Towards Reading Society".

Now we have to introduce the language policy of a state that is of utmost importance in book policy within multilingual and multinational countries<sup>4</sup>. Particular groups of citizens usually have their own systems of ethnic book that coexist or are in conflict with the dominating system. In the present-day world, perhaps all countries would actually fall into this category as almost everywhere there exist national minorities of ancient and/or recent origin. Ethnic revival of recent times has resulted in enormous changes in book culture and has forced politicians to touch problematic issues for long largely ignored. Polish People's Republic wanted to be (until 1989), notwithstanding historical facts and present situation, a state of one nation and one language and therefore other languages were allowed to be used in public to most limited extent. Language policy, or – *jazykove stroitelstvo* in Russian, has direct bearing on the problems of the book world. Official recognition of a given language at primary, secondary or university level, as a locally or nation-wide used means of communication, exerts considerable impact on book systems. History of languages,

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<sup>4</sup> Laitin D. D. Multilingual States : Language Policies and Political Implications // The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics. Oxford, 1994. Vol. 5. P. 2625–2630; Language reform : History and Future / ed. I. Fodor, C. Hagege. Vol. 1–3. Hamburg, 1983–1984.

books, book and language policy in the former Soviet Union provides us with perhaps the best source material to illustrate this point<sup>5</sup>.

Differentiation of book culture in bi- and multilingual countries proceeds with clear respect to language boundaries. It seems that there are not very many trouble spots in language and book policy in multilingual Switzerland, yet the same does not hold true in the case of Belgium and Spain<sup>6</sup>. It is widely known that home tongue of 40 million citizens of EU countries is other than the official language of a country they live

<sup>7</sup> This is a real challenge for book policy.

Writing system should be also called for if controls on book policy are to be fully evaluated<sup>8</sup>. It is sometimes assumed that these issues are definitely resolved, particularly in Europe, and processes of creation of writing systems have rather marginal importance. This is not true, however<sup>9</sup>. Not very long ago, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian tsar authorities had taken the decision to change the writing system of Lithuanian language into Cyrillic; this brought well-known consequences for Lithuanian book. Political action *par excellence*, and *par force* at the same time, was the latinisation and then cyrillicisation of tens of local languages in the Soviet Union in the twenties and thirties<sup>10</sup>. Newly created independent post-Soviet states have to take this fundamental issue again and to find a solution satisfactory to everyone. Let us call for example of Moldova that, still being a Soviet republic, on 31 August, 1989, changed the paragraph 70.1 of the Constitution that now declares the Moldavian language "on the basis of Latin graphics" as the official language of the state<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, on 2 September, 1993, the National Assembly of Uzbekistan formulated the act on "implementation of Uzbek alphabet based on the Latin script" that has to replace the currently used Cyrillic in September, 2000<sup>12</sup>.

Another political action that markedly modified the book system in Turkey was latinisation of Turkish language in 1928, being the part of reformatory measures of

<sup>5</sup> Isaev M. I. *Jazykovoe stroitel'stvo v SSSR* (processy sozdaniya pismennostej narodov SSSR). Moskva, 1979; Lewis E. G. *Multilingualism in the Soviet Union: aspects of language policy and its implementation*. The Hague, 1972; Comrie B. *The Languages of the Soviet Union*. Cambridge, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Tortosa J. M. *Polityka językowa a języki mniejszości: od Wieży Babel do Daru Języków*. Warszawa, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> See: *The Mercator Project: (the European Network for Documentation and Information on Lesser-Used Languages)* // *Celtic Cultures Newsletter*. 1996, no. 6, p. 76–78.

<sup>8</sup> Basic studies on this problem are: Mieses M. *Die Gesetze der Schriftgeschichte*. Wien, 1919; Morison S. *Politics and Script*. Oxford, 1972; *Advances in the creation and revision of writing systems* / ed. J. Fischman. Den Haag, 1977; Glück H. *Schrift und Schriftlichkeit eine sprach- und kulturwissenschaftliche Studie*. Stuttgart, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Migoń K. *Les écriture comme probleme de recherche en bibliologie politique* // *Revue de Bibliologie*. No. 34 (1991), p. 22–28.

<sup>10</sup> Brang P., Züllig M. *Kommentierte Bibliographie zur slavischen Soziolinguistik*. Bd. 1–3. Bern, 1981. Teil 5 *Ideologie, Politik und Sprache*, Nr. 10977–11138; Baldauf I. *Schriftreform und Schriftwechsel bei den muslimischen Russland- und Sowjettürken (1850–1937) ein Symptom ideengeschichtlicher und kulturpolitischer Entwicklungen*. Bamberg, 1991. (Habil. Schrift).

<sup>11</sup> Pohila V. *Grafia latina pentru toti*. Chisinau, 1990. P. 4; *Istoricul an 1989* / red. L. Bucataru. Chisinau, 1991. P. 293.

<sup>12</sup> Ismatulla K. *Modern literary Uzbek*. I. Bloomington (Indiana), 1995. P. XVI.

Kemal Atatürk. Leman Cankaya is right saying that "... adoption of the new form of writing upset the entire cultural heritage", yet the implementation of this new writing system resulted in substantial increase in literacy from just 10% in 1927, through 40% in 1955, up to 60% in 1975<sup>13</sup>

Book policy cannot be treated in separation from the cultural, scientific and educational policy of a state. It is these areas of public life in which books are used and serve as means of transmission and consolidation of ideas. General directions of state policies in all these fields influence the fate of books; most clearly this is seen in totalitarian and centralist systems. Among measures of book policy there appear legal and economic system, copyright law, publishing and library law, preventive and repressive censorship, financial, tax and custom regulations and administrative code. It is also quite obvious that many actions of political character affecting book systems do not have any legal grounds and are consequences of arbitrary decisions.

Finally, effective book policy cannot be carried out without necessary financial means, with time-worn printing machines, inefficient transport and postal system. These financial and technical problems are not common for many African and Asiatic countries. They have been called "developing" until recently; it is increasingly doubtful whether they are developing any more.

#### **4. Book Policy Today**

There are three different levels to carry out book policy. These are, first, international, or, better, suprastate level; second, state level; and third, local level. Moreover, book policy may encompass all or just selected components of the book system. Sometimes, its principles are formulated *explicitely*, yet in most cases can only be reconstructed *ex post*. Here, two former cases will be briefly presented, as these seem to be more important for the global book system.

Moderators of book policy at the international level are suprastate organisations, above all the United Nations and its special committees. The most important part is played by UNESCO and by professional societies of book workers, that is authors, translators, publishers, booksellers and librarians (for example, IFLA and IRA). In addition, international publishing houses and distributors significantly contribute to the global picture of book policy. International aspect in book policy dominates in countries which, owing to strong economy and widespread use of a given language (English, French), have high position in global book trade<sup>14</sup>. Close links between former metropolises and post-colonial states also need to be emphasised.

UNESCO has shown interest in problems of book at the global scale since its creation in 1946, yet it has become more dynamic in this field since the seventies, when vigorous book promotion started and programmes of activity were declared. Reports by Ronald Barker and Robert Escarpit (*Books For All*, 1956; *The Book Revolution*, 1965;

<sup>13</sup> Cankaya L. Turkey, libraries // Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science. New York, 1981. Vol. 31, p. 224; see also: Heyd U. Language reform in Modern Turkey. Jerusalem, 1954, p. 22–25.

<sup>14</sup> See for example: The European Book World. Part I. Vol. 1–2. Part II. Vol. 1–4. Cambridge, 1993–1996.

*The Book Hunger*, 1973), contracted by UNESCO, presented the situation of book in the modern world and became a basis for comprehensive actions. The turning point in UNESCO's book policy proved to be the year 1972, officially declared as the International Book Year.

Programme of book policy, adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNESCO in November 1970, was characterised by great versatility and complexity and so far it is the only one of this kind aimed at the global target. It was based on a few premises; firstly, that the book assists in teaching and education, international understanding and peaceful co-operation; secondly, as a consequence of the above, that authors and translators deserve much support, especially as far as the copyright law is concerned; thirdly, that production and distribution of books as well as the network of libraries has to be developed; and fourthly, that reading habit has to be cultivated. Adoption of these general principles has resulted in tens and hundreds specifically undertaken actions in almost every part of the globe. All these were summarised during the World Congress on Books in London on 7–11 June, 1982, when *The London Declaration: Towards a Reading Society* was announced to emphasise the utmost importance of the idea of "Books for All" and topical character of the *Charter of the Book*, announced a few years earlier in Brussels on 22 October, 1971.

1. Formulation of a national book strategy.
2. Recognition that the book industry is a vital industry.
3. Integration of the new technologies into the book chain.
4. Creation of a reading environment in all types and all levels of society.
5. Stimulation of international co-operation to build national book capacities.
6. Increase in two-way flow of books across borders<sup>15</sup>.

The Congress has emphasised some crucial problems in the world book policy: the role of governments and the need for national book policies within plans of national development, the need for book research at regional, sub-regional and national level, international book exchange and UNESCO book coupon scheme, copyright issues and significance of translation process, publishing in multilingual countries and those directed specifically to minority language groups, scholarly publishing, key role of publishers, booksellers and librarians and – in the aftermath – the necessity for training in all the book professions. UNESCO activities targeted at book culture have been expansively documented in publications launched by this organisation, including the newsletter "Book Promotion News" in English and French, series "Studies on Books and Reading" in English and/or French and Arabic only, widely distributed internal reports concerning regional meetings of experts on national book strategies, etc. They have become the subject to various analyses, undertaken also from bibliological point of view.

Book policies of particular countries vary considerably. Robert Estivals, who analysed the situation of book in the world in years 1971–1981, distinguished four basic

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<sup>15</sup> World Congress on Books, London, 7–11 June, 1982. Final Report. Paris, 1982. P. 7.

models of it: monarchistic, liberal, socialistic and that of the Third World<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, they are all subjected to certain modifications in specific countries, as convincingly proved by Alfred Ŭwierk in respect to Eastern European communist countries. It is only the socialist countries, where book systems have been fully controlled by the state<sup>17</sup>

The most obvious instrument to control the book system available to the state is censorship. Similarly, it becomes a powerful tool in churches, religious associations, political parties and organisations. However, censorship ought to be regarded as merely a component of a more complex system of control; actual decisions are made by state-controlled organisations, whose activities are based on ideological principles. Book policy appears as a complicated mosaic of plans, their fulfillment, general principles and occasional deviations from these. The case of the former Soviet Union may be used here as an example. The state was following a well-defined cultural and scientific policy that included book policy, yet censorship in the institutional meaning of this world was virtually non-existent. The body that exerted some control on the Soviet world of book was *Glavlit* – Main Office for Literature and Publications, "Mezhdunarodnaja kniga" and VAAP, but in fact, for long time, it was ordinary fear and self-censorship, shortage of paper and limited opportunities to get in print that were the most effective agents of control. State institutions took decisions about titles to be published, size of editions, range of distribution, library resources and restrictions in access, desired reading activities (see VDOLK), etc. It must not be said, however, that decisions made were all entirely wrong. Certainly, citizens benefited from the strong emphasis on classic literature, extensive production of scientific books, including those for general public, and overall promotion of book; yet russification and xenophobic aspects cannot be overlooked.

### 5. Necessity of book policy

Book policy is an important component of activities undertaken by modern states, ethnic and social groups and people in general. It enables one, as any other policy, to proceed towards envisaged political goals. Hence, it is of interest to any rulers to implement an effective book policy; in democratic states to match expectations of citizens; in totalitarian ones – to help to keep power and control over all aspects of life.

It may be suggested that implementation of book policy is and has to be the duty of a state; it is so in the same way as with educational, rural or penal policy. However, measures of book policy in particular countries do not need to be exactly the same. Rich countries with long record of book culture, plenty of book production and easy access to books do not have to express explicitly principles of book policy. By contrast, countries which are poor, newly created or with low level of literacy in the society, cannot neglect book policy for the sake of their own cultural and economic

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<sup>16</sup> Estivals R. *Le livre dans le monde, 1971–1981* : introduction a la bibliologie politique internationale. Paris, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Ŭwierk A. G. *Zur sozialistischen Theorie und Praxis des Buchwesens in Osteuropa*. Wiesbaden, 1981.

development. What is necessary to establish an effective system of book policy is creation of favourable conditions for development of publishing houses, bookshops, libraries, and agreement concerning priorities in publishing, translation work and book import.

At the suprastate level, implementation of book policy by competent institutions and organisations is the correct way to meet humanistic aims envisaged by citizens of the world that, at the same time, is becoming more unified and yet more and more diverse.