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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/3512>

DOI: 10.4000/temoigner.3512

ISSN: 2506-6390

Publisher:

Éditions du Centre d'études et de documentation Mémoire d'Auschwitz, Éditions Kimé

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 October 2015

Number of pages: 172

ISSN: 2031-4183

Electronic reference

Guillermo Sanz Gallego, "Censorship under the Franco regime", *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire* [Online], 121 | 2015, Online since 01 October 2016, connection on 03 February 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/3512> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/temoigner.3512>

This text was automatically generated on 3 February 2022.

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Censorship under the Franco regime

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- ¹ The Franco regime enforced a strong censorship policy. On 22 April 1938, one year before the Spanish Civil War came to an end, the *Ley de Prensa* was signed by Ramón Serrano Suñer, who was Franco's brother-in-law and, at the time, the Nationalist Minister of the Interior. The law remained in effect nearly 30 years and served as a form of political propaganda. Four main censorship criteria were used: political opinions, religion, sexual morality, and use of language. Writers were not allowed to express any criticism against Francoism, its ideology, its ideologues, its accepted historiography, or its laws. Criticism of Catholicism was not permitted. References to abortion, divorce, adultery, and homosexuality were forbidden, and published work could not contain taboo language or a register that could be considered obscene or indecent. By applying this censorship law, the Franco regime intended to "ensure both the dissemination of truth and the work of national reconstruction" (Foreword to the *Normas generales*, 1944). In fact, the policy reveals the regime's efforts to control cultural expression and repress dissident political views.

Template for censors dating from the Ley Fraga era

RESULTADO

Se propone la **D E N E G A D O**

Madrid, de de 197

El Jefe de Negociado de Lectorado,

R E S O L U C I O N

VISTOS el informe del Negociado de Lectorado, las disposiciones vigentes y las normas comunicadas por la Superioridad, esta Sección estima que la obra a que se refiere este expediente puede ser

Madrid, de de 197

El Jefe de la Sección,

CONFORME con la Sección.

Madrid, de de 197

EL DIRECTOR GENERAL,

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- 2 A new law, the *Ley de Prensa e Imprenta*, was enacted on 18 March 1966. It was commonly called *Ley Fraga* because it was signed during Manuel Fraga's term as Minister of Information and Tourism. This law was in theory less rigid and it implied a first step toward freedom of speech. Henceforth preventive censorship was abolished. Yet, section 2 of the new law included a series of restrictions that resembled the former censorship criteria. In addition, special attention was given to the role of the editor, who was now also liable to sanctions and criminal prosecution. As a consequence, many editors voluntarily submitted works to the authorities in order to confirm their suitability for publication. Scholars have pointed out that the new law was in fact a legal hoax allowing the regime to maintain repression under the guise of a revised policy. A poll conducted by Manuel Abellán in 1974 proved that, as a result of this new law, self-censorship became a common practice among nearly one quarter of the writers surveyed, and almost none of them dared to express their political opinions in their works. Similarly, editors started to carry out their own censorship programme in the form of editorial practices before submitting the work to the authorities.

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