# Power, Freedom and the Censorship of History

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This essay is not about the history of censorship, but about the censorship of history, and, partly, about the history of the censorship of history between 1945 and 2008. The importance of the censorship of history varies according to whether a given political regime is dictatorial, democratic, or transitory between both.

## Typology

*Dictatorship*. In dictatorial regimes, subdivided in authoritarian and totalitarian types, a small group illegitimately holds power over the state with backing from the military. By their nature, they cannot draw sufficient legitimation for this absolute power from elections and laws. Therefore, to root and consolidate that power, they must seek legitimation elsewhere, often in an ideology that instrumentalizes the past as it has survived in memories, traditions, documents, and cultural heritage. History thus becomes an instrument of the official ideology that in its turn serves dictatorial political power.

To that end, dictators use propaganda and censorship as twin tools – the former to promote the official vision, the latter to eradicate the rest. The union of propaganda and censorship creates an official

historiography with monopolistic pretensions and absolute truths. It discourages or blocks inquiry challenging it. Governmental and other institutions are established to implement the official guidelines. Ideally, these institutions do not blatantly falsify the historical record, but leave intact as much of the past as possible, only altering key passages. They attempt to distort history gently so as to arouse unanimity, not suspicion and dissent. Reality, however, does not always match the ideal: history, then, is often crudely mutilated and falsified. This propagation of the regime's own version of history can be accompanied by tremendous pressure upon historians, resulting in self-censorship, self-criticism, and broken careers. In such a climate of fear and suspicion, professional repression may transform into physical repression. Mail control, telephone tapping, intimidation in all its forms, purges, trials, and detention are part of its panoply.

The best topics for propaganda are those that illustrate the official ideology: cherished antecedents and historical parallels favorable to the dictator in power will be praised, enemies and heresies diabolized. Topics viewed as controversial and liable to be censored are those that call into question the official ideology: allusions to the illegitimate origins and violent maintenance of power, crimes committed by the regime and its interest in covering them up, rivalry among its leaders, discord among the population, sensitive information about dominated minorities and classes, crises (periods of martial law, revolts, and civil war), frictions with other countries, military defeat, periods of humiliation and weakness, the history of successful rivals, and, finally, historical parallels of all these areas. To that end, key episodes of history need reassessment or recovery.

The dynamics of making historiography subservient typically pass through three stages: a stage of equalization, a stage of "normality," and eventually, if at all, a stage of renewed openness. The length and intensity of these stages is dependent on many factors: history's place in society; the pre-dictatorial traditions of integrity among historians and their standing as public figures; the degree of consistency, elaboration, and monopolization of the dictatorial ideology; the importance accorded to history therein; and the strength of the repressive apparatus. The manipulated historical facts and opinions are adapted to the needs of the moment; firm and lenient control alternate. Censorship fluctuates with it – at one moment, it is a legal activity, at another an illegal one;

at one moment it is fragmented at sub national level, at another it may apply to a group of countries with a common ideology.

When dictators are eventually toppled, the windows of the past are thrown open. The transition to democracy and the abolition of systematic censorship go hand in hand and enable – without firm guarantees – the development of an independent historiography. This includes the partial replacement of compromised historians, the rehabilitation and reemployment, if still feasible, of persecuted historians, and the training of a new generation of history students. Current and archival records require a new policy of openness, official secrecy needs democratic legislation and control. In terms of personnel and infrastructure, the solution in most countries leaves room only for a certain degree of generational continuity. If that continuity reflects the dictatorial legacy too much, historians will not always launch investigations into the problematic past as energetically as they should. Emerging democracies alternate hope for the future and fear of relapse. The past plays a key role in this process, for the exposure of historical falsifications, the rehabilitation of political adversaries formerly fallen in disgrace, the predilection for new historical symbols all contribute to the delegitimation of the *ancien régime*.

*Post-conflict societies*. Two dangers related to the censorship of history emerge in these post-conflict societies. The first is obstruction to the protohistorical work of post-dictatorial tribunals and truth commissions. Efforts at punishing perpetrators of past human rights abuses and at providing reparations for their victims are often hampered. The second, related, danger consists in the concealment or destruction of evidence of the violent past. The main targets are the former secret repression archives of dictators and the clandestine cemeteries that contain forensic evidence of their victims. Archives collected by national human rights groups under the dictatorship or those that are the product of post-dictatorial criminal justice and truth-seeking efforts are not safe either. In short, tyranny haunts the lands of history long after its own burial.

*Democracy*. When these emerging, insecure democracies survive, they gradually transform into stable democracies that protect the human rights of their citizens and that keep the military under firm civilian command. The more democratic the regime, the more alternative evidence-based historical facts and opinions circulate or are freely allowed

to do so. Some of these democracies, however, may be characterized by a mixture of democratic and authoritarian elements, with the first tipping the scales. Traces of censorship are clearly recognizable in restrictions put upon historians living in those democracies, especially in three domains. As was the case for emerging democracies, the area of public information and secrecy needs regulation. When secrecy rules for current and archival records are excessive, they lead to censorship. Furthermore, histories commissioned by governments or others are sometimes subtly adapted to disguise unwelcome messages. In these histories, the precarious subjects are mostly tied to the international wars and internal conflicts of the past – frequently (but not always) in combination with imperial or colonial expansion – that in the long run come to be seen as adversely affecting the democratic legitimation of power and the construction of a collective identity, in short, as sources of shame. Finally, groups denying certified research findings, especially about grave historical wrongs, may be penalized for their denial. The historical profession is adamant in that these aberrant theses of deniers of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes are products of pseudohistory, but divided as to whether they should be criminalized.

*Censorship abroad.* Quite different from censorship in dictatorial and (semi-)democratic regimes, is a final type of increasing importance: the censorship of history from abroad. Foreign governments have exerted pressure on official series of foreign policy sources, lobbied universities to stop exile historians from broaching certain subjects, approached parliaments not to adopt resolutions about certain historical episodes, or complained about the historical views of other countries at international fora. Alternatively, they have established chairs, research centers, and associations, or funded congresses and travel to propagate their historical views. If unwelcome foreign scholars have the audacity to present themselves at the border, they are denied a visa, or even imprisoned.

**Justification**

Every form of power, dictatorial as well as democratic, is embodied in an official ideology, which must clarify convincingly two major questions: which historical path did the community follow hitherto and why is the ruling elite particularly suited to guide it with a firm hand

into the future? The first question, about collective identity, is related to the need of each community (and segment thereof) for roots and feelings of continuity with its ancestors, and to its yearning for pride in a unique destiny. The second, about legitimacy, is linked to the fact that no elite and no ruler whose task it is to give the community that desired background can do without an acceptable biography and a venerable genealogy. In the ideology developed by the elite to satisfy and lend authority to both demands, the past constitutes an important storehouse of usable examples. The problem, however, is that the selection of fitting historical examples can be challenged at any given moment. Therefore, elites and rulers are forced not only to make selective use of the past, but also to optimize that use creatively and permanently. In dictatorial systems, the present commands the past, but it is highly doubtful whether the tyrant who loses the keys to history is still able to rule. Democracies, emerging and stable, also draw some of their legitimacy from the past by presenting themselves as a continuation of earlier democracies or as a rupture with earlier dictatorial periods.

**Ontology**

The term censorship, the leading specialist in media law Eric Barendt wrote, is emptied of real meaning if it is applied to any social convention or practice which makes communication for some individuals more difficult. Therefore, the focus here lies on the coercive and the tutelary practices of the state. Even with this fundamental caveat, and whatever the regime, it is often difficult to distinguish censorship from similar restrictions upon the activities of historians. First, a general historical context of war, colonization and occupation, poverty and violence may deeply affect the working conditions of historians. Second, in all regime types, the main censors are governments. In dictatorships, they are supported by the complete state machinery. In other regime types, censorship is more indirect and fragmented. On a more fundamental level, every government imposes constraints on historical research, especially if its official information policies – as embodied in legislation regarding freedom of information, secrecy, and archives – is characterized by excessive secrecy used to conceal sensitive information, avoid criticism, and reduce accountability. The risks of control appear also in the area of public libraries, governmental quasi-monopolies

on historical museums, or on certain large source editions. Of a different order is the official prevention or disturbance of controversial commemorations and anniversaries. Not only does the executive branch of government impose regulations, parliaments also do. For example, they may adopt laws mandating the teaching of history in the language of the majority. Judges may check too eagerly whether the historians carried out their research honestly and prudently and, in the process, attempt to determine historical truth themselves.

Third, educational policies govern the capabilities of universities in terms of funding of research and teaching, allocation of scarce resources, grants, employment, and infrastructure management. In the specific field of history, censorship may be further disguised as pressure from the historical establishment, corporatism, political correctness on the campus, and rejection of theses and manuscripts for incompetence. It often takes the form of career restrictions. Loss of salary, refusal of promotion, demotion, revocation of academic degrees and responsibilities, restrictions on travel abroad and on contacts with foreign scholars, wholesale boycott, and, finally, dismissal, are sometimes insidious forms of censorship. Dismissal is perhaps the most common sanction against historians around the globe. (Conversely, legitimate dismissal for incompetence or abuse is sometimes presented as a censorship case by its victim.)

Fourth, individuals and unofficial groups, either allied with, or opposed to the government may threaten unwelcome manifestations of the past. They loot archives or museums, destroy or desecrate historical monuments, and boycott books and journals. Veterans and Holocaust deniers, while very different groups, sometimes sue historians for defamation with the aim of silencing them. Elsewhere, radical groups attack historians on religious, political, or ethnic grounds. In many countries, they are involved in censorship activity. Hidden censorship is also at work when historians advise publishers or editorial boards to refuse manuscripts of colleagues because their contents do not conform to their viewpoint or signify competition for their own work. Market mechanisms deciding which genres are popular enough to be published may lead to whimsical or structural exclusion of valuable strands of historical writing.

Fifth, large-scale sexism, nationalism, and ethnocentrism lead to the misrepresentation, negligence, or denial of the history of

victim groups. In addition, entire categories may be excluded from, or discriminated during, the recruitment for vacancies. Some of these practices amount to direct censorship, such as the destruction of historical traces as the result of nationalism, or the rejection of a historical work because of the sexual or racial origin of its author. Sixth, autobiographical factors may bring historians to excessive bias and myopia. On balance, it can be concluded that certain restrictive factors may either result in *de facto* censorship or be disguised forms of indirect censorship themselves.

**Concepts**

The separation of censorship from restrictions such as those described in the borderline cases above is often complex. Bearing that in mind, I attempt to define the key concepts:

*Censorship of history*: systematic *control* of historical facts or opinions – often by deliberate suppression – imposed by, or with the connivance of the government or another power.

*Types*: pre- or post-censorship, direct or indirect, formal or informal, official or unofficial, public or private.

*Comment*: often accompanied by self-censorship and propaganda.

*Self-censorship of historians*: omission, often after pressure, by historians of historical facts or opinions – or avoidance of investigating them in the first place – for fear of negative consequences.

*Note*: also called the *Schere im Kopf* (scissors in the head).

*Comment*: most efficient, widest spread, least visible form of censorship; often due to chilling effect produced by censorship installing a climate of threat and fear.

*Historical propaganda*: systematic *manipulation* of historical facts or opinions, usually by, or with the connivance of the government or another power.

*Types*: by commission (i.e. by falsifying or lying), by omission, by denial.

*Comment*: also called "positive censorship." Second and third types close to censorship. Censorship is almost always part of a broader

propaganda campaign, but propaganda, being broader, does not necessarily imply censorship.

These concepts are part of a broader conceptual cluster:

*Abuse of history*: the use of history with intent to deceive. Part of irresponsible history.

*Comment*: censorship is abuse of history committed under control of others. Propaganda is abuse of history.

*Irresponsible history*: the abusive or negligent use of history.

*Comment*: part of the misconduct by historians.

*Misconduct by historians*: violations of professional norms either specifically related to history – this being called irresponsible history – or not.

*Comment*: the latter includes, e.g. use of offensive language in classrooms and intimidating and discriminatory treatment of colleagues and students.

**Dictatorship and Historiography**

The position of historians targeted by censorship is most complex under dictatorial regimes. Schematically, they opt either for collaboration, silence, or resistance. In the first category (collaboration), *propaganda historians* cooperate with the dictator. They write a history in which the rulers are glorified such as to appear fully justified in controlling history. There are two groups. *Court historians* write the official history, lead the new history departments and journals, as mandarins enjoy the privileges and favors of power, and are perhaps engaged as censors. *Bureaucratic historians* carry out smaller tasks and disseminate the official views. In both groups, some suffer from the moral dilemma engendered by the manipulation of history, while others revolt and become dissident and persecuted historians themselves.

The second category consists of *silent historians*. As the first of three subgroups, *accommodating historians* yield to the pressure, tacitly accept propaganda, and employ self-censorship out of fear or for opportunistic or idealistic reasons. *Safe-area historians* avoid controversy, switch to relatively safe areas of research and teaching, and enjoy the

small margins of freedom. *Inner-exile historians* tacitly refuse to endorse the regime, leave their manuscripts, if any, in the drawers, or discontinue their historical work. The spectrum of options makes the silent historian usually the most common and surely the most enigmatic type, whose motives are often difficult to guess. Self-preservation, however, overrules all other concerns.

The third category (resistance) is constituted by *protesting historians*. They differ from the inner-exile historians in that the latter just try to preserve their conscience, while the former aim at an additional social effect. There are four basic forms. *Aesopian historians* use tricks to evade censorship (historical analogies, an ornate style, omission of the index, original research between obedient introduction and conclusion). *Opposition historians* openly challenge attempts to curb freedom: they attack falsification, reorient their field of study *towards* prohibited eras and topics, and organize petitions and manifestos. They usually become the object of scathing attacks themselves. *Underground historians* continue their research in clandestinity, often to refute official views, and publish their manuscripts in *samizdat* (self-publishing) style. They live in isolation, cut off from an audience, barely surviving. They take extensive personal security measures and their work is sometimes characterized by methodological innovation that compensates for the scarcity of historical sources at their disposal. *Refugee* and *exile historians* (the former unwilling, the latter unable to return) try to adapt to a new environment and must overcome many obstacles. Some change careers, others keep alive and enrich the critical traditions of historiography. Non-historians in exile may turn to historical research. The relationship between these four types is laborious: confronting dictatorship unites them; mutually incompatible historiographies divide them. Some of their work is polemical and biased.

**Democracy and Historiography**

Dictatorship needs historiography as a source for legitimation and in that process it is frequently abused. The relationship between democracy and historiography is very different.

A first observation is that democracy and historiography have common determinants. Both are fostered by a culture of human rights, in particular by freedom of opinion and expression. That freedom is a cornerstone of both democracy and the search for, and transmission of the historical truth.

The second observation is that democracy and historiography are each other's conditions. Democracy is necessary (though not sufficient) for historiography. Strictly speaking, the condition is "quasi-necessary," because historians can exercise their duty under a dictatorship, albeit under far less favorable circumstances. Democratic principles of transparency and accountability enable historians to claim access to official archival information and to organize their investigation and education. These two principles also encourage citizens to claim the right to memory (the right to mourn and commemorate) and the right to history (the right to know the truth about past human rights abuses). A democratic regime does not restrain the search for historical facts nor for supporting evidence. Equally, a democracy does not in principle limit the range of opinions about these historical facts nor the public and critical scrutiny of these opinions in an open debate. This evidence-based search for facts and open discussion of opinions are exactly what is lacking in a dictatorship. In a repressive system, key facts are suppressed and deviating historical versions marginalized or censored. And even if democracy cannot ban the abuse of history and the harm it inflicts, even if democratic freedoms offer possibilities for abuses, its climate increases the chances that they are disclosed and opposed early, thus making the transformation of abuse into a large-scale phenomenon unlikely.

Conversely, a sound historiography, either seen as a form of scholarship or as a profession, *reflects* a democratic society. Sound historical scholarship constitutes a practical demonstration of the values – freedom of expression and information, plurality of opinions, and an open and critical debate – that are central to democracy. And the same is true for the core values of the historical profession – autonomy and accountability. Furthermore, a sound historiography *strengthens* a democratic society, because its result – a provisional form of tested historical truth – rejects historical myths once believed in and replaces them with more plausible historical interpretations. In this way, it supports the democratic principles of transparency and accountability. This is also the case for archival science: by making documents of former regimes accessible, it supports the same democratic principles. A sound historiography, then, is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for a *sustained* democracy.

**Practice**

Censorship of history has been practiced in all modes, genres, fields, categories, and periods of history, and in all countries. To begin with, it ranges over all *modes* of the historiographical operation. Pre-censorship, often invisible to the public, attempts to regulate research: archives are kept secret or cleansed and manuscripts are rewritten without authorial consent. Post-censorship means that publications are banned, their authorship is deleted or changed without authorial consent, or that lectures are boycotted or the content of teaching courses is improperly interfered with. Pre-censorship is a common feature of dictatorships, but not of other regimes. All historical *genres* are affected, although many believe that some of them are more amenable to censorship than others. In particular, source editions (even if this is a safe area for some), genealogies, biographies, memoirs, obituaries, chronicles, chronologies, annals, maps, photographs, bibliographies, historical dictionaries, encyclopedias, statistics, indexes, and history textbooks have been mentioned as vulnerable. But no genre is really safe, not even the most system-independent. The preceding survey of genres also proves that all *fields* come into the ambit of censorship, not only political or military history, but also economic, social, cultural, and other fields.

Censors also pay attention to all potentially dangerous historical facts and opinions, whatever their *category*. As the censors' aim is to control the past, they do not necessarily distinguish between professional historians and others dealing with the past. They perceive a danger, irrespective of the qualifications of those behind it. Therefore, *anyone* expressing historical facts or opinions can be targeted. Popular history, either written, spoken, or visual, is as much a target of censorship as academic history, and probably even more so. It uses multiple media and therefore has a wider reach. Many of these media (such as songs, commemorations, films, television, and all forms of cultural heritage) partly feed or reflect collective memory. Depending on the censor's need, all *periods* of history are targeted. Archaeology, for example, often covers the hypersensitive problem of the origin of the nation, and its censorship can be documented. In many countries, contemporary history is certainly the most dangerous period of study. This is mainly because the witnesses are still alive.

Geographical surveys corroborate that censorship is universal and occurs in widely diverging political and historiographical contexts, though distributed very unevenly across continents.

**Effects**

Returning from the textbook scene to the overall situation, the effects of the censorship of history are best assessed in its natural habitat: dictatorship. Under a repressive regime, the peer community of historians ceases to act as an honest check on the scholarly character of historical works. Scores of historians are obliged to destroy their own writings. The whole environment is infected and the border between truth and lies almost irreparably blurred. The censorship of history affects and poisons the entire professional climate: qualifications become unimportant and judgments twisted. Historians are terrorized, the once-stuffed drawers often stand empty. All this leaves its imprint on the present and future generations of historians as a social and professional group. The overall effect of censorship on the profession is not the death of history, but the illusion that it is still alive. In short, the main effect is sterility.

Despite all control, however, professionals are seldom a willing tool of some prescribed line; they always retain bargaining power, represented by their training and knowledge, because they must apply the general ideological guidelines to many different historical problems and contexts, or translate them into detailed curricula and textbooks. In doing so, they are able to create margins that increase as one moves further from the kernel of ideology. For this reason, purely instrumental theories of historiography are usually rather rudimentary.

Although at the broadest societal level, the dictator's aim is a unanimously obedient people, the next effect of censorship may be doubt about dogma and room for dissidence. The implausible tenets of censorship and propaganda engender a credibility gap between the official history taught at school and the versions whispered at home, often followed by a feeling of disillusion, especially among the younger generation, in the face of a culture of lies. For a long time to come, persistent distrust of the historical profession may be the legacy. Thus, even in the darkest hours of tyranny, the distorted past may be challenged by alternative versions. These alternative versions may be equally biased, but they are alternative and, through them, the flame of plurality continues to burn. Under non-dictatorial regimes, the effects of censorship, however serious, are less substantial. Even here, increasing frequencies of censorship may adversely affect the work climate, make the environment more condoning, and the work habitus more sloppy.

However, under all regime types, censorship may have unintended positive effects. Sometimes, if it is not all-pervading, it provides an indirect incentive for creativity and criticism. More importantly, it has a remarkable ability to highlight that which it suppresses. Taboos always attract curiosity. Repression may discourage that curiosity for decades. But when history as a classical vehicle of the past is silenced and compromised, every utterance – graffiti, literature, theater, film – becomes its potential vehicle and substitute. Thus, censorship generates the emergence of substitutes: whenever the silenced and silent historians are not able to refute the heralded truths of official historical propaganda, philosophers, poets, novelists, playwrights, filmmakers, journalists, storytellers, and singers take care of the historical truth and keep it alive. Paradoxically, the ostensible vulnerability of many of these substitutes is their power: writing, for example, is a solitary act requiring little institutional support. Sometimes, fictional genres are not taken seriously by the authorities and hence escape their attention. Thus, censorship may not suppress alternative views but rather generate them, and, by doing so, become counterproductive. Censorship backfires.

**Epistemology**

The question of how the occurrence of censorship can be proved, has its own difficulties. Problems of evidence of censorship do not only arise from its practical operation (the infinite variety of modes, genres, fields, and categories), but also from its very nature as a phenomenon related to knowledge. Three epistemological paradoxes are worth mentioning.

First, many forms of censorship are invisible and difficult to trace, since censorship normally takes place in an atmosphere of secrecy. The more effective, the less visible censorship is. Censors' motives are better masked, borderline cases confusingly ambiguous. Foremost, omission is less easily studied than commission.

Second, in a repressive society there is less information about more censorship, whereas in a democratic society there is more information about less censorship. Under dictatorial regimes, insiders (or outsiders allowed to visit the country) who are informed about the censorship of history or the persecution of historians, mostly do not report them because they fear research or career troubles or backlash effects on themselves or their wider circle. The result is wide

underreporting. Authors who do mention the subject typically do so in passing. Sometimes they treat it more extensively, as they write under the vivid impression of a recent famous case. If they systematically research and report it, and become whistleblowers, they may encounter disbelief. Data from the censors themselves are generally lacking, at least until the moment that a post-conflict transition arrives. Several exceptional but most important moments of repression, and moments of large operations in particular, are ill-suited for recording. Active recording of repression of historians typically requires stability and routine. In more democratic regimes, censorship is not absent, but it is usually less unobserved and uncriticized.

These twin paradoxes entail a third and hard paradox (close to the unintended positive effects discussed above) that comes to light when censorship is felt as problematic and hence studied: *speaking about censorship is the beginning of its suspension.* However, although censorship of history is a well-known and obvious area of interest, it has also been, until recently, a relatively underestimated and neglected field of systematic and encompassing historical research. Inspection of critical historiographical instruments yields a disappointing harvest; most do not address the problem of the political context of historiography as one of its main determinants. Authors slip into thinking that the effect of the political context upon historians is obvious and well-known, or consider that mention of the cases of persecution creates an air of controversy and scandal, usually avoided in scholarly publications. In others, tough psychological factors may be at work: inertia, underestimation of the phenomenon, incredulity that censorship occurs in one's own field of history, or ill-conceived collegiality. In short, scarcity and abundance of information about the censorship of history may be caused by the extent of the censors' success, but also by very uneven research efforts. They make it difficult to distinguish important and typical information from other data, and, hence, to identify patterns and trends about the relationships between history, power, and freedom.

**Historical Awareness**

Both rulers who censor and those resisting them are aware of the importance of the past that is being censored. From time immemorial, the eagerness of rulers to censor history has often been proof *a contrario* of their historical awareness. A superficial count of the heads

of state and government between 1945 and 2008 who had either a degree in history, wrote a historical work, held important speeches with historical contents, or showed their active interest in history in other demonstrable ways, totalled 102 leaders in 63 countries. Many of them attacked historians directly and publicly.

Whether historical awareness increases or diminishes in times of censorship is hard to say. Dictatorship and its legacy may crush or arouse memory and stimulate or counter oblivion. In the first scenario, decreasing historical awareness leads to amnesia and to the temporary loss of the vital source of identification that is the past. In the second, historical awareness increases when the official falsifications engender, as their unintended effect, an unofficial past eagerly consulted as a source of consolation and countervailing power.

**Ethics**

Finally, the problem of the censorship of history possesses an ethical dimension, at least to the extent that the regime type allows historians the oxygen to act as responsible agents at all. Censorship is a violation of the historians' two core rights which are high on the list of human rights: freedom of expression (for teaching and publishing) and freedom of information (for conducting research). Given these rights, it is the historian's professional duty to apply standards of care, in particular to search honestly and methodically for the historical truth. Whereas the responsible use of history – including many forms of responsible selection and omission – is protected by academic freedom, censorship is not. And some of the worst abuses are not even covered by the right to free expression. Censorship of history, through its almost exclusive dependence on non-scholarly interests, is a form of abuse of history and like all such abuse, it undermines the trust placed by society in scholarship and teaching. Therefore, historians should always oppose it. For this reason, the activities of censoring historians should be condemned, with the aggravating qualification that censorship of history committed by professional historians is worse than the same conduct by nonprofessionals. Detailed study of their cases, however, often reveals that censors are sometimes subjected to much pressure themselves. Hence, moral judgments from outsiders on the freedom to act of censoring historians (and on the position of silent historians) are seldom relevant.

A final basic ethical principle is this: the universal rights of freedom of thought and expression ineluctably include the right to write and teach history and the right to remember the past. Mapping the history of the censorship of history and remembering both those opposing it and suffering from it, are vital avenues for keeping these rights to history and to memory alive.

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**Summary**

*This essay analyzes the relationship between power, freedom, and history. It concentrates on the theoretical problems generated by the censorship of history and the justifications and effects of that censorship in contemporary political settings (dictatorship, post-conflict society, and democracy). In order to define the censorship of history, borderline areas and demarcations with closely related concepts are surveyed. The presence of censorship in different modes, genres, fields, categories, eras, and countries is briefly discussed. The final analysis addresses the relationship between censorship and epistemology, historical awareness and ethics.*

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