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## CENSORSHIP OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Antoon De Baets

Among the most important tools of historical popularisation are history textbooks for primary and secondary schools. They have a wide reach and a potentially big impact on the younger generation. Therefore, censors see them as vital channels for disseminating either approved and official or dissident and dangerous views of history. Worldwide, the authorities interfere in the production and distribution of history textbooks and in the curricula on which they are based in widely diverging degrees of monopoly and control, but they generally monitor them closely. Consequently, authors of history textbooks experience a unique paradox: on the one hand, they are relatively free to express opinions, as they seldom ever depend on their authorship as a source of income; on the other hand, by no means do they have the professional historian's academic freedom, as they must work under permanent pressure from political and educational authorities (and from publishers and textbook users). Indeed, this paradox is one of the reasons why the history textbook may be considered a historiographical genre in its own right.

### A TOOL FOR THE OFFICIAL VIEW

In many countries, the authorities attempted to align textbooks with the official vision of the past. A brief look around the globe supplies us with abundant evidence, which is chronologically presented here. From the earliest example, in 1938, to the most recent, in 1997, the following sample contains eleven cases from four continents. In the Soviet Union, generations learned by rote the contents of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (1938), a highly distorted account of Russian and Soviet history attributed to Stalin himself, which in many revised editions (of which fifty million copies were printed), dominated history teaching for fifteen years. Even after Khrushchev's 1956 destalinisation speech, official dogma kept the subject in a straitjacket for three more decades. In Indonesia, the teacher and journalist Sanusi Pané, head of the Office of Cultural Affairs under the Japanese occupation (1942–45), wrote his four-volume *Sedjarah Indonesia* (History of Indonesia) between 1943 and 1945. It became very popular and served as a school textbook. Its Indonesian nationalist tone was muted, owing at least in part to the wishes of the Japanese occupation authorities who sponsored it. Their sponsorship may also explain why the first 1945 edition of the fourth volume did not give the overview of the development of the nationalist movement that appears in the

1950 edition. One of the first directives of the new Bulgarian government, established in 1944, enjoined teachers “not to expound the positive actions of monarchs in history lessons, but to stress the tyrannical quality of their rule and the struggle of the oppressed people”. Since at least 1954–55, history education at all levels in Tibet has been completely Chinese-centered and references to Tibetan culture and history have been treated with contempt. History teachers in European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and West Germany feared that official strategies to “modernise” secondary teaching in the wake of the May 1968 movement, by reducing or abolishing history in favour of subjects such as social studies, were partially inspired by history’s less malleable nature. During Colonel Qaddafi’s “Cultural Revolution” in Libya, in April 1973, history textbooks for more recent periods were extensively rewritten. The pre-eminent place given to the Sanusi family (to which former King Idris belonged) in accounts of the Ottoman and Italian periods was downgraded almost to the point of non-existence. Under the military dictatorship in Uruguay (1973–85), periods deemed worthy of study included the Spanish Conquest, the Catholic Counter-Reformation and the reign of Philip II in Spain, during which Western Christendom, in the view of the military, was saved. Certain historical events like the 1789 French Revolution could not be ignored and remained in the study programmes, but teachers were advised not to cover them in any depth because this would “exalt the fruit of Jewish–Masonic conspiracies”. When General ul Haq assumed power in Pakistan in July 1977 by overthrowing the elected government of Ali Bhutto, the Education Department started to revise syllabi at all levels in order to bring them into line with Islamic ideology and principles. The purged material included “atheistic” accounts of history. The rewriting of history books began in earnest in 1981, when the president declared that it was compulsory to teach *Mutala’at-i-Pakistan (Pakistan Studies)* to all degree students. The course was based on the so-called Ideology of Pakistan (the creation of a completely Islamised state). Topics that were distorted included the historic origins of Pakistan and its archaeological heritage (because of its largely non-Islamic nature); the sacrifices and anti-colonialism of the Muslims in British India; the image of Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s leader in 1947; the role of the *ulama* (religious scholars) in the nationalistic Pakistan Movement before independence; secularism and regionalism; and the portrayal of Hindus. Treatment of the 1947–77 period, including the 1948 war over Kashmir (fought when a civilian government was in power), the history of East Pakistan (including the 1971 civil war, the Indian invasion, and Pakistan’s partition in December 1971), and Ali Bhutto’s rule (1971–77), was almost entirely neglected in the textbooks. After 1988, under the government of Benazir Bhutto, some of the distortions were rectified. In the 1980s and 1990s, history and geography teachers in Transylvania, a region in Romania with a large Hungarian-speaking minority, had to be Romanian by government decree. This was deemed provocative because Romanians and Hungarians gave conflicting accounts of Transylvanian history. In the early 1990s, another decree made Romanian the mandatory language for these subjects, despite protests from the Hungarians. In July 1997, the decrees were abolished. From 1990 on, the teaching of history in Kosovo (Yugoslavia) was “serbianised” and

Albanian history replaced with Serbian history. School textbooks were heavily censored. In June 1996, the Hong Kong Educational Publication Association announced that school textbooks would be revised after 1997 to reflect the official Chinese view of history. More emphasis would be placed on Hong Kong's past within China. References to the Opium War (1840–42) were to be purged of “western bias”, the co-operation between Sun Yat-sen and the warlords would be questioned, Taiwan would no longer be a “country” and there would be a ban on the expression “mainland China” with its implication that there is more than one China. Details of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre would be left to the discretion of individual editors, but fears were expressed by the Teachers' Union Resource Centre that schools were already dropping the use of teaching materials on the massacre in anticipation of a possible ban. In August 1997, Hong Kong textbook publishers indeed revised modern history texts for primary and secondary schools, removing references to the Tibet conflict, the 1957 Anti-Rightist campaign, the Cultural Revolution (1966–69), 1976 dissident protests and the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and its aftermath.

### **CENSORSHIP OF TEXTBOOKS, AUTHORS AND TEACHERS**

Instead of enforcing their own line, authorities might concentrate on censoring unwelcome views of history at several levels. At the textbook level, examples abound. In 1945, the Allied Powers banned all history textbooks which had been in use in the *Third Reich* and no history lessons were given in the reopened schools. Similarly, in September 1945, officials of the Japanese Ministry of Education issued detailed orders to amend wartime textbooks. Following this order, teachers and students all over the country deleted objectionable passages in these wartime textbooks with ink and scissors as they saw fit. From late October 1945, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers gradually asserted control over the textbooks, culminating in a total ban on the use of wartime textbooks on Japanese History in December 1945. In the Americas, the United States and Brazil provide two notorious (but wholly different) examples. In the United States, some school boards tried to tailor the textbooks to their view. In 1954, the school board in El Paso, Texas, banned the use of a history textbook which printed without comment the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of Independence. The State Board of Education, however, rejected a demand to drop the book from its list. In the early 1960s, the Texas State House of Representatives approved a resolution urging that “the American history courses in the public schools emphasise in the textbooks our glowing and throbbing history of hearts and souls inspired by wonderful American principles and traditions.” In 1966, immediately after the election of Governor Ronald Reagan in California, school inspector Max Rafferty opposed any revision of textbooks aimed at giving a fairer share to ethnic minorities. One of the textbooks he condemned was *Land of the Free: A History of the United States* (1966) written by historians John Caughey, John Hope Franklin and Ernest May. In March 1987, a federal district court ordered the removal of forty-four previously approved textbooks (including history textbooks) from Alabama public school classrooms on

the ground that the books violated the First Amendment by promoting the “religion of secular humanism”. The ruling was a victory for conservative Christians who claimed that secular humanism was essentially a religion, based on human instead of divine values. In August 1987, the decision was reversed by a court of appeals. In Brazil, there was the *História Nova* case after the military coup of March 1964. In February 1964, five out of ten volumes of a new history textbook for secondary schools, *História Nova do Brasil* (A New History of Brazil), were published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. They were written by five or six young history teachers under the co-ordination of General Nélson Werneck Sodré, a Marxist historian, head of the history department at the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (ISEB) and considered by many as the Brazilian Communist Party’s official historian. There were heavy protests in several newspapers and on television against the apparent plan to make the textbook obligatory reading in the whole of Brazil. The Historical and Geographical Institute issued a document in which the Marxist model was condemned. In March 1964, volumes one and two were out of print. A decision to reprint and to continue with subsequent volumes to be published by the *Editora Brasiliense* encountered a hostile atmosphere shortly after the coup. The controversial textbook focused on the Brazilian people and emphasised the economic dimension of history, but it was deemed subversive, and the Ministry withdrew its support. Articles, written by Sodré and others in July and September 1965, provoked further investigations and the military police moved against the authors, imprisoning and torturing them. Harassment continued after *habeas corpus* was used to secure release from prison. The authors were deprived of all opportunities to lecture and, with the exception of Sodré, they had to go into exile for long years. The textbooks were confiscated in the bookshops, burned and banned, and the ISEB was closed. In Europe, most examples come from its eastern part. In Yugoslavia, a high school textbook, *History of Philosophy*, was banned in the early 1970s, because one of its authors, Miladin Zivotic, was a member of the dissident *Praxis* group. In 1981, several demonstrations were held in the Soviet Republic of Georgia, in protest against the reduction of the study of Georgian history in the Republic’s schools and universities. In February 1984, the Greek Ministry of Education ordered the immediate dismissal of Dion Nittis, a teacher in an Anglo-American school in Athens, following complaints that he had been engaging in pro-Turkish propaganda. He had asked his class to write an essay on the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus from the Turkish viewpoint and to compare it with the Greek view. He had included a few official Turkish government publications with the recommended reading for the class, and this led the Ministry to invoke a 1931 law which prohibited foreign schools in Greece from holding any kind of educational materials deemed to be unfavourable to the Greek nation. In Poland, 650,000 copies of a textbook, *Modern History*, by Andrzej Szczesniak were withheld by the censors and ordered to be shredded in February 1985, apparently because it touched upon “sensitive” facts which had been passed over in previous school books. In that country, there is even an example of textbook analysis censorship: in May 1979, historian Adam Kersten was to deliver a lecture on “The View of History as Presented in School Textbooks” at the underground Flying

University, which had earlier stressed the damage done by the political censorship of history textbooks. As a result of persistent heckling, he abandoned it. In August 1995, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka of Belarus banned all history textbooks published since 1992, because they were allegedly “politically biased” and developed a nationalist version of the Belarussian past, while he preferred the Russophile version. In anticipation of new textbooks, old pre–1991 Soviet texts had to be used. In practice, an outright ban was not imposed, owing to textbook shortage. The issuing of the directive prompted the resignation of two deputy ministers of education.

Censors also intervened in the stages before and after textbook production. Refusal to grant a book textbook status occurred, for example, in 1928, when a book by Gu Jiegang (Ku Chieh-kang), a historian famous for his critical discussions of Chinese antiquity, did not receive official authorisation for use in high school because Guomindang officials denounced his treatment of the Golden Age as a myth. More frequently, intervention struck at manuscript level. The Japanese example is telling. Since 1956, the Japanese Ministry of Education has screened all history textbook manuscripts. Many critical views are liable to censorship. The sensitive topics include: government policies; the national flag; the national anthem; the emperor, the royal family, and their relationship to the Shinto religion; the foundation of the nation; the 1889 Meiji Constitution; the Korean Independence Movement of March 1919; armed forces atrocities during the Pacific War, including the invasion of China by the Japanese Imperial Army in the 1930s, the 1937 Nanking Massacre, and the bacteriological experiments of Unit 731 at Harbin; the conscription of Koreans into forced labour in Japan during 1939–45; the 1941 Russo–Japanese Non-Aggression Pact; the question of “comfort women”; and the 1945 battle of Okinawa. Many believe that the textbook authorisation system (*kentei seido*), in conjunction with other measures such as textbook selection, national examinations and teacher job rating reports, lead to a narrow and centralised view of the past. Until the end of the century and beyond, numerous textbook manuscripts had to be adapted before they were authorised for use in the classroom.

### **UNOFFICIAL CENSORSHIP**

The state was not the only actor interfering with textbook contents; unofficial groups also tried to intervene. An early case took place in Japan. On 19 January 1911, one day after twenty-six men charged with an assassination attempt against Emperor Meiji were convicted, a leading newspaper criticised the contents of a textbook entitled *Jinjô shôgaku Nihon rekishi* (Japanese History for Primary Schools) (1906), written by Kita Sadakichi and revised by, among others, Mikami Sanji, both members of an advisory textbook board at the Ministry of Education. It treated the Namboku-cho period (1336–92) as one in which two imperial courts co-existed on equal terms, thereby suggesting that the imperial authority was divisible, whereas the official line supported popular sympathy for the Southern Court. This sparked off a controversy in the press. A discussion in the Diet was prevented at the last moment. The opposition party Kokuminto and several societies, such as the nationalistic Society for the

Protection of the National Polity of Great Japan, sent letters of protest to the government. In late February, the cabinet decided to recognise the Southern Court as the only legitimate one (a decision approved by the emperor on 3 March). On 27 February, Kita was dismissed from the advisory board and placed on leave of absence from his position in the Ministry of Education. (When his leave ended two years later, he resigned from the Ministry.) Mikami, director of the Institute of Historiography at Tokyo Imperial University, resigned voluntarily from the advisory board. The government appointed Shigeta Joichi, a professor of history at the Hiroshima Higher Normal School, to rewrite the textbook, and a new edition which focused on the role of the legendary imperial ancestors and endorsed the Southern Court legitimacy was published in October 1911. In early-twentieth-century France, a textbook war took place when Catholics opposing state intervention organised petitions against “bad” textbooks, put them on the index and burned them. An unusual example from the same country is the successful boycott by the French teachers’ union in 1926–28 of twenty-six anti-German history textbooks and readers that glorified war. The publishers were forced to withdraw and replace the textbooks. In the United States, the right-wing group Texans for America (TFA) intimidated the Texas State Textbook Committee in 1961 and pressed several publishers to make substantial changes in their books on American history and geography. Macmillan deleted a passage saying that the Second World War might have been averted if the United States had joined the League of Nations, and the Silver Burdett Company took out two passages on the need for the United States to maintain friendly relations with other countries and the possibility that some countries would occasionally disagree with the United States. The substituted passages simply stated that some countries were less free than the United States. Also in 1961–62, TFA took action against the use in Texas of the history textbook *This Is Our Nation* by Paul Boller, a historian at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, and Jean Tilford, a high school teacher. Boller was accused, among other things, of being soft on Communism, of omitting vital facts about American history, of giving too much space to the Indians and to the subject of slavery, and on providing a too favourable view of President Roosevelt and the New Deal. He received hate calls in the middle of the night. Notwithstanding the pressure, the book was adopted in November 1961. In 1962, however, the TFA sent out a four-page circular throughout Texas denouncing the book and threatening “indignation meetings” if it was selected anywhere. It was successfully boycotted in all school districts but one. In 1963, the TFA wanted fifty textbooks to be banned from the classrooms, including: *America: Land of Freedom*; *A History of the United States*; *The Story of Our Country*; *American History*; *Living World History*; *The Rise of the American Nation*; *The Story of America*; *The Record of Mankind*; *The Adventure of the American People*; and *United States History*. In 1979, a conservative coalition in New Mexico demanded (apparently without success) that forty-three textbooks be excluded from the state list of adopted textbooks, among which many United States history and civics or government textbooks. In 1983, the Texas Board of Education, considering world history books, ordered publishers to make several changes in the portrayal of prehistory and evolution, religion, capitalism, communism, and the

New Deal, in accordance with the views of conservative groups led by Mel and Norma Gabler, a Texan couple active in textbook selection since 1961 and operating as Educational Research Analysts Inc. A few years before, an Alabama State Board had removed *Unfinished Journey: a World History* from the approved list of school texts because it defended the evolutionary position. Unofficial action against textbooks also occurred elsewhere, but information is mostly scarce, as in the following example. In March 1976, Server Tanilli, a university lecturer in Turkey, was denounced to the police by the paramilitary Hearths of Idealism, the youth movement of the Pan-Turkish Nationalist Action Party (NAP), for being the author of the textbook *A History of Civilisation*. He was charged with subversion but acquitted in April 1978. A few days after his release, a group of youths believed to be NAP militants attempted to murder him; four bullets left him paralysed from the chest down.

### **PUBLIC CONTROVERSIES**

It often happened that history textbooks were controversial to the extent that they became the object of public debate and concern. In the early 1970s, a debate in the Peruvian media focused on the use of certain high school textbooks and the question whether history should be more than a description of the heroic deeds of a few great men. In the Soviet Union, the final history exams for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds and the annual examinations on the history of the Soviet period for other forms were cancelled in 1988, because the old history textbooks had been found full of lies: their credibility had disappeared. New textbooks appeared in 1989 and 1990. Between 1990 and 1994, a “textbook war” raged in Hungary and revolved around the issue of “Hungarianness” versus universalism. In 1997, the Slovak government announced that it would withdraw a controversial history textbook, *The History of Slovakia and the Slovaks*, by Catholic priest Milan Durica, following an outcry, from, *inter alia*, Slovak historians, that it denied the persecution of Slovak Jews during priest Joseph Tiso’s pro-Nazi war regime (less than 10,000 of 70,000 Jews survived).

The following cases, describing controversies in India, Japan, Colombia, and Mexico, allow for some comparisons. From May 1977 until at least March 1978, a history textbook controversy took place in India. In May 1977, the principal secretary to Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister of the newly elected Janata government (1977–79) in India, sent a note to the Minister of Education saying that the Prime Minister’s attention had been drawn to the contents of four books on Indian history (written at the insistence of educational authorities, for use in the higher school classes and the primary stage of college instruction, and already prescribed in certain institutions). The secretary endorsed a detailed anonymous memorandum to the Prime Minister which stated that the contents of these textbooks were prejudicial to the study of Indian history. The Minister of Education was asked to consider the withdrawal of their recognition. The textbooks were *Medieval India* (1967) by Romila Thapar; *Modern India* (1970) by Bipan Chandra; *Freedom Struggle* (1972) by Amal Tripathi, Barun De, and Chandra; and *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (1970) by Harbans Mukhia, Thapar, and Chandra. All

of the authors were historians. During the controversy, a fifth textbook, *Ancient India* (1977) by Ram Sharan Sharma, was added, after it was denounced at a mass meeting. The textbooks had not been subject to adverse critical comment before that time. The Education Ministry referred the matter to the National Council for Educational Research and Training. This Council—the publisher of three of the books—examined them and dismissed the criticism as untenable. A virtual ban on the use and reprint of the books did nevertheless apparently occur. The most disputed feature of the textbooks was the interpretation of “medieval” Indian history, the period in which Muslim rule prevailed in much of India (1200–1757) and characterized by some as anti-national, anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim. Much discussion centered around the question whether Muslim rule could be called “indigenous” or “foreign”. Other important points were the authors’ attention to social and economic history and their propensity to explain conflict among elites primarily in political rather than religious terms. The controversy took place in the press (among others, between Thapar, who defended the secularist view, and Romesh Chandra Majumdar, who argued from the communalist point of view), journals of opinion and Parliament. A leaflet against the authors was distributed, but teachers and students at two universities in New Delhi signed petitions in their favour. It was alleged that at the same time a more general campaign was waged against so-called Communist historians and social scientists. Sharma’s book, published at the height of the controversy, was withdrawn from the syllabus in 1,100 schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education in July 1978. The books by Thapar and Chandra were not formally withdrawn, but their distribution was *de facto* sharply reduced. Fourteen other history textbooks were on a list of works to be withdrawn. After the Indian History Congress strongly supported the textbook writers, the Janata government encouraged the creation of a rival organisation, the Indian History and Culture Society.

In Japan, a controversy of a different nature took place from June to September 1982. It all began when the Japanese press reported on the new history textbooks. Many Asian countries, led by South Korea and China, disputed the ways in which these textbooks portrayed Japanese military imperialism in Asia between 1910 and 1945. In July 1982, China lodged an official protest, and, in South Korea, widespread anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out. One of the points raised in the debate was the extent to which foreign governments could interfere in the writing of a country’s national history. In late August 1982, the Japanese government announced that it would correct the textbook accounts and that the criteria for textbook authorisation would be revised. Korea and China accepted this promise. At the end of September 1982, Japanese students clashed with riot police at demonstrations when grievances were expressed over various issues, including the revision of history textbooks. In November 1982, a new policy for textbook examination and authorisation was adopted, with, however, several exemptions.

In 1985, a history textbook controversy took place in Colombia. In several October and November issues of *El Tiempo*, Colombia’s largest newspaper, Germán Arciniegas, president of the *Academia Colombiana de Historia* (Colombian Academy of History) and former Minister of Education, accused



history textbook author Rodolfo Ramón de Roux (who, with Fernando Torres Londoño, had published *Nuestra Historia*, a textbook in two volumes, in 1984) of omitting or ridiculing the most important figures of the independence period and of overemphasising contemporary history. He rejected the New History approach in Colombian textbooks such as these as being Marxist and non-patriotic, as Roberto María Tisnés, another Academy member, had already done in 1979. Despite the moral condemnation of the Academy, the textbooks continued to be used in the schools. In 1988, a third volume in the textbook series was published, *Historia de Colombia*, written by Silvia Duzzan and Salomón Kalmanovitz, probably a professor emeritus from the *Universidad Nacional* (National University). A judgement of the Academy condemning the New History methodology used in the textbook was cited approvingly in the daily *El Siglo*. In a March 1989 issue of the Medellín newspaper *El Colombiano*, an Academy member added that it depicted Spaniards and Creoles unfavourably, thus inciting hatred against them. The Academy urged the Minister of Education to censor the textbook. This was followed by a petition from teachers and professors of the National University in which they endorsed the textbook and criticised the dogmatic attitude of the Academy.

From August to October 1992, there was a history textbook controversy in the Mexican mass media about the contents of the new official mandatory history textbooks for nine- to twelve-year olds (fourth, fifth and sixth grade). The new books, entitled *Mi Libro de Historia de México* (My Book of Mexican History), were intended to replace social science textbooks because, in May 1991, the Minister of Public Education (future President Ernesto Zedillo) had declared that the public had an insufficient knowledge of national history. The protest was directed against what was called their biased interpretation of Mexican history, especially contemporary history—the books included events up to the government of President Salinas, among them the October 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of students, much to the discontent of the army—, in support of the legitimisation of the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Traditional (nationalist) heroes were excised or written down; the 1910 Revolution was deflated. The *Porfiriato* (1876–1911)—when President Díaz attempted Mexico's modernisation at great human cost—was depicted as a liberal and technocratic precedent and rehabilitated. As a result of the protest, the government withdrew the textbooks. One year later, in August 1993, the revised editions, which stopped Mexican history in 1964, thus avoiding description of the 1968 events, aroused new criticism and they too were withdrawn. *Ad hoc* history teaching materials were distributed instead.

In these four countries—India, Japan, Colombia and Mexico—the press was the main forum for the controversy. Parliamentary debates on school history were held in India and Japan, and possibly also in Mexico. Everywhere, large groups of historians were mobilised to express their opinion. The controversies were accompanied by attempts at censorship in all of the countries, except Mexico where the debate concerned the admissibility of official propaganda. In Japan, the controversy acquired an international dimension because other countries disputed the portrayal of history in Japanese textbooks. In each of the four cases, the controversy constituted the most visible manifestation of a deeper rooted

conflict. In India, it was the clash between secularist and communalist views of history; in Colombia, a struggle between conservative and progressive views of history; in Japan, a conflict between those who wanted a positive portrayal of Japanese history and those who also wanted to discuss its dark sides; and in Mexico, a collision between those who wanted contemporary history to support the ruling party and those who resisted this. In India, Colombia and Mexico, it was also a conflict between traditional and modern methodologies. Serious disagreement emerged in each of these countries about the shift of emphasis in the textbooks involved from the history of great men towards the history of the masses and of daily life. The textbook controversies clearly show that history is an important issue whenever it concerns the public at large and future generations. They not only reflect very different interpretations of the past, but also, ultimately, different underlying conceptions of national identity.

### **RESISTANCE TO CENSORSHIP**

Some textbook authors, teachers and students protested against the mutilation and censorship of their textbooks. Two cases in which some success was achieved illustrate the forms of this resistance. Late in 1974, the Mississippi State Textbook Purchasing Board refused to approve *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (1974), authored by James Loewen and Charles Sallis, for use as a textbook in state schools, and, when requested by the authors, did not give any reasons for the ban. The book was the product of a collaboration between students and staff of Tougaloo and Millsaps Colleges. It discussed racial conflict and pointed out the contributions of black people and other ethnic minorities to the state. The manuscript of the book had been turned down by several textbook houses before Pantheon published it. In 1975, it won an award for the best work of Southern non-fiction. At the end of that year, the authors, together with many teachers and organisations in Mississippi, sued the state school authorities for permission to use the book on the ground that the only authorised history book championed white supremacy. In April 1980, the court ruled that the textbook “was not rejected for any justifiable reason” and that the ban was “motivated and influenced by racial issues”. It ordered the book to be placed on the approved list for a period of six years. However, the *New York Times* reported in March 1981 that, in some schools, pressure, including threats of dismissal, had been applied against teachers interested in adopting the textbook.

The most famous example of resistance was perhaps that of a Japanese historian who initiated three suits against the state. In 1963, the Ministry of Education refused to approve the fifth revised edition of a high-school history textbook, *A New History of Japan*, written by Ienaga Saburo, a professor of history at Tokyo University of Education and specialist of Japan’s cultural and legal history. The author was asked to modify about three hundred items, despite the fact that almost all of these items had appeared in the same form in the first edition which had been approved in 1952 and constantly used for more than a decade. In June 1965, he filed a suit, the first of a series known as “the textbook cases”. In these cases, he challenged the authorisation system as an unconstitutional transgression of his freedom of

expression, his academic freedom and the children's right to education. In the first suit, he sought compensation for damages from the Ministry for not approving his textbook and asked the screening system to be declared unconstitutional. According to Ienaga, the suit was the first of its kind in the world. It became the longest running case in Japanese legal history, with court decisions in July 1974, March 1986, October 1993, May 1994, and August 1997. In June 1967, he filed a second, administrative suit to have the rejection of his textbook repealed. Court decisions came in July 1970, December 1975, April 1982 and June 1989. After the July 1970 decision ruled that screening, if interfering with textbook contents, constituted censorship and was unconstitutional and illegal, right-wing extremists threatened the judge, and the author and his lawyers. In January 1984, Ienaga filed a third lawsuit concerning the unacceptable and increasingly more severe textbook screening procedures. In 1980, the Ministry had demanded the revision of nearly four hundred items in the new edition of a Japanese history book that he had submitted for approval. The 1982 history textbook controversy also contributed to his decision to file the new suit. Court decisions were taken in October 1989 and March 1993. In August 1997, Ienaga Saburo partially won his case, when the Supreme Court ruled as illegal the deletion of references to Unit 731 and the Nanking Massacre. At the same time, it upheld the Ministry of Education's constitutional right of textbook screening, saying that it did not constitute censorship, because it did not prohibit the book from being published commercially. In March 2001 Ienaga was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. From the beginning, Ienaga received wide and organised support from many researchers and educators and from the Japan Teachers' Union (which regularly published a critique of current textbooks). In 1992, for example, an appeal for fairness in the textbook cases had been signed by five hundred Japanese historians. In 1993, Takashima Nobuyoshi, a teacher of social studies in Tokyo, whose manuscript was also not approved, followed Ienaga's example and sued the state. In April 1998, a district court ruled that two changes to his textbook demanded by the Ministry were illegal. The court ordered the Ministry to pay damages to the author.

Until today, textbooks remain a most sensitive area of attention. In June 2000 the Spanish Real Academia de la Historia (Royal Academy of History) published a report in which it criticized the systematic omission of Spanish and non-contemporary history and the nationalistic bias in some high school history textbooks of the Galician, Basque and other regions. The report sparked a controversy. In July 2000 the writer Edward Said criticized Palestinian Authority history textbooks for obliterating the history of post-1948 Palestinian-Israeli relations with the aim of not disturbing the Oslo peace process. In November 2000, Francesco Storace, a member of the far-right Alleanza Nazionale in Italy, voted for the creation of a commission to evaluate history textbooks in the Lazio region. This sparked a controversy because professional historians feared that it was the first step of a process in which right-wing political parties would demand the end of the anti-Fascist paradigm, a condemnation of the communist experience and a re-evaluation of the Republic of Salò which fought against the partisans after the 1943 armistice. In Turkmenistan, President Saparmurad Niazov ordered that the entire

printing of a new Turkmen history textbook be burned. And in March–April 2001, South Korea, North Korea, China and Taiwan protested against a nationalist Japanese history textbook.

Terence Leonard, a member of the British Textbook Section of the Control Commission of Germany after the war, used to say that if Foreign Offices would read foreign history textbooks, they could save all the money they spend on agents' reports on public opinion abroad. The examples given here show, on the contrary, that in many countries authorised textbooks tend to reflect public opinion only poorly or not at all: they are barometers for the views propagated or condoned by the authorities. There often remains a huge gap between the history taught at school and the history remembered and told at home, with the former supplemented and corrected by the latter.

## FURTHER READING

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