"Making voices heard…": *Index on Censorship* as advocacy journalism[1]

John Steel

University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract

The magazine Index on Censorship has sought, since its launch in 1972, to provide a space where censorship and abuses against freedom of expression have been identified, highlighted and challenged. Originally set up by a collection of writers and intellectuals who were concerned at the levels of state censorship and repression of artists in and under the influence of the Soviet Union and elsewhere, 'Index' has provided those championing the values of freedom of expression with a platform for highlighting human rights abuses, curtailment of civil liberties and formal and informal censorship globally. Charting its inception and development between 1971 and 1974, the paper is the first to situate the journal within the specific academic literature on activist media (Janowitz, 1975; Waisbord, 2009; Fisher, 2016). In doing so the paper advances an argument which draws on the drivers and motivations behind the publication's launch to signal the development of a particular justification or 'advocacy' of a left-libertarian civic model of freedom of speech.

Introduction

This paper examines the foundation and formative ideas behind and expressed within the publication *Index on Censorship* (hereafter cited as *Index*). In doing so, the paper situates the publication within a particular type of hybrid advocacy journalism (Fisher, 2016) which, though its founders sought to eschew any specific political or ideological motivation, articulated a particular civic model of freedom of expression. Originally published as the 'house journal' for the charity Writers and Scholars International (WSI), the publication's main aim was to draw attention to the suppression of writers and artists around the world who were suffering brutal censorship, imprisonment and repression at the hands of oppressive regimes and governments. Though *Index* was initially concerned with highlighting abuses against freedom of expression within the Soviet sphere of influence, the publication's editorial board were also keen to include writers and stories from elsewhere, particularly South Africa, Greece, Argentina, Spain and Portugal. The magazine has also included articles

and whole editions on issues relating to "religious extremism, cultural difference, the rise of nationalism, the rewriting of history, words that kill, pornography, violence on television and freedom on the Internet" (Owen, 1997:15). Indeed, *Index* has spent the past forty-five years seeking to champion the free speech rights of artists, poets, political agitators and citizens around the globe. In doing so it has published works of a host of literary and artistic giants who have themselves been subject to censorship and repression or who have spoken out against it; as well as highlighting the censorship practices of governments, criminals and the social and cultural practices of silencing and 'chilling' of freedom of thought and expression. *Index* has published the work of writers and artists as diverse as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Salman Rushdie, Arthur Miller, Mumia Abu-Jamal, John Gittings, Václav Havel and Hilary Mantel and a host of other distinguished artists and intellectuals.

This paper provides an examination of *Index* and its foundation in order to do two things: Firstly, to historically situate the publication within the literature on advocacy journalism (Janowitz, 1975; Waisbord, 2009; Fisher, 2016). Secondly it explores the political and philosophical motivations behind the launch of the publication and the factors that shaped its formation as a vehicle to champion specific rights and goals (Downing, 1984; Atton, 2002). In doing so the paper identifies the specific philosophical parameters of freedom of speech (Schauer, 1982) it sought to develop and articulate during its founding years. The argument advanced in this paper is that *Index's* particular deployment of advocacy journalism in relation to its advocacy of freedom of speech and fighting censorship, despite attempts by its founders to present their publication as politically and ideologically non-partisan, expose a left-libertarian praxis of the autonomy argument for freedom of speech (Schauer, 1982; Barendt, 2005). This paper therefore situates *Index* in the media ecology of the early 1970s and provides an original exploration and analysis of the early historical, political and philosophical parameters of what was to become arguably one of the most important freedom of speech/anti-censorship publications in the world.

The Foundation of *Index*

Index was founded in 1972 by a group of writers and intellectuals under the collective name Writers and Scholars International. The group came together because of their shared concerns about the political repression of writers and intellectuals, particularly within the Soviet Union. The founder members: poet Stephen Spender, *Observer* editor David Astor, journalist Edward Crankshaw; writer and translator Michael Scammell and academic Stuart

Hampshire, had variously experienced fascism and Nazism during the war and had become increasingly frustrated and concerned by recent events in the Soviet Union (Spender, 1964; Scammell, 2010). The international context that animated the concerns of the WSI was of course broadly dominated by the ideological contestation between communism and liberal democracy. In the west, the liberal democratic nations which had rebuilt themselves in the aftermath of war, made much of the hard won freedoms brought about by the defeat of Nazi Germany and the growing and ever present threat from Soviet Russia. The politicised western framing of a belligerent and cruel Soviet leadership and its armies within the Warsaw Pact was vindicated by the Soviet led invasion of Prague in 1968, crushing attempts to liberalise Czechoslovakia.

One of the key figures in the WSI was poet Stephen Spender. Spender had been active in the anti-fascist movement and brief member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (Sutherland, 2005; Spender, 1991), eventually becoming disillusioned with the party following the Nazi Soviet Pact (Crossman, 1950). Spender's intellectual instincts demanded that he took a principled stance against authoritarian regimes, something that he had seen at first hand in Berlin in the 1930s and at a distance during the Spanish Civil War (Spender, 1964; Scammell, 2010). Writing about his experiences in Berlin in during the 1930s in his autobiography, Spender notes that during the rise of fascism in Germany that he "had watched the bases on which European freedoms had seemed to rest, destroyed" (Spender, 1964: 188). His emphasis on the "bases" of freedoms is instructive, as these of course included common respect and tolerance for all, sentiments that would be reflected in the early editions of *Index*. Another founding member of WSI was David Astor, editor of the *Observer* newspaper from 1948 to 1975, who was an ardent campaigner against Imperialism, particularly British Imperialism. As Jeremy Lewis (2016) notes, after he joined the *Observer* in 1947, Astor set about "converting a conservative, rather frowsty newspaper into a non-party paper of the centre-left, famed for the quality of its writers" (Lewis, 2016).

Also with connections to the *Observer* newspaper was another key figure in the foundation of *Index* - Edward Crankshaw. In 1947 Astor sent Crankshaw to Moscow to write articles for the newspaper on Soviet matters and domestic Russian politics. (Saxon, 1984). Later renowned as a celebrated 'Kremlinologist', Crankshaw had gained some significant status as an expert in Soviet affairs following his revelation that he had secured the complete transcript of one of Khrushchev's speeches in which Khrushchev had denounced Stalin

(Rettie, 2006; McCrum, 2016). Another key founding member of the WSI was Stuart Hampshire, an Oxford University philosopher who, during the war had worked for the British intelligence service (O'Grady, 2004) and provided much of the philosophical sophistication to the initial intellectual thrust of WSI and later *Index* as we will see below. The final key member of the WSI team was Michael Scammell, a scholar and translator of Russian literature who was hired as the director of the WSI and the first editor of *Index*, a role he retained until 1980. It is through his translations of Russian dissident writings that Scammell became interested in the treatment of writers and artists under Soviet rule. In addition to the founding members of WSI, the group were able to gather together a host of literary and intellectual giants who would be patrons or take up seats on the board of the WSI.[2]

The main impetus for the establishment of WSI came from a series of reports and letters that had appeared in the *Times* newspaper during1967 and 1968. In a statement of intent in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1971 Spender referred an open letter published in the *Times* in 1968 headed "Appeal to world opinion over Russian writers" (Bogoraza and Litvinov, 1968). The letter, written by Larisa Bogoraza[3] and Pavel Litvinov, highlighted the rigged trial of a group of samizdat writers who had found themselves in the dock for their part in protests against the arrest of the editors of an underground journal.[4] The letter suggests that one of the accused, Alexey Dobrovolsky, had given false testimony in order to secure the conviction of his former friends and sought to appeal to "the western progressive press" for condemnation of the trial process. Litvinov's account of the trial had been published in an earlier edition of the *Times* and a number of other foreign newspapers. In this letter, Litvinov states that he "regards it as his duty to make public" his account of the trial (Litvinov, 1967). Another later letter to *The Times* newspaper by the son of Soviet writer Yuli Daniel (this time in the form of an open letter to Graham Green) protesting against the treatment of his already imprisoned father who had been subjected to further harsh treatment with no judicial process (Daniel, 1970), added to the growing sense of significant oppression in the Soviet Union. Though not naming all of them directly, Spender cites the fate of writers who are making an appeal "directly and openly for the sustained concern of colleagues abroad". The publication of these letters in *The Times* highlighted the need to draw world attention to what the WSI argued in the first issue of *Index* was "one of the most persistent problems of the present moment: the suppression of intellectual freedom" (*Index*, 1972: 7). Spender cites 1968 as a year that could be seen as a "turning point in the development of intellectual freedom" (Spender, 1972: 7) as the Soviet crackdown in Czechoslovakia along with the invasion of

Prague in 1968 prompted outrage from intellectuals and artists under Soviet rule. Many of these writers were now in labour camps or prison. The cases of Yuli Daniel and Pavel Litvinov, who's direct appeal in *The Times* for support and expressions of concern, galvanised Spender in his efforts to set up a publication which would seek to bring to light the oppression and injustices metered out to artists and dissidents around the world. Writing in the first edition of *Index*, Spender notes that "Our need today is for organs of consciousness that could help us to know and to care about other members of the same intellectual community" (Spender, 1971, p. 8).

Yet drawing attention to the repression of authors and artists within authoritarian societies was not the sole concern for members of WSI. In the *TLS* article Spender was also keen to state that vigilance against censorship and oppression was required whatever political system one lived under as "freedom of intellect and imagination transcends the 'bourgeois' or 'proletarian' social context" (Spender, 1971). Just because one writer happened to live in a country with more freedom than another did not mean that they had to accept such inequity, to do so would be to accept freedom as a matter of fete. As a writer, Spender and his associates felt obliged to answer the appeal of those who had been silenced, stating "If a writer whose works are banned wishes to be published, and if I am in a position to help him to be published, then to refuse to give help is for me to support censorship" (Spender, 1971). He continues:

> Therefore, if I consider myself not just in my role of lucky or unlucky person but as an instrument of consciousness, the writer or scholar deprived of freedom is also an instrument of consciousness, and through the prohibition imposed on him my freedom is also prohibited (Spender, 1971).

Spender's statement attempts to foreground the notion of common humanity and a shared interest in safeguarding freedoms everywhere. As the "role of the WSI will be to answer the appeal of those who are silenced in their own countries by making their circumstances known in the world community to which they spiritually belong and by making their voices heard so far as this is possible" (Spender, 1971, p. 9). This notion of "making voices heard" is the central function of the publication and as such provides a key to understanding the function of the journalism contained within the pages of *Index*.

It is worth briefly highlighting the significance of the emerging political infrastructure and discourse and of European human rights, particularly around freedom of expression (Berger, 2017) which provided the wider context for the concerns of *Index* and its founders. Though discourses concerning the 'rights of man' had been evident since the eighteenth century (Hampton and Lemberg, 2017), the most significant framework of international human rights was of course established via the United Nations in 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with Article 19 in particular establishing a basic right for all of freedom of opinion and expression, provides an institutional framework and guarantee of human rights that all people should enjoy (Hampton and Lemberg, 2017). However, as Samuel Moyn (2010: 2) has noted, by the late 1960s, the United Nations had declared 1968 "International Human Rights Year" even though "such rights remained peripheral as an organizing concept and almost non-existent as a movement". Yet paradoxically it was from the utopianism of 1968 that new social movements and NGOs such as Amnesty International emerged, which sought to champion human rights causes that arrived "seemingly from nowhere" (Moyn, 2010: 3). As Moyn goes on to note (2010: 213), such organisations became important from the 1970s onwards precisely because the "crisis of other utopias", Marxism and Capitalism were so evident. Human rights "cound break through" by "trancscending politics" (Moyn, 2010: 213).

Index as Advocacy Journalism

In order to situate *Index* within the media ecology of the 1970s, it is worth noting that the publication was originally launched as the 'house journal' of WSI. Following its first edition in March 1972, it went on to publish four times a year until 1977 when it ran to six editions per year.[5] However, from its third volume, published in 1974 *Index* was referred to as a magazine primarily because of an enforced change of status due to the way in which the tax authorities in the UK viewed the activities of WSI as being agitational rather than educational, though the format of the publication changed very little during this period. It was published relatively cheaply with no pictures or graphics and no colour, not dissimilar in appearance to any number of zines of that period (Atton 2002). Its format consisted of the inside cover space with the contents page preceding the editor's introduction, or as it was termed "Notebook". What followed in these early editions tended to consist of a combination of articles about repressive regimes and their various assaults on freedom of speech and expression, as well as reflections on the values and meaning of freedom of speech and the

fate of those who were denied it. Importantly, the first edition carried *Index's* statement of intent. Written by Spender and titled "With concern for those not free", the stated purpose of *Index* would be twofold: firstly, following the call to arms by dissidents such as Solzhenitsyn and of course Litvinov, *Index* would bring to a wider audience the plight of banned and imprisoned authors and their work. Secondly, *Index* would provide an analysis of how censorship functions and operates in various parts of the world, including in liberal democratic states like the US and UK. In doing so, it would campaign on behalf of those subject to such measures. Though not against censorship per se, (Scammell, 1971) the publication would explore the parameters of censorship within a variety of political contexts. Also in the first edition was "Letter to Europeans" by George Mangakis, an anonymous article on Greece, A piece by Jennifer Coates on Bangladesh's struggle for independence and an article by Christopher George on Press Freedom in Brazil. This edition also included a brief article by W. S. Merin entitled 'On being loyal' which covered the UK press council's memo on the Official Secrets Act, something that was in keeping with the WSIs intention to reflect on matters of censorship everywhere. Within this first edition were also writings by those who had been subject to state censorship. These included poems by Natalya Gorbanevskaya and two contributions from Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Given *Index's* stated ambitions, its limited resources, its tiny staff, it could be argued that the publication be classified as a form of alternative media (Downing,2001; Atton, 2003) as there are certainly features of the publication that correspond with the broad definition of alternative media (Waltz, 2005; Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpenter, 2008). These include: engaging with and contributing to public debate, blurring the boundaries of citizen, activist and professional journalist, functioning within highly restricted finances (Comedia, 1984). However, I suggest that citing *Index* as a form of alternative media would be stretching the classification too far. *Index* and its founders were concerned with transformation through publicity, rather than challenging established traditional media norms and practices (Atton, 2002). In this context we can see that *Index* was concerned with transformation and change particularly in relation to altering the conditions of those of course who found themselves in the midst of oppression and censorship. Given this emphasis, it would be worth considering *Index*, in its infancy at least, be understood as a form of advocacy journalism. In order to substantiate this, it is worth reflecting on this classification of journalism further. Janowitz (1975) identifies two models of journalism within US media which are defined as the gatekeeper model and the advocacy model. The former, he argues, deals extensively with

facts and objective truths as the journalist "select the important from the mass of detailed information; therefore, the notion of the journalist as gatekeeper rested on his ability to detect, emphasise, and disseminate that which was important" (Janowitz, 1975: 618). He goes on to highlight (and lament) a shift in US journalism which has seeds in the student protest movements of the 1960s, towards a form of journalism which seeks explicitly to position itself on one particular side when reporting social conflict. He notes "Advocate-journalists have come to think of themselves as conforming to a conception of the legal profession, concerned to speak on behalf of their 'client' groups by means of the mass media" (Janowitz, 1975: 621). In other words, according to Janowitz, instead of reporting the world 'objectively', the advocate journalist becomes partisan. Janowitz's pessimism with regard to advocacy journalism is mirrored (Fisher, 2016) by Waisbord (2009). Like Janowitz, Waisbord differentiates between two models of journalism: the first is the 'journalist' model "which expresses the political interests of journalists" (Waisbord, 2009: 375) and tends to reflect the ideological, usually right-wing biases of their corporate owners; and the 'civic' model which "represents advocacy efforts by civic groups that promote social change" (Waisbord, 2009: 375). This civic model of advocacy journalism may provide an apt description of *Index* as this model sees media also "pragmatically engage with mainstream media, mainly, because they value the reach and influence of the media to affect specific actors (e.g., decision makers, funders) and society at large" (Waisbord, 2009: 377). It might therefore be argued that at its inception, *Index* was a hybrid form of both types of advocacy journalism as it clearly reflected the political interests of those who founded the journal as well as some of those who contributed to it and the interests they represented. In contrast to the traditional notion of journalistic professional identity (Hanitzsch, 2011), their political beliefs or ideological orientation is central to their practice (White, 1950; Patterson and Donsbach, 1996). Yet *Index* also sought to promote social change and highlighted political injustice (Waltz, 2005). In this sense the form of advocacy journalism the publication produced sits within a spectrum or continuum of advocacy journalism (Fisher, 2016; see also Harcup, 2005). Fisher (2016: 712) suggests that in addition to "obvious" or "overt displays of advocacy and partisanship by opinion writers and commentators […] advocacy ('support or argument for a cause') can also appear in more subtle ways". In the case of *Index*, simply publishing a poem or short story by an artist was enough given that it was published in *Index*. In her discussion of activist magazines in the contemporary era of social and mobile media, Barassi (2013: 137) signifies the continued importance of printed activist magazines which have "long been part of the personal histories of those engaged in political struggle". It is

clear that Spender and his associates felt that *Index* could provide a space for censored writers to publish their work as well as chronicling the abuses of repressive regimes. Within broader frames of assessment, such model of media could of course be conceptually located within the optimal parameters of Habermas's public sphere (Habermas, 1989, 1992). The media ecology of the public sphere creates spaces which facilitate the broader exposure of a particular issue or injustices in the hope that these will then be challenged and overcome. As Roberts and Crossley (2004: 6) suggest "the critical potential of public argument will achieve a wider audience and stimulate the process of transformation that it calls for".

Index and Free Speech

In order to fully appreciate the hybridity of *Index* as a form of advocacy journalism, it is worth considering the publication's political and philosophical motivations in more detail. Rather than an 'ideological fantasy' (Petersen, 2007) the advocacy of freedom of speech rights during the Soviet era can be seen as a function of ideological contestation between the liberal west and illiberal east. However, to perceive *Index* as a by-product of the Cold War is to gloss over thoughtful interventions in its theorisation and praxis of freedom of speech and its analysis of censorship. From its inception, WSI sought to cut through any traditional political partisanship. This had philosophical as well as pragmatic roots. Its early status as an educational trust meant that the WSI could not and should not be openly partisan. Moreover, one of its founding members the philosopher Stuart Hampshire, sought to promote the organisation's position by appeal to what he termed "universal values" (Hampshire, nd) which transcend party political or ideological parameters, something already signalled by Spender. In responding to the charge of western liberal bias in a retrospective of *Index*, Hampshire states that the "aim of *Index* has been to serve an interest presumed to be universal or species-wide: the defence of a sovereign right to free expression" (Hampshire, 1997: 191). But he goes on to ask the question "is not the recognition of such a right just the very specific and defining peculiarity of Western liberalism?" (Hampshire, 1997: 191). In seeking to answer this question and the challenge it raises, Hampshire argues that WSI and *Index's* moral basis does not in fact present a particular 'Western' liberal world view as the aspects of his philosophy "are such obvious points about fairness and decency in political procedure that they cannot, I think, plausibly be represented as the prescriptions only of a liberal philosophy" (Hampshire, 1997: p. 195). He notes that "As an enemy of censorship,

Index can still preserve its impartiality, and can avoid being too narrowly identified with a liberal ideology confined to the West" (Hampshire, 1997: 194).

Hampshire's position rests on a form of procedural rationality where, according to him, even in states in which religious fundamentalism shapes the moral and political landscape, debates still occur and disagreements arise and are subsequently settled. In highlighting procedural rationality, Hampshire is seeking to conceptually position *Index* in relation to a form of "philosophical quietism" (Hampshire, nd, p. 2) which rejects grand plans and which state that "individuals can pursue their own various fulfilments without obstructing each other" (Hampshire, nd, p. 3). The sentiment clearly draws on John Stuart Mill (1859) and Isiah Berlin's (1969) notion of negative liberty, as for Hampshire the only alternative is the use of force to silence the opposing view. Hampshire's intervention therefore can be seen as an attempt to sketch out *Index's* early philosophical position as being one that stands against the silencing of alternative or opposing views whatever they are. In doing so he is attempting to provide a universalist conception of the moral virtue of opposing censorship, yet one that is clearly drawn from a particular liberal sensibility.

Though *Index* was also concerned with conceptually trying to define the parameters of censorship (Scammell, 1974, p. 3) and provide a humanist basis for its analysis, the fact that the publication also sought to campaign on behalf of those under censorship is also instructive of its political philosophy. Again it is worth drawing on Hampshire's reflections, particularly his multiple use of the word 'publicity' as publicity, particularly in relation to the "exposure of censorship" allows Hampshire's procedural justice to be laid bare. Hampshire notes that "Publicity, the exposure of censorship and other denials of free expression, is of the essence of procedural justice, because without publicity, the war of words, adversary argument itself, cannot be expected to begin" (Hampshire, 1997: p. 195). Here Hampshire is clearly concerned with a principle that was very much in keeping with enlightenment thought, particularly that of John Stuart Mill and Emanuel Kant, which emphasised the 'power' of reason, and the need to use it in public discourse in order to eventually give rise to a more rational and democratically grounded form of public opinion (Splichal, 2002). As Splichal notes

> The principle of publicity was originally conceived as a critical impulse against injustice based upon secrecy of state actions *and* as an enlightening momentum

> substantiating 'the region of human liberty', making private citizens equal in the public use of reason (Splichal, 2002: 23, original emphasis).

This notion of publicity for the purpose of public enlightenment as opposed to the more limited, yet widely cited notion of publicity as a dimension of the so-called watchdog or fourth estate function of media (Steel, 2016), is one that is evident in the rationale behind *Index* as evidenced across its pages as well as in retrospectives of it.

In terms of free speech theory (Schauer, 1982; Barendt, 2005) we can situate *Index's* advocacy of individualism and negative freedom and autonomy in terms of that again emphasised by Mill (1859) and refined by Berlin (1969). For them, negative freedom is the realm within which human beings should be protected from interference on matters of their own conscience as long as these matters do not transgress the liberties of others. In terms of freedom of speech, the autonomy argument, also known as the liberty argument can be understood as having the right to express one's views freely and openly in so far as they do not infringe on the liberties and freedoms of others (Steel, 2012: 21). Berlin's ideas resonate through the pages of *Index* as his conception of negative liberty is framed, principally by Hampshire, as a fundamental aspect of human dignity. As such, in philosophical terms, *Index* can be seen as the principle of publicity in praxis as it sought to transcend traditional political contestations with its essentially Kantian universalist ethos. In contrast to traditional media which uses the principle of publicity – the press as the fourth estate - to obscure its anti-public orientation in the name of corporate interests (Steel, 2012), as Splichal has shown, "the principle of publicity denotes a universal belief in the freedom and independence of human nature and reason" (Splichal, 2002: 23). Such a concept is more aligned to the Jeffersonian conception of freedom of speech as the press becomes a syphon of public opinion in a genuinely deliberative capacity (Dewey, 1927; Sunstein, 1993).

Despite attempts to remain politically impartial, circumstances dictated that WSI and *Index* would lose its charitable status as it was deemed by the tax authorities "that 'advocacy' of any kind of change in law – or political change – is strictly forbidden" (Scammell, 1974, p. 3). What is particularly interesting about the shift in the WSIs status was that it had to acknowledge, even if it did not accept the view, that it was in fact an advocacy publication. From its third volume, published in 1974, *Index* had to acknowledge that no would it be known as a journal, instead it would define itself as an "independent magazine".

Reception

By the time of its launch in March 1972, board members of the WSI had made good use of their contact books as the launch was reported widely in the quality press with publications such as the *TLS*, the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman* all featuring the launch. Most of the reviews were very positive but as this review by Anthony Arblaster in the *New Statesman* (1971) suggests, campaigning for freedom of expression could be perceived as something of a niche occupation. Arblaster suggests that the relatively narrow focus of *Index*, on constraints on freedom of expression and censorship, were mainly the concerns of a relatively small elite. Whilst not diminishing the gravity of the plight of imprisoned writers and poets, Arblaster asks "To whom does censorship matter?" to which he replies "most directly, it matters to intellectuals, whose business is with words and communication and to political dissidents, who seek to challenge the state and the dominant orthodoxy" (Arblaster, 1972: 714). In other words, Arblaster is offering a salutary warning to its editors not to privilege the rights of dissidents or intellectuals over those members of the community who are "less distinguished". Implicit in this criticism, and one that is often observed in left criticisms of organisations such as WSI and English PEN, is that their focus on narrow parameters of censorship and thus leaves little room for any wider or deeper analysis of systems of oppression more fundamentally. Again Arblaster's review in the *New Statesman* draws attention to the specific focus of the journal which explicitly avoids any overt political analysis despite attempts to frame freedom of expression as a universal issue, rather than a particular type of political outlook. Indeed, Spender's statement of aims in the first edition, attempts to both clarify and justify this "non-ideological" positioning, noting that *Index's* founders "have no political or ideological axe to grind. They are not concerned with drawing attention to lack of freedom in one part of the world in order to paint an exaggerated picture of freedom supposedly enjoyed in another" (*Index*, 1972: 6). Michael Scammell suggests that part of the reason why *Index* was particularly keen in the early years not to be drawn into explicitly political discussion, was that the British Left and the New Left in particular "did little to advance a theoretical case for free speech, something that could be done in the pages of *Index*" (Scammell, 2017). Although *Index* was most obviously attacking authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and their activities, as we have seen, it was also keen to emphasise restrictions on freedom of expression in democratic societies such as the UK and the US. This was something that would become much more apparent in later years, particularly after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of communism in Russia and beyond. Yet one

issue that was a key concern in Britain in the early 1970s was the debate about obscenity and pornography and it is worth examining *Index's* position on the matter at this time as it again allows us to appreciate the extent to which *Index* sought to remain non-partisan in terms of its political stance.

Index and the debate about pornography

The domestic context in which *Index* was founded saw its emergence in the intellectual ether of the late 1960s, at time when the new "cultural experience, presented a world of limitless material possibility [...] and which accepted the widespread literary discussion" of sex and sexuality (Morris, 2014: 37). The increasing centrality of liberal ideas, particularly in cultural politics, saw the growth of protest movements and their media which offered "a means of democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production" (Atton, 2002: 4). In the wake of civil rights campaigns and the anti-Vietnam war movement, the inclination for protest and political advocacy was at a height at this period (Harris and O'Brien Castro, 2014). In part fuelled by the popular press and the vocal Festival of Light (Sutherland, 1982) the early nineteen seventies saw a moral backlash against the so-called permissive society. The infamous *Gay News* and *Oz* trials provide important cultural reference points for this schism (Sutherland, 1982). The public furore surrounding these trials seemed to open up a moral and cultural fissure which was reflected with ferocity across print and broadcasting media (Palmer, 1971; Sutherland, 1982). The matronly figure of Mary Whitehouse, who had founded the National Viewers and Listeners Association alongside the Festival of Light, cast a vivid picture of English Christian conservatism onto the public stage; in stark contrast to the changes in popular culture that were far more tolerant and open about matters of sex (Sutherland, 1982). The debate about the impact on public morals of 'obscene' materials, though frequently in the public eye, was as Thomas (2007) notes, generally a losing battle. Public attitudes to morality were changing and attempts to prosecute and convict publishers in contravention of the Obscene Publications Act (1959) became increasingly difficult. The public furore surrounding *Oz* seemed not only to highlight a schism between moral crusaders and the changes in society more generally, but can also be seen in terms of a public awareness of hypocrisy, double standards and even corruption (Travis, 1999). This meant that the notoriety surrounding *Oz* was more a reflection of a crisis of legitimacy than a broader public engagement with the whys and wherefores of censorship.

The *Oz* trial and its potential ramifications was debated by the WSI as editorial meeting minutes and letters between members highlight. For example, at letter from Michael Scammell to Stuart Hampshire in August 1971 states that "regarding *Oz*, the views of the council members seem to conflict considerably. I am not at all sure in my own mind what we ought to do…" (Scammell, 1971). Hampshire responds unequivocally saying that

> we ought not to take up this kind of case so early in our history because it is not typical of the kind of oppression with which we wish our name to be associated. I do not positively object to *Index* mentioning it' but, I do not think that we should make a special fuss about it (Hampshire 1971).

The "fuss" about *Oz*, as this article from Geoffrey Wansell in *The Times* newspaper (1971) was eloquently explained by Scammell when asked about the trial who noted that attention would primarily be placed on matters not already in the public eye. In addition to private correspondence between editorial board members, there had also been some discussion of *Oz* at editorial committee level (Minutes of *Index* Editorial Sub-Committee, 1971) and in light of this discussion *Index* issued a statement regarding its stance on pornography and obscenity. The 'Notebook' to the 3rd edition of *Index* provides an attempt to clarify *Index's* position on pornography and obscenity given that *Index* was now being asked as to why it had not deemed the subject worthy of serious inquiry (*Index*, 1973: 115). Recognising that in Britain, although matters of "overt political censorship have more or less been resolved", issues pertaining to obscenity and pornography "continue to torment this puritanical nation to an astonishing degree" (Scammell, 1972: 3). Citing The Longford Report into pornography (Longford, 1972) and the "ballyhoo" surrounding its publication, Scammell sought to clarify *Index's* position. The statement notes that *Index* and WSI "are profoundly indifferent" to matters of sexual behaviour and to whether or not it should take "a tolerant or restrictive attitude to the publication of materials with an erotic content" (Scammell, 1972: 3). Such questions being "completely outside our purview" (Scammell, 1972: 3). However, the piece goes on to discuss how matters concerning sex and sexuality could be used for political ends, either in terms of using the depiction of sex and sexual analogies to "transpose" matters of political significance into public debate, or in the case of the *Little Red School Book*, where political and moral agendas determine that a particular publication is singled out.[6] Likewise, though *Index* restates its "indifference" to the contents of the Longford Report it signals a "potential danger" in its proposal of new grounds for

prosecution in which a publication or performance might "outrage contemporary standards of decency or humanity accepted by the public at large" (Sutherland, 1982, 128). Here Scammell suggests that such an attempt to broaden already highly problematic concepts such as 'depraved' and 'corrupt' which form the basis of the legal definition of obscenity, runs the risk of opening the "floodgates to 'outrage' and public indignation on a whole host of subjects" (Scammell, 1972: 6). He continues that given the subject's complexity "it is likely to remain only marginal to our principal field of interest and to take up only a tiny part of our time and attention in the future" (Scammell, 1972: 6). It is instructive to draw attention to the fact that *Index* was attempting to tread carefully in this debate as the politically febrile atmosphere of the early 1970s saw the marking out of ideological positions concerning free speech and its limits during the ensuing culture war. As such it is clear to see why *Index* sought to remain publicly 'indifferent' to such matters, given the implications of being drawn into an openly ideological contestation. However, *Index's* position on pornography and obscenity clearly reflect its left-libertarian approach to freedom of speech as it recognised, albeit obliquely, that the debate about pornography and obscenity are intertwined with "social and political issues" and as such "*Index* is interested in the implications for freedom of expression" (Scammell, 1972: 6).

Conclusion

This paper set out to tell a story about how the publication *Index* was established – the motivations and intentions of its founders, the political and cultural context in which it was launched – and assess its place in the media ecology of the early 1970s. In doing so the paper has advanced an exploration of *Index* as a form advocacy journalism (Fisher, 2006; Waisbord, 2009) and examined its particular take on freedom of expression by exploring its position on freedom of speech. Via an exploration of *Index's* form of advocacy journalism, it has been possible to locate its particular stance on freedom of speech which can be understood as a form of left-libertarian 'argument from autonomy' (Schauer, 1982; Barendt, 2005) which advocates personal freedom and autonomy yet does so within the context of a civic principle of publicity (Splichal, 2002). As such during *Index's* early years we can see that its formulation of arguments *for* freedom of speech and *against* censorship was being developed. It is worth noting that despite numerous changes in editorship and editorial style, as well as changes in the technological, social, political and cultural context of freedom of speech debates, that despite its claims to distance itself from political or ideological labels,

Index's advocacy of left-libertarian/civic politics remains strong. In a retrospective analysis of *Marxism Today*, Mike Kenny suggests that "the most important legacy of *Marxism Today*, […] lies in terms of the spirit that informed it, rather than the substance of its arguments, most of which were tethered to the Thatcherite times in which they appeared" (Kenny, 2011: 130). In the case of *Index,* it is both the spirit that informed it *and* the substance of its arguments that has enabled it to continue as a significant voice against repression in all its guises over the past 45 years. Finally, it is hoped that this modest contribution to the study of just one example of advocacy journalism stimulates further research and discussion about advocacy models of journalism and their variations within different national and historical contexts in the future.

NOTES

1. The author would like to thank the staff at The Bishopsgate Institute in London for their assistance in gathering a number of primary materials for this paper and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank Rachael Jolley for her comments on an earlier draft and to Michael Scammell for agreeing to be interviewed for this paper.

2. Board members included Louis Blom-Cooper, Lord Gardiner, Elizabeth Longford, Sir Roland Penrose. Patrons included Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Sir Peter Medawar, Henry Moore, Iris Murdoch, Sir Michael Tippett and Angus Wilson (Scammell, 2010: 163).

3. Bogoraza had been involved in a long standing campaign to publicise the plight of her former husband Yuli Daniel who had been convicted, along with Andrei Sinyavsky with producing anti-Soviet propaganda. Daniel's son had also written a letter to Grahame Green in *The Times* highlighting the treatment of his father asking him to listen to and call attention to the plight of other writers in the same predicament.

4. Yuri Galanskov, Alexander Ginsburg, Alexey Dobrovolsky and Vera Lashkova.

5. By 1986 *Index* had reached ten editions per year until 1994 when it reverted back to six editions per year. In 2001 it reverted back to four issues per year which it retains to date.

6. The justification therefore to publish Allan Healy's "Letter from Australia" (Healy, 1972: 185-195) in which he discusses the suppression of the *Little Red School Book* and Australian attitudes to its publication is therefore justified, as is *Index's* decision to publish the New Zealand Publications Tribunal's decision on the book in the same edition.

REFERENCES

Arblaster, A. (1972) Free Speech. *New Statesman*, 26 May: 714.

Atton, C. (2002) *Alternative Media*. London: Sage.

Atton, C. (2003) What is 'alternative' journalism? *Journalism*, 4(3): 276-272.

Bailey, O. G., Cammaerts, B. and Carpenter, N. (2008) *Understanding Alternative Media*. Maidenhead: Oxford University Press.

Barassi, V. (2013) When materiality counts: The social and political importance of activist magazines in Europe. *Global Media and Communication*, 9(2): 135-151.

Barendt, E. (2005) *Free Speech*. Clarendon: Oxford University Press.

Berger, G. (2017) 'Expressing the changes. International perspectives on evolutions in the right to free expression', in H. Tumber and S. Waisbord (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights*, pp. 17-29. Abingdon: Routledge.

Berlin, I. (1969) *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bogoraza, L. and Litvinov P (1968) Appeal to world opinion over Russian writers. *The Times*, 13 January, p 8.

Comedia (1984) The alternative press: the development of underdevelopment. *Media, Culture and Society* 6(2): 95-102.

Crossley, N. and Roberts, J. M. (eds.) *After Habermas. New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Crossman, R. (1950) *The God that Failed: six studies in Communism*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Daniel, A. (1970) You are our hope… they cannot last. *The Times*, 17 January, 8.

Dewey, J. (1927) *The Public and its Problems*. New York: Swallow Press.

Downing, J. (2001) *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*. London: Sage.

Fisher, C. (2016) The advocacy continuum: Towards a theory of advocacy journalism. *Journalism* 17(6): 711-726.

Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. (1992) Further Reflections of the Public Sphere. In C. Calhoun (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Hampshire, S. (1971) Writers and Scholars International, Letters.

Hampshire, S. (1997[1992]) "Should *Index* be above the battle?", In Web W L and Bell R (eds.) *An Embarrassment of Tyrannies, 25 Years of Index on Censorship*, New York: Victor Gollancz, pp.186-195.

Hampshire, S. (no date) A Philosophy for the Humanities. Stuart Hampshire correspondence file, 1974-1980.

Hampton, M. and Lemberg, D. (2017) 'History of Media and Human Rights', in H. Tumber and S. Waisbord (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights*, pp. 30-38. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hanitzsch, T. (2011) Populist Disseminators, Detached Watchdogs, Critical Change Agents and Opportunist Facilitators: Professional Milieus, the Journalistic Field and Autonomy in 18 Countries. *International Communication Gazette* 73: 477-494.

Harcup, T. (2005) "I'm doing this to change the world": Journalism in alternative and mainstream media. *Journalism Studies* 6(17): 361-374.

Harris, T. and O'Brien Castro, M. (eds.) *Preserving the Sixties: Britain and the 'Decade of Protest'*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Janowitz, M. (1975) Professional Models in journalism: The gatekeeper and the advocate. *Journalism Quarterly* 52: 618-626.

Kenny, M. (2011) Habits of the mind. *Public Policy Research* September-November: 130-135.

Lewis, J. (2016) David Astor: A king in the golden age of print. *Guardian*, 7 Feb. 7. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/feb/07/david-astor-golden-age-of-observer-journalism-jeremy-lewis (accessed 17 May, 2017).

Litvinov, P. (1967) Free speech plea smuggled from Russia. *The Times*, 28 December, 6.

Longford Report (1972) *Longford Committee Investigating Pornography*. London: Coronet Books.

McCrum, R. (2016) How Cambridge spy Guy Burgess charmed the Observer's man in Moscow. *Guardian*, 29 May. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/28/cambridge-spy-guy-burgess-charmed-observer-files (accessed 15 May 2017).

Mill, J.S. (1859[1991]) *On Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morris, R. J. (2014) The 1960s Days of innocence. In Harris T and O'Brien Castro M (eds.) *Preserving the Sixties. Britain and the 'Decade of Protest'*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moyn, S. (2010) *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

O'Grady, J. (2004) Sir Stuart Hampshire Obituary. *Observer*, 16 June. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/jun/16/guardianobituaries.obituaries (accessed 17 May 2017).

Palmer, T. (1971) *The Trials of 'Oz'*. London: Blond and Briggs.

Patterson, D.E. and Donsbach W (1996) News decisions: journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication* 13: 455-468.

Petersen, J. (2007) Freedom of expression as liberal fantasy: the debate over The People vs. Larry Flynt. *Media, Culture and Society* 29(3): 377-394.

Rettie, J. (2006) The secret speech that changed world history. *Observer*, Sunday 26th February. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/feb/26/russia.theobserver (accessed 15 May 2017).

Saxon, W. (1984) Edward Crankshaw is dead at 75: Author on Soviet and Hapsburgs. *New York Times*, 4 December. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/04/obituaries/edward-crankshaw-is-dead-at-75-author-on-soviet-and-hapsburgs.html (accessed 15 May 2017).

Scammell, M. (1971) Minutes of *Index* Editorial Sub-Committee meeting. 26th October.

Scammell, M. (1971) Writers and Scholars International. Letters.

Scammell, M. (1972) Pornography and *Index*. *Index*, 1(3/4): 3-8.

Scammell, M. (1973) Writers and Scholars International Memorandum from the Director. December.

Scammell, M. (1973a) Writers and Scholars International Director's Report. June.

Scammell, M. (2010) Freedom is not a luxury. *Index on Censorship*, 39(1): 155-167.

Scammell, M. (2017) Personal interview with author, 3 May.

Schauer, F. (1982) *Free Speech a Philosophical Enquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spender, S. (1964) *World within world: The autobiography of Stephen Spender*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Spender, S. (1971) Writers and Scholars International. *Times Literary Supplement*, 15th October, No. 3633.

Splichal, S. (2002) The principle of publicity, public use of reason and social control. *Media, Culture and Society* 24(1): 5-26.

Steel, J. (2016) "Reappraising Journalism's normative foundations" in M Broersma & C Peters (eds.) *Rethinking Journalism Again*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 35-48.

Steel, J. (2012) *Journalism and Free Speech*. London: Routledge.

Sunstein, C. (1993) *Democracy and the Problem of Free Speech*. New York: The Free Press.

Sutherland, J. (1982) *Offensive Literature: Decensorship in Britain*. 1960-1982, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books.

Sutherland, J. (2005) *Stephen Spender: A literary life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Theiner, G. (1984) *They shoot writers don't they?* London: Faber and Faber.

Thomas, D, (2007) *Freedom's Frontier, Censorship in Modern Britain*. London: John Murray.

Travis, A. (1999) Oz trial lifted lid on porn squad bribery. *The Guardian*, 13 November. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/nov/13/alantravis (accessed 29 May 2017).

Waisbord, S. (2009) Advocacy Journalism in a Global Context. In Wahl-Jorgensen, K. and Hanitzch, T. (eds.) *Handbook of Journalism Studies*. New York: Routledge, pp.371-38

Waltz, M. (2005) *Alternative and Activist Media*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wansell, G. (1971) A voice for the persecuted. *The Times*, 15th October, 14.

Web W.L. and Bell R (1997) *An Embarrassment of Tyrannies, 25 Years of Index on Censorship*. New York: Victor Gollancz.

White, D. M. (1950) The 'gate-keeper': A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly* 27: 383-390.