



**From Paternalism
to Authoritarianism:
Censorship in the Habsburg
Monarchy (1751–1848)**

Od paternalizma do
avtoritarnosti: cenzura v
Habsburški monarhiji (1751–1848)

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This article provides an overview of censorship and book bans in Austria between 1751 and 1848. It is based on the catalogues and lists of banned manuscripts and books and the available censorship regulations and censors' protocols; moreover, the most important persons involved in censorship such as Gerard van Swieten, Count Sedlnitzky, and Metternich are introduced, and their impact on the book trade is shown. From an instrument encouraging Enlightenment and defending morality during the reign of Maria Teresa and Joseph II, censorship became a major factor of political repression after the French Revolution. The focus moved from the protection of Catholicism against Protestant "heresy" and superstition to the defense of monarchy against liberalism and nationalism. The aim of enlightening the citizens and promoting their happiness pursued during the second half of the eighteenth century was replaced by the will to maintain the "peace" of the state and suppress any ideas that confounded its interests.

CENSORSHIP, BOOK BANS, HABSBURG MONARCHY, ENLIGHTENMENT, PRE-MARCH, PUBLISHING BUSINESS, LITERATURE, SCIENCES, THEOLOGY, POLITICS

Razprava preučuje cenzuro in prepovedi knjig v Avstriji med letoma 1751 in 1848. Temelji na katalogih in seznamih prepovedanih rokopisov in knjig ter razpoložljivih predpisih o cenzuri in cenzorskih protokolih; poleg tega so predstavljene najpomembnejše osebe, vpletene v cenzuro, kot so Gerard van Swieten, grof Sedlnitzky in Metternich, in prikazan njihov vpliv na knjižni trg. Od instrumenta, ki je spodbujal razsvetljenske ideje in branil moralo, kar je bilo značilno za vladavino Marije Terezije in Jožefa II., je cenzura po francoski revoluciji postala glavni dejavnik politične represije. Težišče se je premaknilo z zaščite katolištva pred protestantsko »herezijo« in vraževerjem k obrambi monarhije pred liberalizmom in nacionalizmom. Cilj razsvetljenja državljanov in spodbujanje njihove sreče, ki ga je zasledovala cenzura v drugi polovici 18. stoletja, sta nadomestila volja po ohranjanju »miru« države in zatiranje vseh idej, ki so bile v navzkrižju z njenimi interesi.

CENZURA, PREPOVEDI KNJIG, HABSBUŠKA MONARHIJA, RAZSVETLJENSTVO, PREDMARČNA DOBA, KNJIŽNO ZALOŽNIŠTVO, LITERATURA, ZNANOST, TEOLOGIJA, POLITIKA

1
On the early history
of censorship,
cf. Eisenhardt.

2
Cf. mandate relating
to “Sectischer
Bücher-Verbott”
issued by Archduke
Ferdinand I of Austria
on 3/12/1523, cited
in Wiesner: 22–24.

1. WHAT CAME BEFORE: CENSORSHIP IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The first proscription of a book in the German-speaking area appears to have been declared by the Bishop of Würzburg in 1482, i.e. soon after Gutenberg’s invention of printing with movable type. The first known banning of a book by an emperor occurred three decades later and applied to a work by Johannes Reuchlin.¹ Archduke Ferdinand issued a prohibition on the reproduction and trafficking of the treatises of Luther and his followers for the Austrian lands in 1523; this decree is considered the first genuinely Austrian censorship measure.² The foundation of the imperial authority in matters of books and the press was the so-called *Bücherregal* (regalian right regarding books), a monopoly the emperor later shared with the territorial rulers. Established around 1500, it included the right to grant printing privileges (*Privilegia impressoria*) protecting authors and/or publishers against unauthorized reproductions. The *Sanctio pragmatica* of 1623 delegated censorship in (Lower) Austria to the University of Vienna. Since the Jesuits occupied most of the chairs of religion and philosophy in the Catholic lands, they handled the censorship of manuscripts and books in these disciplines, which translated into extreme rigor regarding Protestant writings. The Church and the secular governments thus began to share the task of censorship; religious treatises dominated the book market until well into the eighteenth century anyway, and the most important political concern was maintaining the religious peace. In Austria, this primarily meant the prevention or obstruction of “sectarian”—meaning Protestant—writings. At least in Bohemia, with its original share of 80 to 90 percent Protestants among the population and accordingly radical forced reconsecration following Ferdinand II’s victory in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, trade in forbidden



← **FIG. 1**
Frontispiece of the
papal *Index librorum
prohibitorum* of 1711.

books was punishable by death until the issuance of Joseph's Patent of Toleration in 1781. The death penalty was likely not applied often, however (cf. Ducreux).

Since systematic surveillance of the distribution of books could be assured neither in the religious nor in the political segment, the state's measures were limited to the symbolic burning of a single copy of banned writs, destroyed as a proxy for the author respectively the spirit of his work.³ The pathos implied in the destruction by fire and the notion of a direct connection to higher powers manifest therein are visualized in the frontispiece of the 1711 edition of the Roman *Index*: In it, the Holy Spirit sends Saints Peter and Paul serving as censors energy, which reflects off them to ignite the fire that destroys the books carrying evil (see Figure 1).

3
On book burning
cf. Rafetseder.

It is only in an imperial edict of 1715 that political writings and pasquinades attacking the government and the laws of the Holy Roman Empire or individual persons are mentioned for the first time. The fact that theology was beginning to lose ground on the book market and secular authority was being discussed more and more frequently entailed a shift in censorship competencies in favor of the state. In addition, the worldly rulers increasingly felt competent regarding the salvation of their subjects. Since the spiritual authorities—primarily the pope, the bishops, and the Jesuits at the universities—had no intention of giving up this responsibility voluntarily, however, a dispute about the power of censorship ensued that would last the entirety of the eighteenth century. The examination of manuscripts associated with the bestowal of printing privileges was still in the hands of the university, while the monitoring of the book trade in the shape of visitations of stationary bookstores and the markets as well as the inspection of book imports at the borders were shared between the university and the state. The state governments established book auditing committees for this purpose, beginning with the ones for Bohemia in Prague in 1723 and for Inner Austria in Graz in 1732.

A treatise causing some commotion appeared in Prague in 1748: the *Historische und Geographische Beschreibung des Königreiches Böhmeim* (Historical and Geographical Description of the Kingdom of Bohemia, Freiburg 1742; 2nd edition Frankfurt and Leipzig 1746) published under the pseudonym Rochezang von Isecern. It included a critical examination of the awarding of the Bohemian vote for the election of Emperor Charles VII to Maria Theresa, whose franchise was a point of much contention, as well as reports on the ongoing war activities. Since the atmosphere in Bohemia was already heated and the government feared an eruption of peasant revolts, the book was burned

in Vienna in November 1749 and its author's name displayed on the gallows. Shortly thereafter, a book entitled *Lettres d'un Seigneur Hollandois à un de ses amis* (Letters from a Dutch Lord to One of His Friends) and challenging Maria Theresa's right of succession turned up in Vienna (cf. Fournier: 403–404). Each of these cases had to be treated individually and the respective verdict proclaimed by way of a decree, which meant a very cumbersome process; the need to introduce an efficient system of censorship increased. Furthermore, the establishment of modern administrative structures was observable in all the European absolute monarchies during the mid-eighteenth century, for example in France and the German states. Such modern bureaucracies commonly included a censorial surveillance apparatus characterized by professionalism and division of labor as well as by regulations codifying the censorship process and a system of record documentation. The ousting of the ecclesiastical institutions from the censorship procedure as seen in Austria was an integral part of these bureaucratic reforms and the path to development of modern statehood.

2. THE CENSORSHIP COMMITTEE UNDER MARIA THERESA

A new central agency for the political administration of the monarchy was created in 1749: the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus*, which also assumed responsibility for organizing censorship. The Directorium's recommendation was to establish a new *Bücher-Censurs-Hof-commission* (Court Book Censorship Committee), which would leave the power of censorship concerning theological and philosophical books with the university while assigning the remaining disciplines to secular censors. This suggestion reflected the fact that theology still dominated the book market and the production of political, historical,

and juridical literature was marginal in Austria in contemporary assessments: According to the printers, there existed “no other writers besides five or six clerical and roughly a few secular ones” in Vienna in 1751 (qtd. in Klingenstein 1970: 144).

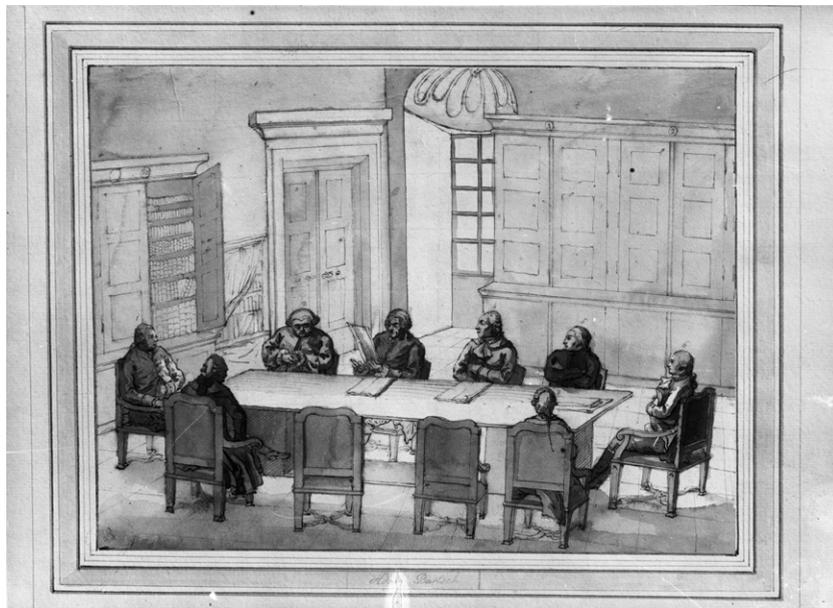
Gerard van Swieten, who coordinated and implemented these recommendations, can be considered the originator of Maria Theresa’s censorship reform. He represents the archetype of the Austrian censor belonging to the old genus of polyhistorians that was dying out at the end of the eighteenth century. The first president of the Censorship Committee was Count Franz Josef Saurau, who was soon succeeded by Count Johann Chotek. The fields of theology and philosophy were handled by the Jesuits as designated; two professors of the Faculty of Law, Ignaz Aigner and Johann Adam Penz, were assigned to jurisprudence; van Swieten himself, who also assumed the Committee presidency in 1759, censored in the discipline of medicine; and the historical and political writings as well as public law were covered by professors of the Savoyan and Theresian Academies (Christian August Beck, Paul Joseph Riegger, and Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi; cf. Klingenstein 1970: 161). Van Swieten was able to wrest the areas of philosophy and the *materies mixtae* (roughly: belles-lettres) from the competency of the Jesuits. In addition, he successfully derided the Jesuit practice of objecting to “nudity” in books on anatomy (qtd. in Klingenstein 1970: 172) and subsequently also took over the censorship of natural science treatises. The last remaining Jesuit was eliminated from the Committee in 1764. Although the Jesuit members were replaced by subordinates of the Archbishop of Vienna, the secular state faction had won an important victory in the fight for censorial dominance. As Van Swieten emphasized, the Archbishop could suggest the clerical members of the Committee, but the Empress had to confirm them (cf. Fournier: 462).

In keeping with Enlightenment ideals, censorship was primarily intended to counter ignorance and superstition. Moreover, “[t]he old forms of mores and customs, which appeared profane and coarse in the eyes of the proponents of the Enlightenment, could also be altered with the help of censorship.” Censorship thus served for “the diffusion of modern, more rigorous morals and the refinement of manners.” (Klingenstein 1973: 104) What may sound like pure idealism in the sense of improvement of humanity also promoted more concrete interests, however: The modern state required responsible, independent, and above all well-informed citizens and economic subjects. A moderate reform Catholicism (that is, Jansenism) was therefore tolerated or even facilitated while Jesuit writings were forbidden beginning in 1759—especially as they were said to condone regicide (cf. Klingenstein 1970: 106–115). The reorganization of censorship also put an end to official book burnings. Nevertheless, books were occasionally burned on imperial orders, for example in Frankfurt in 1766 in the case of a blasphemous book by Henri-Joseph Laurens entitled *Chandelle d’Arras* (cf. Rafetseder: 229, 238). The times of ritual public incineration by the executioner, however, were brought to a close by the advancing Enlightenment and the associated rationalization of all areas of life.

In his memorandum *Quelques remarques sur la censure des livres* (Some Remarks on the Censorship of Books) of 1772, van Swieten listed the most important motives for censorship. His point of departure was the diagnosis that “pernicious books” had proliferated quickly. In the area of religion, deism had gained ground, the Protestants challenged the pope’s authority, indulgence was being preached, superstition abounded, and the Jesuits were proclaiming the absolute power of the pope over all the faithful and their property, including that of the secular rulers. Scientific books written by Protestants, on the other hand, could

be of great use and should be tolerated despite occasional anti-Catholic invectives. A staunchly faithful Catholic audience could not be made to waver by such contumeliousness, and in any case, the appropriate answers were delivered promptly by controversial theology. “Immoral books” and images naturally had to be suppressed categorically, however—one of van Swieten’s primary concerns was the protection of the youth. His statements are an expression of the contradictions between apology and condemnation as well as of the associated self-contrariety that proponents of the Enlightenment entangled themselves in when they spoke about censorship; they are encountered in similar fashion in the works of Enlightenment figureheads like Leibniz, Wolff, Gottsched, and Kant.

Van Swieten remained president of the Committee until his death in June 1772. Besides publications from the fields of natural science and history, he also censored all fiction. Works by famous authors like Ariosto, Machiavelli, Lessing, Wieland, Fielding, Crébillon, Rousseau, and Voltaire did not meet with his approval. He is even said to have called Rousseau a “nasty individual” with reference to the novel *Émile* in a conversation with Friedrich Nicolai (Nicolai: 854). Van Swieten despised creative writing, finding aesthetic literature useless, often even “evil, scandalous and godless” (qtd. in Fournier: 464), a phrasing that may have been aimed directly at Voltaire. He therefore bemoaned the effort he had to put into reading such works, especially since he thought there was no lasting benefit to be reaped from doing so. His censorship reports, which formed the foundation for the appraisals of the Committee, are collected in a codex written in a difficult-to-decipher shorthand. Thanks to the efforts of E. C. van Leersum, they have been at least partially accessible since the early twentieth century. At Joseph von Sonnenfels’ instigation, the censoring of theater plays was included



← **FIG. 2**
A session with
Gottfried van Swieten in the Camera
praefecti. Drawing
by Adam Bartsch.

in the Committee's agenda in 1770. For some months performed by Sonnenfels himself, this field was soon taken over by the Lower Austrian government councilor Franz Karl Hägelin, who also drafted detailed guidelines for the censorship of drama in 1795.⁴

The Committee met once a month, or more frequently if necessary, in van Swieten's office (cf. Figure 2). The members reported on the as yet unknown books that had been sent to them for review after having been delivered to the *Bücherrevisionsamt* (Book Review Office) via the customs authorities. Occasionally, certain relevant passages from individual works were read aloud before a vote was taken on the verdict. If the vote was unanimous, the case was closed and a decision in favor of prohibition forwarded to the Empress (effectively, to the court chancellery) for confirmation. In the case of a divided vote, the

4
Memorandum
by Franz Karl
Hägelin, intended
as a guideline for the
censorship of theater
in Hungary (1795), qtd.
in Glossy: 298–340.

5 From a report to the Styrian government entitled “Kurze Nachricht von Einrichtung der hiesigen Hofbüchercommission”, cited in Fournier: 419.

6 The source is the database “Verdrängt, verpönt – vergessen?” (<http://univie.ac.at/zensur>).

respective case was deferred so that all censors could read the work in question and make up their minds. If the subsequent vote was still not unanimous, the individual opinions were documented and passed on to the Empress for her final decision. Lists of banned titles were compiled roughly every month and sent to the provinces; at the end of the year, they were collectively amended to the *Catalogus librorum prohibitorum*. The Committee sessions also included a strange ritual in which the banned books seized from private individuals were “immediately torn to pieces and destroyed by all of the censors and himself [the Committee Secretary].”⁵ Only theological and political literature was incorporated into the imperial respectively archiepiscopal library if it was not already included in the holdings.

Until the founding of the Censorship Committee, information about the prohibition of individual writings had been propagated in the shape of a separate decree for each title. This process was protracted and inevitably led to errors and information gaps; it had been adequate only while the book market remained small and manageable. To eliminate its weaknesses, the continuously amended and updated *Catalogus librorum prohibitorum* was introduced in 1754. A total number of 4,701 prohibitions have been determined for the period from 1751 to 1780, equivalent to an average of 157 titles banned each year.⁶ There are six Frenchmen among the top eight names of prohibited authors along with three Germans—one of whom (Frederick II) likewise often wrote in French. Voltaire takes the top spot, the Marquis d’Argens is in second place. Their part-time “employer,” the Prussian philosopher king, comes in a close third—tied with Georg Friedrich Meier, a further philosopher focused on aesthetics and criticizing religion. Claude Joseph Dorat with his plays and works of prose stands out in the ranking as a conservative and anti-Enlightenment figure. Rousseau and the author

of satirical and frivolous-libertine prose and epics Rétif de La Bretonne and Wieland round off the group of the most frequently prohibited Enlightenment notables.

The practice of distinguishing between the upper or educated classes and the mass audience goes back to the 1760s. Special permissions or *Scheden* are first mentioned in van Swieten's remarks on the organization of the Censorship Committee in 1762.⁷ On October 4, 1766, a court decree stated that books containing only a few objectionable sentences should henceforth be allowed for use by educated readers (cf. Lavandier: 90). Members of the highest social circles generally did not even need to apply for *Scheden*; they used informal channels instead. Count Karl Zinzendorf, for example, noted in his diary how he had boxes full of forbidden books delivered from Frankfurt, Leipzig, and by ship from Marseille during his time as Governor of Trieste, that is between 1777 and 1780 (cf. Wagner).

⁷ "Kurze Nachricht von Einrichtung der hiesigen Hofbüchercommission" (February 1762), cited in Fournier: 418–420.

3. CENSORSHIP IN THE JOSEPHINE-LEOPOLDINE ERA

Josephinism has been defined as the Austrian variant of enlightened absolutism. The young and ambitious monarch continued the reforms begun by his mother, but his measures for restricting the influence of the Church and the religious orders were far more radical: Whereas Maria Theresa had carefully facilitated Jansenist reform Catholicism, her son attempted to completely secularize the state. One of the problems encountered by the reform plans was the antagonism between the impeding forces among the nobility and the estates on the one hand and the emerging middle classes on the other, who demanded the liberalization of the administration and economy, asserting freedom and equality as inherent rights.

Feudalism along with old institutions such as guilds designed to protect certain industries or trades against overpopulation and paternalism by the Church had no place in this concept. New publishing houses, printer's shops, and booksellers, on the other hand, were welcomed as promoters of the Enlightenment and enhancers of the state's income. Joseph viewed the book industry as a branch of commerce like any other, notoriously comparing it to trade in cheese (cf. Plachta: 70). The school reform initiated by Maria Theresa began to bear fruit, causing literacy to increase and the audience and demand for books to grow. Nevertheless, the reform package remained an instructional and disciplinary measure that upheld the principle of absolutism despite its endorsement of liberalism in certain details.

The Josephine practice of censorship was Janus-faced: Liberality and surprising strictness were equally present in its repertoire. Joseph initially wanted to centralize censorship as much as possible, and the corresponding measures were one of many attempts to modernize the monarchy and restrict the autonomy of the individual lands (cf. Wögerbauer). The censorship committees in the lands had decided on the prohibition or approval of manuscripts and books at their own discretion and subsequently often come to disparate results. Already practiced since the 1760s, the transmission of the Viennese prohibition decisions to the lands represented a first step towards standardization. In January 1780, monthly notification of the lands about the censorship decisions in Vienna (the lists of forbidden and allowed books) had been decreed anew (cf. Sashegyi: 17). Upon assuming power, Joseph went significantly beyond these measures by simply abolishing the committees in the lands entirely. The decree of June 11, 1781—frequently known as Joseph's "Censorship Patent"—established a central *Büchercensurshofkommission* in Vienna that was responsible for manuscripts and books within the entire monarchy.

Joseph's abovementioned decree of June 11, 1781 (see *Zensurverordnung Josephs II.*) stated that popular literature—especially “non-rhyming ribaldry”—was to be treated more strictly than scientific works, which only reached a small, educated readership anyway. In keeping with the Patent of Toleration issued in the same year, Protestant books were to be allowed for professed Protestants—as were writings critical of religion in general as long as they did not systematically challenge the Catholic faith. The same applied to criticism of objects and persons, “from the sovereign to the lowest subject,” provided the author was identified by name. Furthermore, neither self-contained works nor periodicals should be banned due to individual questionable passages. The special privileges (*Scheden*) were done away with; any book was to be either forbidden or accessible to everyone. In practice, however, they appear to have still been granted.

Moreover, Joseph had the *Catalogus librorum prohibitorum*, which had grown considerably since the 1750s, revised and titles for whose prohibition there was no longer any reason deregulated. The revised catalog entitled *Verzeichniß aller bis 1-ten Jänner 1784 verbottenen Bücher* contained only 1029 works, of which 184 were new writings that had never been banned before. This means that the catalogs accumulated under Maria Theresa, which had included 4,701 works as mentioned above, were reduced to only 845 titles. The total of new editions prohibited in the Josephine decade amounted to 641. On top of the list of most frequently prohibited authors we find the prolific writer of popular Enlightenment texts, Karl Friedrich Bahrdt. The former Augustine father Karl von Güntherode was a like-minded author who increasingly devoted himself to religious satire. Friedrich von der Trenck was presumably targeted by censorship as a thorny case in the diplomacy between Prussia and Austria, while Joseph Großinger was a historian

and brochure author with a propensity for sensationalism—titles like *Babylon, oder das große Geheimnis der europäischen Mächte* (Babylon, or the great secret of the European powers, 1784) were characteristic for his work. The writings of Johann Friedel took a similar tack; among his banned works was *Galanterien Wiens auf einer Reise gesammelt, und in Briefen geschildert von einem Berliner* (Gallantries of Vienna collected on a journey and described in letters by a Berliner, 1784), whereas Christian Gottlieb Berger was dedicated to philosophy and pseudo-religious speculation.

On February 8, 1781, the new Censorship Committee headed by Count Chotek was appointed. The political and philosophical writings were henceforth censored by Baron Aloysius von Locella, the economic and military titles by court councilor Johann von Birkenstock, and the juridical and historical ones by Konstantin von Kauz. After lengthy discussions, the censorship reform entered into force on June 8, 1781 (cf. Sashegyi: 23, 27). The Censorship Committee, now officially called *Studien- und Zensurhofkommission* (Study and Censorship Court Committee) to emphasize the educational mandate of censorship, was directed by Gottfried van Swieten. Besides the office, Gerard van Swieten's son had also taken over the court library from his father; he dedicated himself entirely to the Enlightenment as interpreted by the Emperor and maintained close contacts to the Viennese literary scene. It therefore comes as no surprise that authors like Aloys Blumauer or Joseph von Retzer were likewise employed as censors, at least intermittently.

On April 8, 1782, the Censorship Committee was suspended, meaning that the censors could henceforth decide independently and simply send a report with a brief justification of their verdict on each reviewed work to the president of the Study and Censorship Committee; the

committee had to convene only in difficult cases. In 1784, the verdict of “*typum non meretur*” (not deserving of being printed) was introduced, which was aimed at light fiction and indicated meaninglessness in terms of content rather than style. Publications by Jansenists, Jesuits, and Freemasons as well as works about them were permitted; as mentioned above, the Church was excluded from the censorship process. What was more, the secular censorship occasionally banned writings by the Vatican, including papal bulls, breviaries, missals, and regulation books for Catholic orders, thereby perpetuating the conflict with the Archbishop of Vienna. That this conflict was in fact a power struggle for control over the state is evidenced by the fact that a decree issued in 1774 had ordered “the instruction by Gregory VII about the power of the pope to depose monarchs ‘to be pasted over with a paper’” in the breviaries (qtd. in Sashegyi: 33). Such prescriptions to cover up passages in ecclesiastical writings became quite frequent during the 1780s. Pius VI’s visit to Vienna in 1782 in reaction to Joseph’s church reforms represented the culmination of the power struggle between the Holy See and the Holy Roman Emperor. It ended in a stalemate of sorts.⁸

Changing to political agitation, tolerance was not experienced by the bookseller Georg Philipp Wucherer, who had been printing radical oppositional literature by authors from Vienna (like Johann Jakob Fezer, Franz Kratter, and Joseph Richter) as well as from elsewhere (Karl Friedrich Bahrtdt) since 1784 and was also convicted of selling banned books (cf. Sashegyi: 123–124). Wucherer sometimes had books printed on his behalf sent to Viennese booksellers by other foreign traders in order to cover his tracks and prevent the censors from taking action. When he was eventually also identified by the bookseller, author, and Freemason Johann Joachim Christoph Bode from Weimar as the Viennese executive member (“*Diözesan*”) of the radical *Deutsche Union* founded

⁸ The mentioned events have been portrayed by numerous authors; cf. e.g. Wangermann 2004: 72–82.

9
The list of seized items is printed in Frimmel: 211–214; cf. also Winter.

10
According to Sashegyi: 125, based on State Council documents.

by Karl Friedrich Bahrdt—a secret society in the spirit of the Illuminati whose primary goal was to facilitate correspondence between radical authors—the police decided to use an *agent provocateur* posing as a “Hungarian cavalier” to end the bothersome publisher’s activities. The covert agent persuaded Wucherer to sell him a book prohibited by censorship, namely the anonymous pamphlet *Die Gesunde Vernunft, oder die übernatürlichen Begriffe im Widerspruch mit den natürlichen* (Healthy Reason, or the Supernatural Concepts in Contradiction to the Natural Ones, London 1788). Wucherer thus committed an offense, even though it was only a minor infraction punishable with a fine of 50 guilders; the printing and possession of banned books alone did not represent a violation since it was permissible, for example, to sell them abroad. The police were merely tasked with monitoring and preventing the circulation of prohibited writings. Wucherer was subsequently arrested, and the police searched his business premises, discovering a large number of forbidden and uncensored books including works by Bahrdt, Joseph Richter, and Aloys Blumauer.⁹ Although possession of these books did not constitute an offense in itself as mentioned above, Wucherer was sentenced to a blanket fine of 1000 ducats at the Emperor’s behest. In addition, his stores of books were destroyed and his company dissolved, and he and his family were expelled from the country (cf. Wangermann 1966: 53–55).

In fact, Wucherer’s case indirectly caused the reintroduction of pre-censorship. After it had been possible since a decree issued on February 24, 1787 to print manuscripts in Vienna without permission from the Censorship Committee (although the resulting books did have to be censorially approved after their printing), preventive censorship came into force again on November 24, 1789.¹⁰ Joseph II was by no means prepared to give up his control over the population and its reading, and even his

more enlightened advisors and allies were not consistently liberal. As decrees forbidding the printing of manuscripts without censorial permission under threat of punishment are preserved even for the phase of putative “freedom of the press” under Joseph II frequently asserted in research, this terminology cannot be upheld.

The veritable flood of pamphlets inundating Vienna as a consequence of the “freedom of the press” according to various commentators, including Aloys Blumauer in *Beobachtungen über Österreichs Aufklärung und Litteratur* (Observations on Austria’s Enlightenment and Literature) and Johann Pezzl in his *Skizze von Wien* (Sketch of Vienna), was more myth than fact. Although Wernigg’s thorough *Bibliographie österreichischer Drucke zwischen 1781 und 1795* (Bibliography of Austrian Prints between 1781 and 1795) comprises roughly 6,300 entries, it should be noted that the author extends the phase of “freedom of the press” to 1795—thereby making it at least three years longer than it actually was, since the reaction already began during the reign of Leopold II. In addition, Wernigg found it sensible to include the entire oeuvre of the most important authors, including many works published before or after the period stipulated in the title. Ultimately, this means that the “flood of pamphlets” amounts to between 2,000 and 3,000 titles at most, distributed across an entire decade.

Leopold II initially continued Joseph’s ostensibly liberal course, for example by allowing anti-aristocratic writings that challenged the nobility’s claims with reference to the French Revolution and were characterized by “a satirical, sometimes caustic tone” to be published under circumvention of censorship (Reinalter: 97). He also defended the citizens’ right to form corporate bodies as well as the peasants’ demands for liberation from feudal burdens. On the other hand, he returned to stricter censorship principles of the kind that had been

in place under Maria Theresa. Leopold's court decree of September 1, 1790 stipulated the maintenance of general calm within the state and prohibited anything that diminished obedience to the sovereign or caused "skepticism in spiritual matters" (qtd. in Giese: 385). Foreigners suspected of revolutionary agitation were monitored by the police. In this sense, Leopold paved the way for the reaction under his successor Francis II.

4. CENSORSHIP AS AN INSTRUMENT OF REPRESSION: BETWEEN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND STUDENT UNREST (1792 TO 1820)

The first five years of the period discussed in this section form the transition phase between the instructionally oriented and Enlightenment-focused censorship regime to the strictly prohibitive system instituted by Emperor Francis II in the post-revolutionary era. The Enlightenment from above had bred an authoritarian state, and the unity between the sovereign's decisions and the will and interests of his subjects, which had formed the basis for the monarchy under Joseph II, turned out to be an illusion. While the focus of censorship during the previous decades had been placed on enlightening the citizens and promoting their happiness, it now explicitly served to maintain the "peace of the state" and suppress any ideas that "confound its interests and its good order," as Metternich explained (qtd. in Heindl: 42).

Following a court decree issued on February 10, 1792, the Bohemian-Austrian Court Chancellery inherited the censorship agendas from the discontinued *Studien- und Zensurhofkommission*. This meant the end of collegiate treatment of censorship questions; censors now submitted their individually compiled reports, based on which an official at the Court Chancellery made the final decision regarding permission

or prohibition. A further court decree issued in February 1793 reminded the censors that books painting the French Revolution in a positive light were to be allowed neither for printing nor for import. A General Censorship Ordinance subsuming the previous partial enactments was issued on 22 February 1795 (see Hofdekret). Manuscripts could not be printed nor books produced abroad be sold without prior approval. Reprints and translations had to be submitted for censorship like manuscripts, and the same applied to catalogs of books offered for sale or auction. Sending manuscripts forbidden in Austria to other countries for printing was forbidden. Most of the paragraphs in the General Censorship Ordinance were obviously designed to put an end to misuse in the book production and distribution process.

As a result the prohibition numbers reached a level that would remain unmatched even at the end of the pre-March period despite the massive increase in literary production. The increase in the number of prohibitions of printed works is most significant in 1795 (779) to around three-and-a-half times the value for 1793 (226). The high rate of prohibitions reached in 1795 was maintained until 1802 before the numbers of banned titles quickly dropped to less than a tenth of the value for 1802 until 1815, the year of the Congress of Vienna (1802: 741, 1815: 57). Prohibition activity stagnated between 1815 and 1818, after which a marked increase can be observed. The reason is clear: Following the Wartburg Festival, the start of the student uprisings, and especially the murder of Kotzebue, the political climate became tense once again. The increase in prohibitions marks the beginning of the pre-March period in Austria. Austrian writers were forced to adapt their activity to the situation by effectively practicing self-censorship, and literature published outside the Monarchy had to be treated equally strictly. On the top on the list of prohibited writers we find mainly

German authors of popular novels and plays such as Johann Friedrich Ernst Albrecht, Christian August Vulpius, Carl Gottlob Cramer, Johann Ernst Daniel Bornschein, and August von Kotzebue.

In 1801, responsibility for censorship was transferred to the *Polizeihofstelle* (Court Police Section) established in 1792. It was presided over until 1804 by Count Johann Anton Pergen, who had been urging for censorship to be included in the Section's duties for a long time since he was of the opinion that the surveillance of literature represented a facet of national security. From 1816 to 1848 the Court Police Section was subsequently headed by Count Joseph Sedlnitzky, who was infamous for being a narrow-minded fanatic (cf. Hadamowsky: 301). The censors had to report to the Court Police Section, they were to combine the abilities of a good official accustomed to following regulations with the qualities of a scholar. In addition, they were expected to be proficient in as many languages as possible and possess political intuition. Thus, they were recruited from among scholars and higher clerks who kept abreast of one or more fields of knowledge, many of them even actively published their own writings. The number of permanently employed "genuine" censors fluctuated between eight and thirteen in the period covered here; additional temporary censors were employed in times of heavy work loads.

In the course of his military campaigns, Napoleon conquered large areas of the Habsburg Monarchy and even occupied its capital twice for several months, once in late 1805 and then again from May to November 1809. The French administration abrogated censorship altogether, as a result several publishers promptly began marketing books that had previously been prohibited, e.g. uncensored editions of the works of Schiller, Voltaire, and Wieland. A considerable number of books traditionally frowned upon in Austria were immediately banned again following the withdrawal of the French forces.

In January 1810, a relatively liberal patent entitled *Vorschrift für die Leitung des Censurwesens und für das Benehmen der Censoren* (Regulation for the Administration of Censorship and for the Behavior of Censors) was issued (reptd. in Marx 1959: 73–76). It was meant to increase Austria’s international prestige by promulgating comparatively mild censorship rules but, nevertheless, it established a paternalistic regimen. The motives for censorship were defined as protection of the monarch and his dynasty, of foreign governments, of religion and morality as well as the honor of individuals against defamation. Tolerance was promised to serious and innovative scientific contributions, while worthless light fiction such as novels of chivalry or ghost stories would be met with the full severity of censorship. The most important political reason for prohibitions were attacks on the imperial family. In this regard, even a novel like Mme. Barthélemy-Hadot’s *Clotilde de Hasbourg ou le tribunal de Neustadt* (Clotilde of Habsburg or the Tribunal of Neustadt, 1810), a family saga set in the fourteenth century and revolving around Rudolf the Founder, was considered insulting because it portrayed “some [members of the Habsburg dynasty] as so unnaturally depraved and despicable as [it does] others, the repressed, as virtuous and likable.” (Censorship reports). Not even Heinrich von Kleist was immune to accusations of immorality. His tale “The Earthquake in Chile” was rated “damnatur” in January 1811 by the censor because of a scene of seduction in a convent and the “most dreadful” outcome (ibid.). The *Vorschrift* remained in force until 1848 and represented the only guideline for the censors during this period. It was reaffirmed and distributed to the censors throughout the Monarchy in lithographed form as late as 1840.

The *Bücherrevisionsämter* (Book Review Offices) respectively the local censors were allowed to admit shorter, obviously unproblematic—and

in particular non-political—manuscripts and books of their own accord, thereby clearing them for printing, and to request minor changes or omissions in the case of manuscripts. The book reviewers in the crown lands were not permitted to impose prohibitions, however—these had to be issued by the Court Police Section in Vienna. Exceptions to these limited competencies of the Book Review Offices in the capitals of the crown lands were the offices in Lemberg, Milano, and Venice, where all manuscripts for works to be published as well as books in Polish respectively Italian arriving from abroad were assessed. The lists of forbidden respectively permitted books reveal that this approach suggested itself due to the sheer quantity of writings published in these languages. The Book Review Offices also formed relay stations within the censorial process, they accepted the submitted manuscripts along with books slated for reprinting and passed them on to suitable censors in case of concerns. All books arriving from abroad and as yet unknown and therefore neither allowed nor banned in Austria, had to be submitted to the censorship process. The censorial reports on foreign books had to be forwarded to the Court Police Section for the final decision on their verdict. In addition, the reviewers maintained handwritten cumulative thesauruses of prohibited publications. Last but not least, the Book Review Offices also accepted and processed the applications for *Scheden*, the special permits for purchase of prohibited works.

5. CENSORSHIP IN THE PRE-MARCH PERIOD (1821–1848)

The (German) nationalist movements that had previously been welcome in connection with the liberation from Napoleon's occupation were increasingly being perceived as a threat by the Austrian government as well as by the rulers of other countries since they simultaneously

advanced liberal political ideas. The first conflicts concerning Austrian rule arose in Lombardy and Venetia, with Galicia respectively Poland likewise becoming centers of nationalist independence efforts not long thereafter. The monitoring of communication by way of printed texts was now accompanied by the observation of suspicious persons. The first secret societies to attract attention were the Italian ones, with the best-known among them being the Carbonari, while the activities of the supporters of the Greek liberation movement came into focus in the 1820s (cf. Noe). Lord Byron was observed during his sojourn in the Italian states. It is hardly necessary to note that numerous of his works were to be found on the lists of forbidden books. He never made a secret of his disdain for the Austrian “Huns” and “barbarians” who were preventing liberal progress. It was no wonder that Metternich could easily be convinced of the danger posed by the Englishman on the Italian peninsula. On December 25, half a year after the revolution in Naples, he reported to the Emperor:

Englishmen with such radical principles as [...] Lord Biron [sic] applies in Ravenna and as are known [...] from the Lords Kinaird and Hamilton must be viewed as the most dangerous apostles of independence and revolution and should therefore, without accepting any objections from the British Government about intolerance against its subjects, be kept away from the peninsula by way of joint measures by all Italian governorates. (Brunner: 32)

A second restoration campaign followed after the July Revolution of 1830 in France with the overthrow of Charles X. The Hambach Festival in May 1832 further stoked the fear of revolution, and the concerns regarding a Europe-wide conspiracy against the continent’s monarchs

increased. In order to sharpen the tools of censorship, the verdict “*damnatur nec erga schedam*” was reintroduced in 1836. It meant that only the Emperor himself could grant special permission to read the corresponding title. The same applied to the formula “remove from circulation”, which was usually applied to newspapers, periodicals, or continuous works like encyclopedias and amounted to a prospective *Debitverbot* (prohibition on placing an order for the work with an Austrian bookseller) or *Pränumerationsverbot* (prohibition on mail orders). In particularly turbulent times, seizures of books were also ordered more frequently, with the respective titles marked as “*damnatur and to be confiscated*” in the prohibition lists. The focus was on radical liberal writings assessed as revolutionary, and such seizures were applied to works published by Hoffmann und Campe in Hamburg, Hoff in Mannheim, the *Literarisches Institut* in Herisau/Switzerland, and several other printers. Mitigations of prohibition verdicts were rare but did occasionally occur—for example in the case of extolments of Napoleon, which were tolerated from 1832.

Evidence on the number of *Scheden* applications is lacking. At any rate, it is clear that it was mostly members of higher societal strata, and occasionally middle-class individuals considered reliable, who received *Scheden*. This practice of allotting the special permissions can be illustrated using the example of Eugène Sue’s successful novel *Le juif errant* (The Wandering Jew, 1844/45), a fantastic story about a conspiracy of the Jesuits attempting with dishonest means to gain control of the gigantic inheritance of a family. It was forbidden in Austria primarily due to its anti-clerical aspects. But besides anti-clerical and anti-monarchistic passages as well as regular frivolous scenes, Sue’s novels also featured a certain political explosiveness especially visible in the descriptions of poverty in the *Mystères de Paris* (Mysteries of Paris). As preserved

applications from Prague show, permission to obtain *Le Juif errant* was granted to a number of illustrious persons including Count Auersperg, Count Joseph Matthias Thun-Hohenstein, Count Johann zu Salm, Countess von Salm, Countess Johanna von Thun, Count Oktavian Kinsky, and Prince Karl zu Liechtenstein (see Applications for Scheden).

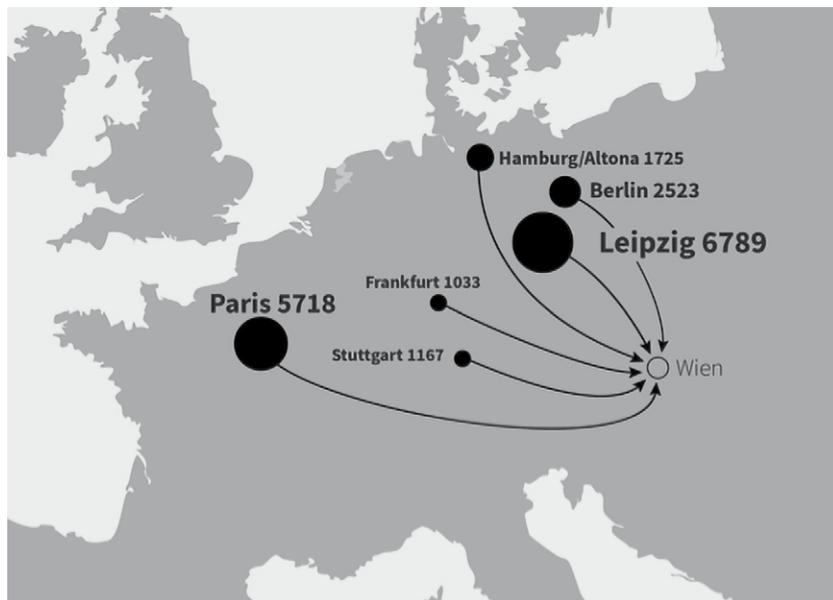
For members of the middle class, the prospects of receiving a *Scheda* were limited at best, and at times their profession prevented them from being granted permission despite their trustworthiness. The Milanese seller of music supplies Ricordi, for example, was considered to be in the best possible repute, yet the authorities feared that he might “render information” from the periodical *L’Illustration* he had applied for to his customers in his busy salesroom—in other words, that he might display the magazine there as an attraction for his patrons (cf. Marx 1963: 462).

Booksellers were able to obtain prohibited goods despite the efforts of the police. Raids regularly discovered forbidden writings, even the renowned bookstore owned by Karl Gerold in Vienna attracted the authorities’ attention repeatedly. Gerold was widely known for being able to obtain any prohibited book. The year 1843 seemed to finally offer the police an opportunity to make an example of the insubordinate firm. A clerk dismissed by Gerold reported a store of forbidden books on the premises. The secret storeroom was discovered without issue, the agents found numerous prohibited works hidden behind books published by Gerold on the shelves. The volume of seized goods was so large—1,000 books and booklets—that “three persons had to be used to transport it to the local official building in covered tubs and wheelbarrows.” (Visitation Karl Gerold) Among the confiscated items were several copies of the particularly detested—and thus censorially designated for seizure—titles *Oesterreich im Jahre 1843* (Austria in the Year

1843) and *Oesterreich und dessen Zukunft* (Austria and Its Future) by Baron Victor von Andrian-Werburg as well as *Spaziergänge eines zweiten Wiener Poeten* (Promenades by a Second Viennese Poet) by Ferdinand Avist. The visitation of Gerold's store was followed by an interrogation of the owner. He explained the existence of the secret storeroom with a lack of space; the forbidden books had been procured for persons possessing *Scheden* and subsequently not picked up or returned after having been read. The particularly objectionable titles mentioned above had been given to him for forwarding by the Brussels bookseller Cans, who had been passing through. Anyway, the Viennese magistrate in person of Mayor Ignaz Czapka showed no eagerness whatsoever to punish Gerold, and the police and state government thus lost out to a book trader once again.

Taking printed publications and manuscripts together, the number of prohibitions grew by 150 % between 1819 (445) and 1822 (1140). Until the late 1840s, the numbers remain roughly at the level of 1822; it was only during the final year of the system of preventive censorship prior to its abrogation in the course of the Revolution of 1848 that the prohibitions reached their all-time peak (1847: 1,698 prohibitions). The increase in book production, which nearly quadrupled during the same period (1820: 3,772 titles; 1843: 14,039 titles), is not mirrored in the censorship activity. Thus, we may assume that the production of books effectively outran the censorship efforts, meaning that the developments on the book market increasingly eluded the administration's grasp—representing a symbolic parallel to the political events culminating in the revolution of 1848.

The only German author near the top of the list of the most frequently prohibited authors in this period is philosopher and state theorist Wilhelm Traugott Krug, followed with a considerable margin



← **DIAGRAM 1**
The seven most important places of publication of books prohibited in Austria (1754–1848).

by popular novelists Alexander Bronikowski, one of the many Scott epigones, and Amalie Schoppe. The roster is led by French writers: Paul de Kock, known for his frivolous stories; Eugène Sue, author of adventure and social novels who regularly borrowed from Dark Romanticism; Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, Frédéric Soulié, Victor Hugo, and Etienne Léon de Lamothe-Langon, who published in all genres (with the latter specializing in biographies). An outlier in this regard is the Genevan historian and economic theorist Simonde de Sismondi. Walter Scott and Lord Byron, the two most provocative British authors of the 1820s, complete the top ten.

To end this essay, the above diagram visualizes the movement—from northwest to southeast—of the printed works forbidden in Vienna and the liberal and Enlightenment ideas they transported. The seven

cities most frequently specified as printing locations of prohibited writings across the entire period discussed in this study are Leipzig (7220), Paris (5915), Berlin (2769), Hamburg incl. Altona (1841), Frankfurt (1591), Stuttgart (1173), and London (854). ♡

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Zusammenfassung

Die österreichische Zensur unter Maria Theresia widmete sich der Förderung der Aufklärung, die katholische Religion wurde gegen Angriffe durch den Protestantismus geschützt, vor allem aber wurde der Aberglauben bekämpft; auch die Verteidigung der Sittlichkeit spielte eine wichtige Rolle. Das Josephinische Jahrzehnt brachte den Übergang von einem paternalistischen zu einem liberalen Zensursystem mit deutlich geringeren Verbotszahlen. Die Erfahrung der Französischen Revolution bewirkte hingegen eine drastische Verschärfung der Zensur, zugleich verlagerte sich ihr Augenmerk zunehmend auf den Bereich der Politik, d.h. die Verteidigung der Monarchie gegen Liberalismus und Nationalismus. Auch als wertlos erachtete Unterhaltungsliteratur verfiel nun häufig dem Verdikt der Zensoren. Die politisch unruhigen 1820er Jahre brachten eine erneute Verschärfung der Zensur mit sich, die Kontrolle des Buchwesens wurde der Polizei übertragen, die als Behüterin des autoritären Staates fungierte. Diese Entwicklung setzte sich im Vormärz fort, gegen die Revolution von 1848 hin scheint die Zensur aber gewissermaßen vor der drastisch ansteigenden Buchproduktion zu kapitulieren. Der Beitrag stützt sich auf die verfügbaren Kataloge und Listen verbotener Bücher, Manuskripte und Periodika, auf die die Zensur regulierenden Verordnungen und Richtlinien sowie auf die wenigen erhaltenen Zensurprotokolle, die Urteile über einzelne Texte beinhalten. Ferner werden die wichtigsten Protagonisten wie der Vorsitzende der maria-theresianischen Zensurkommission Gerard van Swieten, der Präsident der Polizeihofstelle Graf Sedlnitzky und Staatskanzler Metternich eingeführt und die Auswirkungen auf den Buchhandel sowie die Praxis der Vergabe von Genehmigungen zur Lektüre verbotener Werke für die gesellschaftliche Elite angesprochen.

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