

School of Public Morality or Instrument of Political Repression? Theatre Censorship between Vienna, Brno and Opava from Enlightened Absolutism to the Pre-March Period

by
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1 Introduction

Censorship represented one of the most effective and yet most criticised agents of state control over public opinion and all intellectual life. It owed its position and importance in the Habsburg monarchy at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries primarily to the consolidation and centralisation of state power and to the pursuit of state supervision, aimed at eliminating unwanted publications in print and image, and at guiding the influence of journalists in the service of national interests. Despite a variety of previous works¹ regarding the Habsburg censorship in the 18th and 19th century there is still no comprehensive history of theatre censorship in the Austrian Empire. Among the existing gaps, we have to emphasize the question, to what extent the censorship

¹ There is a large number of works dealing with Austrian censorship. See for example JULIUS MARX: *Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz*, Wien 1959; IDEM: *Österreichs Kampf gegen die liberalen, radikalen und kommunistischen Schriften 1835-1848*, Wien 1969. Further important accounts can be found in ISABEL WEYRICH: *Die Zensur als Mittel der Unterdrückung von liberalen Bestrebungen im österreichischen Vormärz*, typewritten thesis, Wien 1975; GERDA GRIESINGER: *Das Salzburger Zensurwesen im Vormärz*, typewritten thesis, Wien 1969; ERIKA WEINZIERL, RUDOLF G. ARDELT (ed.): *Zensur in Österreich 1780 bis 1989*, Wien – Salzburg 1991; ADOLPH WIESNER: *Denkwürdigkeiten der österreichischen Zensur vom Zeitalter der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1847; HEINRICH H. HOUBEN: *Verbotene Literatur von der klassischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 2 vols., Berlin 1924, 1928; IDEM: *Der gefesselte Biedermeier*, Leipzig 1924; EDDA ZIEGLER: *Literarische Zensur in Deutschland 1819-1848*, Wien 1983; DIETER BREUER: *Geschichte der literarischen Zensur in Deutschland*, Heidelberg 1982. For our purposes, however, there are no general works dealing with theatre censorship in Moravia-Silesia in the period under examination. We can find only a few papers concerning the censorship of particular plays during this period, namely JULIUS MARX: *Metternichs Gutachten zu Grillparzers Gedicht "Campo vacino"*, in: *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft N.F.*, 2 (1942), pp. 49-69; DUŠAN UHLÍŘ: *Rakouská cenzura, Grillparzer a král Otakar* [The Austrian Censorship, Grillparzer and King Ottakar], in: *Ad vitam et honorem. Profesoru Jaroslavu Mezníkovi přítel a žáci k pětasedmdesátiletým narozeninám*, Brno 2003, pp. 785-796, or CLAUDIO MAGRIS: *Habsburský mýtus v moderní rakouské literatuře* [The Habsburg Myth in Modern Austrian Literature], Brno 2001, pp. 104-109.

in the center was stricter or milder than the one in the peripheries and which factors were responsible for such a phenomenon.

In this paper², I will discuss both the impact of Josephine reforms such as the new church policy, the reduction of feast days or the relaxation of censorship on the performances of enlightened authors, and the impact which the defensive measures taken by the forces of conservative reaction under the Emperors Francis II (I) and Ferdinand I had on the theatre in Brno (Brünn), the capital of the Habsburg crownland of Moravia-Silesia. Moreover, I will also be exploring the censorship of Moravian theatre classics, as well as those of German, Austrian or Czech authors. By analysing the political correspondence between the Viennese and the Moravian-Silesian authorities, theatre regulations in Brno, theatre performances staged in Brno, Olomouc (Olmütz) or Opava (Troppau), and lists of plays censored in Vienna and Brno, I will try to identify the extent to which developments in the centre corresponded to or differed from those in the “close periphery”. Thus, while taking into account the specific conditions in Moravia and Silesia, I will also be investigating the ways in which the Austrian regime sought to preserve both the political status quo and religious and ethical standards. I support that thesis that theatre censorship in Brno proved to be more stringent than that in the Habsburg capital especially since the 1820s. This was the case because of the application of the Vienna prohibition lists whereas local reasons and bureaucratic interferences led to further prohibitions there as well.

Administered by the Church since the late Middle-Ages, the Jesuit University of Vienna, and therefore the Bishop of Vienna, were in charge of censorship, and sought to outlaw Protestant books and preserve the dominant religious position of Roman Catholicism. The Habsburg sovereigns Charles VI and Maria Theresa undertook a gradual “declericalisation” of censorship during the “enlightened” 18th Century by assigning the scrutiny of foreign printed books to secular committees (Bücherrevisionskommissionen). With the establishment of the Censorship Court Committee (Zensurhofkommission) in 1781, chaired by the enlightened reformer Gerhard van Swieten, Joseph II laid the foundation for the centralisation of this influential institution. He was praised both by supporters of the Enlightenment and by liberals for his relaxation of censorship, which suppressed only “worthless” literature and promoted books based on scholarship, religious principles and practical values. Nevertheless, from 1784 up to his death, Joseph II sought to curb an

² In my book on Count Sedlnitzky, I discuss only the particular theatre censorship practised by the Austrian chief of police, without exploring Moravia-Silesia and Viennese theatres (especially the Burgtheatre) and authors (especially Franz Grillparzer and Eduard Bauernfeld) more generally. In addition, this work is confined to the Pre-March period and is based solely on Viennese archival sources. See MICHAL CHVOJKA: *Joseph Graf von Sedlnitzky als Präsident der Polizei- und Zensurhofstelle in Wien (1815-1848). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Staatspolizei in der Habsburgermonarchie*, Frankfurt a.M. 2010, pp. 198-209.

increasing number of popular brochures on religious and political issues, most characteristically through the introduction of a special tax (Stempelgebühr). His brother and successor Leopold II was forced to tighten censorship in the wake of the French Revolution and this institution reached its peak under the die-hard etatistic conservative Emperor Francis II (I), under whom it became a unique instrument of political repression. This is best expressed in the transfer of censorship to the chief police authority (Polizeihofstelle) in Vienna in 1801, which from then on came to be designated the “Police and Censorship Court Office”.³

2 Habsburg Theatre and its Enlightened Absolutist Reflection

Until the beginning of 18th century, theatre in the Habsburg monarchy was considered to be essentially a form of entertainment and was offered by wandering companies. Alongside the traditional court theatre, with its predominant performances of Italian operas, the first permanent stage for the public in Vienna was set up in 1708 by the establishment of what came to be known as the Theatre at the Carinthian Gate (Theater am Kärntnertor). It acquired a reputation for staging historical scenes called “Haupt- und Staatsaktionen”, “Hanswurst” (Punch) farces and popular comedies. It was not until the reign of Joseph II that three new theatres were created in the suburbs of the Habsburg capital – the Theatre in der Leopoldstadt (1781), the Theatre an der Wien (1787) and the Theatre in der Josephstadt (1788).⁴

In the Czech parts of the monarchy, the first professional theatre, the Kotzen Theatre (Divadlo v Kocích), was opened in the Old Town of Prague (Praha, Prag) in 1739, although there had also been stages in Prague, Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary, Karlsbad), Brno and Opava in the first half of the 18th Century. These theatres drew their inspiration from Vienna, which had served as a cultural model for theatre development, and performed plays of French, Italian or German classicists like Molière, Voltaire, Carlo Goldoni or Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Nevertheless, it was the burlesque popular comedies with comic figures such as Bernardon or Punch which enjoyed the greatest popularity among audiences. Situated in various or magical parts of the world,

³ WEYRICH (as in footnote 1), pp. 5-10, 25-28; ANNA H. BENNA: Die Polizeihofstelle. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Österreichischen Zentralverwaltung, typewritten thesis, Wien 1942, pp. 148-171; ERNST WANGERMANN: Lockerung und Verschärfung der Zensur unter Joseph II. und Leopold II., in: WEINZIERL/ARDELT (as in footnote 1), pp. 1-5.

⁴ See NORBERT BACHLEITNER: The Habsburg Monarchy, in: *The Frightful Stage. Political Censorship of the Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, New York et al. 2009, pp. 230-231; KARL WEISS: Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Theaters, Wien 1854, pp. 32-107; ALFRED KOLL: Schauspielstätten im Vormärz, in: JOSEF MAYERHÖFER (ed.): *Wiener Theater des Biedermeier und Vormärz*, Wien 1978, pp. 23-39.

they were based on frequent changes of costume, fantastic effects, ambiguous jests and the actors' improvisation.⁵ Paula Sutter-Fichtner explains their success through both their linguistic accessibility and through the actors' off-the-cuff remarks, which often voiced the social, political and economic resentments which troubled the Habsburg monarchy but which rarely became a part of reform policy.⁶

Consequently, from the 1750s onwards, there was a fierce controversy between the supporters of popular situation theatre and the supporters of regular literary plays. Enlightened authors like Joseph von Sonnenfels, who sought to establish a "national" German theatre following Lessing's example in Hamburg, promoted the idea that the theatre – along with religion – was supposed to become a school of morality for the public.⁷ In his major work *Grundsätze der Policy, Handlung und Finanzwissenschaft*, Sonnenfels wrote that bawdy farces or other nonsense which dishonoured morals or good manners could not be permitted to appear on the stage and that theatre censorship was indispensable. Plays which allowed for improvisation by the actors had to be banished, since they relied on indecency and cynical allusions.⁸ As a result, the question of whether an enlightened state could promote and tolerate such entertainment, which had no aspirations to educate and which did not contribute to the creation of certain ideal stereotypes⁹, was resolved to the disadvantage of popular situation comedy, and this led to the establishment of theatre censorship¹⁰.

Having become the official theatre censor in 1770, Sonnenfels also managed to enforce his above-mentioned theoretical principles in practice. The Emperor Joseph II approved of them willingly and ordered Sonnenfels to introduce them in local theatres as well. Actors were expressly warned to avoid both spontaneous improvisations as well as direct addresses to the audience.

⁵ PAVEL BĚLINA, JIŘÍ KAŠE, JAN P. KUČERA: *Velké dějiny zemí koruny české (1740-1792)* [Grand History of the Czech Crown Countries], vol. 10, Praha – Litomyšl 2001, pp. 546-557.

⁶ PAULA SUTTER-FICHTNER: *Print vs. Speech. Censoring the Stage in 18th Century Vienna*, in: ELIZABETH POWERS (ed.): *Freedom of Speech. The History of an Idea*, Lanham 2011, pp. 81-102, here p. 83.

⁷ FRANZ HADAMOWSKY: *Die josephinische Theaterreform und das Spieljahr 1776/77 des Burgtheaters. Eine Dokumentation*, Wien 1978, p. IX; JOSEPH VON SONNENFELS: *Grundsätze der Policy, Handlung und Finanzwissenschaft*, München 1787, p. 61 (§ 108). See also SUTTER-FICHTNER (as in footnote 6), pp. 87-88, and KARL VON GÖRNER: *Der Hans Wurst-Streit in Wien und Joseph von Sonnenfels*, Wien 1884, pp. 7-73.

⁸ SONNENFELS (as in footnote 7), pp. 62-63 (§§ 110, 114).

⁹ See ZDENKA STOKLÁSKOVÁ: *Vysoký státní úředník a reformátor. Příklad Josepha von Sonnenfelse* [The High State Official and Reformer. The Example of Joseph von Sonnenfels], in: JIŘÍ MALÍŘ (ed.): *Člověk na Moravě ve druhé polovině 18. století*, Brno 2008, pp. 31-47, here pp. 34-35.

¹⁰ See HERMANN GNAU: *Die Zensur unter Joseph II.*, Strasbourg – Leipzig 1911, pp. 197-211.

When they neglected to do so they were to be arrested and, upon repeated transgression, even to be dismissed from theatre. Censors also supervised performers to make sure that their gestures did not violate sound morals.¹¹ The Emperor Joseph intended to enforce a dual principle. Firstly, the censor should not permit anything that in the least offended religion or the state. Secondly, the stage supervisor was supposed to reject every obvious absurdity and rudeness as unworthy for court theatre. According to Karl Glossy, theatre censorship was responsible not only for monitoring the performance of plays, but also for their aesthetic impression.¹²

Under circumstances which remain unclear, and in the face of vehement opposition¹³, Sonnenfels was replaced as supervisor of the Habsburg theatres by Maria Theresa's school policy adviser, Franz Karl Hägeline. The latter held this position for more than three decades (until 1805) and believed that all plays – regardless of their genre – had to have a moral purpose if they were not to threaten the state.¹⁴ In a memorandum on censorship (1795), he summed up his ideas and principles. Aware of the difficulties of curbing the impact of a word spoken on stage, Hägeline appealed to playwrights “either to avoid words with undesirable social overtones or vulgar connotations or to find alternatives.”¹⁵ Likewise, he also took account of political developments, both at home and abroad. Thus, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, terms like liberty, freedom, revolution or Enlightenment were banned from the stage.¹⁶ As for censorship practice, theatre managers had to submit the pieces to be performed in printed or handwritten form. The censor reviewed them carefully with particular respect to double meanings, indicating all offending passages. If corrections to the text were necessary, the censor removed the objectionable passages, or the author had to make these amendments himself. The plays were released for performance only after going through this procedure.¹⁷

Hägeline's responsibility grew enormously following Emperor Joseph's 1782 decree that each theatre piece designed to be performed in the German hereditary lands was first to be censored in Vienna. As a result, Hägeline received and examined many plays from Prague, Brno, Olomouc, Graz or

¹¹ See SUTTER-FICHTNER (as in footnote 6), p. 91; KARL GLOSSY: *Zur Geschichte der Wiener Theatencensur*. A separate print from *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft* 7 (1896), pp. 23-24.

¹² GLOSSY, *Zur Geschichte* (as in footnote 11), p. 26.

¹³ See *ibidem*, pp. 28-30.

¹⁴ SUTTER-FICHTNER (as in footnote 6), p. 94.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ FRIEDRICH WILHELM SCHEMBOR: *Meinungsbeeinflussung durch Zensur und Druckförderung in der Napoleonischen Zeit*, Wien 2010, p. 227; SUTTER-FICHTNER (as in footnote 6), p. 96.

Linz.¹⁸ Derek Beales has stated that, if Joseph's guidelines for book censorship allegedly came close to granting freedom, the opposite was true for plays.

"In no circumstances, could a piece be performed whose content was in itself 'morally objectionable'. No mistress could figure. Horrible, unnatural and frightening crimes could not be enacted. Improper actions or behavior must not be shown. Male persons could set traps for virtue, but a lady's room must never be the scene of their success. Two lovers must never leave the stage together alone. Characters who did wrong must get their deserts. Divorce must not be mentioned. Double meanings must not be permitted. Nothing specific to any religion could be shown; no mention was to be made of toleration, church law, atheists, heretics or sectaries. As for politics, plays were not to be allowed, which depreciated monarchical government. [...] Friendly nations and the Estates must not be criticised."¹⁹

3 The Theatrical Situation in Brno

The crownland capital Brno had had a theatre building since 1600 in the Upper Market (Horní trh, Obermarkt), where the Reduta Theatre is situated today. In 1693 it was destroyed by fire and the theatre was temporarily housed in Count Salm's riding hall in the Fish Market (Rybný trh, Fischmarkt). In 1732, a new theatre building was built in the Cabbage Market (Zelný trh, Krautmarkt), where travelling troupes offered performances, provided that they had acquired the necessary licenses. The theatre in Brno was considerably influenced by Vienna and performed operas, ballets, dramas or farces. Despite the mixed Czech and German audience, plays were performed in German and operas especially in Italian. The Czech language began to appear in the late 1760s. Under director Roman Waizhofer, the theatre in Brno already exhibited a decent level and performed operas from Christoph Willibald Gluck or Shakespeare's drama *Hamlet* in 1784. The following year, a fire destroyed the theatre building again, but the Moravian Estates built a new theatre (so-called "Landständisches Theater") in the same year. According to a decree of Joseph II, Brno acquired a particular "theatre privilege" in 1786 and was thus able to maintain a permanent theatre.²⁰

Delving into the files of the Moravian governor's office, a senior political authority in the crownland of Moravia-Silesia, we can reconfigure a political framework for the development of local theatre and censorship in the 1780s. As early as 1776, through Joseph's declaration of the so-called "liberty for theatres" (Spektakelfreiheit) which allowed for the establishment of the first

¹⁸ See GLOSSY, *Zur Geschichte* (as in footnote 11), pp. 39-40; SCHEMBOR (as in footnote 17), p. 226.

¹⁹ DEREK BEALES: *Joseph II. Against the World. 1780-1790*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 466-467.

²⁰ JAROSLAV DŘÍMAL: *Dějiny města Brna* [The History of Brno City], vol. 1, Brno 1969, p. 179.

permanent commercial theatres²¹, a new era of modern theatre was launched in the Habsburg monarchy. The whole range of public entertainments including music and theatre performances, masked balls and puppet plays, were from now on no longer limited to an exclusive monopoly, but were within reach of those deemed suitable. Of course, permission on the part of the Moravian governorate constituted an unavoidable prerequisite, while imperial laws and limitations had to be kept in mind. For instance, a court decree from January 1781 prohibited public entertainment on the holy days of Easter Day, Whitsun, Christmas Day, the Feast of Corpus Christi, All Saints' Day, the Feast of the Annunciation, the Birth Day of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Theresa's Day. Prohibition was also extended on the 17th and 18th of August and the 28th and 29th of November because of the respective deaths of Emperor Francis and Queen Maria Theresa, as well as from the 22nd to the 24th of December, during the last days of Advent.²² As clear as it might seem, Josephine church policy caused a particular confusion in that case, as it was unclear whether this prohibition also applied to those feast days reduced to common workdays by Joseph II.²³ Though this was not the case, there was an obvious degree of uncertainty among local officials which could be observed with respect to public entertainment and its changing framework in the early 1780s.

In Johann Baptist Bergobzoom²⁴, who had been working since the 1760s as an actor and principal across various German states (Munich, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Mainz, Cologne or Düsseldorf), and who had later appeared on renowned stages in Vienna (the Burgtheatre) and Prague (the Kotzen Theatre), the theatre in Brno won an experienced theatre entrepreneur. In April 1784, he took over management of the theatre from Roman Waitzhofer²⁵ and gained a six year theatre privilege for several other towns in Moravia (especially

²¹ See W.E. YATES: *Theatre in Vienna. A Critical History, 1776-1995*, Cambridge 1996, pp. XVI, 1 and 15.

²² Moravský zemský archive v Brně (MZA) [Moravian Provincial Archive Brno], Moravské místodržitelství – starší [Moravian Governorate – older (MGO)], box 4519, Court decree from 17.01.1781 (transcript).

²³ On Sundays and feast days, public entertainment was allowed to begin only after 19.00. During the winter months, from St. Michael's Day (29.09.) to St. George's Day (24.04.), it should end by 22.00, and during the summer months by 23.00. The only exception was Shrovetide, when balls were permitted to finish at 2.00 AM. See: *Handbuch aller unter der Regierung des Kaisers Joseph des II. für die K.K. Erbländer ergangenen Verordnungen und Gesetze (1780-1784)*, vol. 2, Wien 1785, section 4, pp. 73-74, 97-78; MGO, box 4519, No. 19.772, inquiry of county Iglau (Jihlava) from 5.10.1786.

²⁴ For a short biography, see the article INGRID BIGLER-MARSCHALL, ALENA JAKUBCOVÁ: Johann Baptist Bergobzoom, URL: <http://host.divadlo.cz/art/clanek.asp?id=1799> (28.03.2012).

²⁵ For the contract and relevant conditions between them see MGO, box 4519, No. 2628, record of proceedings from 27.01.1785 (transcript) and undated "Promemoria" from Roman Waitzhofer.

Olomouc and Kroměříž)²⁶. Nevertheless, business was rapidly disrupted by two fires in 1785 and 1786, which burned down the theatre in Brno, along with all its internal equipment. According to a personal instruction of the Emperor Joseph II from September 1786, theatre administration was taken over by the city of Brno in order to ensure a stable theatre operation. Bergobzoom became a sworn-in city official with both an annual salary and a quarter-share of the profits. The theatre was renamed the Royal Municipal National Theatre (Königliches Städtisches Nationaltheater) and built up a theatrical company of nearly 40 actors.²⁷

Drawing on his experiences, Bergobzoom made a request to perform plays on Fridays (as in Vienna) as well as masked balls and redoubts outside of the carnival period. An obvious justification for these requests can be found in the need to sustain his numerous theatre companies. In addition, he intended to manage two theatres simultaneously, having been offered the administration of a German theatre in Hannover under attractive terms. The Moravian Governor, Count Ludwig Cavriani, approved of the first two proposals of the Brno theatre entrepreneur but required more information on the double theatre management, due to the desire to ensure “continual good services for the audience” in Brno.²⁸ Bergobzoom’s dynamic activities were further highlighted by his requesting Emperor Joseph II for permission to offer 16 or 20 performances at the Vienna Theatre at the Carinthian Gate with his own theatrical company following the Easter of 1785.²⁹

The first confrontations with censorship, as recorded by the Moravian governorate, appeared before the Easter of 1787. Police director Johann Okacz reported in mid-March that Bergobzoom had allegedly violated an imperial regulation by offering two comedies, *Die Erziehung macht den Menschen* (Education Makes the Man) and *Das Weiberkomplott* (The Wives’ Conspiracy) in February and March 1787. In Okacz’s view, this was not in accord-

²⁶ In January 1786, Bergobzoom was allowed to perform plays on Fridays throughout the whole year, also in Olomouc. See MGO, box 4519, No. 1084, Cavriani to County office in Olomouc, 17.01.1786.

²⁷ See BIGLER-MARSCHALL/JAKUBCOVÁ (as in footnote 24).

²⁸ MGO, box 4519, No. 11.170, Johann Bergobzoom to His Majesty (Joseph II), 22.05.1784; The Moravian governorate’s evaluation of J.B. Bergobzoom’s request, 13.06.1784; report of the Moravian Governor Count Cavriani to the Court Chancellery in Vienna, 28.06.1784. Among the files of the Moravian governorate, there is no final document resolving the question of simultaneous management of theatres in Brno and Hannover. However, when assigning licenses for theatre enterprises, Moravian authorities gave a clear preference to those theatre managers not “burdened” with another business. In particular, Vinzenz Michule was denied a position as theatre director in Opava, because he was already running a similar enterprise in Olomouc. Such an activity would harm the audience in one or another city, according to the statement of the Moravian governorate. (MGO, box 4519, Nr. 8553, Letter to County office in Opava from 30.05.1801).

²⁹ MGO, box 4519, No. 178, Johann Bergobzoom to His Majesty (Joseph II), 31.08.1784; Moravian governorate to County office in Brno, 6.09.1784.

ance with Emperor Joseph's permission of plays, tragedies and dramas to be performed during the Lentern period (including Palm Sunday but excluding Holy Week).³⁰ The authorities in Brno blamed Bergobzoom for a double infringement in this case, firstly in the performance of the two comedies and, secondly in their false designation as "plays" on advertising posters. It was claimed that this "would mislead the audience and damage the reputation of the National Theatre" in Brno.³¹ Bergobzoom defended himself through commercial imperatives³², allegedly set by Emperor Joseph II and taken into consideration in other crownland capitals, through an explanation of the word "drama", and through his claim that he drew his topical inspiration from the Theatre at the Carinthian Gate. Considering such treatment as harassment, Bergobzoom asked for permission to resign from his position as a theatre entrepreneur in Brno in 1788.³³ In any event, despite his claim that the Court Theatre in Vienna was offering "far more critical and attractive pieces" during Lent³⁴, Bergobzoom received a stern rebuke to follow regulations and not to pay attention to what was going on in Vienna.³⁵ The later practice shows that theatre entrepreneurs in Opava were expected to submit a list of pieces to be performed every eight days (however, only if they had previously been performed in the National Theatre in Brno).³⁶

4 Theatres between the Authorities and the French Revolution. A "Dagger Story" in Olomouc

The attractive ideas of the French Revolution came to win clear support, particularly among the middle and lower social classes, civic officials, writers, intellectuals and Freemasons.³⁷ At the end of 1791, the revolution in

³⁰ Joseph II. issued his respective regulation on 15.02.1787. See MGO, box 4519, No. 3086, Okacz to Cavriani, 13.03.1787; Presidential decree to police directorate in Brno from 16.02.1787.

³¹ MGO, box 4519, No. 4923, Governor's letters to Municipal economic administration from 15.03. and 10.04.1787. All translations are the author's.

³² The emperor is said to have instructed him to capitalise on everything when thriving, for the good of the city and in order to bring in money, so that the city should have no damage and could prosper. Bergobzoom emphasised the fact that operas were not performed during Lent at the Court Theatre in Vienna for economic reasons and not as a result of a prohibition. Otherwise, Punch had not to be allowed at the Leopoldstadt Theatre and the prohibition would be extended also to Prague, Graz, Linz, Buda, Innsbruck etc. See MGO, box 4519, Bergobzoom's letter from April 2nd, 1787.

³³ See MGO, box 4519, Bergobzoom's letter from 2.04.1787.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ See MGO, box 4519, No. 6783, Letter to the municipal economic administration from 10.04.1787.

³⁶ See MGO, box 4519, No. 14.599, Letter to the County office in Opava from 12.09.1801.

³⁷ In this context, HELMUT REINALTER: *Aufgeklärter Absolutismus und Revolution. Zur Geschichte des Jakobinertums und der frühdemokratischen Bestrebungen in der Habs-*

France entered into a new “Republican” phase, with significant events to come. The Kingdom was supposed to collapse and the electoral legislation was expected to be substantially democratised. The French armies defeated those of Prussia and Austria and conquered Belgium and the southern Rhineland, thereby creating a basis for the spreading of revolutionary ideas beyond France.³⁸

Pre-revolutionary expressions were also perceived in Moravia and Silesia. Brno police authorities had become increasingly sensitive towards incidents disturbing the peace and received orders from Vienna not to underestimate any revolutionary sign. Characteristically, during the transitional period of 1792/93, they examined “secret meetings” in Olomouc, where daggers had been distributed among the students of the local lyceum in preparation for a play which was to be performed there. The Moravian Governor Count Alois Ugarte considered this fact to be extraordinarily important and, at the end of December 1792, he sent his police director Okacz to Olomouc, because of a lack of confidantes there, in order to investigate the affair and arrest the perpetrators. Okacz was given a certificate, due to which every local religious and secular authority without distinction of class and rank had to provide him with all assistance in Olomouc.³⁹ As a result, Okacz spent the last five days of 1792 in the episcopal- and fortress-city of Olomouc, supposedly on the trail of the possible plot, with students, some officers and “Jacobins” equally involved. The Brno police director established contacts with the fortress commander Count von Arco and started secretly to interrogate individual citizens secretly and to collect the first notes.⁴⁰

The main reason for the “dagger story” was connected with the play *Lina oder Lohn der Strafe des heimlichen Gerichts* (Lina, or The Reward for Punishment by the Secret Tribunal), written by Franz Cajetan Reisinger, a professor and director of philosophy at the lyceum in Olomouc. For the purpose of the play, Christian Roßbach⁴¹, a theatre entrepreneur in Olomouc, had several sharp daggers manufactured. Several citizens in Olomouc were worried both

burgermonarchie, Wien et al. 1980, pp. 165-172, refers to the appeals of the Viennese Jacobins (Riedel, Hebenstreit, Ruzsitska and others).

³⁸ WILLIAM DOYLE: *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, Oxford 1989, pp. 174-196; FRANÇOIS FURET: *Revolutionary France 1770-1880*, Oxford 1993, pp. 101-151; REINALTER (as in footnote 37), pp. 162-163.

³⁹ MZA Brno, Moravsko-slezské gubernium – presidium (MSGP) [Moravian-Silesian Governorate – Presidium], box 220, Ugarte to Kollowrat, 24.12.1792, und Ugarte to Okacz, 25.12.1792.

⁴⁰ MSGP, box 221, Okacz’s reports for Ugarte, 27.-31.12.1792 (here the report from 27.12.1792).

⁴¹ Christian Roßbach (1756-1793) was an actor, founder and the first director of the Freihaus Theatre (Theater auf der Wieden) in Vienna (1787-1788). He appeared on the stage both in Opava and Olomouc at the beginning of 1790s as a theatre entrepreneur. See TADEUSZ KRZESZOWIAK: *Freihaustheater in Wien 1787-1801*, Wien et al. 2009, pp. 73-75.

by this and by the nature of the murder⁴² of Count Rudolph in the play, so much so that one of them made a secret report to Brno. Moreover, the author of the play, Reisinger, who had earlier tried to be accepted among the Freemasons in Brno, without success, intended to display the Masons as “ridiculous and dangerous”, as police director Okacz reported.⁴³ This “theatrical revenge” mingled with the assumptions of the citizens, which were further increased by their dislike of the magistrate and some high-school teachers. In addition, it was quite common to label someone as a “Jacobin” among the citizens of Olomouc. Through investigations and inquiries, the Brno police director found out that such a “label” had been used in general for someone who was not “well minded” and had belonged to the former reading society, for the Masons, certain wealthy citizens and for professors at the lyceum.⁴⁴ Consequently, Okacz managed to explain away the “dagger story”, which was initially surrounded by the veil of “imminent danger of revolution”, as bloated, deformed and misunderstood, and to reject the suspicion of an “impending assassination conspiracy”⁴⁵.

In so doing, however, the Brno police director also uncovered the “staging of revolutionary plays” in Olomouc, which he could not consider as being in conformity with the security of the country and the monarchy.⁴⁶ His accusations were directed especially against the magistrate official Maschner, who had been in charge of “censorship and police surveillance”, but who was said to have paid attention “neither to order and security, nor to the censorship of plays” in the theatre.⁴⁷ After having been informed by Okacz, the Moravian governor prohibited Reisinger’s play⁴⁸ and urged his immediate superiors in the Court Chancellery in Vienna to issue a stern rebuke to the theatre entrepreneur Roßbach in Olomouc. In addition, Count Ugarte ordered all county offices in Moravia and Silesia to verify each and every censored play and to send him a list of plays to be performed every month.⁴⁹

⁴² In the play, Count Rudolf was murdered by a masked man, which naturally reminding the audience of the recent murder attempt on King Gustav III of Sweden during a masked ball at the Stockholm Opera (March 1792). See MSGP, box 221, Okacz’s report from Olomouc, 28.12.1792.

⁴³ Ibidem, Okacz’s report from Olomouc, 28.12.1792, and Ugarte’s report to Kollowrat, 11.01.1793.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, Okacz’s report from Olomouc, 29.12.1792.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 31.12.1792.

⁴⁶ Okacz considered it “really very strange and striking that since some time there had been performed so many revolutionary pieces in all the theatres [in Olomouc], that might be taken from the roughest periods and considered least appropriate to the current circumstances. Such pieces can yield an advantage neither for public morals nor for the state.” (Ibidem, 30.12.1792).

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem and Ugarte’s report to Kollowrat, 11.01.1793.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, Ugarte’s report to Kollowrat, 11.01.1793.

Therefore, the highest resolution of the Emperor Francis II (I) in April 1793 must have appeared to the rigorous Brno police authorities as a bolt out of the blue. Since, in the Olomouc incident, Roßbach had not been convicted on the “suspicion of an evil act or even ambiguous intention”⁵⁰ he was only reminded to make use of blunt tinny or wooden daggers in the future. Otherwise, his works were considered to have been properly censored and were therefore permitted, so that the ban on the performance was lifted and Roßbach was able to defend his good name in Olomouc society following this affair. The Emperor also rejected the aforementioned requirement for monthly lists to be sent by the county offices, which he considered to be a redundant measure. The governor was required only to ensure the strict observance of the rule that no pieces should be performed, other than those that had been properly censored.⁵¹ Whether this turn was brought about by Roßbach’s short activity in the Freihaus Theatre in Vienna, by the well-known inclination towards the theatre of the Emperor Francis II (I), or simply by the “impartial and fair assessment” of imperial councillors, the “milder” course in Vienna was to prove to be only a temporary phenomenon, and a general tightening of censorship was resumed within a matter of time.

5 Conservative Reaction and New Regulations for Theatre Censorship

Aside from covering books, newspapers or theatre pieces, censorship also extended over various works of fine art, such as libretti and song texts, sermons, public lectures, maps, business signs or even grave- or fabric-inscriptions. Imperial regulations from the 22nd February 1795 and the 14th September 1810 constituted the legal basis for the management of censorship and for the conduct of censors throughout the Napoleonic and pre-March period.⁵² The first of these reacted both to the excesses of the French Revolution and to the struggles with the so-called Hungarian and Viennese Jacobins, who aimed at revolutionary changes within the Habsburg monarchy itself. The opening paragraphs of the 1795 regulation sought to suppress the smuggling and dissemination of forbidden books through the imposition of harsh punishments (paragraphs 1-3). Simultaneously, preventive censorship was also introduced, as no domestic books were allowed to be printed abroad (paragraphs 8-9) and all manuscripts were to be submitted to censors via the Control Offices (Revisionsämter) before print. The final decision, based upon a censor’s opinion, was to be made by censorship departments within the respective governorates

⁵⁰ Ibidem, Court decree to Ugarte from 13.04.1793.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien, Staatskanzlei (in the following: HHStA Wien, StK), Correspondence with Police Court Office, box 58, fol. 117-124. Complete versions of both censorship regulations are also to be found in MARX, *Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz* (as in footnote 1), pp. 68-76.

or by the Court Chancellery in Vienna.⁵³ In his famous memorandum on censorship in Hungary (1795), Franz Hägelin clearly pointed out that censorship of the theatre must be far more severe than the normal censorship of printed texts.

“This is a consequence of the different impression which can be made on the minds and emotions of the audience by a work enacted with the illusion of real life, by comparison with that which can be made by a play that is merely read at a desk.”⁵⁴

Fifteen years later (1810), after Napoleon’s armies had vacated Vienna following their victorious campaign in the Fifth Coalition War, and after censorship had been introduced there temporarily, a new regulation was passed to reconsolidate control over written and spoken words.⁵⁵ “No work is exempted from censorship”, as paragraph 9 stated, whereas paragraph 15 introduced four Latin expressions to assess printed works. “Admittitur” signified the unrestricted permission of a publication. If the object of censorship was graded with “transeat”, it could be sold publicly but not advertised in newspapers. The third grade, “erga schedam”, stood for strictly forbidden prints, which were to be handed out only to carefully selected and scientifically-educated individuals against the so-called “commitment bill” (Verpflichtungsschein) of the Police and the Censorship Court Office. In each of the crownlands, the consent of the respective governorate was needed. The highest level of the prohibition was “damnatur”, and this was applied to publications which “undermined” the state or public morality. Permission to read such books could only be granted by the police court office in Vienna. In the course of the introduction of counterrevolutionary measures in the 1830s a new extraordinary form of censorship prohibition was introduced “damnatur nec erga schedam (conceditur)”. Julius Marx speaks of further “refinements” arising from the practice of censorship.⁵⁶ It was an exclusive privilege of the Emperor to hand out such books to persons deemed to be most reliable. Moreover, in order to suppress the most revolutionary writings such as political and liberal leaflets and pamphlets, the category “damnatur et confiscatur” was also introduced.⁵⁷

⁵³ MARX, Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz (as in footnote 1), pp. 69-71 (§§ 4-7, 10-12).

⁵⁴ Quoted according to YATES (as in footnote 21), pp. 25, 246.

⁵⁵ For the principles underlying the censorship regulation of 1810, see BENNA (as in footnote 3), pp. 198-199.

⁵⁶ See JULIUS MARX: Die amtlichen Verbotslisten. Zur Geschichte der vormärzlichen Zensur in Österreich, in: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs 9 (1956), pp. 150-185, here p. 153; IDEM: Die amtlichen Verbotslisten. Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der österreichischen Zensur im Vormärz, ibidem 11 (1958), pp. 412-466, here pp. 421-422.

⁵⁷ This prohibition was imposed, for example, on the Polish newspaper *Echo miast polskich* published in Paris (HHStA Wien, StK, Messages from Police Court Office (in the following: MfP), box 48, message from 22.11.1843; HHStA Wien, StK, Messages to Police Court Office, box 18, message from 3.12.1843) or several print products of

Paragraph 10 set out three main reasons for the prohibition of publications. Firstly there were political reasons, resulting from attacks on the monarchical system of government, on the Austrian state administration and its representatives, or on foreign governments and dynasties. Secondly there were religious reasons, raised by offences against the Christian religion or the promotion of other religious or philosophical currents and, finally, there were also moral reasons, seeking to counter attacks against public morality. Censorship goals could be accomplished either through “preventive” or “repressive” censorship, i.e. prior to or following print.⁵⁸ Despite certain good intentions, this instruction can be considered to be inadequate, since 22 paragraphs offered a broad space for interpretations. It is fair to say, however, that these regulations were mere guidelines, as no newspapers were taken into account. As a consequence, emerging problems were to be resolved by particular court decrees or by a reference to the precedent set by earlier decisions.

Plays represented a large group of censorship objects, to which the Habsburg police paid the closest attention. For this reason, no plays or dramas could be performed or announced in the newspapers, unless they had been approved by the censors.⁵⁹ Such an approach was becoming increasingly important for the absolutist regime, since the stage provided the predominant topic of conversation among both aristocratic and bourgeois circles and offered, in fact, the only possibility of assembly. In addition, the theatre further presented the means both for distraction from political affairs, and for the guidance of the population according to the principles of Habsburg government. As a consequence theatres, as institutions, were promoted by the police, rather than inhibited by them.⁶⁰ Such a policy had no alleviating effect on

the company Hoffmann & Campe (e.g. „Österreich und dessen Zukunft“, HHStA Wien, StK, MfP, box 48, message from 12.05.1843).

⁵⁸ WEYRICH (as in footnote 1), pp. 6-7; SILVESTER LECHNER: *Gelehrte Kritik und Restauration. Metternichs Wissenschafts- und Pressepolitik und die Wiener “Jahrbücher der Literatur”* (1818-1849), Tübingen 1977, pp. 79-82.

⁵⁹ CHRYSOSTOMUS FAULLER: *Gesetze, Verordnungen und Vorschriften für die Polizeiverwaltung im Kaiserthume Oesterreich*. Vol. 4: S-Z, Wien 1827, pp. 313-314 (Court decree from 26.04.1802 respectively Decree of Police court office from 9.03.1817).

⁶⁰ For example, when the Court Theatre at the Carinthian (in 1816 or 1824) ran into financial difficulties, Count Sedlnitzky viewed this as a most harmful matter from the point of view of the higher state and the police, and he urged the Vienna Police Chief Directorate to find new sources of revenue. Among these measures, new taxes or the passport and license fees levied by the police, lent themselves to such a policy. On the other hand, censorship protected theatres against the “damaging” effects of so-called theatre critics in the newspapers, be it against the editor of Viennese *Mode-Zeitung*, W. Hebenstreit (1816), against the criticisms in the magazine *Der Sammler* (1823) or against Moritz G. Saphir, who was renowned for his biting criticism (1834-1835, 1846). See HERMANN OBERHUMMER: *Die Wiener Polizei*, vol. 1, Wien 1937, p. 189; KARL GLOSSY: *Zur Geschichte der Theater Wiens II. (1821 bis 1830)*, in: *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft* 26 (1920), pp. 1-155, here pp. 35-36; DONALD E. EMERSON: *Metternich and the Political Police. Security and Subversion in the Habsburg Monar-*

censorship, however, as the aforementioned regulations and paragraphs suggest. Moreover, older pieces were subjected to censorship again when performed at the same theatre after a longer period of time.⁶¹ So-called “theatre inspection commissioners” (Theater-Probe-Inspektionskommissare), appointed for each theatre, had to attend rehearsals and supervise the actor’s texts, speeches and gestures. Later on, they became responsible for the preliminary censorship of plays which were to be performed in the theatres entrusted to them.⁶² Those who would violate this new regulation by making unauthorised alterations to previously-performed pieces were to be fined 100-500 gulden. The actors, in turn, who would allow the insertions or extemporizations arbitrarily and without the prior knowledge of the theatre directorate, were in danger of being arrested and held for a period of up to eight days.⁶³

6 Theatre Between “the Centre and the Periphery”

Julius Marx claims that, while theatres in the Viennese suburbs or the Habsburg crownlands enjoyed a more relaxed censorship, both the Court Theatres⁶⁴ in Vienna were subject to an extremely vigilant censorship, which looked for any offensive passage as accurately as possible.⁶⁵ Norbert Bachleitner, however, raises doubts in this regard and points out that lists of prohibited plays were sent from Vienna to the crownlands in order to secure certain homogeneity of censorship within the monarchy.⁶⁶

If we keep in mind the aim of resolving this discrepancy, we need to take a more detailed look at the records of both the political and police authorities in Moravia and Silesia. Firstly, however, it is important to point out that there are significant gaps within individual periods between 1780 and 1848. The Josephine and Napoleonic periods in particular display an obvious lack of necessary documents, such as lists of prohibited plays, censors’ expert opinions, or even more extensive correspondence between governorate and police directorate, which would allow us to analyse the extent of theatre censorship

chy (1815-1830), Haag 1968, pp. 150-151; Burgtheater in Dokumenten. Katalog der Theaterausstellung September 1976 – März 1977, Wien 1977, pp. 34, 55; CARL LUDWIG COSTENOBLE: Aus dem Burgtheater 1818-1837. Tagebuchblätter des weiland k. k. Hofschauspielers und Regisseurs Carl Ludwig Costenoble, vol. 2: 1830-1837, Wien 1889, p. 222; KARL GLOSSY (ed.): Aus Bauernfelds Tagebüchern. Vol. 1: 1819-1848, Wien 1895, p. 82; EDUARD V. BAUERNFELD: Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. 3, Wien 1871, pp. 321-324.; MARX, Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz (as in footnote 1), p. 57.

⁶¹ For more information see FAULLER (as in footnote 59), pp. 314-315.

⁶² Ibidem, pp. 316-318. For examples of their activity see GLOSSY, Aus Bauernfelds Tagebüchern (as in footnote 60), pp. 4-5, 22-24, 25-26, 41.

⁶³ See CHOJKA (as in footnote 2), pp. 198-199.

⁶⁴ Burgtheatre at Michaelerplatz and Theatre at the Carinthian Gate. See KOLL (as in footnote 4), p. 23.

⁶⁵ MARX, Österreichische Zensur im Vormärz, (as in footnote 1), p. 57.

⁶⁶ BACHLEITNER (as in footnote 4), pp. 234-235.

in-depth. Fortunately, there is an increasing number of the aforementioned materials from the 1820s onwards, reaching a climax in the 1830s and early 1840s. Therefore, our generalisations and answers will refer to the period between 1824 and 1840 in particular, even though it is also possible, to a certain extent, to apply them to the period before 1820/24 and the period up until 1848. We will discuss this later within the relevant context.

As we have already stated, Count Sedlnitzky decided to tighten surveillance of the Habsburg stages and, from 1822 onwards, ordered the annual provision of theatre censors in the crownlands with a list of plays not allowed in Vienna. The reasons for this allegedly lay in the sporadic provincial performances of pieces prohibited in the Habsburg capital. Brno was no exception in this regard. In 1824, Governor Anton Friedrich von Mittrowsky made the police director in Brno, Peter von Muth, responsible for theatre censorship, and provided him both with the Viennese lists and with two guiding principles to follow in exercising his new responsibilities. First of all, theatre was to be a public school for morality and good taste.⁶⁷ Being one of the few available public pleasures and forms of relaxation, whose deprivation would generate great general dissatisfaction⁶⁸, theatre was supposed to educate the people in moral, religious and political spheres. In spite of the fact that some of the plays that had been prohibited in Vienna had appeared in print, Mittrowsky viewed their stage performances as potentially dangerous, due to the possible production of “bad impressions” among the audiences in Brno. Secondly, not every piece allowed in Vienna was to be permitted automatically in Brno, since local conditions and the Brno audience might require their prohibition. Thus, the Viennese lists of prohibited plays were to serve merely as a guideline. They also contained short descriptions of motives for prohibition, which were to provide clues and reference points for the police director Muth in his conduct of theatre censorship. Subsequently, the latter issued his own lists of censored plays to be sent to and observed throughout the whole

⁶⁷ MZA Brno, Policejní ředitelství (PD) [Police Directorate], box 75, fol. 20-21, Mittrowsky to Muth, 9.08.1824; fol. 57-59 (Verzeichnis der Theaterstücke, welche vom Monate May bis zum Schlusse des Jahres 1824 in Wien zur Aufführung nicht zugelassen worden sind); fol. 172-174 (dasselbe Verzeichnis vom Januar 1825 – Oktober 1826) etc.; Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Polizeihofstelle (in the following: AVA Wien, PHS), box 1.074, No. 46 ex 1824, fol. 61-63 (Verzeichnis der Theaterstücke, welche seit dem Anfange des Jahres 1822 in Wien zur Aufführung nicht zugelassen worden sind). The last-named Viennese list was sent to all governors as a circular. See also GLOSSY, *Aus Bauernfelds Tagebüchern* (as in footnote 60), p. 56.

⁶⁸ Both the governor of Moravia-Silesia and the police director in Brno were particularly concerned with ordinary theatre business for this particular reason. Therefore, when it was threatened that the Brno audience be deprived of theatre performances for a period of up to six months because of problems with theatre financing and the appointment of a new theatre director, this was considered an impossibility, and they did their best in order to engage a new director as soon as possible. As a result, Aloys Zwoneczek became the new theatre manager for a period of six years. See PD, box 75, Mittrowsky to Muth, 10.01.1825; Police director's report to Mittrowsky from 6.02.1825.

crownland Moravia-Silesia. This practice did not start only in 1824, as a police commissioner's request to receive such lists in Opava for the years 1807-1812 shows. In any event, it demonstrates the clearly limited extent of theatre censorship during the second half of the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁹

By looking at the Viennese list of banned plays from 1822, we can recognise four characteristic reasons for which plays were banned, whether this be out of consideration for the military (as was the case with the comedy *Musikalische Akademie* (Musical Academy), because of its "offensive" depiction of two "easygoing" officers), in defence of princes and kings (as with the comedy *Die Pilgerin* (The Female Pilgrim) by Johanna Franul v. Weißenthurn, because of its "offensive" characterisation of a prince, or with Walter Scott's tragedy *Mary Stuart's First Imprisonment*), or for religious and moral reasons (as seen with the comedy *Schwere Wahl* (Tough Choice), which was prohibited because of its portrayal of the slippery love adventures of a prince, or with Shakespeare's drama *The Merchant of Venice*). Finally, a very significant group was comprised of plays prohibited for political reasons, such as Franz Grillparzer's tragedy *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* (King Ottokar's Fortune and End), which was banned in January 1824.⁷⁰ From 1830, all governors were required to submit trimestral lists of all plays in their respective crownlands, both allowed and prohibited.⁷¹

The more rigorous course in the crownlands was becoming increasingly evident, as pieces which had already successfully passed the censorship process in the province, but which had subsequently been forbidden in Vienna, were ultimately prohibited throughout the state.⁷² One of the ways in which to circumvent such regulations was to rename the play, so that forbidden or even uncensored plays could be performed. Having compared lists of plays performed in Olomouc with those censored in Brno, Governor Mittrowsky discovered that a historical play, *König Stephan* (King Stephen), only appeared in the first of these lists. This affair cast a shadow on the police director who had permitted its performance in Olomouc. Muth proved his innocence, demonstrating that he had checked it under a different title *Gisela von Bayern, erste Königin der Magyaren* (Gisela of Bavaria, First Queen of the Magyars). Mittrowsky could not be easily won over, however, by the claim that "many theatre directors had often changed the titles of pieces arbitrarily"⁷³, and labeled such unfair practices as an infraction of the law. The play might have been permitted, the complete name, in turn, constructed by a mere

⁶⁹ PD, box 75, fol. 20-21, Mittrowsky to Muth, 9.08.1824; fol. 180, Mittrowsky to Muth, 10.12.1826; and fol. 26, Mittrowsky to Muth, 19.12.1824.

⁷⁰ AVA Wien, PHS, box 1.074, 46 ex 1824, fol. 61-63. See also GLOSSY, *Zur Geschichte der Theater Wiens* (as in footnote 60), pp. 29-30, 33-34.

⁷¹ PD, box 75, fol. 263, Inzaghy to Muth, 31 March 1830; GLOSSY, *Zur Geschichte der Theater Wiens* (as in footnote 60), pp. 120-121.

⁷² Ibidem, fol. 124, Mittrowsky to Muth, 7.01.1826.

⁷³ Ibidem, fol. 135v, Muth to Mittrowsky, 16.02.1826.

combination of both titles, but the title also was, and always would have to be, subject to the assessment of the censors.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, there were also less offensive or, to be precise, more bureaucratic reasons for such phenomena. The play *Die beiden Peter* (The Two Peters), which was actually known as *Der Bürgermeister von Sardam* (The Mayor of Sardam), and permitted as such in October 1820, was not included on a regular semimonthly list of censored plays in Brno for January 1826. To justify this discrepancy, police director Muth declared that the manuscript of this comedy had already been censored under both titles in 1820. It seemed, however, to have been registered only under one of the given titles, so the second one was incorporated into the next list of censored plays.⁷⁵

Next to the function of a theatre censor in the person of police director Muth, his subordinate police commissioners, or actuary trainees (*Konzeptspraktikanten*) were entrusted with the tasks of theatre inspection commissioners. In this position, they supervised rehearsals and opening performances, ensuring that the actors did not deviate from the approved text, and overseeing the approval of costumes, decoration and other internal equipment.⁷⁶

Despite these precautions, some actors were not able or willing to avoid improvisation. Johann Nestroy, a famous Austrian actor, playwright and satirist, became renowned for his sexual innuendos and political allusions when acting in the theatres of Vienna, Amsterdam, Brno, Graz and Lemberg. From 1825 on, he was under contract in the Moravian capital⁷⁷, and left an immediate and visible impression there, coming into collision with police right at the beginning of his engagement in December 1825. According to the report of the theatre inspector Franz Krockner, Nestroy offended public morality during the opera performance *Der Dorfbarbier* (The Village Barber) by adding an improvised comment about an officer cuckolding his hirer.⁷⁸ The whole affair was properly examined at the police department on the following day. As is apparent from the minutes, first Nestroy was interrogated and then both the stage director Karl Saal and the theatre entrepreneur Aloys Zwoneczek were taken to task. Nestroy was convicted of having presented two speeches and two songs, i.e. four uncensored passages in total. Initially, he defended himself with ignorance of the theatre regulations and assured the police that it would not happen again in the future. However, once Saal and Zwoneczek

⁷⁴ Ibidem, fol. 134 and 137, Mittrowsky to Muth, 10.02.1826; fol. 135-136, Muth to Mittrowsky, 16.02.1826; fol. 153, Mittrowsky to Muth, 26.04.1826; fol. 160, Mittrowsky to Muth, 16.05.1826.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, fol. 128, Mittrowsky to Muth, 22.01.1826, and fol. 129, Muth to Mittrowsky, 27.01.1826.

⁷⁶ BACHLEITNER (as in footnote 4), p. 234. For more detailed information see MGO, box 4525, Instruction for theatre inspectors (not pag.).

⁷⁷ PD, box 75, without folio number, Muth to Mittrowsky, 9.12.1825.

⁷⁸ PD, box 75, without folio number, Krockner's theatre report, 4.12.1825.

had declared that he was no novice and that he must have known the theatre laws, which were hung in the men's wardrobe, Nestroy was forced to confess his guilt and justified it through his unwillingness to recite outdated jokes.⁷⁹ The police director classified this argument as a poor excuse, and saw his behavior as a gross violation of the regulations for theatre staff, referring particularly to paragraph 8, which strictly forbade on-stage improvisation. Moreover, Muth blamed Nestroy's obscene innuendo for having made the uncensored insertion even more striking. Only several days later, Nestroy once again attracted the attention of the theatre audience and the police after he had shown his contempt for the former following some manifestations of disapproval with his performance.⁸⁰ Consequently, Nestroy was jailed for 12 hours and his direct superiors were required to attend rehearsals properly and to supervise carefully the detailed recitation.⁸¹

The documents of the Police Department in Brno indicate a gradually rising tension between the police and theatre management, be it in relation to adequate compliance with censorship regulations⁸², or to the growing police dissatisfaction with the way in which Aloys Zwoneczek had been conducting theatre business in general. As police director Muth reported on 14th of September 1825, the theatre director did not fulfill his contractual obligations, in particular with respect to the ordinary staff, and the monthly performance of two new pieces plus a new opera, in addition to older performances. Such an "improper care" of the whole theatre business had allegedly led to repeated manifestations of general public dissatisfaction. After being reprimanded by the Governor for his casual lack of action in this regard, Muth was ordered to summon Zwoneczek to the police directorate immediately, to record his negligences and to press for an urgent remedy, which was a particularly pressing concern given that the latter was contracted to manage the theatre in Brno for a total of six years.⁸³

During late March and early April of 1827, police authorities conducted an opinion poll in order to ascertain the attitudes of the audience towards performances at the theatre and towards the achievements of its theatre director.

⁷⁹ PD, box 75, without folio number, Minutes with Nestroy, Saal and Zwoneczek, 4.12.1825.

⁸⁰ PD, box 75, without folio number, Theatre report of police commissioner Prohazko, 12.12.1825; see also BACHLEITNER (as in footnote 4), p. 238.

⁸¹ PD, box 75, without folio number, Muth to Mittrowsky, 8.12.1825; Mittrowsky to Muth, 13.12.1825.

⁸² The theatre director himself provided his singer with an uncensored aria for the presentation of the *Barber of Seville* and justified it by claiming that he had considered it insignificant and believed, moreover, that it was included in the book already censored. Consequently, Zwoneczek was again reprimanded because of this repeated – as the police director emphasised – contempt for the censorship regulations. See PD, box 75, fol. 120, Muth's report from 21.12.1825.

⁸³ PD, box 75, fol. 93-94, Muth's report from 14.09.1825; PD, box 75, without folio number, No. 4589/1-12, Klebelsberg to Muth, 7.10.1825.

The audience seems to have been quite satisfied with the standard of the theatre, considering the personnel to meet the level expected of a provincial theatre. There were differing opinions, however, with regard to Zwoneczek. On the one hand, he was characterised as a person “animated with good will”,⁸⁴ who would spare no expenses in support of the theatre. On the other hand, he was deemed to have neither the energy necessary to manage a larger staff nor the artistic sense or even abilities necessary to make appropriate choices regarding the pieces to be performed and actors to be used according to conditions of the time. In addition, Muth pointed out that he had been repeatedly summoned to the police office due to disruptions during theatre performances, and governor Mittrowsky threatened the theatre manager with the termination of his contract, providing that he would not take immediate remedial action.⁸⁵

The situation escalated further in mid-October 1827, as Zwoneczek came into conflict with the theatre inspection commissioner Franz Hartmann. The latter, visiting the stage after a performance, had discovered that a small fire extinguisher was not only without water, but also contaminated with paper, glass and sand. Nevertheless, the theatre manager expelled Hartmann from the stage, pointing out his place in the auditorium. The controversy even ended up with the two hour arrest of the theatre manager after he had been reprimanded for allegedly arrogant manners and committed contempt for police officials in the heat of passion and umbrage. On a practical level, though, the incident resulted in daily controls of theatre fire protection.⁸⁶

After numerous further reprimands and interventions by the police, Zwoneczek’s era came to an end in 1830, although only thanks to a verbally promised but repeatedly postponed termination of the contract on his part, as the police director had suggested. Otherwise his tenure would have already been brought to an end by the end of 1829. An elaborate police report reveals Aloys Zwoneczek as a completely unsuitable theatre manager, losing his best actors because of harsh and degrading treatment, and unable either to rehearse his pieces properly⁸⁷ or to fulfill his obligations to perform 24 new plays and 12 new operas a year.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ibidem, fol. 224v, Muth’s report from 2.04.1827.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, fol. 225, Klebelsberg to Muth, 28.03.1827; fol. 224, 227, Muth’s report from 2.04.1827; fol. 238, Klebelsberg to police directorate, 6.04.1827. § 20 of the contract for conducting theatre business in Brno stated that, should the tenant give rise to discontent during the lease period and pay no attention to earlier warnings, the full-year termination could become effective even during the lease time, see MGO, box 4525, fol. 1024-1025, Draft of conditions to let out the theatre in Brno on lease for a period from Easter 1826 to Easter 1832.

⁸⁶ PD, box 75, fol. 230, 233, Theatre inspector’s report from 18.10.1827; fol. 231-232, Muth to governor Inzaghy, 18.10.1827, and fol. 234, Inzaghy to Muth, 18.10.1827.

⁸⁷ Within a period of 30 days between mid-October and mid-November 1830, there were only six out of 31 performances which had no reported deficiencies (mostly including

As a consequence of Zwoneczek's resignation, a call for bids was advertised in order to re-lease the theatre in Brno, with Heinrich Schmidt eventually being chosen as new director.⁸⁹ Simultaneously, new theatre regulations both for the audience and theatre members and for the theatre inspection commissioners and theatre manager himself were to be drafted by the police director and issued by the governor of Moravia-Silesia. Based on the experiences of the previous years, the police director also emphasised the need to explain the duties of the respective theatre entrepreneur. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, it was necessary in order to secure "as perfect performances as possible" but, more importantly, was needed in order "to meet the potential problems resulting from the lack of understanding or intention in advance".⁹⁰

When comparing the two guidelines for theatre managers from 1819 (24 paragraphs) and 1831 (41 paragraphs), there is an obvious increase in the number of paragraphs, even though the spirit of these instructions remained the same. The theatre director was allowed to perform tragedies, comedies, operettas, operas, ballets or pantomimes in the Brno Theatre during the lease period. Of course, these productions had to successfully pass the theatre censorship beforehand. Every Saturday afternoon, the theatre manager was required to submit a weekly schedule of plays to the police directorate.⁹¹ The prices were predetermined, and ranged from 18 kreutzer for a cheap seat or 21 kreutzer in the second gallery up to six gulden and 30 kreutzer for a loge on the ground floor.⁹² There were to be four performances every week including two new plays and one new opera every month. The theatre manager was expected to report to the Police Department after each performance (or after every ball) on the date, time and title of the piece as well as on the state of fire extinguishers. In addition, the name of both the inspection commissioner and the night watchman were to be added.⁹³ More importantly, the manager's behaviour had to be ordinary, peaceful and moral⁹⁴, because the theatre was expected to act as a school for public morality. This aspect should therefore be carefully considered in the selection of theatre members. The manager was

inappropriate costumes and scenography, but also because of a shortness of duration). See *ibidem*, fol. 303-306.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, fol. 283, 288-293, 310, Muth to Inzaghy, 28.11.1830. According to an overview of new plays and operas under the theatre manager Zwoneczek, there was only one new opera in his first season 1825/26 and none at all in the next four seasons. The number of plays – divided into big, small, and those with singing – ranged between nine and 13 a year (*ibidem*, fol. 310).

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, fol. 283, 288-293, 310, Muth to Inzaghy, 28.11.1830.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, fol. 343v, Muth to Inzaghy, 3.11.1830; MGO, box 4525, Inzaghy's reminder for Muth, 29.01.1831.

⁹¹ MGO, box 4525, Instruction for a current theatre manager and tenant of the City Theatre in Brno from 14.05.1819 (fol. 1007-1019), here §§ 1, 16.

⁹² *Ibidem*, § 3.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, §§ 4, 6, 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, § 23.

personally responsible for providing each member with relevant instructions on admission.⁹⁵ Further rules concerned the contracts with actors and their benefits, good lighting and cleaning corridors, fire safety, night guards and medical assistance.⁹⁶

According to the instruction from March 1831, the theatre manager was expected to provide five performances weekly, two new plays monthly and two operas bimonthly.⁹⁷ In order to preempt previous problems and shortcomings, the entrepreneur was supposed to attend rehearsals for all plays and to supervise whether they had been conducted properly. Both the players' and the extras' clothing and the scenery should be in accordance with the content of the pieces. To ensure the quality and orderliness of theatre productions, the manager had to employ two stage directors for opera and plays respectively, as well as "a suitable" musical director.⁹⁸ Additional and extended provisions regulated fire safety, dances, balls or medical assistance.⁹⁹ The prices remained at the same level as in 1819, which underlines the significance of widespread access to state-guided mass media and to means of public entertainment.

7 Theatre Censorship in Brno in the 1830s and Early 1840s

As we have already mentioned, one would expect to find a systematic overview of censored plays among the files of the police and political authorities in Brno from the 1780s to the 1840s, but the sources are confined to documents from the period between 1824/25 and 1842, and from the 1830s in particular. These archival sources are comprised of Viennese lists of prohibited plays (which were also to be banned in Brno), the short subject matter of respective theatre pieces, assessments of the police directorate and decisions of the Moravian governor. More importantly, whereas the police department's opinions were almost exclusively accepted by the governor in the second half of 1820s, there was an increasing number of cases in the 1830s, in which the latter declared the performance of the modified piece to be inadmissible in spite of the police directorate's support.

When assessing these pieces, considerations for the state, religion and morality represented the primary censorship categories which were to be borne in mind. However, as can be deduced from the Viennese prohibition lists below, political and moral motives also played a key role in the second half of the 1820s and during the 1830s (and in the 1840s as well).

⁹⁵ Ibidem, § 23.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, §§ 5, 7, 10-14, 21-22.

⁹⁷ PD, box 75, Instruction for a current theatre manager and tenant of the City Theatre in Brno from 18.03.1831 (fol. 318-330), here §§ 6, 10.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, §§ 17-20, 26.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, §§ 13-14, 22, 35-38.

Viennese lists of prohibited plays I.

| Prohibition motives ¹⁰⁰ <i>Period</i> | Political | Religious | Moral | Other ¹⁰¹ | Total number of plays |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| V-XII/1824 | 4 | – | 9 | 3 | 14 |
| I/1825 – X/1826 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 18 |
| XI/1826 – XII/1829 | 9 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 29 |
| IX/1830 – VII/1832 | 13 | 5 | 12 | 1 | 27 |

Source: Moravian Provincial Archive Brno, Police Directorate¹⁰²

Viennese lists of prohibited plays II.

| Prohibition motives <i>Period</i> | Political | Religious | Moral | Other | Total number of plays |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|
| I-XII/1833 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 2 | 23 |
| I-XII/1834 | 11 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 22 |
| I-XII/1835 | 6 | 2 | 15 | – | 20 |
| I-IX/1837 | 4 | 1 | 17 | – | 18 |
| I-XII/1838 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 12 |

Source: Moravian Provincial Archive Brno, Police Directorate¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ A censored play need not be prohibited for one reason alone, but also for multiple ones, thus combining political, religious or moral aspects. Therefore, the number of prohibition motives does not comply with the total number of censored plays given in the respective lists.

¹⁰¹ Next to political, religious or moral reasons, there were also some plays which were prohibited because of their inadequate depiction of a ceremonial occasion in the lives of privileged persons (like the plays *Alle jubeln* in celebration of Habsburg archduke Francis Charles' marriage in 1824 or *Der Vater ist gesund*, marking the successful recovery of the Emperor Francis I in 1826), a child's part in a play (*Der magische Stockzahn* in 1838), unavoidable improvisation (the improvisation play *Der Liebhaber aus dem Steifreif*, March 1833) or for the critique of living persons (*Die Heirat durch die Theaterkritik*, September 1838).

¹⁰² PD, box 75, fol. 57-59 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from May to December 1824); fol. 172-176 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 January 1825 to 30 October 1826); fol. 264-271 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 November 1826 to 31 December 1829); fol. 386-390 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 September 1830 to 31 July 1832).

¹⁰³ PD, box 35, fol. 270-273 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna in 1833); fol. 495-497 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna in 1834); box 36, fol. 33-36 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna in 1835); fol. 459 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 January to 30 June 1837); box 37, fol. 743-744 (list of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 July to 31 December 1837) and fol. 21, 75 and 197-198 (lists of plays prohibited in Vienna from 1 January to 30 March, 1 April to 30 June and 1 July to 30 September 1838).

Norbert Bachleitner¹⁰⁴ sums it up as follows:

“The monarchical principle was protected against theatrical attacks. Therefore, productions depicting revolutions¹⁰⁵ or conspiracies¹⁰⁶ had to be avoided. [...] The same applied for dramas in which a sovereign, whether Austrian or foreign, was portrayed as despicable.¹⁰⁷ Representation of regicide¹⁰⁸ [...] was, of course, impossible on an Austrian stage. Nationalities and members of the ruling orders¹⁰⁹, notably the aristocracy, the clergy and the military, were also protected against attacks. Even laws, such as those concerning matrimony, duels, or suicide, were not to be criticised on the stage. Nor should plays incite nationalism or insult the character of a people, as this was feared to endanger peace within the monarchy or threaten diplomatic turbulence.”

For this reason, particular attention was paid to the elimination of all causes for complaint on the part of the friendly neighbouring countries¹¹⁰ or of possible analogies to the conditions of the time.

¹⁰⁴ BACHLEITNER (as in footnote 4), p. 238. The examples inserted to Bachleitner's quote have been extracted from the Viennese prohibition lists quoted above.

¹⁰⁵ *Atar-Gull oder die Negerrache*, prohibited in 1833, displayed a horrible slave revolt against a non-vicious master. Further plays were forbidden due to the intentional correlation of the Irish “love of freedom” with the “dizzying freedom” of the French Revolution (*O'Connor*, 1827), because of the presentation of Pugachev's rebellion in Russia (*Das Nordlicht von Kasan*, 1828), for driving the king to madness by his people's open revolt (*Ludwig, Markgraf von Österreich*, 1829) or because of the Hungarian noblemen's “outrageous” speeches to their king Matthias Corvinus (*Sieg der Treue*, 1832).

¹⁰⁶ The historical play *Die Bildsäule des Knabenwürgers oder das Gelübde* was prohibited in 1834 because of its depiction of the dethronement of a legitimate ruler by a secret conspiracy, *Der treue Palatin* (1834), in turn, for showing an active rebellion against the rightful king. Since the secret societies and the Freemasons had been banned in the Habsburg Monarchy since the Jacobin trials (1795), it was not allowed to present any of their doings, identifying signs or the inauguration of their members on stage (prohibition of plays *Die Rächer um Mitternacht oder die Pflicht des Bundes* in 1831, *Die Löwenritter* in 1834 or *Die Ritter vom Drachen* in 1835). The performance of so-called “robber pieces” (*Claudine von Villabella* in 1824 or *Rinaldo Rinaldini* in 1833) was explicitly prohibited by special regulations.

¹⁰⁷ In the play *Der Mann von Sevilla*, prohibited in 1826, a king was portrayed as weak and led by flatterers, whereas the comedy *Moliere* was prohibited (1838) because of the scenes depicting the French king with his mistresses. The piece *Der Herzog und der Schauspieler* (1834) contained degrading and unworthy references to the deceased Friedrich II, King of Prussia.

¹⁰⁸ In *Arwed Gyllenstierna oder das Lager von Friedrichshall* (prohibited in 1832), there was a regicide perpetrated by two officers and an execution of a minister on the impulse of the Regent.

¹⁰⁹ One could not criticise the government and its policy or discuss the state budget (play *Aurelie, Prinzessin von Amalfi*, prohibited in 1828 and again in 1830).

¹¹⁰ The play *Christoph der Kämpfer oder das Turnier bei München* was prohibited in 1827 because of its depiction of a conflict between two ducal brothers in Munich, whereas the piece *Der Rettungskampf am Berge Isel*, displaying the Tyrolean fight against Bavarians and Napoleon (1809), was banned in 1829. Similarly in 1835, the

Both the police and the political authorities in Brno paid regard to these principles when drafting opinions, suggesting modifications or applying prohibitions on the plays to be performed. The chief police commissioner Leopold Bezděk considered Princess Amalie of Saxony's play *Die Fürstenbraut* (The Prince's Bride) as inappropriate to be presented to the audience in Brno, despite recognizing its dramatic value. First, the relationship of the reigning prince to his courtiers was allegedly depicted as "too unbalanced". Moreover, one could easily discover a reference to the annulled marriage of Princess Sophie Dorothee of Württemberg with Ludwig of Hessen-Darmstadt, as the former had been chosen as a consort for the Russian Tsar-to-be Paul in the storyline.¹¹¹ Combined political, religious and moral reasons led to the prohibition of Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's drama *Die Nacht des Schreckens* (The Night of Terror). Though characterised as one of the most impressive recent pieces by the reviewing police sub-commissioner Ernst Born, the subject included a suicide and attacks on the Catholic religion which might have easily been deleted. The final sentence was handed down, however, because the play discussed both the idea of a regicide being "beneficial for the country" and the probable replacement of a cruel Queen.¹¹²

In dealing with Ernst Raupach's farce *Der brüllende Löwe* (The Roaring Lion) we can observe a disagreement between the police censor and the State Governor. Whereas the former highlighted several funny situations and proposed to allow the piece after deleting and modifying some passages, the latter rejected it as a "badly masked political allegory"¹¹³ hidden under the guise of love intrigues, and able to give rise to many misinterpretations. This can be attributed to the fact that a certain Mr. Alp lives isolated with his narrow-minded son Kaspar, whom he intends to marry off to the rich young lady Bertha, in a remote village and warns him not to abandon the boundaries of his farm because the Zeitgeist as a roaring lion was wandering around. A parallel to the Austrian Empire's isolating itself from the external world and its ideas, especially with respect to recent constitutional tendencies or even French revolutionary slogans, was not hard to find.¹¹⁴ A similar discord was

stage performance of *Sonnen aus Demetrius* was not permitted, due to its depiction of Poles and Lithuanians revolting against Russia.

¹¹¹ PD, box 36, fol. 16-18, Leopold Bezděk's assessment of the piece *Die Fürstenbraut* from 26.04.1835 and governor Ugarte's letter to police directorate, 17.05.1835. See especially acts 2-4; also available at URL: <http://sophie.byu.edu/?q=node/3692> (12.12.2012).

¹¹² PD, box 37, fol. 48-51, Ernst Born's assessment of the piece *Die Nacht des Schreckens* from 5.05.1838 and governor Ugarte's letter to police director Maltz, 30.08.1838. For further reading see: Original-Beiträge zur deutschen Schaubühne, Dresden – Leipzig 1837, pp. 5-140 (*Die Fürstenbraut*).

¹¹³ PD, box 38, fol. 69, Ugarte's letter to police directorate, 1.03.1840.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem, fol. 69-72, Bezděk's assessment of the piece *Der brüllende Löwe* from 22.02.1840 and Ugarte's letter to police directorate, 1.03.1840. For an allegory be-

evident in relation to Theodor Hell's comedy *Laurette*, as one episode, coinciding with the French Revolutionary era, could be seen as grounds for prohibition.¹¹⁵

Indeed, any political allusions were either to be deleted or modified by the censor or would constitute a reason to prohibit the piece altogether. For instance, in Eduard Bauernfeld's comedy *Bürgerlich und romantisch* (Bourgeois and Romantic), which dealt with the humorous situation of a young lady Katharine von Rosen, who travelled to a resort pretending to be a widowed freelance artist, the following modifications were necessary in order for the performance of the piece to be permitted: the opening dialogues had to be deleted since, while reading, the spa commissioner Sittig mentioned terms like "radical" or "liberalism". Unruh's sentence in the eighth scene, "You know the ninety-nine Belgian protocols by heart", was crossed out as an allusion to the Belgian revolution of 1830 which had resulted in the independence of the southern Belgian provinces from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Sittig's passage in the twelfth scene, where he says "In certain things, the system of non-intervention is the best", also suffered a similar fate because of its reference to a policy contradicting the principles set up by Austria, Russia and Prussia following the congresses in Opava and Ljubljana (Laibach) in 1820/21. In any case, having "purified" the play from political double meanings and insertions, the censor Bezdek appreciated this in many ways funny and grotesque comedy as being full with hitting truths from real life, thereby paying tribute to Bauernfeld as one of the most renowned playwrights of the time.¹¹⁶

Albert Lortzing's comic opera *Zar und Zimmermann* (The Tsar and the Carpenter), which corresponded in terms of its content with a previously permitted opera, *Der Bürgermeister von Sardam*¹¹⁷, was also closely and thoroughly examined from a political point of view. To express it using the censor's words, since the storyline was not based on state policies, the envoys of England and France did not appear in diplomatic functions and the occasional allusions to their diplomatic positions could be eliminated without causing too much interference, so that the piece was finally allowed. However, the envoys from France and England disappeared from the text entirely. Numerous other omissions ("traitors", "with respect to England", "the revolt is general"

tween *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the time) and "roaring lion" see ERNST RAUPACH: *Der Zeitgeist. Possenspiel in vier Aufzügen*, Hamburg 1835, pp. 28-29.

¹¹⁵ PD, box 36, fol. 410-12, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Laurette* from 16.04.1837 and Ugarte's letter to police directorate, 10.05.1837.

¹¹⁶ PD, box 35, fol. 646-647, 650, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Bürgerlich und romantisch* from 23.09.1835 and Ugarte's letter to police director Muth, 25.09.1835.

¹¹⁷ This piece displays Tsar Peter I, who left for Saardam in order to gather experience as a common worker in shipbuilding. His presence there was discovered by English and French envoys, although Peter I managed to be confused with another young Russian by the name of Peter Ivanov for a certain period of time.

etc.) and modifications were adopted, including “admirals” or “lords” instead of “envoys”, “to sue” instead of “to grumble”, “evildoers” instead of “sinners”, “Colonel” instead of France, “Tsar” instead of “crowned heads and their envoys” or “What is the reason for this?” instead of “What kind of Majesty it is?”¹¹⁸

It is not necessary to add many more examples in order to be able to conclude that a clear tendency towards a total depoliticisation of the theatre can be observed in the pre-March period. Nevertheless, as shown in the tables above, the number of plays prohibited for political reasons had risen, especially in the context of revolutionary outbreaks at the beginning of the 1830s. The overwhelming majority of the grounds given for prohibition comprised of moral reasons, based on a Christian morality with respect for family life, both private and public relationships, and relaxation. According to the Viennese prohibition guidelines, episodes from the lives of adventurers like Casanova or Don Juan¹¹⁹, lascivious and frivolous stories¹²⁰, revenge, murder, suicide or fraud¹²¹ were all deemed unsuitable for presentation on the stage, particularly the popular stage. The ban on religious grounds was imposed upon alleged attacks on the Catholic or Jewish religion (or on its representatives) in particular, such as the promotion of superstition, satirizing the sacraments like marriage or confession, and the open depiction of obvious adultery.¹²²

The famous Spanish playwright of the Baroque period, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, often dramatised violent family situations arising from the sins of a hypocritical father which, when not reconciled, often led to multiple murders, incest and a sort of self-immolation resembling suicide.¹²³ The Brno theatre censorship authorities prohibited the production of his tragedy *Die Sühne* (The Atonement), because it allegedly put a series of immoral acts on display, be it “Lope’s degeneration as a result of his neglected education and the ha-

¹¹⁸ PD, box 39, fol. 34-39, Assessment of the piece *Zar und Zimmermann* from 31.12.1841 and Ugarte’s letter to police directorate, 8.01.1842.

¹¹⁹ Therefore, comedies like *Geniestreiche eines Gefangenen* (The Mastermind of a Prisoner) or *Die Hand des Rächers oder Gnade und Gericht* (The Hand of the Avenger or Mercy and Judgment) were banned, in 1838 and 1831 respectively, due to their depiction of flamboyant behavior and free love affairs on the one hand, or because of the seduction and abandonment of a girl on the other.

¹²⁰ For example, the comedy *Die Köchinnen in München* (The Cookees in Munich) was prohibited for this reason in 1825.

¹²¹ For example, the drama *Johanna Montaldi oder Rache beleidigter Eitelkeit* (Johanna Montaldi or Vengeance of a Wounded Vanity) was prohibited for containing these motives in 1824.

¹²² For example, the following plays were banned for these reasons in Vienna: *Der Vampyr* (The Vampire, 1825), *Pigmalion oder die Prüfung der Musen* (Pigmalion or Examination of the Muses, 1825), Ignaz Franz Castelli’s *Ein Fehltritt* (Indiscretion, 1831), *Das Abenteuer in der Judenschenke* (The Adventure in Jewish Pub, 1835).

¹²³ JOHN GASSNER, EDWARD QUINN (ed.): *The Reader’s Encyclopedia of World Drama*, Mineola 2002, p. 107.

tred of his putative father, the abuse of the latter by his supposed son, the dishonour of the sister of Lope's alleged mother by Don Mendo, or the passionate love of Lope for the latter's daughter, Donna Violante, despite his seeming to be her natural brother", to name just a few reasons.¹²⁴

Similarly, Karl Haffner's drama *Blocks Todtengruft oder die Schmiede von Insterburg* (Block's Crypt or the Forge of Insterburg) was also banned from the stage, since it did not only seek to present a horrible murder, it also failed to meet with the Habsburg requirements of justice, since the criminal escapes punishment by committing suicide.¹²⁵ More interestingly, this play was performed (and thus permitted) in Pest (Hungary) on 10th January 1835, even though it deserved a better fate than that which it received, as Adolf Bäuerle's and Baron Joseph Seyfried's newspapers suggested.¹²⁶

In the second half of the 1830s, there was an increasing number of instances where the police censors suggested the modification of certain plays, whereas the governor prevented their performance altogether for moral reasons and by virtue of his supreme position in the province. In our context, this happened first in the case of Bernhard Anton Herrmann's comedy *Voltaire's Ferien* (Voltaire's Holidays)¹²⁷. Later on, both Count Franz von Riesch's drama *Der Vaterfluch oder die verstoßene Tochter* (The Paternal Curse or the Outcast Daughter)¹²⁸ and the romantic magical play *Der steinerne Gast oder Don Juan und Faust* (The Stone Guest or Don Juan and Faust)¹²⁹ suffered a similar fate. When assessing Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's play *Die Verwaiste oder Friedchen* (The Orphaned Girl or Friedchen), the police censor referred to an objectionable relationship between the married Countess Julie and her nephew. Since marital fidelity was to prevail over passion in the end, he proposed that modifications be made in order for the play to be permitted for performance.¹³⁰ Likewise, Seraphin Mandelzweig's drama *Die beiden Schlosser* (The Two Locksmiths) was supposed to have passed censorship with certain modifications, having already been performed at the Theatre an der Wien,

¹²⁴ PD, box 36, fol. 358-360, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Die Sühne* (Penance) from 1.04.1837 and Ugarte's letter to the police director Muth, 8.04.1837.

¹²⁵ PD, box 37, fol. 44-46, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Blocks Todtengruft* (Block's Tomb) from 19.08.1838 and Ugarte's letter to the police director Maltz, 29.08.1838.

¹²⁶ See *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Originalblatt für Kunst, Literatur, Musik, Mode und geselliges Leben* from 19.01.1835, p. 51, and *Der Wanderer* from 21.01.1835, part: *Kurier der Theater und Spectakel* (Pest).

¹²⁷ PD, box 36, fol. 498-500, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Voltaire's Ferien* from 13.07.1837 and Ugarte's letter to police director Muth, 22.07.1837.

¹²⁸ PD, box 36, fol. 474-476, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Der Vaterfluch* from 20.06.1837 and Ugarte's letter to police director Maltz, 1.09.1838.

¹²⁹ PD, box 38, fol. 55, 58-59, Bezdek's assessment of the piece *Der steinerne Gast* from 6.06.1838 and Ugarte's letter to police directorate, 27.02.1840.

¹³⁰ PD, box 37, fol. 62-64, Assessment of the piece *Die Verwaiste* from 14.05.1837 and Ugarte's letter to police director Muth, 15.07.1837.

whereas the governor rejected it as a mere “accumulation of crimes, theft, treacherous murder and suicide”.¹³¹

On the other hand, pieces displaying a supposedly “higher character”, and human virtues and vices based on Christian morality or, at the least, including funny situations held within the bounds of moderation, did gain access to the stage. Ernst Raupach can be considered the most played playwright in Brno, with more than 30 performances in the 1830s, followed by authors like Theodor Hell, Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, Princess Amalie von Sachsen, Eduard Bauernfeld, Jan Nepomuk Štěpánek or Ignaz Franz Castelli.¹³² In this respect, Johann Nestroy achieved the unthinkable – being jailed for numerous collisions with the theatre censorship authorities in 1825, but going on to become one of the absolute elite playwrights in Brno, with 21 performances in the 1830s alone.¹³³ Even famous names like Ferdinand Raimund, August von Kotzebue or Franz Grillparzer were not performed nearly that often on the Brno stage.¹³⁴ Based upon his sharp wit and the use of funny couplets, Nestroy applied an established juxtaposition of virtue and vice in his plays so that “true love and loyalty, friendship or sense of order, work and regular life celebrated victory over their hostile elements”.¹³⁵ However, it was a pyrrhic victory for Nestroy, as all his texts were subjected to extensive alterations by the theatre censors. Even the great Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose *Faust* also underwent heavy modifications before finally being approved in 1839 (after two earlier prohibitions)¹³⁶, was not accorded such an “honour” in Brno.

¹³¹ PD, box 39, fol. 23-27, 387, Bezdek’s assessment of the piece *Die beiden Schlosser* from 10.12.1841 and Ugarte’s letters to the police directorate from 4.01. and 28.11.1842.

¹³² See MILADA WURMOVÁ: Repertoár brněnského divadla v letech 1777-1848 [The Repertoire of the Brno Theatre in the Years 1777-1848], Brno 1990, pp. 120-153.

¹³³ Ibidem, pp. 133-153.

¹³⁴ One should at least mention Raimund’s magical play *Der Verschwender*, which passed the censorship in October 1836 (PD, box 36, fol. 127-128, 130, Bezdek’s assessment of the piece *Der Verschwender* from 14.10.1836 and governor’s letter to police director Muth, 25.10.1836), Franz Grillparzer’s play *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen* (PD, box 35, fol. 448-451, Bezdek’s assessment of the piece *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen* from 1.02.1835 and Ugarte’s letter to Muth from 2.03.1835) and the comedy *Wehe dem der lügt* (PD, box 39, fol. 11-13, Bezdek’s assessment of the piece *Wehe dem der lügt* from 9.12.1841 and Ugarte’s letter to police directorate from 30.12.1841).

¹³⁵ PD, box 34, fol. 180-181, assessment of the piece *Der böse Geist Lumpazivagabundus* from 14.10.1833 (performance approved by police director Muth); box 35, fol. 238-239, assessment of the piece *Der confuse Zauberer* (dateless, but performance approved by police director Muth and realised on 20.01.1834).

¹³⁶ For further details about censoring *Faust* see PD, box 38, fol. 636-640, Bezdek’s assessment of the piece *Faust* from 3.07.1841 and governor’s letter to police directorate from 12.07.1841.

8 Conclusions

Within policing and vertical social control in the Habsburg crownland of Moravia-Silesia, censorship constituted both an independent variable, thus existing as a characteristic factor, intrinsic to the individual periods in the time-frame under consideration (1780-1848), and a dependent variable, whose extent, intensity and efficiency were dependent upon internal (imperial policies, the stability of the country) and external factors (revolutions, wars, the impact of ideologies). For objective reasons, it has not been possible to locate similarly relevant data for the single periods of 1780-1792, 1792-1815, 1815-1830 and 1830-1848, which means that we can only lend a limited validity to our generalisations, based upon the unequal use of both primary and secondary sources.

The moral and Christian background to theatre censorship had already been developed in the Baroque era and during the Enlightenment, when both ecclesiastical and secular institutions put their mark on this means of public entertainment and control. However, the most important political imperatives and principles were set up during the reign of Joseph II, and censorship was regulated according to these principles up until 1848. Simultaneously, there was a rapid qualitative increase both in the conditions for theatre performances and in bureaucratic interventions into them. In the 1780s Brno theatre entrepreneur Bergobzoom experienced already that drawing a topical inspiration from Vienna guaranteed no automatic permission in the capital of Moravia-Silesia. However, as the “dagger story” from Olomouc demonstrated, the manipulation of theatre censorship differed from town to town even within the crownland of Moravia-Silesia, being most strict in the centre and weakening towards the periphery. With the new regulations on censorship introduced in 1795 and 1810, a unified set of rules came into being which aimed at suppressing revolutionary or constitutional ideas and at more systematically promoting the monarchical order and Christianity.

The beginning of the 1820s, marked by revolutions on the Iberian, Italian and Balkan Peninsulas, proved to be another caesura, which launched a further bureaucratization and systemisation of the theatre censorship. Alongside the existing police and political institutions, new control mechanisms were set up in order to secure the state against the impending challenges. Theatre-inspection-commissioners were in charge of the practical implementation of theatre censorship. Newly and regularly composed lists of both censored and prohibited plays emerged as a useful tool in the homogenisation of surveillance throughout the Habsburg monarchy and the increasing number of archival sources allows us to quantify the differences between the state and provincial capitals. Unfortunately, there are no specific prohibition Brno theater lists, which would enable a simple comparison with the Viennese lists and would visualize the extent of and the reasons for the theater bans. Verifiably, the prohibition motives comprised of the considerations for the state, religion and morality, with the increasing political bans before and after the

July Revolution of 1830 and dominating moral motives throughout the Pre-March era. Even the governor of Moravia-Silesia, who accepted almost all of the suggested modifications of the police department in the second half of the 1820s, had begun to prohibit the performance of the modified pieces in spite of the police directorate's support in the 1830s.

The police also tightened control over theatre management in Brno for the sake of quality, quantity, security and supervision. However, while numerous modifications and omissions – which proved to be more rigorously imposed in Brno than in Vienna due to additional interventions by the Moravian-Silesian governor – were able both to prevent the audience from the primary impacts of unwanted principles and to form them both politically and morally, they constituted an obvious encroachment on the freedom of these spheres, especially in the 1830s and 1840s, channelled by the economic and social movements of 1848/49. Thereby, they established a generation distinguished from the one which had grown up with the myth of the good and liberal monarchy in the Austrian Empire.¹³⁷

Zusammenfassung

Schule der öffentlichen Moral oder Instrument politischer Repression? Theaterzensur zwischen Wien, Brünn und Troppau vom Aufgeklärten Absolutismus bis zum Vormärz

Die vorliegende Studie beschäftigt sich mit den Auswirkungen der josephinischen Reformen sowie der Gegenmaßnahmen der konservativen Reaktion unter den Kaisern Franz II. (I) und Ferdinand I. auf das Theater in Brünn (Brno) – der Hauptstadt des Habsburger Kronlandes Mährisch-Schlesien – während der Napoleonischen Kriege und des Vormärz'.

Anhand der Analyse von Archivalien der politischen und Polizeibehörden Mährisch-Schlesiens, der Theatervorschriften für das Brünner Theater, durch die Untersuchung der Zensurgutachten ausgewählter Theateraufführungen in Brünn, Olmütz und Troppau sowie der Verzeichnisse verbotener Theaterstücke in Wien wird gezeigt, dass bereits unter der Herrschaft von Joseph II. die wichtigsten politischen Prinzipien aufgestellt worden waren, auf deren Grundlage die Theaterzensur bis 1848 geregelt wurde. Der Staat wollte unter keinen Umständen solche Unterhaltung fördern und tolerieren, die keine Bildungsziele verfolgte und nicht zur Entstehung bestimmter verherrlichender Stereotype – vor allem eines auf christliche Moral gestützten Familienlebens – beitrug. Demzufolge sollte das Theater vor allem als eine öffentliche Schule der Moral und des guten Geschmacks agieren und die Menschen in moralischer, religiöser und politischer Hinsicht erziehen, weil es eine der wenigen öffentlichen Vergnügungen darstellte. Die Zensurvorschriften von 1795 und 1810 gingen eindeutig in diese Richtung, wobei sie unter dem Eindruck der Französischen Revolution und der Konspiration ungarischer und Wiener Jakobiner insbesondere im Theaterbereich streng anzuwenden waren.

Neben den bestehenden polizeilichen und politischen Institutionen wurden seit den 1820er Jahren im Theaterleben neuartige Kontrollmechanismen eingeführt, um den Staat vor unerwünschten politischen Herausforderungen zu bewahren. Diese führten allerdings zwangsläufig zu intellektuellem Widerstand. Zu nennen wären vor allem die sog. „Thea-

¹³⁷ BACHLEITNER (as in footnote 4), p. 257.

ter-Inspektions-Kommissäre“ oder die regelmäßig angelegten Verzeichnisse zensierter und verbotener Werke.

Als These bleibt festzuhalten, dass die vormärzliche Theaterzensur in Brünn scheinbar rigoroser als in Wien gehandhabt worden ist, da die Wiener Verbotslisten für alle Kronländer und somit für Mährisch-Schlesien galten, darüber hinaus aber weitere Stücke aus „lokalen Gründen“ – insbesondere durch Interventionen des Landesgouverneurs – verboten werden konnten und verboten wurden.