

# The secret book trade after the outbreak of the Great French Revolution

## Symptoms of the latent history of communication

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The study analyses the censorship legislation and censorship records from the period of the Great French Revolution with the aim of pointing to the existence of a latent world in the history of communications as a result of the action of disciplinizing pressure. It captures the investigation of the distribution of anonymous political pamphlets and the unsuccessful search of the whole of Hungary for the secret private printing press with the aim of eliminating the problematic anonymous texts that threatened the public peace. Analysis of the innovative censorship legislation and sources on the investigation and testimony of importers enable us to generalize about not only the adaptation of importing practices to the adjusted conditions, but also about the methods of exculpation in the detention of suspected goods. The study shows that the illegal book trade was an important part of the history of communications, which spread and reproduced untolerated ideas in spite of prohibitions.

Key words: Great French Revolution. Publishing of books. Book trade, Censorship. Disciplinization. Latence. 18th century. Kingdom of Hungary.

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*“When I want, for example in Bratislava, to get such a [forbidden – I. K.] book or several of them, I write on a small piece of paper: Gazette noire is wanted by Johann Friedel. This paper is sent to a book seller in Vienna at a cost of four kreuzers. The reply to the order also costs four kreuzers. I must sacrifice eight days and eight kreuzers, then the book will come to me.”<sup>1</sup>*

Thus the Josephine writer Johann Friedel recorded that he obtained forbidden books in Bratislava by this unproblematic method. His statement underlines that what we can research and prove on the basis of sources is only the tip of the ice-

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1 FRIEDEL, Johann. *Briefe aus Wien verschiedenen Inhalts an einen Freund in Berlin*. 2. Theil. Leipzig und Wien, 1785, p. 247-248.