

BOOKSELLERS AND SMUGGLED BOOKS:
FOREIGN PRINT MEDIA AS A POLITICAL
INFLUENCE IN AUSTRIA BEFORE 1848

Michal Chvojka

This contribution examines, from a political as well as an economical perspective, the smuggling of books into Austria in the decade leading up to the revolutionary period of 1848. The author demonstrates how the absolutist administration used censorship and measures involving the police in the struggle against criticism by authors who had fled from the Habsburg monarchy, mostly in the 1830s and 1840s, and taken refuge in regions belonging to the Germanic Confederation. German publishing houses, such as Hoffmann & Campe in Hamburg or Otto Wigand and Philipp Reclam jun., both Leipzig-based, printed such works because it earned them money. Sometimes, they even used illegal ways of exporting them to Austria. When such shipments were detected, they had to cope with the commodities being seized and the titles concerned being banned, and they reacted, among other things, by setting up dummy firms. In spite of the restrictive legislation enjoying a measure of success, as did the police enforcing it, in the long run German publishing houses producing critical treatises and shipping them to Austria contributed to a degree of liberalization being achieved.