

# VILLAINS OR A FEW WORDS ABOUT AUSTRIAN SECRET POLICE

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## Introduction

During the 19th century, the Austrian secret police had to face difficulties, which, although typical of the times, in the reality of a monarchy becoming multinational, became an exceptional challenge. In essence, however, this institution was not founded to fight national movements, and its history goes back to the 18th century and the reforms that the Habsburg monarchy had to undertake.

The middle of the 17th century was the last bell for Vienna to reform the internal organization of the state. The lost Silesian wars and the loss of this province to Prussia were an impulse to begin the efforts to reorganize the state. As it often happens in such cases, the model on which Austria modelled itself was its direct rival, Prussia. Trying to repeat the centralisation processes that so effectively served the Hohenzollerns, the Viennese government tried to subjugate individual local cantons within the monarchy more closely, for example, by establishing an institution of District Captains as agents of the central government throughout Austria. As the efficiency of the administration increased, so did the revenue from taxes, which could be used either for the expansion of the army or for other activities aimed at strengthening the state.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. E. Emerson, *Metternich and the Political Police, Security and Subversion in the Hapsburg Monarchy (1815–1830)*, Hague 1968, p. 3.

This reorganization later became the basis on which the Austrian system of centrally directed police was built at the end of the century. In using their administrative sections for the central government, Count Haugwitz, Maria Theresa's reforming minister, had the District Captains supervise police in the provinces in 1749 with the exception for Lower Austria. They were to direct police affairs in their region and two years later the central government created police commissioners for Vienna and its suburbs, the capital and seat of Lower Austria. In June 1754, Maria Theresa appointed three police inspectors of her own who together with their assistants were to assure general security and good order in Vienna.<sup>2</sup>

Austria thus followed in the footsteps of other European rulers, who had previously recognized the need to systematize police action, especially in rapidly developing cities. Louis XIV, who can be considered a precursor in this matter, created the office of lieutenant of police as early as 1667. Soon, however, other rulers, trying to solve the problems associated with growing urbanization, especially in the capital cities, began to establish similar institutions modelled on the French model—Peter the Great established imperial police administration for St. Petersburg in 1718 and Frederick II established a royal police director for Berlin in 1742.

Previously, the term “police” itself had a relatively broad and essentially dual meaning. The first referred to functions and meant all activities relating to security and policing carried out by public institutions. In this context, the police were to be the sum of activities carried out by the authorities to improve the conditions of individual families, which in turn should translate into an improvement in conditions throughout the country. In the second, institutional sense, it was the name of the authorities responsible for carrying out police activities.<sup>3</sup>

### Count Pergen reforms

In the Austrian context of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, these two meanings still functioned side by side, although with time the contemporary institutional meaning of the term became predomi-

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> R. Axtman, “Police” and the Formation of the Modern State. *Legal and Ideological Assumptions on State Capacity in the Austrian Lands of the Habsburg Empire, 1500–1800*, “German History” 1992, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 57.

nant. This was largely due to the effectiveness of the Paris police, whose then superior, Antoine de Sartine, boasted to Louis XV that “when three people talk on the street, one of them is my man.” Another time, de Sartine allegedly received a letter from Vienna asking for the arrest of a thief who was to flee to Paris. After a few days, the chief of the Paris police answered that the person was in fact in Vienna, and that he could be found at this and that address. Such stories, although they seem exaggerated, helped to build a legend of the effectiveness of the institution he runs, and, even if they are not true, de Sartine himself would probably consider them worthy of creation and circulation. His legend was growing and as a result, many European rulers decided to consult him on their activities related to the organization of police forces. Maria Theresa, impressed by his effectiveness, in 1768 asked de Sartine sixteen questions about police activities and the answers obtained were passed on to her officials, who were to have proper knowledge of them.<sup>4</sup>

Her son Joseph II believed that, despite the reform efforts he had already made, the inherited state was still lagging behind its rivals, and the improvement of the existing police system was one of the elements of the reforms he undertook. The first opportunity for this happened less than two years after he had taken over full power in the monarchy when the Vienna police were reorganized on the occasion of Pope Pius VI’s visit to the city in April 1782. As part of this reorganisation, police operations in Vienna were divided into three main areas, each of which was to be supervised by a different body. From now on, the municipal authorities were to be responsible for commercial regulations, cleaning and paving of streets, and lighting. The municipal court was responsible for arresting the perpetrators of the crimes as well as expelling beggars and other unwanted people from the city. The newly appointed police director, however, was responsible for all other cleaning matters and was given under the authority of the Lower Austrian Governorate, which was a major change from the previous state of affairs.<sup>5</sup> The latter at that time was headed by Count Johann Anton von Pergen, whose role in the spread of this reform cannot be underestimated.<sup>6</sup>

Count Pergen developed a plan to reorganize police forces throughout the Habsburg monarchy and submitted it to the Emperor for ap-

<sup>4</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., pp. 6–7.

<sup>5</sup> R. Axtman, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> I. Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat, Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867*, New Haven-London 2015, p. 81.

proval in July 1784.<sup>7</sup> His proposals were that the reform adopted in Vienna should be extended to virtually all the lands of the monarchy, creating a whole network of state police forces, directed from Vienna. In the individual lands of the monarchy in which the local administration had so far supervised police tasks, appropriate police directorates were to be set up. They would have separate secret police units, whose tasks would differ from strictly policing and police tasks.

The emperor himself considered the introduction of police institutions in particular provinces, so these proposals fell on fertile ground, but Joseph II was not fully convinced that they should simultaneously perform “public” and “secret” functions. Eventually, however, despite some problems, Pergen’s proposals gained the approval of the centralist emperor.<sup>8</sup> The reform of 1784 divided the tasks of the new institution, which included the entire Habsburg monarchy, into two parts: public and secret—also known as the higher state police (*höhere Staatspolizei*). Pergen’s instructions to future directors of the various police forces reflected this division. While the public service was not particularly different from the ordinary police service, which until then had been organized by the authorities of particular provinces, the instructions for the secret service were much more detailed.<sup>9</sup> These included, first of all, supervision over foreigners and their registration, gathering information through a network of secret agents, secret supervision over officials and their contacts, collecting information on how the emperor and his governments are assessed in society, military control, clergy, supervision over the exportation of money from the country, and conducting correspondence with abroad in order to obtain information. The new service was to act with caution and prudence in its activities.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the list of tasks that were set before the new service, it can be seen that these duties could not be performed by ordinary police force or even less uniformed officers. Therefore, a network of paid agents, who were recruited from among the residents, should be responsible for obtaining information, supervising and tracking suspicious persons, while the task of police officers was to prepare the information and pass it on to the relevant authorities. The uniformed

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<sup>7</sup> F. Roubík, *Počátky policejního ředitelství v Praze*, Praha 1926, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 11. More about details regarding the creation of Austrian secret police see P. P. Bernard, *From the enlightenment to the police state: the public life of Johann Anton Pergen*, Ann Arbor 1991, pp. 140–169.

<sup>9</sup> See: F. Roubík, *Počátky*, op. cit., pp. 225–231.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, pp. 64–65.

officers performed police duty and kept the existence of secret police secret by their presence. Only the head of the political authorities was to be informed about its tasks, but they were to be kept secret from its officials.<sup>11</sup>

The first city, apart from Vienna, for which Joseph II appointed a police director, was Prague. It took place on 12 February 1785, and the newly appointed director, Jan Jiří Reisman of Riesenberk, received the title of Governial Councillor and the salary of 1 500 florins. A month later, on 16 March 1785, the Emperor appointed Jan Okáč to the post of Police Director in Brno.<sup>12</sup> The following year, the police directorates in Bratislava, Buda, and Opava were established as well as the police commissioner for Graz. By 1787, police directorates were established in all countries of the monarchy<sup>13</sup>.

The high degree of secrecy in the activities of the secret police was problematic. For example, Jan Jiří Reisman of Riesenberk, who had to undergo a training course organised in Vienna by Count Pergen on the work of the new secret police before being appointed police director in Prague, faced the task of organizing both the new “public” and the secret police on his arrival in Prague. The problem is that the instructions signed by the emperor himself concerning the secret duties of the police, Reisman had to hand over personally to Count Kolovrat, Governor of the Czech Kingdom, and the governor’s officials could not find out about their existence. For this reason, there were many misunderstandings between the new director of the Prague police, the Governorate, and the magistrate, and the police directorate itself did not start operating in the city until 1 June 1785.<sup>14</sup>

However, this did not change the fact that Count Pergen’s main objective, which was to establish a network of police stations, centrally managed and independent of the provincial authorities, had been achieved. It was the duty of the director of the police in the province concerned to send all information that might concern se-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 72–76.

<sup>12</sup> Director of Prague police, Jan Jiří Reisman of Riesenberka, was as a result appointed for a second time. F. Roubík suspects that probably for formal reasons the imperial nomination from 16 March was to be the basis for the Court Chancellery to prepare the appropriate decree appointing both to positions. *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> Besides above mentioned cities police directorates were established in Linz (Upper Austria), Innsbruck (Tyrol), Lviv (Galicia), Pest (Hungary), Sibiu (Transylvania), Trieste (Austrian Littoral), Milan (Lombardy), Freiburg im Breisgau (Further Austria), and Brussels (Austrian Netherlands). D. E. Emerson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> F. Roubík, *Počátky*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

cret state affairs directly to Vienna, without informing the provincial authorities.<sup>15</sup>

Emperor Joseph II, however, was not entirely satisfied. When in October 1786, a meeting of all police directors was convened on his orders in Vienna, the participants were surprised by the new imperial guidelines, which gave all the tasks of policing, which from 1784 had been carried out by individual police directors, to the hands of individual magistrates. The function of director of the police was retained, but now it was only to supervise the execution of the relevant tasks of the public and secret police, and this supervision was to be carried out through the local authorities, to which the police directors could turn for help. Staff in the form of one commissioner and one writer remained at the disposal of the police directors and the rest of the personnel was to be subordinated to the magistrates. Direct correspondence with the Viennese Police High Directorate (Oberste Polizeidirection) under the direction of Count Pergen could only be conducted in exceptional cases. The Count Pergen himself was deprived of some of his staff on this occasion.<sup>16</sup>

Such a major change meant a failure of Count Pergen's concept and made the secret police, which had to carry out its tasks through other offices, in practice no longer a secret. However, Count Pergen continued his efforts to push through regulations close to his original concept. And the circumstances seemed to confirm the need for greater control over the subjects—in February 1788 Joseph II began a war with Turkey, which, however, did not go as planned in Vienna. The mood in the Austrian Netherlands was truly revolutionary and indeed resulted in the outbreak of the Brabant Revolution in next April, which was thwarted only by the conquest of Brussels on 2 December 1790 by the imperial army commanded by Field Marshal Blasius Bender.<sup>17</sup> The nobility, mainly in Hungary, increasingly expressed their dissatisfaction with the emperor's policy, while the clergy opposed state interference in his affairs. Because of the unfavorable development of the situation, Joseph II increasingly followed Count Pergen's recommendations for a centrally directed police force. Finally, after one year of the Austro-Turkish War, in February 1789,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, pp. 88–89.

<sup>17</sup> M. Paszyn, *Rewolucja brabancka w latach 1789-1790 w świetle relacji „Gazety Warszawskiej” i „Pamiętnika Politycznego i Historycznego”*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis, Folia Historica” 2001, t. 70, p. 61.

Joseph II established a police system centrally managed from Vienna for all lands of his monarchy. A year later, on 5 February 1790, Pergen, who was given the task of organizing it, could proudly report to the emperor that the arrangements for police and security had been brought into operation in all the provinces of the monarchy.<sup>18</sup> According to new guidelines introduced by Pergen, the director of the police, who was to be directly subordinate to the province governor, had to carry out both law enforcement actions and secret activities on his own.<sup>19</sup>

Although Count Pergen himself warned Joseph II in January 1790 that the general mood in the monarchy might require a tactical withdrawal from some of the reforms, he did not expect that Joseph's successor in the imperial throne would consider that one of those institutions whose powers should be limited would be Pergen's Police High Directorate. Emperor Leopold II was not positively disposed towards it and preferred to listen to the arguments of Viennese opponents of the head of the Austrian police. In an attempt to withdraw from some of his brother's reforms, which were unpopular with the public, he significantly reduced the powers of the secret police, and Pergen himself resigned as a protest.<sup>20</sup>

By order of the emperor, the Viennese headquarters was no longer to directly supervise police operations in individual lands, and the police agenda was transferred to the various provincial authorities under the general supervision of the Court Chancellery. The Vienna Police Directorate was to be subordinated to the municipal authorities from now on. The Foreign Office was to take over secret police tasks. Besides, the emperor commissioned Joseph von Sonnenfels,<sup>21</sup> a well-known lawyer and professor of political science at the University of Vienna, to develop new proposals for the organisation of police forces in Vienna. Sonnenfels, one of Austria's leading Enlightenment representatives, who was instrumental in the abolition of torture, took the view that the powers of each office should be known to the public, which clearly contradicted Count Pergen's police vision. In his recommendations, he therefore rejected the need for secret police as a "terrible instrument

<sup>18</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> F. Roubík, *Počátky*, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> P. P. Bernard, op. cit., pp. 170–179; D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> H. Reinalter, *Sonnenfels, Joseph von (1733–1817)*, p. 422, [https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1\\_S/Sonnenfels\\_Joseph\\_1733\\_1817.xml;internal&action=hilite.action&Parameter=Joseph%20von%20Sonnenfels](https://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1/oeb1_S/Sonnenfels_Joseph_1733_1817.xml;internal&action=hilite.action&Parameter=Joseph%20von%20Sonnenfels) [Access: 18.09.2019].

of espionage and oppression,” which “many police organisations have already discouraged from the real task of protecting the well-being of citizens.” The new police organisation that Emperor Leopold II introduced in Vienna on 1 November 1791 focused on precisely this: The individual police districts into which Vienna was divided were to be concerned not only with maintaining public safety, but also with providing medical assistance to the urban poor. The directors in charge of the districts were not subject to single central management but had the opportunity to settle minor disputes to relieve the burden on the courts.<sup>22</sup>

The changes introduced by Leopold II, however, survived only until the end of his brief reign. In October 1792, his successor, Emperor Franz II, ordered Count Pergen to reorganize the secret police. As a result, centralised control over the police was restored at the beginning of 1793.<sup>23</sup> As part of this new reform, all police directors were subordinated to the new Viennese Court Police Office (*Polizeihofstelle*), headed by Count Pergen himself. The police directors in the individual cities were to operate under the supervision of the governors of the particular provinces, who could even request them to submit correspondence with the Vienna Court Police Office. On the other hand, however, the governors were obliged to send the Court Police Office all the information they obtained relating to national security. This was supposed to ensure that the competence misunderstandings would not be repeated.

With time, Count Pergen began to expand his office. In 1798, the Court Police Office, which initially consisted of two secretaries and a deputy to Pergen, grew to eight officials, including Pergen itself. It also directly controlled the Vienna Police Directorate, which consisted of forty eight people and more than three hundred and fifty strong military police-watch. Three years later, in September 1801, tasks related to censorship were added to the competence of *Polizeihofstelle*, which involved changing the name to Court Police and Censorship Office (*Oberste Polizei und Censurhofstelle*),<sup>24</sup> which made the process of growing the highest police personnel even faster. By 1814, the personnel of the Court Police and Censorship Office grew to thirteen people. In 1818, it was also enriched with the staff responsible for financial mat-

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<sup>22</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> A. Fournier, *Die Geheimpolizei auf dem Wiener Kongress. Eine Auswahl aus ihren Papieren*, Wien-Leipzig 1913, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 27.



ters. In the 1830s, already nineteen people worked in the four departments of the office.<sup>25</sup>

The system introduced by Count Pergen worked so well that it basically lasted more than a half of a century—the next major organisational change in the Austrian police force was only introduced in 1848 when Emperor Ferdinand abolished the Court Police and Censorship Office and transferred its agenda to the newly established Ministry of the Interior.<sup>26</sup> However, as neo-absolutist tendencies became stronger, its independence was restored with the creation of the Supreme Police Office (*Oberste Polizeibehörde*) in 1852, which seven years later was transformed into Ministry of Police. In 1867, after the Austro-Hungarian settlement, it was abolished and its agenda was formally submitted to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. This state of affairs did not last long, however, because after several changes of affiliation the agenda of the former Supreme Police Office was permanently transferred to the Interior Ministry in 1870.<sup>27</sup>

The number of police directorates changed over time. As a rule, they were to be located in large cities where the governor's seat was located, but this was not always the case. For example, in June 1848, in response to the events of March in Vienna and the fact that the hated director of the Lviv police, Leopold Sacher-Masoch, took a holiday and disappeared from the city, acting governor Count Gołuchowski simply dissolved the local police directorate, dividing its agenda between the governor and the city magistrate.<sup>28</sup> The police directorate in Lviv, which was already subordinate to the Supreme Police Office was re-established on 31 August 1852.<sup>29</sup> Budgetary restrictions, mainly in the years 1860–1866, were also reflected in a reduction in the number of existing police directorates.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A. Hedwig-Benna, *Organisierung und Personalstand der Polizeihofstelle (1793–1848)*, "Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs" 1953, 6. Band, p. 233.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup> P. Bělina, M. Hlavačka, D. Tinková, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české, svazek XI a. 1792–1860: Habsburská monarchie v zápase s napoleonským hegemonismem a revolučním demokratickým a počátky utváření novodobého českého národa*, Praha-Litomyšl 2013, pp. 61–63.

<sup>28</sup> A. Kurka, *Dzieje i tajemnice lwowskiej policji z czasów zaboru austriackiego 1772–1918*, Lwów 1930, pp. 23–27.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Policejní ředitelství Praha 1796–1920: inventární soupis (Pomůcka č. 1011)*, ed. H. Chudobová, Praha 1964, p. 5.

## Means of control

Throughout its existence, the agenda of the secret police or the higher state police, as it was then often called, remained the same as drawn by the Count Pergen—by open measures and a network of secret agents, to monitor and prevent the anti-state activities of suspicious individuals. The anti-state activity could be understood quite broadly and differed depending on the challenges that individual police directorates faced in different lands of the Habsburg monarchy. However, the means used to combat it were analogous.

The most important operational resource of the Austrian secret police was the network of paid agents. They recruited from all walks of life—from prostitutes and doormen to officials and professors.<sup>31</sup> The activity of police informants was very broad and was not limited only to collecting information on general social moods or reporting on young noblemen who gamble their cards. The police tried to keep their agents in environments considered potentially dangerous or to directly monitor individual suspects. A good example is the action taken against the environment of Prague's "Repeal", in which in 1859 an informer was placed, whose contacts provided unique opportunities for the Czech intelligentsia to observe. This was the journalist and writer Karel Sabina, who was released from prison two years earlier under an imperial amnesty. In exchange for financial support, Sabina promised to rebuild his previous contacts in Prague and report on matters that could „threaten the order in the Czech Kingdom, at least in those matters that could be influenced by agitation.” The head of the Prague Police Directorate highly valued his usefulness as an agent, arguing that „there is no other person like Sabina who is both popular and widely familiar with both local and Slavic issues.”<sup>32</sup> The same police directorate also kept Božena Němcová under surveillance and placed an agent in her environment—Viktoria Paulová<sup>33</sup> reported on Němcová until her premature death in May 1856.

Wherever the Austrian secret police appeared, a network of agents was set up to gather information about the activities of suspects for the monarchy. This process can be seen on the example of northern Italy, where the Congress of Vienna established the Kingdom of

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<sup>31</sup> R. J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, New York 2010, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> J. Purš, *K případu Karla Sabiny*, Praha 1959, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> Národní archiv Praha (NA Praha), Presidium policejního ředitelství Praha – tajné (PPT)/9/441–447; NA Praha, PPT/9/544–550.

Lombardy-Venetia as part of the Austrian Empire in 1815. Virtually immediately after it was incorporated into the Habsburg monarchy, police directorates in Venice and Milan were established, and the next step was the creation of a network of informants in these areas. Interestingly, the envoys delegated from Vienna by Prince Metternich and the head of the *Oberste Polizei und Censurhofstelle*, Graf Josef von Sedlnitzky, had the task of not only establishing a spy network in newly incorporated Italian parts of the Austrian empire but also in the other countries on the Apennine Peninsula and even in southern France.<sup>34</sup>

The network of secret agents was for a long time a fairly effective means of maintaining order in the multinational monarchy. That task was becoming even more important to the authorities after the assassination of conservative writer August von Kotzebue by Karl Sand, the German liberal student and nationalist, which took place on 23 March 1819. One of the many consequences of that famous murder was the introduction of so-called Carlsbad Decrees on the meeting of the German states' representatives called by the Austrian Minister of State Prince Metternich<sup>35</sup>. The Carlsbad Decrees called for the dissolution of student organisations, strictening of press censorship throughout the entire German Confederation and persecution of people spreading liberal and nationalistic ideas, which consequently led to certain calming of the revolutionary moods. However, this peace was maintained by fear—people were often simply afraid to raise political issues, and parents advised their children to avoid discussing political issues even among their closest acquaintances.<sup>36</sup> As one can easily guess, this climate became more and more annoying for the population over time, and many people, especially those engaged in national activities, simply assumed that the secret police might be interested in them.<sup>37</sup> For the Viennese authorities, however, the ability to obtain information was more important than the well-being of the subjects, and only for a short time after the introduction of constitutional rule following the events of March 1848, the newly established Ministry of the Interior,

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<sup>34</sup> M. Chvojka, "Whose realm, his law". *The Austrian Repression of Italian Nationalist Movement under the Reign of Francis I (1815–1835)*, "West Bohemian Historical Review" 2015, vol. 5, issue 2, pp. 49–50.

<sup>35</sup> W. Siemann, *Metternich: Strategist and Visionary*, Cambridge-London 2019, pp. 579–583.

<sup>36</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> J. R. Vilímek, *Ze zašlých dob – vzpomínky Jos. R. Vilímka st.*, Praha 1908, p. 7.

which at that time were responsible for supervising the police, decided to give up the services of the secret police.<sup>38</sup> This did not last long, however, because with the introduction of neo-absolutism and the establishment of the Supreme Police Office, the tried and tested practices were returned.

The secret police agency was used not only to gather information but also to carry out provocations. One of them ended in the arrest in 1855 of about a hundred Italian revolutionaries who were involved in the movement organized in Habsburg Lombardy by the Austrian secret police agent Giuseppe Bideschini. The Austrian secret police had the task doubly facilitated, because not only did they organise the whole conspiracy, but their agent also managed to convince the co-conspirators to immortalize their revolutionary plans in writing.<sup>39</sup>

The police confidants were not very popular with the general public. It happened that they received anonymous threats, even so, sophisticated that they contained a model of gallows, „on which you, spy villain, will hang until your confident body rots by itself.”<sup>40</sup> In less peaceful times, there were even physical attacks on informants or people who were only suspected of reporting to the Austrian police. For example, such a fate happened to a Krakow employee of the telegraph office, who in 1863 was stabbed in the back with a knife when he bent down in front of the house to draw water from the stream with a watering can.<sup>41</sup>

Another of the operational techniques used by the Austrian secret police was the secret interception of correspondence. In all the major post offices of the monarchy, there was a special unit called *Logen*, which the only task was to secretly intercept and copy the correspondence of people considered suspicious. The recipients of the information collected in this way were, of course, the Austrian authorities. As part of the morning routine, the Duke of Metternich liked to go through secret police reports for hours, and from time to time he liked to throw in a conversation with foreign diplomats crumbs of information, which he could only obtain by intercepting correspondence, to maintain the aura of his omniscience. In 1817, same Metternich even

<sup>38</sup> A. Kurka, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

<sup>39</sup> R. J. Goldstein, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (ANK), C.K. Dyrekcja Policji w Krakowie (DPK<sub>r</sub>), 29/247/6 (no page number).

<sup>41</sup> ANK, DPK<sub>r</sub>, 29/247/7/1415–1423.

claimed that Austria had created a police force „whose scale was higher than anything else before.”<sup>42</sup>

Police did not have to be included in the *Logen* organisation. Interception of correspondence was a prerogative of the Emperor, and the Secret Cipher Office (*Geheime Ziffernkanzlei*), which supervised this practice, as a very important, separate organizational unit, subordinated to it personally.<sup>43</sup> However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the police were admitted to the effects of the office’s work and could identify persons whose correspondence was to be intercepted. In individual provinces, the *Logen* network could be organised directly by the Secret Cipher Chancellery, the relevant police directorates or local authorities. But even if they were organised by local authorities, this did not mean that they would automatically have access to all the correspondence intercepted in the province they manage. For example, although both Metternich and Sedlnitzky praised the efforts made by the local Prague authorities to intercept correspondence, Count Kolovrat had to seek permission from Court Police and Censorship Office to grant him access to the correspondence intercepted in *Logen* in Karlsbad.<sup>44</sup>

The Austrian interception of correspondence was not limited to the monarchy. After 1815, for example, a postman named Heller was recruited in Frankfurt am Main, who passed on the intercepted correspondence to Vienna via *Logen* in Karlsbad<sup>45</sup>.

Although the subjects of the monarchy were aware that their correspondence could be intercepted, this was a very effective operational measure. It was thanks to him that, during the most intense diplomatic efforts in connection with the ongoing Vienna Congress, it was discovered, for example, that one of the Commissioners working in the Prague police directorate was a Russian agent.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> R. J. Goldstein, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>43</sup> More about *Geheime Ziffernkanzlei* see: S. Franz, *Zur Geschichte und Organisation der Wiener Geheimen Ziffernkanzlei (von ihren Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1848)*, „Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung” 1937, vol. 51, pp. 131–160. Intercepted ciphered correspondence was also sent to the Viennese *Geheime Ziffernkanzlei*.

<sup>44</sup> D. E. Emerson, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

There was also suspicion of journalistic activity, which, under separate regulations,<sup>47</sup> was placed on the censored list—literally, because it was the police who were supposed to control the publication of periodicals, although they did not always manage to do so. A good example of this was the case of the publisher of the periodical “Posel z Prahy”, František Šimáček, who publishes his journal every five weeks, thus avoiding many of the censorship restrictions resulting from the fact that the press law of 1852 defined a periodical as a publication that comes out, regularly or not, every day or at least once a month. The Prague police realized that by publishing their magazine every five weeks it did not meet this definition and thus circumvented the provisions of the act, so they tried to combat this publication on the basis of criminal law, while at the same time suggesting to their superiors that the definition of a periodical should be extended so that the regulations of the press law would also cover such cases. The Supreme Police Office, in consultation with other ministries, took the view that the definition of the periodical should not be extended for the time being and that officials responsible for observing the press law should apply other legal measures.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the existence of a separate office to censor books and theatre plays,<sup>49</sup> the Austrian police officers, especially before neo-absolutism insisted on a strictly legal basis, were able to make the lives of the writers of the time more difficult in ways that went beyond the scope of their duties as determined by Count Pergen. For example, in Lviv, the police, not content with the control they exercised, constantly interfered in censorship matters. In this respect, the Deputy Director of the Police, Counsellor Antoni baron Pauman, aimed with extraordinary

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<sup>47</sup> From 1801, onward *Oberste Polizei und Censurhofstelle* served as the supreme censorship office, and in 1810, a new uniform instruction for the censorship apparatus, based on the penal code of 1803, was introduced. Further regulations regarding censorship were issued in 1819 and 1830. Censorship was abolished in March 1848, but freedom did not last long as the censorship was re-established on 2 January 1849. In 1852, a press law was issued, and another regulations regarding that matter was introduced in 1860. “Reichsgesetzblatt” (RGBl) 2 VI 1852, no. 36, pos. 122, pp. 603–615; RGBl 23 I 1863, no. 4, pos. 6, pp. 145–156; M. Bogus, *Cenzura czy troska, czyli „spis książek poleconych i zakazanych” Jana Śliwki z 1899 roku*, “Slezský sborník” 2013, t. 111, č. 1, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> J. T. Leigh, *Austrian Imperial Censorship and the Bohemian Periodical Press, 1848–71*, London 2017, pp. 174–177.

<sup>49</sup> T. Gutkowski, *Cenzura w Wolnym Mieście Krakowie 1832–1846*, Kraków 1914, pp. 16–17; M. Chvojka, *Príspevok k dejinám knižnej cenzúry a jej manipulácii habsburskou štátnou políciou v predmarcovom období*, “Časopis Matice moravské” 2008, t. 127, č. 2, pp. 335–353.

zeal at this, by providing uninvited care for the Polish theatre, about which he imposed articles by the editorial staff of “Gazeta Lwowska.” The baron wrote down his artistic impressions in German, while poor Kaminski had to translate them into Polish and put them in the “News” column. Pauman was particularly fond of using the formula: *Typum non meretur* and was later appointed to the Central Committee of Censorship in Vienna.<sup>50</sup>

Baron Antoni Pauman (actually Anton Freiherr von Päumann, as he signed himself) did not appear in the above paragraph by chance. After moving from Lviv to Vienna, he was taken into account by Graf von Sedlnitzky as a candidate for the position of Head of the General Directorate of Censorship (*Zensuroberdirektion*),<sup>51</sup> but eventually, his career turned out differently, and he himself initiated a special operation of the Austrian secret police, the outline of which would be worth quoting here, given that today’s theoreticians of information warfare would not hesitate to classify it as a perception management.<sup>52</sup>

Anton Päumann was appointed director of the Prague police force in Autumn 1854. Three years later, he became interested in the celebrations that Czech national activists organised in Dvůr Králové nad Labem on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the discovery of the Queen’s Court Manuscript by Václav Hanka. This manuscript, together with the Green Mountain Manuscript, was generally considered to be a monument of the Czech language, dating back to the 13th and 10th centuries, respectively. Although the ceremony itself was rather local and did not attract too many Prague national activists, Päumann feared that a similar celebration, this time on a larger scale, would be held on the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the manuscripts, or even earlier. Referring to his Viennese superior, Johan von Kempen, the Prague police director emphasized the danger that these manuscripts pose to the Empire, in his opinion. According to Päumann, these poems, which were promoted as valuable monuments of the Czech literature, were in fact used to spread national

<sup>50</sup> S. Schnür-Peplowski, *Cenzura (Obrazek z przeszłości Lwowa)*, “Dziennik Polski” 1895, nr 27.

<sup>51</sup> M. Chvojka, *Zwischen reform und Beharrung. Die Rolle des Grafen Sedlnitzky in der Zensurenentwicklung der 1840er Jahre*, “Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské university” 2008, č. 2, pp. 71–72.

<sup>52</sup> *Wojna informacyjna jako skuteczne narzędzie destabilizacji państw i rządów [RAPORT]*, <https://www.defence24.pl/wojna-informacyjna-jako-skuteczne-narzedzie-destabilizacji-panstw-i-rzadow-raport> [Access: 23.08.2018].

tensions against Germans and were treated as national artefacts by the Czech national activists.<sup>53</sup>

Because, like antiques, manuscripts were not subject to censorship regulations, Päumann could not forbid the printing of their subsequent editions. He also could not remove them from schools. However, in order to neutralize them in some way, he came to the conclusion that the question of their authenticity was extremely important. As he explained in his later correspondence with the Prague Governorate, it would be advisable to prove that they were falsified and thus neutralize their influence. The falsification for which Päumann believed Hanka stood behind would have to be proved by scientists, but the police could help them to do so.<sup>54</sup>

Päumann managed to get von Kempen interested in the case, so he began to methodically collect all the doubts that had been raised in the past by scientists at that time in connection with the dating or authenticity of manuscripts. He sent his findings to von Kempen on 8 March 1858, also pointing out that Hanka is known for his ability to imitate various types of writing, and in his workshop, at the Czech Museum in Prague, he has access to various types of inks. In response, the ministry considered that the facts cited by Päumann were sufficient to undermine the authenticity of the manuscripts.<sup>55</sup>

However, the director of the Prague police did not intend to take any shortcuts. Afraid that the suspicions of police involvement in the case might harm the operation, he planned to put an article written by one of his subordinates, containing all the scientific doubts about the manuscripts, in a readable foreign newspaper. Päumann hoped that this would provoke the attacked individuals to defend themselves and, at the same time, that the public would learn about the falsification, which in its eyes would undermine both the credibility of the manuscripts and other oldest monuments of Czech literature and reduce their influence on the formation of Czech national consciousness.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> F. Roubík, *Účast policie v útoku na Rukopisy roku 1858*, [in:] *Od pravěku k dnešku – Sborník prací z dějin československých*, t. 2, Praha 1930, p. 436; J. Kočí, *Spory o Rukopisy v české společnosti*, [in:] *Rukopis královédvorský a zelenohorský, Dnešní stav poznání*, ed. M. Otruba, Praha 1969, pp. 27–28.

<sup>54</sup> F. Roubík, *Účast*, op. cit., p. 441.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 437.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 438.



The text commissioned by Päumann mentioned all doubts about the authenticity of the Queen's Court Manuscript, which had already been raised by historians and philologists. He also pointed to the similarities between it and the Serbian heroic songs published by Herder in the 18th century and *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, the translation of which was published by Hanka in 1821. An unknown author suggested that it would be better if Hanka did not "find" any new manuscripts and called for a commission investigation of the authenticity of the Queen's Court Manuscript. However, Päumann did not manage to reach foreign editors who would be ready to print the prepared text, so at the end of March he sent a request to Kempen to try to publish it abroad through his channels.<sup>57</sup>

However, this plan was halted after one of *Oberste Polizeibehörde's* officials advised Kempen not to carry out this provocation, arguing that manuscripts were no more political than staging Schiller's play about Wallenstein and that the dispute over their authenticity should be left to the narrow circle of Slavic philologists and historians. Päumann did not seem to give up, however, because on 24 October 1858, he sent a report to Vienna on the whole series of articles published in the Prague daily "Tagesbote aus Böhmen" under the title *Handschriftliche Lügen oder palaeographische Wahrheiten*. In anti-Czech intended texts, the anonymous author reminded of known historical falsifications and quoted doubts as to the authenticity of the manuscripts found by Hanka. Ironically recalling that the "old Bohemian" writing school probably existed as early as the 19th century, the author suspected Hanka of having perfect contact with it as early as 1848. The series of five articles end with a call for the authenticity of the Queen's Court Manuscript to be finally confirmed by independent specialists, which has not been done so far.<sup>58</sup>

In his report, Päumann did not hesitate to boast to his superior that he had arranged the whole situation. The director of the Prague police also informed von Kempen that the materials used in the preparation of these articles had been handed over to the editorial staff of "Tagesbote aus Böhmen" in an extremely cautious manner and that the newspaper itself had been chosen by him since among all German newspapers published in Prague, it would be the least suspected of

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 438.

<sup>58</sup> *Handschriftliche Lügen oder palaeographische Wahrheiten*, „Tagesbote aus Böhmen" 1858, no. 276, 285, 289, 292, 299.

having any connection with the police.<sup>59</sup> It can be suspected that this assessment was due to the fact that a few years earlier, this newspaper had almost been closed by Päumann.<sup>60</sup>

The publication, understandably, aroused a great deal of emotion in Prague. František Palacký himself, who defended the authenticity of the manuscripts in a series of articles published in “Bohemia”, decided to answer the anonymous author. According to the leading representative of the Czech national revival, the attack on these “ancient flowers of Czech literature” was carried out only due to the fact, that they are not German.<sup>61</sup>

However, Päumann’s operation had only a limited effect. Although the “Czech side” was forced to defend its position, the subject of alleged falsification was not widely discussed in the press, and the anonymous author of the texts in “Tagesbote aus Böhmen” remained alone in his accusations. As a result of these publications, however, Hanka brought a lawsuit for “insulting honour” against the editor of “Tagesbote aus Böhmen,” David Kuh, who did not reveal the identity of an anonymous author suggesting that Hanka was the author of the manuscripts in question. This trial was won by Hanka<sup>62</sup> in the first two instances, which is interesting because a dozen or so years later, both texts, during the so-called “dispute over manuscripts” were found to be a skillful falsification,<sup>63</sup> and to this day the view that Václav Hanka and Josef Linda are responsible for this forgery is definitely prevailing.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> NA Praha, PPT/9/280–286.

<sup>60</sup> J. T. Leigh, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>61</sup> F. Palacký, *Handschriftliche Lügen und palaeographische Warheiten. Eine Entgegnung*, “Bohemia” November 1858, č. 5, 6, 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Proceß gegen den Redakteur des Tagesboten aus Bohmen, David Kuh*, “Gerichtshale” 7 May 1860, p. 148–151.

<sup>63</sup> More on that topic see also J. Kočí, op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> Although not everyone agrees to that. In 1993, an association, dissolved after the World War II by the communist authorities, dedicated to defence of the authenticity of both manuscripts, abbreviated shortly as RKZ, was re-established. Its members continue to raise arguments which, in their opinion, point to the authenticity of the Manuscripts. On the 200th anniversary of Hanka’s “finding” of the Queen’s Court manuscript, the association issued a monograph devoted to RKZ. K. Nesměrák, D. Mentzlová, J. Urban, J. Žytek, *RKZ dodnes nepoznané*, Praha 2017.

## Conclusion

Of course, the above-mentioned episodes of necessity are only examples of the activity of the Austrian imperial secret police, which had to face many challenges and opponents of the imperial court during its more than a century of activity. Under no circumstances should this work be an attempt at a holistic approach to the subject, but only a sketch of the organization and working methods of the Austrian secret imperial police, which seems to be poorly represented in Polish historiography.

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## Abstract

The article aims to briefly outline the history, organization, and operational methods of the Austrian secret police at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The author outlines the context in which it was brought to life and recalls events most important for its creation. He then discusses the instruments which in the next couple of decades were in the arsenal of the Austrian *höhere Staatspolizei*.

Keywords: Austria, police, Johann Anton von Perggen, Habsburg monarchy

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