

# Literature of Revolution in the Newspaper of the Duchy of Courland: *Mitauische Zeitung* (1789–1795)

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**Abstract.** The break in intelligibility caused by exceptional events encourages interpretation, attempts at explanation, the search for causes, and the projection of consequences, thus creating relevant literature. Newspaper references to the vast textual space dealing with the French Revolution, through bookshop or library announcements, book reviews, and significant quotations, guided their readers' choices. Thus, the selection of readings illustrated the characteristics of local reception. This study examines the information published in the newspaper of the Duchy of Courland, *Mitauische Zeitung*, about print matter that reflects and interprets revolutionary events and their analysis, in order to diagnose the specificities of this cultural transfer.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Duchy of Courland, *Mitauische Zeitung*, Baltic Germans

## INTRODUCTION

The discontinuity of the text in small newspapers and their typographic arrangement in the 18th century were not conducive to highlighting important events. Local news, or news likely to affect local life, was

followed by a flow of international information structured geographically and chronologically, with announcements placed on the last page. However, this traditional layout could be modified if there was important news of distant events, by placing this news on the front page. For example, the story of the attempted escape and arrest of French King Louis XVI in 1791 occupied the entire first page of *Mitauische Zeitung* and continued onto the following pages, while traditionally Mitau's newspaper placed French news on the third page.<sup>1</sup>

The French Revolution of 1789, an event that resonated widely in the press giving rise to many periodicals and causing ink to flow in other fields, thus creating a literature of revolution.<sup>2</sup> This began with the reproduction of authentic documents from legislative institutions, along with their explanations and contextualisation, followed by descriptions of revolutionary events and their historical causality, which led to discussions of individual subordinate events. These descriptions of monumental ideas, along with arguments for their significance, also included speeches and articles by key figures of the event, memoirs of its participants, and accounts of their lives written by others. Moreover, this profusion of literature reflected the diversity of opinions, the expression of which was stimulated by the events of the revolution.

The event inspired history through its extraordinary and unique character, prompting a search for causes, explanations, parallels, analogies, and the projection of direct or indirect consequences. The periodicals that played an important role in this process "aimed to build the foundations of history, to provide a first reading of it".<sup>3</sup> They also acted as intermediaries, informing the public about printed material that offered different perspectives and interpretations. Revolutionary events in France were also covered in the bi-weekly newspaper *Mitauische Zeitung* of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, providing a news overview and information about revolutionary writings, as well as publishing announcements from bookstores and libraries with reading suggestions.

Without claiming to provide a comprehensive review of the literature used in the article, we will mention some key research. First, there are studies on the history of the region during the period in

1 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 19 July 1791. Mitau was the Duchy's capital.

2 Literature of revolution is an operational term used in the context of this article to refer to publications related to the French Revolution, its participants, ideas, documents and literary works reflecting revolutionary events.

3 P. Retat. *Les gazettes: de l'évènement à l'histoire*. – Études sur la presse au XVIIIe siècle. Presses universitaires de Lyon, Lyon, 1978, 23–38.

question. Extensive research on the history of Latvian territory, where the Duchy of Courland was located in the 18th century, was published in the 1970s by two Latvian émigré historians. Edgars Dunsdorfs released the *History of Latvia 1710–1800* (1973), while Andrejs Johansons published the *Cultural History of Latvia 1710–1800* (1976). These two works complement each other to create a complete picture: the former covers political, social and economic history, while the latter focuses on book publishing, periodicals, education, traditions, and the arts. Additionally, Anne Sommerlat explored the networks of scholars, education, politics, and the field of *Aufklärer* activities in *Courland and the Enlightenment* (2010).

Second, Latvian, German and Estonian historians such as Mārgers Štepermanis *Reflection of the Great Flame* (1971), Erich Donnert *Courland in the Ideas of the French Revolution* (1992), and Indrek Jürjo “The Reception of the French Revolution in the Baltic Provinces” (2006) have produced well-documented studies that explore the revolutionary moods of the people, societal contradictions and the ruling classes, and also focus on sources of information on the French Revolution.

Third, this article delves into research on reading habits and the circulation of the press in the Baltic region, exploring distribution networks and delivery routes.

The present research, in continuity with previous studies on the history and newspapers of the Duchy, aims to explore French cultural transfers within the Baltic German society of Courland by examining cultural interactions in the context of French and German Enlightenment ideas. The article seeks to analyse the type and content of information on revolutionary literature available in the newspaper, as well as the key informative aspects, focusing on the perspective of revolutionary events, their ideas, main actors, and their impact.

The scope of this article encompasses issues of the *Mitauische Zeitung* from the beginning of 1789, prior to the start of the revolution, until the end of 1795, during the first months of the Directory’s rule, which coincides with the incorporation of the Duchy of Courland into the Russian Empire. The newspaper provides information at two levels: first, what is published in the news; and second, information on books, brochures, and documents available concerning the events of the revolution, the latter being the primary focus of this research, while the former will help contextualise the research material. Thus, this study aims to analyse the breadth of literature surrounding the revolutionary events in France to reveal the narrative shaped by the informational

landscape of the Duchy's newspaper and the value system it conveys. It examines how the French and German receptions of the newspaper evolved over time and investigates the expression of diverse opinions within the local context. Through this analysis, the study contributes to the field of intellectual history related to societal development in the Baltic provinces.

The article first discusses the historical, political and international context of the Duchy of Courland, then examines the structure and ideology of the *Mitauische Zeitung*, and finally analyses the information provided by the newspaper on the literature of revolution. This information is divided into three segments: bookshop and library offerings, book reviews, and publication citations.

### THE HISTORICAL, POLITICAL, AND READING CONTEXT OF THE DUCHY OF COURLAND

In the spring of 1789, while events foreshadowing the revolution in the Kingdom of France were unfolding, the local newspaper of Mitau published information on the Russo-Swedish war (1788–1790), which was happening simultaneously with the Russo-Turkish (1787–1792) and Austro-Turkish (1788–1791) wars. These conflicts were more geopolitically relevant to the Duchy of Courland than events in Western Europe, as they were tied to Sweden's desire to restore its influence in the Baltic Sea region, which it had lost after the Treaty of Nystad (1721). The potential involvement of the Duchy of Courland is suggested by a letter dated 5 August 1788, from King Gustav III of Sweden to the Secretary of State for Finance, Eric Ruuth, in which he promised to write to the Duke of Courland to enquire if he intended to participate in the war with Russia.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Baltic Germans were part of the German sphere of interest and culture, events influencing local life that depended on other countries were also significant. The Duchy of Courland was an autonomous state under the suzerainty of the Republic of Two Nations (Poland-Lithuania), while remaining within the sphere of influence of the Russian Empire. Russian ascendancy dated back to the Great

4 Gustave roi de Suède III: Collection des écrits politiques, littéraires et dramatiques de Gustave III, roi de Suède; suivie de sa correspondance. Imprimée chez Charles Delén, Stockholm, 1805, 20–21.

Northern War (1700–1721), during which Peter the Great became the chief protector of Polish King Augustus II, who had been dethroned by the armies of Sweden's King Charles XII in 1704, but was restored by the Tsar five years later, following the Battle of Poltava (1709). During the second half of the 18th century, Russian policy aimed at strengthening its authority over the Republic of the Two Nations, whose successive partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1795) between the Habsburg monarchy, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Russian Empire led to its eventual disappearance.

On one hand, the Duchy of Courland was under indirect Russian authority, mediated by the Republic of Two Nations. Although Russia's influence grew, the trilateral relationship between Courland, Poland, and Russia gradually evolved into a bilateral model in which Poland became less significant as an overlord.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, this authority proved to be direct: in the second phase of the Great Northern War, after Russian successes, Peter the Great sought to secure Russian influence by having the new Duke of Courland, Friedrich Wilhelm Kettler, marry his niece, Anna Ioannovna, thereby consolidating Russian control.

Additionally, it is important to note that the adjacent territories were incorporated into Russia in 1721 after the war's conclusion, forming the Governorate of Livonia. The territories of the Duchy of Courland and the Governorate of Livonia were inhabited by the same indigenous peoples (Latvians and Estonians in the northern part), and the Baltic German families ruling both territories were closely linked by kinship, property, and business ties. Thus, while the vectors of cultural and ideological orientation were focused on the German-speaking space, geopolitical importance was given to the Russian sphere of influence.

This interest was already mutual at the beginning of the 18th century. The Russian Emperor Peter the Great's projected Europeanisation of his country facilitated the influx of Baltic Germans into Russian power structures while allowing this segment of the population to retain their privileges.<sup>6</sup>

This was also true of the relatively independent Duchy of Courland when Anna Ioannovna, the Germanophile widow of Duke Friedrich Wilhelm Kettler, became Empress of Russia in 1730. Her

5 E. Oberländer. *Das Herzogtum Kurland im 18. Jahrhundert. – Kurland, Vom polnisch-litauischen Lehnsherzogtum zur russischen Provinz: Dokumente zur Verfassungsgeschichte 1561–1795.* Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 2008, 29–51, here 29.

6 E. Bérard. *L'ambassade d'Allemagne à Saint-Petersbourg 1910-1914. – Revue germanique internationale*, 2010, 11, 21322.

Baltic German favourite, Ernst Biron, then became Duke of Courland, effectively reigning not only over Courland but also over all of Russia.

Some time later, the last Duke of Courland, Peter, son of Ernst Biron, fostered a flourishing culture and arts scene in the Duchy<sup>7</sup>; however, in the realm of internal politics, he could not withstand the opposition of the local aristocracy. This conflict was undeniably rooted in the Duchy's own legislation: the *Formula Regiminis*, approved by the government in 1617, established the state system of the Duchy by restricting the power of the duke in favour of the nobility. It granted the Lantags (the ordinary general assembly of the highest representatives or "envoys of the earth", convened every two years) significant rights. Supreme power and property rights in the Duchy belonged to his suzerain, the King of Poland, while legislative power was vested in the Landtag of Courland, whose decisions bound the Duke, who had to appeal to the Warsaw Court of Appeal in cases of disagreement. Additionally, Duke Peter's family went on a European tour from 1784 to 1787, and during the Duke's absence, the country was governed by the Supreme Council.<sup>8</sup> This further reinforced the nobility's desire to rule the Duchy, thus restricting the rights of the Duke.

However, the bourgeoisie sought to improve their situation. In Poland, the suzerain country of Courland, the urban bourgeoisie submitted demands to the king and the diet for an expansion of their rights and for broader opportunities to participate in political and public life. These Polish demands, along with the events of the French Revolution, influenced the development of the situation in Courland, where the lawyer Wilhelm Ludvig Koenemen played an important role. He wrote reflections on the demands of the Polish cities (*Merkwürdige Betrachtungen über die unterthänigste Adresse der gesamten polnischen Stände des Reichs, gewidmet den polnischen und curländischen Bürgern von dem ehem. liefländischen Advokaten Wilhelm Ludvig Koenemen, 1790*)<sup>9</sup>, which encouraged the Courland bourgeoisie to take action inspired by the Polish example and called for the most radical measures, including the abolition of serfdom. This idea had already made its way into Livonia. Johann Georg Eisen, a pastor in Torma who later became an advisor to Duke Peter of Courland, had, in the middle of the century, expressed his views on serfdom as a system that degraded human dignity

7 A. Johansons. *Latvijas kultūras vēsture, 1710-1800*. Jumava, Rīga, 2011, 52.

8 *Oberrat*, the highest governing body of the Duchy in the event of the Duke's death, until a new Duke took office, and during the Duke's illness and absence.

9 M. Stepermanis. *Lielās liesmas atblāzma*. Zinātne, Rīga, 1971, 55.

and hindered economic growth.<sup>10</sup> The economic inefficiency of both serfdom and slavery also preoccupied other European thinkers, such as the French physiocrats, who acknowledged the superiority of free labour.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Koenemen's reflections were not published, they were presented to the magistrate of Mitau, and their discussion sparked the creation of an organisation called the United Members of the Entire City and Bourgeoisie in the Duchy of Courland and Semigalia (*Sämtliche Städte und vereinigte Glieder des Bürgerstandes der Herzogthümer Kurland und Semgallen*), founded the same year, in 1790.

This organisation, referred to as the Bourgeois Union, presented its demands to the Duke. Although they mentioned the American and French revolutions, there was nothing revolutionary in the demands and no trace of the radicalism found in Koenemen's<sup>12</sup> writings. A year later, intellectuals from education institutions joined the Bourgeois Union, the majority of whom were municipal magistrates. However, the organisation was short-lived, due to conflicts with the nobility and the difficult political situation, the Duke was forced to dissolve the Bourgeois Union in September 1793.

The attempt to unite the bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, civil servants, city magistrates, merchants and craftsmen into one organisation proved almost impossible.<sup>13</sup> The city's petty bourgeoisie – craftsmen, whose needs were not reflected in the demands of the Bourgeois Union – presented their demands to the Duke in December 1790. These demands were also inspired by Koenemen's notes. As the condition of the craftsmen did not improve, a rebellion of millers occurred in 1792.<sup>14</sup> However, this cannot be seen as an echo of the French Revolution, as this millers' rebellion aimed to ensure the rights of corporations established

10 See Eisen's work J. G. Eisen. Beweis, dasz diejenige Verfassung des Bauren, wenn selbiger von seinem Herrn dergestalt ein Unterthan ist, dasz er seinen Bauer Hof erbund eigenthüml. besitzt, nicht nur dem Herrn gar viel vortheilhafter, sondern auch überhaupt der einzige Grund sei, worauf ein Staat so vollkommen blühend werden kan, als es die Beschaffenheit des Landes nur immer erlauben mag, hingegen die Leibeigenschaft deselben dem Herrn und Staat höchst nachtheilig sei. Nach dem Exempel von Esth- und Liefland abgefaz. recap and analysis in the article M. Stepermanis Pirmās cīņas par dzimtbūšanas atcelšanu Vidzemē 1750–1764. – Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts, 1931, 10, 275–293.

11 J.-Y. Grenier. "Faut-il rétablir l'esclavage en France?" Droit naturel, économie politique et esclavage au XVIIIe siècle. – Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, 2010, 57, 2, 7–49, here 11.

12 E. Donnert. Kurland im Ideenbereich der Französischen Revolution. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, 84.

13 M. Stepermanis. Lielās liesmas atblāzma, 68.

14 E. Dunsdorfs. Latvijas vēsture, 1710–1800. Daugava, Stockholm, 1973, 157.

in the Middle Ages, rather than pursuing revolutionary activities with specific political objectives.<sup>15</sup>

A later uprising led by Tadeusz Kościuszko in Poland, which affected the ducal city of Libau in the spring of 1794, had more ambitious aims directed against Russian domination and serfdom. Certainly, Koenemen's interest in the French Revolution and the events in Poland were reflected in his writings and inspired the demands of both the larger and smaller bourgeoisie, but other sources of inspiration were also present.

News about the French Revolution could be obtained not only by purchasing newspapers or other news media, but also by joining a reading institution. As was the case throughout Europe, such institutions were founded in the second half of the 18th century. The reading society and associated library in the Duchy's second largest city, Libau (now Liepāja), was established in 1777, and in the Duchy's capital, Mitau, in 1785. These subscription libraries were democratic in nature, and provided similar indications of membership in a reading society: "Every book lover and consenting reader, not only here in the city, but also not far away in the country, regardless of sex or class, is accepted as a member of this reading society (*Lesegesellschaft*)."<sup>16</sup>

Libau's reading offerings initially focused on entertainment but gradually shifted to more serious literature: "Until the reading society is large, comedies, novels, travelogues, various magazines, and biographies will be purchased. As the society grows, books in various scientific fields will also be acquired for the enjoyment and needs of readers and members."<sup>17</sup> By comparing the founding plans and their mode of expression of the two libraries, one can conclude that Mitau's plan, drawn up eight years later, borrowed heavily from its predecessor in Libau or that they had similar models. However, in terms of reading materials, the capital had broader ambitions; in addition to those already mentioned, the Mitau library aimed to improve the quality of the German language, enhance moral education, and stay abreast of news and French literature:

15 This idea of Henrich Bosse (*Zunftgeist oder Revolution? Die Mitauer Müllerunruhen im Lichte der Gesellenaufstände des 18. Jahrhunderts.* – *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 1983, 32, 518–571) is supported by Indrek Jürjo in his article: *La réception de la Révolution française dans les provinces baltes.* – *Revue d'Histoire Nordique* = *Nordic Historical Review*, 2006, 2, 85–106, here 87.

16 *Plan und Einrichtung der Lesebibliothek.* Gedruckt bei J. F. Steffenhagen, Hochfürstl. Hofbuchdrucker. Mitau, 1785, 2–3.

17 J. A. Grundt. *Plan der Liebauschen Stadt- und Lesebibliothek, zur Nachricht der gegenwärtigen und künftigen Mitglieder im Druck gegeben von Johann Andreas Grundt, Lettischen Pastore und Directore der Lesegesellschaft.* Liebau, 12. Septbr. 1777.



At first [...] we will focus mainly on books [...] that lead to a deeper and more precise knowledge of the German language: works of good taste, beautiful poems, plays, novels and the news; we will choose weekly and monthly reviews of moral instruction [...] if friends of French literature also wish to participate in this institution, we will acquire good French writings for the reading library as well.<sup>18</sup>

It is undeniable that reading institutions focused on the interests of the public in the field of reading, while trying to establish themselves on the basis of good taste and morality. In addition to the two important reading libraries mentioned above, there were private libraries in the Duchy, such as those of Johann Magnus Wehrt and Heinrich Beise in Mitau, as well as the lending library of pastor Georg Sigmund Bilterling<sup>19</sup> in Preekuln (now Priekule), and another pastor supervised the reading library in Goldingen (now Kuldīga).<sup>20</sup>

The Duchy of Courland was enduring a complicated political situation, both internal and external, which contributed to increased discontent among the various layers of Baltic Germans. This discontent can be evaluated in the context of a wide and accessible information space.

### MITAUISCHE ZEITUNG AND CHANGES IN SOCIETY

In 1766, the foundation of the newspaper called *Mitau News about the State, Learned and Local Things* (*Mitausehe Nachrichten von Staats-gelehrt- und einheimischen Sachen*) was part of the wave of newspaper and magazine creations of the 18th century. Nine years later, starting in July 1775, it was transferred to the new academic gymnasium *Academia Petrina*, and edited by Johann Nikolaus Tiling, preacher of the Reformed Church of Mitau and professor of eloquence. With the change in management came a change in name: *Mitau Political and Learned Newspapers Under the Supervision of the Princely Academy of Peter* (*Mitauische politische und gelehrte Zeitungen, unter der Aufsicht der Hochfürst[ichen] Petrinichen Akademie*).

18 Plan und Einrichtung der Lesebibliothek. Gedruckt bei J. F. Steffenhagen, Hochfürstl. Hofbuchdrucker. Mitau, 1785, 1–2.

19 I. Jürjo. Lesegesellschaften in den baltischen Provinzen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lesegesellschaft von Hupel in Oberpahlen. Teil I. – Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 1990, 39, 4, 540–571, here 558.

20 Mitauische Zeitung, 11. April 1786.

It should be noted that another name change also occurred in 1767, altering the sequence of adjectives from “state, learned and local things” to “learned, state and local things”, thus reflecting areas of preference. “Learned” as the first attribute signalled a modified publishing regime: each issue now began (with a few exceptions) with a popular scientific article.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper’s printing house was connected to the ducal court, but the editorial office remained independent of political authorities. It was permanently linked to *Academia Petrina*, which used it as an advertising medium for the circulation of printed works, whether locally produced or from abroad.<sup>22</sup>

*Mitauische Zeitung* belonged to the type of newspaper that appeared in Germany at the beginning of the 17th century: the political newspaper (*Politische Zeitung*), which primarily covered foreign news, transmitting information disseminated through the European postal communication network.<sup>23</sup> In the Baltic provinces, at the beginning of the French Revolution, there were, in addition to *Mitauische Zeitung*, two other political newspapers, *Rigische Politische Zeitung* (1777/1778–1797) and *Dörptsche Zeitung* (1789–1875). The model for the newspapers in the Baltic provinces was the *Hamburger Correspondent*, an important newspaper in northern Germany. Its editors were closely connected with Hamburg Enlightenment circles. Furthermore, it was appreciated and read in the Baltic provinces.<sup>24</sup>

Other periodicals available included the *Berliner Zeitung*, the *Thorner Zeitung*, the *Staatsanzeigen* of Göttingen, the *Politisches Journal* of Hamburg, *Der deutsche Merkur* of Weimar, the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* of Berlin, the *Neues deutsches Museum* of Leipzig and also the *Gazette de Leyde* in French.<sup>25</sup> The inhabitants of the Baltic provinces were well-informed, even before the appearance of the three local political newspapers, thanks to postal connections through which periodicals also

21 G. Brandt. *Die Mitauischen Nachrichten* und ihre Nachfolger (1766–1810). – *Deutschsprachige Zeitungen in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Sprachliche Gestalt, historische Einbettung und kulturelle Traditionen*. Hrsg. von J. Riecke, B.-M. Schuster. (Germanistische Arbeiten zur Sprachgeschichte, 3.) Weidler, Berlin, 2005, 89108, here 100.

22 A. Šemeta. *Deutschsprachige Periodika in Livland und Kurland vor 1800. – Baltische Literaturen in der Goethezeit*. Hrsg. von H. Bosse, O.-H. Elias, T. Taterka. Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg, 2011, 353–379, here 368–369.

23 K. Vanamölder. *Rigische Politische Zeitung ja selle kaks lisalehte 1780. ja 1781. aastal.* – *Tuna*, 2024, 2, 93–109, here 93.

24 K. Vanamölder. *Kuidas täita pool sajandit kestvat pausi? Ajakirjandus Riias 17. ja 18. sajandil kommunikatsioonialaloo vaatenurgast.* – *Muutused, ümberkorraldused, uuendused: Varauusaja arengujooned Eesti- ja Liivimaa 1520–1800*. Koost. M. Seppel, M. Maasing. (Acta Universitatis Tallinnensis. Humaniora.) Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus, Tallinn, 2023, 380–407, here 397.

25 A. Sommerlat. *La Courlande et les Lumières*. Belin, Paris, 2010, 61; M. Stepermanis. *Lielās liesmas atblāzma*, 38–39.

circulated. As early as the 17th century, they were delivered to Riga from Hamburg in 12 to 15 days. Additionally, this flow of information played an inclusive role: the Baltic Germans, being in the same information space as Western Europeans, felt that they were part of it.<sup>26</sup>

It must be admitted, however, that the French and German cultural spaces were marked by certain differences. The belief in the progress of society within the German Enlightenment was deeply rooted in education, in which the Church took an active part. The connection between educational endeavours and Christianity was also a part of the ideology of the *Mitauische Zeitung*. This was vividly illustrated by a response published by the newspaper's editor, Tilling, to an anonymous reader.

The author of the letter, describing himself as a well-to-do country citizen, asks for help in establishing a small, inexpensive country library that would primarily meet the needs of farmers, as well as the wishes of the lovers of nature and friends of the muses, who prefer seriousness to entertainment. He requested that Tilling recommend books that could strengthen his beliefs as a Christian and deepen his knowledge of the Christian religion.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that, in the German cultural space, including the Baltic, religious questions still occupied a prominent place at the end of the 18th century.<sup>28</sup>

Tilling presents the letter author's questions: "How is it that one who possesses both intelligence and knowledge, and who wants to be considered noble-minded, a compassionate friend of people, can be an apostle of irreligious principles and maxims? [...] Why would a good person so willingly want to be a machine or an animal, even if he would be so humiliated and reviled for it?" These two questions reveal a certain familiarity with Enlightenment philosophical thought. The first question evokes the deist convictions of Voltaire and his struggle for tolerance and against religious fanaticism and the persecution of innocent individuals. The second question references Descartes' theory of the animal-machine and the mechanistic materialism of La Mettrie.

This raises doubts about the authenticity of a letter written by an ordinary citizen seeking to establish a modest library; the approach appears more to have been exploited by the editor-in-chief to promote the newspaper's Christian ideology. The opposition between German and French cultural spaces is perceptible. Indeed, in Germany, education

26 K. Vanamölder. Kuidas täita pool sajandit kestvat pausi?, 387, 400.

27 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 15. März 1776.

28 A. Sommerlat. *La Courlande et les Lumières*, 88.

is closely linked to religious institutions, while in France, education and knowledge symbolise individual emancipation and a reduction of religious influence.

The letter indicated a preference for serious reading rather than entertainment. However, the general trend in reading was towards entertaining novels, and by the end of the century, Christian certainty was no longer as evident. A well-known work of the time that strongly opposed the Berlin Enlightenment, *Appeal to My Nation* (*Appel an meine Nation*), was penned by the polemicist Heinzmann. It juxtaposed the evolution of German readers' tastes with the French Revolution, assigning both the same catastrophic importance:

As long as the world has stood, nothing has been as remarkable as the reading of novels in Germany and the revolution in France. These two extremes developed quite simultaneously, and it is not entirely improbable that novels have secretly caused as much misery for men and families as the terrible French Revolution has done openly. When one considers that immorality, mockery of serious subjects, frivolity capable of undertaking anything, contempt for religion, and animal lusts have become extraordinarily widespread among our newly blossoming generations through the reading of novels.<sup>29</sup>

Reading novels developed the imagination by broadening it beyond the narrow confines of the Christian world and stimulating its expansion, which Heinzmann interpreted as an anti-Christian conspiracy. Ludwig Christian Kehr, a librarian in Kreuznach, a town in the Palatinate on the Rhine, also wrote about the popularity of novels, but in a much more tolerant tone, acknowledging the needs of his reading library. Initially, he aimed to shape the tastes of readers by offering them the opportunity to take:

... our old classic German writers, Gleim, Kleist, Uz, Michaelis, Rabener, Ramler, Gellert, Hagedorn, Hölty, Cramer, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, Lichtenberg, etc., as well as the newer ones, Archenholz, Goethe, Schiller, Falk, Pfeffel, Salis, Matthisson, Tieck, Tiedge, etc., along with a multitude of travelogues and historical works. However, readers primarily wanted to read novels, especially chivalric novels, which were then in vogue. The ghost stories from the works of Spieß and Cramer [...] were so in demand that I had to set up several copies, while the aforementioned writers were covered in dust.<sup>30</sup>

29 J. G. Heinzmann. *Appel an meine Nation: über Aufklärung und Aufklärer; über Gelehrsamkeit und Schriftsteller; über Büchermanufakturisten, Rezensenten, Buchhändler; über moderne Philosophen und Menschenerzieher; auch über mancherley anderes, was Menschenfreyheit und Menschenrechte betrifft. Auf Kosten des Verfassers*, Basel, 1795, 139.

30 L. Ch. Kehr. *Selbstbiographie von Ludwig Christian Kehr, Buchhändler in Kreuznach: Zunächst für angehende Buchhändler geschrieben*. Kreuznach, 1834, 21–22.

In addition to this enormous interest in novels, the second most important factor influencing the development of reading habits was the French Revolution, which Kehr acknowledged: “The French Revolution had given rise to numerous writings for and against and made the literary needs of the various parties increasingly active.”<sup>31</sup>

Here we must make a small parenthesis to mention the widely accepted thesis of the German historian Rolf Engelsing regarding the change in reading habits in the second half of the 18th century, shifting from intensive to extensive reading.<sup>32</sup> The former primarily applied to the reading of religious texts, involving their repeated reading, usually aloud, and memorisation. In contrast, extensive reading, with the increase in the volume of the press and other printed materials, demanded rapid and superficial reading. The Enlightenment’s need to be well-informed involved acquiring knowledge from a wide variety of texts in a short time. Thus, the information provided by newspapers about published books helped potential readers navigate the available offerings.

The supervision of the journal by the academic gymnasium, established in its title (1775–1776), continued, although this was no longer explicitly stated in the journal. Matthias Friedrich Watson became the editor of the periodical and directed it until his death in 1805. Watson was a professor of Latin literature and language at the academic gymnasium, while his vice-rector and colleague, Carl August Kütner, professor of literature and Greek language, also contributed to the journal.<sup>33</sup> The teaching staff of *Academia Petrina* and other intellectuals of Courland belonged to the literary order (*Literatenstand*) and the *litterati* (from the Latin *litteratus* – literate, learned, educated) which referred to all people with a university education. As a class, they were a predominantly Baltic phenomenon.<sup>34</sup>

It was customary to speak of the literary order as opposed to the knighthood which was a closed class in Courland. In Mitau, where the *litterati* were numerous, especially after the foundation of the academic gymnasium, they could do without social relations with the other classes and did not depend on the nobility either.<sup>35</sup> A century later, Theodor Neander, Mitau’s publisher, gave a lecture entitled *Bourgeois Order*

31 Ibid., 22.

32 R. Engelsing. Die Perioden der Lesergeschichte in der Neuzeit: Das statistische Ausmass und die soziokulturelle Bedeutung der Lektüre. – Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens, 1969, 10, 945–1002.

33 G. Brandt. Die *Mitauischen Nachrichten* und ihre Nachfolger, 94, 96.

34 K. Pappel. Der deutschbaltische Literatenstand und die städtische Musikkultur im 19. Jahrhundert. – Musik-Stadt: Traditionen und Perspektiven urbaner Musikulturen. Hrsg. von H. Loos. Schröder, Leipzig. 2011, 33–44, here 33.

35 W. Lenz. Der baltische Literatenstand. Johann Gottfried Herder-Institut, Marburg, 1953, 9.

and Literary Order (Nobility of the Book) in Mitau in a Historical Retrospective (Mitau's Bürgerstand und Literatenstand (Buchadel) in historischen Rückblicken), the summary of which was published in the Riga newspaper *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*. Acknowledging the opposition between the aristocracy and the literary order, he emphasised the intellectual nobility: "Despite the stubborn resistance of the nobility, they [*literati*] succeeded in obtaining a measure of social equality with the nobility, which consisted of the right to appeal to the king, the granting of the 'noble' title and various social prerogatives. This class is called the 'Nobility of the Book'".<sup>36</sup>

The opinions of the Baltic literati were divided. Johann Nicolaus Tiling, editor-in-chief of the *Mitauische Zeitung*, distanced himself from the Bourgeois Union, to which most of his colleagues belonged. He expressed his political views in the book *On the So-called Bourgeois Union in Kurland (Über die sogenannte burgerliche Union in Kurland)*. In his work, he passionately defended the established social and political system and idealised the situation in Courland. Additionally, he expressed strong criticism of the French National Assembly. Drawing upon his Christian convictions, he argued against the Assembly's policies.<sup>37</sup>

In light of the events of the time, the situation in Courland was perceived differently by the prominent Baltic German *Aufklärer* Garlieb Merkel, who drew inspiration from the failure of the millers' revolt for his criticism of serfdom and the writing of his book *Latvians*.<sup>38</sup> The young traveller, Munich lawyer Johann Heinrich Liebeskind, sensing the echoes of the Kościuszko uprising when crossing Courland, also sympathised with the oppressed.<sup>39</sup> Pastor August Wilhelm Hupel, whose writings were available in the reading institutions of Mitau, a defender of serfdom, held the opposite opinion.<sup>40</sup> The variety of opinions and interests among potential readers, along with the Enlightenment imperative to be informed, probably influenced the reading offerings.

36 -r. Mitau's Bürgerstand und Literatenstand („Buchadel“) in historischen Rückblicken. – *Zeitung für Stadt und Land*, 1886, no 80, 8 April 1886, 1.

37 See Tiling's book recap by M. Stepermanis. *Lielās liesmas atblāzma*, 73–77.

38 G. H. Merkel. *Die Letten, vorzüglich in Liefland, am Ende des philosophischen Jahrhunderts*, Ein Beytrag zur Völker- und Menschenkunde. Heinrich Graff, Leipzig, 1797.

39 J. H. Liebeskind. *Rückerinnerungen von einer Reise durch einen Theil von Teutschland, Preussen, Kurland und Liefland, während des Aufenthalts der Franzosen in Mainz und der Unruhen in Polen*. Strasburg, 1795.

40 A. W. Hupel. *Ökonomische Handbuch für lief- und estländische Gutsherren*. Hartknoch, Riga, 1796.

REVOLUTION LITERATURE PROPOSED  
BY THE NEWSPAPER

The convocation of the Estates General and the Assembly in Paris, which lasted from May 5 to June 27, 1789, was not reported in the columns of the *Mitauische Zeitung*. As mentioned earlier, this news was overshadowed by information about the Russian–Swedish War. However, the *Rigische Zeitung*, a newspaper from neighbouring Riga, reported on the concerning situation throughout France, both in the capital and in the provinces, starting in April, during the elections for the Estates General.

The *Dörptsche Zeitung*, whose creation coincided with the beginning of the revolution, also dedicated a significant amount of space in its columns to French news. Thanks to the keen interest of the public, it was able to stabilise financially and operate successfully.<sup>41</sup> We must recognise that, in terms of access to information, the Riga newspaper was in a more privileged position than its Mitau counterpart, as it had foreign correspondents in Paris, London, and Amsterdam.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, the *Mitauische Zeitung* had no correspondents and instead republished news from foreign newspapers.

Thus, the *Mitauische Zeitung* paid less attention to pre-revolutionary events, and the Paris section was usually on the third page of the newspaper. Certainly, some disturbing events were covered. In January, the newspaper reported that the Prince de Conti informed the king that brochures being distributed in the provinces were causing harm throughout the empire, and that the distribution of such papers needed to be prevented. He proclaimed that notable nobles should decide how to restrict this uncontrollable freedom of the press.<sup>43</sup> In April, there were reports of unrest in Brittany and the dispatch of the provincial commander-in-chief, General Comte de Thiard, to trouble spots to prevent the outbreak of riots, as well as the appointment of Rabaud de Saint-Etienne and du Comte de Mirabeau as members of the Third Estate.<sup>44</sup> In May, four issues had no news section on France at all; then, after almost a month without news from Paris, the *Mitauische Zeitung* published alarming news:

41 I. Jūrjo. La réception de la Révolution française dans les provinces baltes, 88–89.

42 M. Stepermanis. Lielās liesmas atblāzma, 36.

43 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 16. Januar 1789.

44 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 12. Mai 1789.

Things did not go very well in Paris: in various locations, great disorders plagued parts of the city, which have not yet been quelled, despite the French and Swiss guards deployed against the rebels. Around 100 people were reportedly killed and many more injured. This tumult terrified all of Paris, and all the shops and stalls were closed.<sup>45</sup>

In general, there was only a small amount of information about the beginning of revolutionary events in France in the newspaper. However, considering that other publications were available in Courland that provided information about events in France, the people of Courland were fairly well informed about ongoing developments.

However, the aim of this study is not to analyse the range of information in the *Mitauische Zeitung*, but to focus on a specific segment: the books, brochures and documents mentioned in the newspaper regarding the French Revolution. Its purpose is to reveal the literature related to the revolution and its ideological orientation by creating an appropriate information space through selective presentation of information, namely, French or German sources, deemed important for covering the course of events and the historical process. It must be admitted that sometimes the information on the authors or the works is presented superficially; the concise form of the statement suggests that the reader is already familiar with both the author and his or her works or the criticism these works evoked. The research segment covers different types of information: (1) books indicated with their place of availability, along with the offerings of publishers, bookstores, and libraries; (2) references to reviews of books published in other periodicals, as well as information on books published or set to be published abroad; and (3) quotations from documents containing statements by public figures.

In the announcements section of the newspaper, news was regularly provided about where to buy books from the two most important towns of Courland, Mitau and Libau: the ducal printing house (*Hochfürstlichen Hofbuchdruckerey*) and Friedrich's bookshop (*Friedrichsche Buchhandlung*). Lists of published books included prices. The activities of Libau's bookshop were linked to the publishing house De Lagarde & Friedrich, which in 1790 published the first edition of the work of the eminent German philosopher Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*). The supply of literature of revolution from both companies was not abundant, yet it was diverse. To illustrate this diversity, it is worth mentioning a few works. Among

45 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 9. Juni 1789.



the most important and well known were two books belonging to Bastille literature<sup>46</sup>, translated from French into German: *The Bastille Unmasked, or, Collection of Authentic News Concerning Its History* (*Die entlarvte Bastille, oder Sammlung authentischer Nachrichten zum Behuf ihrer Geschichte*) written by Pierre Hubert Charpentier and Louis Pierre Manuel, and *The Unveiled Bastille, or Collection of Eight Contributions to the History of the Same* (*Die enthüllte Bastille oder Sammlung achter Beytrage zur Geschichte derselben*), an anonymous work. Both were offered in advertisements at the end of 1790 and also in 1791<sup>47</sup>, and, as their titles indicate, included the unmasking of the Bastille as a symbol of the repressive activities of absolutism. *The Bastille Unmasked* was highly pro-revolutionary and recounted the fate of those incarcerated in the Bastille prison.<sup>48</sup> An opposing view expressed in German writer Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard's *Revolution's Almanac of 1793* (*Revolutions-Almanach von 1793*), published at the beginning of 1792<sup>49</sup>, which ironically explained the revolutionary violence through the semantic shift of its central ideas: nation, philosophy, patriotism, liberty, rebirth, legislature, and constitution:

Out of a misguided sense of tolerance, nuns and women in monasteries and churches are flogged, and the clergy are strangled. The burning of a noble castle and the massacre of la Glacière in Avignon are labelled constitutional acts. Thus, the most venerable and important words have been subjected to an entirely opposite application.<sup>50</sup>

Although books could be read at a lower cost in paid reading establishments, economic considerations were not the only factors influencing readers to take advantage of this option. Libraries, by curating their selections from a wide range of literature of revolution, alleviated the difficulties of choosing for their potential patrons; however, the available works remained limited.

From 1792 to 1795, announcements from Mitau book vendors were published in the newspaper one to four times a month. The most active participants were two individuals representing reading institutions of different forms: the lending library (*Leihbibliothek*) of the notary Werth, and the reading society (*Lesegesellschaft*) under the direction

46 On the literature of the Bastille, see H.-J. Lusebrink, R. Reichardt. *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*. Duke University Press, Durham, London, 1997.

47 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 17. Dezember 1790, 30. August 1791.

48 S. S. Valke. *Revolūcijas literatūra Liepājas pilsētas lasāmbibliotēkā (1790–1796)*. – *Aktuālas problēmas literatūras un kultūras pētniecībā, rakstu krājums*, 2022, 27, 216–240, here 222–225.

49 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 26. Februar 1792.

50 *Revolutions-Almanach* 1792, 209.

of the cantor Beise. We should also mention the books offered on commission by the postmaster Krüger. Initially, that is, in 1792, the books offered were mainly books that preferred the importance of authority to the idea of individual freedom. One could borrow the book *Glances at the Current Horrors of France (Blicke auf Frankreichs jetzige Greuel)*<sup>51</sup> by the aforementioned Baltic German Lutheran pastor and historian August Wilhelm Hupel, in which he expressed his strong support for the monarchy and rejected any claims by the States General to represent the entire French nation<sup>52</sup>, as well as the periodical that severely criticised the revolution *Historical News and Political Reflections on the French Revolution (Historische Nachrichten und politische Betrachtungen über die Französische Revolution)* by the Swiss doctor and publicist, Christoph Girtanner<sup>53</sup>, and the theatrical dialogues *Scenes (News) in Paris and Versailles (Szenen (neue) in Paris und Versailles)* by August Christian Vulpius<sup>54</sup>, who depicted violent, imaginary revolutionary events in a supposedly realistic Parisian setting.

Although the general tendencies of the literature offered were predominantly against the revolution, pro-revolutionary works were also occasionally available. These included German translations of the works of the Deputy of the Third Estate to the Estates General, the Comte de Mirabeau<sup>55</sup>, as well as the *Historical Almanac of the French Revolution of 1792 (Almanach Historique de la Révolution Française de 1792)* by the French revolutionary, Protestant pastor and defender of religious freedom Rabaut Saint-Etienne.<sup>56</sup> This almanac compiled a list of the decrees of the National Assembly and provided an account of the revolutionary events, aiming to promote the views of the defenders of the revolution internationally.<sup>57</sup> The diversity of interpretations seemed to have favoured the learning of French, as evidenced by the demand for and supply of French language instruction, as well as educational materials specifically designed for the German public, such as Vernon's *French Grammar for the Use of Germans (Die französische Grammatik zum Gebrauch der Deutschen)*,<sup>58</sup> and the more complex *Choice of Comedies to*

51 Mitauische Zeitung, 1. Januar 1792.

52 I. Jürjo. La réception de la Révolution française dans les provinces baltes, 91.

53 Mitauische Zeitung, 12. März 1792, 2. Oktober 1792.

54 Mitauische Zeitung, 10. Januar 1792, 12. März 1792, 4. September 1792.

55 Mitauische Zeitung, 11. September 1792, 9. November 1792, 27. November 1792, 30. November 1792, 7. Dezember 1792.

56 Mitauische Zeitung, 27. März 1792.

57 S. S. Valke. Revolūcijas literatūra Liepajas pilsētas lasambibliotēkā, 225–226.

58 Mitauische Zeitung, 14. Februar 1792.

*Practice in the French Language (Comédies pour s'exercer dans la Langue Française)*.<sup>59</sup>

From June 1792, news of events in Paris increasingly appeared on the front page of the newspaper, detailing the riots in the city and the needs of the army, which were dictated by the state of war that followed the April 20, 1792 declaration of war on the Austrian Empire by the Legislative Assembly. In the following year, 1793, information about the state of war continued to be published on the front page, but after Louis XVI was executed by guillotine, reading institutions began offering essays on the life, suffering, and death of the King. Gradually, during the years 1794 and 1795, interest in France, its events, and its personalities diminished, causing its news to recede from the front page to its usual position on the third page.

The December 1795 announcement of the Reading Society of Mitau, which occurred after the annexation of the Duchy of Courland on March 28, included an amusing short satire of about fifty pages titled "What is Really Lacking in the French? A Philosophical Medical Enquiry".<sup>60</sup> The work was emblematic because it reflected the distancing from the French Revolution and cast a critical eye over one of the German receptions. The satire presented a dialogue between the Strawhead and the German Heart during a rural family celebration of the French and the events in France, expressing the opinion that the latter were suffering from ergotism (*Kriebelkrankheit*). This disease suggested that part of the body had infected their souls, as they fed not only on unripe grain, but also on the works of immature writers. At first glance, it seems possible to draw parallels with the theatrical dialogues of Vulpius, which perpetuated the stereotypes of German 'depth' and French 'superficiality'. However, the anonymous satire offers a perspective on the German reception of the Revolution, revealing its fear of the contagious "disease" by even attempting to purify the German language of its French borrowings: "The time is over when the German allowed the French to iron their tongue"<sup>61</sup>.

While bookshops and libraries offered direct access to books, summary information from other periodicals and news from European cities about published or planned books served as both informative news and indirect advertising.

59 Mitauische Zeitung, 24. Mai 1793.

60 Mitauische Zeitung, 18. Dezember 1795.

61 Ein ehrlich Lüneburger. Was fehlt denn eigentlich den Franzosen? Eine medicinisch-philosophische Untersuchung; benebst einer angehängten Kleinen Bitte an die Meister der deutschen Sprache. Bey Franzen und Grosse, Stendal, 1794, 54.

*Mitauische Zeitung* regularly republished information from *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, one of Germany's most important Enlightenment periodicals, which frequently reflected French news. This monthly publication was not only cited as the source of certain news, but each month until the beginning of 1793, the front page of *Mitauische Zeitung* presented an overview of the contents of *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in a numbered list of the most important news. The diversity of viewpoints in the authoritative Berlin newspaper also seems to have stimulated pluralism in the columns of the *Mitauische Zeitung*. Thus, opposing opinions on the new French constitutional texts of 1789 were published in the second half of 1790 in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, a fact reported by *Mitauische Zeitung*. One of the articles enumerated was the German historian and theoretician Justus Möser's *On the Rights of Mankind, as the Basis of the New French Constitution (Ueber das Recht der Menschheit, als den Grund der neuen Französischen Konstitution)*, in which he discussed the impossibility of achieving equality, the priority role of landowners in society, and the illegality of abolishing the privileged orders in France.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, the Enlightenment philosopher Johann Erich Biester<sup>63</sup> and lawyer and political scientist Carl von Clauer<sup>64</sup>, who held views close to the Jacobins, disputed Möser's ideas.

Parallels were sometimes drawn between Möser and the Irish thinker Edmund Burke<sup>65</sup>, known for his firm opposition to the French Revolution, as expressed in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). It should be noted that the people of Courland were also offered the opportunity to familiarise themselves with critical opinions regarding Burke's ideas at Werth's loan library. This included a German translation of *Defense of the French Revolution Against Mr. Burke's Accusations* by British philosopher James Mackintosh (*Vertheidigung der Französischen Revolution gegen die Anschuldigungen des Herrn Burke*).<sup>66</sup>

The content of the journal *Minerva*, founded by the German historian and journalist Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, was part of the stream of defenders of the revolution<sup>67</sup>. This journal serves as a

62 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 22. Juni 1790.

63 Eine Nachricht vom Herrn Biester, in welcher er glaubt, zeigen zu können, daß Möser's Meinung theils nicht ganz recht gefaßt sey, theils sich noch vertheidigen lasse. – *Mitauische Zeitung*, 14. September 1790.

64 Herr von Clauer, Auch über das Recht der Menschheit, eigentlich gegen einen früheren Aufsatz von Möser, bey Gelegenheit der französischen andern Konstitution. – *Mitauische Zeitung*, 14. September 1790.

65 See H. Reiss. Justus Möser und Wilhelm von Humboldt: konservative und liberale politische Ideen im Deutschland des 18. Jahrhunderts. – *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 1969, 8, 1, 23–39.

66 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 25. Juni 1793.

67 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 6. März 1792, 23. März 1792.

particularly interesting source of information, as Archenholz himself lived in Paris from mid-1791 to mid-1792 and witnessed the events firsthand. In the preface to *Minerva*, he stated that:

The papers will, for the most part, consist of carefully selected material useful to future historians. As France now attracts the attention of people more than any other country, and since the publisher is currently in this country, he will make a special effort to raise awareness of the consequences of the surprising changes that have occurred here.<sup>68</sup>

Irregularly, and without reference to a source of information, the newspaper *Mitauische Zeitung* mentions books published abroad, some of which are provided to illustrate the diversity of the proposed ideas. Voltaire's important work *Treatise on Tolerance* was published in a new German translation available at the Royal Prussian Academic Library of Arts and Books in Berlin.<sup>69</sup> Although this essay is not part of the literature of revolution, it addresses one of its main ideas – religious tolerance – and echoes the information published several times about the reburial of Voltaire's remains in the Pantheon, thereby illustrating his contribution to the development of the ideas of freedom.

*Mitauische Zeitung* announced that Louis-Charles de Lavicomterie's book *The Crimes of the Kings of France from Clovis to Louis XVI* (*Les crimes des rois de France, depuis Clovis jusqu'à Louis XVI*) was available in Parisian bookshops<sup>70</sup> and informed readers about the forthcoming publication of *Anecdotes and Traits from the Life of the Count of Mirabeau* (*Anecdotes und Charakterzüge aus dem Leben des Grafen von Mirabeau*) in the Gräfe library in Leipzig.<sup>71</sup> After the death of the King of France, it was reported that the *Justification of Louis XVI Pronounced at the National Convention on December 26, 1792* (*Justification de Louis XVI prononcée à la Convention nationale le 26 décembre 1792*), a 49-page document published in octavo format and written by Raymond de Sèze, lawyer and politician, was well received by the public. Additionally, *The Life and Martyrdom of Louis XVI. King of France and Navarre immolated on January 21, 1793, with an Examination of the regicide decree by Monsieur de Limon* (*La vie et le Martyre de Louis XVI. Roi de France et de Navarre immolé le 21. Janvier 1793, avec un Examen du décret régicide par Monsieur de Limon*)<sup>72</sup> was released in quarto in Regensburg.

68 J. W. Archenholz. Vorwort. – *Minerva*, 1792, 1, 1–2.

69 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 24. September 1790.

70 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 18. Februar 1791.

71 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 8. Juli 1791.

72 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 28 Mai 1793.

While the long titles of 18th century books provided an overview of each book's content, the citations of political figures' addresses were more exhaustive and created an effect of presence at important societal processes. The quotations published by *Mitauische Zeitung* did not serve as traditional illustration or argumentative support, as they were introduced by only a few lines of information. Instead, they provided emotionally charged details that enriched the information presented.

The fury caused by the attempted escape and the arrest of the king was an important event in the revolution, sowing growing doubts about the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in France, and generating ideas in favour of a republic. This incident was subsequently used in the charges brought by the National Convention against the king in December 1792. The event received extensive international media coverage, including by the *Mitauische Zeitung*. The timeliness of the subject was reinforced by the breadth of the story, the newspaper was almost entirely devoted to it, featuring long quotes accompanied by short explanatory passages. After a brief introduction, the newspaper presented a German translation of the testimonies of Drouet and Guillaume concerning the circumstances of the King of France's arrest in Varennes<sup>73</sup> during a session of the National Assembly.<sup>74</sup> Three months later, the *Mitauische Zeitung* dedicated an issue to lengthy quotes from the September 13 session of the National Assembly.<sup>75</sup> The newspaper specified that the information was sourced from the latest issue of the *Gazette de France*.<sup>76</sup> This included a letter from Louis XVI brought to the National Assembly by the Minister of Justice, in which the king accepted the new constitution. The political significance of the story and the importance of the quotation were underlined by a remark stating that the German translation was reliable.

The significant declaration by Duke Brunswick, general of the army of the Prussian majesty, was republished by the *Mitauische Zeitung*<sup>77</sup> from the newspaper *Berlinische Nachrichten, von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, which had translated it from the published text by the *Universal Monitor* of Paris. This document, known as the "Brunswick Manifesto", threatened the French with widespread repression if the royal family were endangered. However, the result was quite the opposite;

73 Compte rendu par M. Drouet sur l'arrestation du roi, lors de la séance du 24 juin 1791. – Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Première série (1787–1799). Tome XXVII: Du 6 juin au 5 juillet 1791. Librairie Administrative P. Dupont, Paris, 1887, 508–509.

74 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 19. Juli 1791.

75 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 7. Oktober 1791.

76 *Gazette de France*, le 16 septembre 1791.

77 *Mitauische Zeitung*, 10. August 1792.

it led to an uprising which culminated in the capture of the Tulleries Palace and the fall of the king.

## CONCLUSION

Media coverage of literature of revolution by the *Mitauische Zeitung*, despite its conservative stance, included a diverse array of publications: those that promoted the ideas of the revolution, such as Rabaut Saint-Étienne's *Almanach*, and others that illustrated a need for change, like *The Bastille Unmasked* by Charpentier and Manuel. In contrast, the counter-revolutionary newspaper by Girtanner, included writings by an opponent of the idea of equality, Justus Möser, as well as the translation of Brunswick's threatening manifesto. News of the French Revolution and the revolutionary wars in Europe was viewed through the prism of local reception, gaining varying degrees of importance at different stages of these events. The active reception of revolutionary events was not immediate, it gradually increased over time. This growing importance was indicated by the increase in the volume of news about revolutionary events and the prominence of such coverage on the front page of the newspaper, particularly with the onset of the revolutionary wars in Europe, which further highlighted the international dimension of these events.

Comparing the amount of reading material on offer, the busiest period was 1792, which was rich in events. This year marked not only the beginnings of the revolutionary wars but also the fall of the monarchy, the incarceration of the family royal and the founding of the First Republic. The range of books rarely included works in French; instead, most publications consisted of translations from French into German and works by German authors, thereby appealing to a wider range of potential readers.

The offerings of booksellers and libraries, riding the wave of popularity of the revolution, responded to the interest of the Courlanders in the revolutionary events in France. From the already mentioned year 1792, a regular supply of literature emerges that marked both anti-revolutionary and, to a lesser extent, solidarity tendencies, as well as publications devoted to the fate of the royal family. The year 1792 in the Duchy of Courland was also marked by the escalation of the conflict between the Bourgeois Union and the local nobility, as well as by the millers' rebellion. Koenemen's notes, inspired by the French Revolution

and the events in Poland, had outlined an alternative trajectory for societal development. The editor of the newspaper, Tiling, on the other hand, was one of those literati who wanted to preserve the existing order.

The newspaper provided an information platform for booksellers and libraries, whose aims were not devoid of financial interest. Meanwhile, book news from other sources, citing prominent newspapers and expounding on their views of revolutionary events, revealed a greater diversity of opinions. This approach aimed to provide a more detailed understanding of certain events, documents, personalities, attitudes, and ideas rather than the overall process as a whole.

The event that created a break in intelligibility eventually acquired meaning – or rather several meanings – based on the ideological position of the interpreter. This acquisition allowed for a considered distance not only between the event and its observer, but also between the interpretation of the event and the observer. Far from being revolutionary and largely in disagreement with many of the ideas and methods brought by the French Revolution, the Curonian *literati* and representatives of the bourgeoisie aspired to participate in the political life of the Duchy. Thus, the interests of this specific Baltic German regional order were in harmony with the updated ideas of equality and the meritocratic society. By opening a space for the diversity of ideas, the literati made change possible. However, this possibility ended with the incorporation of the Duchy of Courland into the Russian Empire and the establishment of its censorship institutions.

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REVOLUTSIONILINE KIRJANDUS  
KURAMAA HERTSOGIRIIGI AJALEHES  
MITAUISCHE ZEITUNG (1789–1795)

*Simona Sofija Valke*

18. sajandil kajastasid ajakirjanduslikud teated peamiselt selliseid banaalseid ja korduvaid sündmusi nagu aadlike reiseid, abielud, surm; vähem oli erandlikke ja erakordseid teateid sõdadest, katastroofidest, revolutsioonidest ja muust sarnasest. Erakordsetest sündmustest katkendlik, mittetäielik arusaamine soosib nende tõlgendamist, seletuskatseid, põhjuste otsimist ja tagajärgede projitseerimist, luues ühtlasi uut asjakohast kirjandust.

Prantsuse revolutsiooni kajastati peamiselt perioodikas, kuid ka teistes trükistes: ajaloolistes, kriitilistes ja biograafilistes esseedes, almanahhides, ideoloogilistes ja kirjanduslikes teostes, avaliku elu tegelaste avaldustes ja poliitilistes dokumentides. Lugejaid teavitati sündmustest viidetega kõikvõimalikule kirjandusele, samuti tsitaatide ja raamatuarvustustega. Seega aitab konkreetne ajakirjanduslik aines mõista sündmuste kohalikku retseptiooni.

Ajalehe *Mitauische Zeitung* asutamine 1766. aastal oli osa 18. sajandi ajalehtede ja ajakirjade asutamise lainest. Üheksa aastat hiljem, 1775. aasta juulist, viidi ajaleht üle samal aastal asutatud uue akadeemilise gümnaasiumi *Academia Petrina* alluvusse ja selle toimetajaks sai reetoorikaproffessor Johann Nikolaus Tiling, seejärel alates 1777. aastast ladina keele ja kirjanduse professor Matthias Friedrich Watson. Artikkel käsitleb *Mitauische Zeitung*i numbreid alates 1789. aasta algusest (vahe-tult enne Prantsuse revolutsiooni puhkemist) kuni 1795. aasta lõpuni, direktoriumi valitsemisaja esimeste kuude ja Kuramaa hertsogiriigi liitmiseni Vene keisririigiga.

Ajaleht pakkus teavet kahel tasandil: esiteks avaldati uudiseid ja teiseks anti teave ilmunud raamatute, brošüüride ja revolutsiooni-sündmusi käsitlevate dokumentide kohta – viimased ongi siinse artikli objektiks, samas kui esimesed võimaldavad uurimismaterjali kontekstualiseerida. Seega püüab Prantsuse revolutsioonilisi sündmusi käsitleva kirjanduse ulatust analüüsiv uurimus haarata pilti, mille on loonud hertsogiriigi ajalehe informatsioon ja selle kaudu edastatav väärtussüsteem.

Artiklis käsitletakse esmalt Kuramaa hertsogiriigi ajaloolist, poliitilist ja rahvusvahelist konteksti, seejärel uuritakse *Mitauische Zeitung*i struktuuri ja ideoloogiat ning lõpuks analüüsitakse ajalehes revolutsioonilise kirjanduse kohta pakutud teavet. *Mitauische Zeitung*i

revolutsioonilise kirjanduse kajastus, kuigi konservatiivne, sisaldab üsna erilaadseid väljaandeid: neid, mis propageerivad revolutsiooniideid, ja teisi, mis illustreerivad muutuste vajadust. Revolutsiooniliste sündmuste aktiivne vastuvõtt ei olnud kohene, vaid suurenes järk-järgult.

Võrreldes pakutava lugemisvara hulka, oli tegusaim ja sündmusteroheim 1792. aasta, mis tähistas Euroopa revolutsioonisõdade algust, monarhia langemist, kuningliku perekonna vangistamist ja esimese vabariigi asutamist. Raamatuvalik hõlmas harva prantsusekeelseid teoseid, enamik trükiseid on prantsuskeelsete teoste saksakeelsed tõlked ja saksa autorite teosed, mis kaasavad seega laiemat potentsiaalsete lugejate ringi. *Mitauische Zeitung*i eesmärk oli anda üksikasjalik arusaam teatud sündmustest, dokumentidest, isiksustest, hoiakutest ja ideedest, mitte protsessist tervikuna.

Algselt mõistetamatu, murranguline sündmus sai seeläbi tähenduse, õigemini mitu ideoloogilisele positsioonile vastavat tähendust. Ajalehe pakutav ja populariseeritav mitmekesine kirjanduse viitas ühiskondlikule pluralismile, mis kajastus hertsogiriigi poliitilises elus osaleda ihkava Baltimaade literaatide seisuse püüdlustega, mis lähtusid võrdõiguslikkuse ja meritokraatliku ühiskonna ideedest.