

The Image of the Journalist in France, Germany, and England, 1815-1848

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THE IMAGE OF THE JOURNALIST IN FRANCE, GERMANY, AND ENGLAND, 1815-1848 *

The growth of the professions in the nineteenth century occurred as a process of specialization; distinct functions separated out of certain broad categories of activity. The church, the law, and medicine were the matrices from which new professions emerged and became differentiated in response to the growing needs of an increasingly complex society. The reasons for that complexity were in the main economic and stemmed from the industrialization of the first half of the century.

Within the limits of this pattern, however, the development of individual professions varied from one country to another, and the history of journalism demonstrates how an occupational group could have a different function and importance depending on the kind of society in which it operated. In general, the history of journalism conformed to the Western European pattern of professional development, insofar as it was a response to the increasing literacy, growing wealth, and improvements in communications and printing techniques that came with industrialization. Everywhere the emergent figure of the journalist had to be differentiated from a stratum of educated men with pretensions to social leadership, a group comprising the artist, the teacher, and the political leader. In France, Germany, and England, however, the process of separating journalism from related activities took rather different forms. While in each country the occupation combined *belles lettres*, reporting, and political agitation, still in each case these component elements were combined in different proportions; the variation is explicable only in terms of dissimilarities in economic and political systems.

The economic system was determinative in that a certain kind of newspaper press could emerge only at a certain stage of industrial society. That is, only an economically advanced society could produce a newspaper press that supported itself completely from sales to a mass reading public and from paid advertisements. Without such an economic basis the newspaper press was either ineffectual or had to rely on political subsidy. Likewise journalism as a full-time occupation with its own standards of performance and moral integrity, and at least a degree of social status, could appear only when the

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newspaper press had become a profitable business enterprise. Still the economic factor is by itself not enough to explain the position of the newspaper press. The economic situation in France and Germany in the early nineteenth century, for example, was different, but hardly different enough to account for the striking contrasts in the press of the two countries. Account must therefore be taken of the political factor: the nature of the press in each country was crucially affected by the existing distribution of political power. In France, where the middle class increasingly monopolized power, newspapers were essentially instruments of party, weapons used by one section of the middle class against another. The German press reflected the conflict between absolute governments, employing censorship and subsidies, and an emergent middle class demanding a share in government. In England an advanced middle class achieved political compromise with the aristocracy and devoted its chief energies to economic matters, so that the great dailies concentrated on advertising and news rather than politics. In contrast to France and Germany, however, England had a laboring class strong enough to produce a newspaper press devoted to social grievances, and as such was an acutely felt threat to the upper classes.

The interaction of political and economic factors can be analyzed through a comparative study of journalists in the first half of the century in France, Germany, and England. The study can best be focussed through comparison of the attitudes towards the newspaper press, and the image of the journalist in these societies: what was the newspaper press judged to be, how did the journalist see himself, and how was he viewed by other social groups? ¹

FRANCE

In France the journalist was slow to define a role distinct from that of the artist, politician, and financier, and to lose a reputation for venality and social inferiority. The chief reason for this was doubtless the relatively backward state of the French economy, which remained predominantly agrarian, with a small business community not much inclined to innovation and dominated by finance rather than industry. There was little paid advertising, nor was there a mass reading public, and in consequence French newspapers could not build up the kind of revenue that would have made them a profitable or even self-supporting business. They remained financially dependent

¹ It may be objected at the outset that journalism does not qualify as a profession, and if one adopts a rigorous definition of a profession, stressing possession of a systematic body of knowledge acquired through a long specialized training, then the objection is valid. Decisive, however, is the fact that journalism was commonly regarded in the nineteenth century as a profession and is now. It requires considerable education and experience, and the journalist does as a rule have access to certain information denied the ordinary person.

on the various political parties, and thus highly politicized and partisan. The critic Alphonse Karr wrote that "There are only two kinds of newspapers: those that approve and support the government, whatever it does, and those that blame and attack it, whatever it does."²

To successive governments, accordingly, the newspaper press appeared as a political force requiring regulation. Preliminary censorship was abandoned in 1819, but other means of control were always in use. There were burdensome stamp taxes, and in 1819 a system of caution money was instituted. Under this system the owner of a newspaper was required to deposit a fairly large sum with the government as surety for the payment of any fines that might be levied in the future. The aim was both to restrain individual owners by the threat of loss and to ensure that newspapers were controlled by the prosperous classes opposed to revolution. Such financial measures, however, probably only accentuated the political character of the press, since ownership was thus confined to the wealthy middle class who already dominated political life and who regarded the press chiefly as a means to political influence. The highly successful if controversial press-magnate Émile de Girardin, a strong critic of the system, argued that this kind of control only prevented independent individuals from setting up newspapers while it did nothing to hinder the political parties or the rich; the parties could always raise enough money to establish a newspaper. The effect, in Girardin's words, was "to create for the benefit of some great feudatories a privilege by which the exclusive exploitation of public opinion is delivered to them as a monopoly, and thus to create in the state an aristocracy the more redoubtable in that it is unrecognized."³ In a situation in which no writer could express views that differed from those of the newspaper owners, to the German poet Heinrich Heine it seemed that the French press suffered from an unofficial censorship more oppressive than the government censorship of Germany.⁴

Opponents of caution money further claimed that it resulted in reducing the number of newspapers so that all varieties of existing opinion were not reflected in the press. Moreover the papers that did survive naturally gained in importance, and a naive observer might easily believe that these newspapers represented a small number of powerful, unified parties. "Twelve newspapers

² Alphonse Karr, *Les guêpes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1858), I, 9. On the French newspaper press during this period there is the standard work of Eugène Hatin, *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1859-1861), and the indispensable study by Irene Collins, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France, 1814-1881* (New York, 1959).

³ Émile de Girardin, "De la presse périodique au dix-neuvième siècle", *Études politiques* (Paris, 1842), pp. 345-46.

⁴ Heinrich Heine, "Lutezia", *Sämtliche Werke*, Oskar Walzel and others (eds.), 10 vols. (Leipzig, 1911, 1912, 1920), IX, 66-67. German observers often noted the pressure exerted by the French press on political and social life, and its corruption of public opinion. See Klara Kautz, *Das deutsche Frankreichbild in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, 1957), p. 75.

that divide France among them," wrote Honoré de Balzac, "are twelve powers as strong or even stronger than the seven ministers, for they overthrow the ministers but themselves remain in existence; whereas a hundred newspapers are no longer to be feared. . . ." ⁵ Girardin suggested that the government abandon caution money and permit free entry into the newspaper field, then make up for the resulting revenue loss by dropping subventions to the government-supported press. The government would be stronger in the end, since it would find that it could always count on a certain amount of voluntary press support. In any case Girardin thought caution money ineffective as a restraint since newspapers preferred to pay fines to losing subscribers, and they found that the best way to keep subscribers was to play up political and social dissensions; given a steady diet of such journalism, the most objective reader was bound to end a political sectarian. Girardin concluded that the basic solution to the unhealthy condition of the press was to reduce to a minimum the financial burdens attached to starting a paper, so that anyone who seriously wanted his own newspaper could have it. Then more newspapers would be established and more views and interests find a hearing. In this variety, opinions would neutralize each other, and the average reader would be freer to form his own views. ⁶

In time the extreme political orientation of the press was modified, though only partially as the result of economic growth. Change came about because of the increase in literacy and the formation of a new reading public that was no longer so engrossed in politics, and because of the increase in paid advertising that lessened the financial dependence of the press on the political parties. In 1836 Girardin started the *Presse*, a major venture in the newspaper field that he hoped would inaugurate a new type of journalism. The paper sold at forty francs, exactly half the usual price of the time. Girardin calculated that the revenue lost through the lower price would be made up by an enlarged body of subscribers attracted by the paper's cheapness, and by an expansion of advertising. Advertising and circulation would react favorably on each other, as business men would want to advertise in a paper of mass circulation, and readers would prefer a paper with many advertisements. The project was Girardin's answer to the difficulties of the political press, which had to rely on political subsidy because circulations were too small to attract advertisers. It was also aimed at the "petit journal", the small paper that did not deal with politics and consequently was exempt from the stamp tax and caution money, but was at least as meretricious and certainly more offensive than the political newspapers. Directors, actors, and actresses were compelled to pay to avoid bad reviews in the "petit journal"; tradespeople paid to have

⁵ Honoré de Balzac, "Enquête sur la politique des deux ministères", *Œuvres complètes*, 24 vols. (Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, Éditeurs, 1869-1876), XXIII, 264.

⁶ É. de Girardin, "De la liberté de la presse et du journalisme", *Études politiques*, p. 414. Girardin took a large part in the extensive debate on caution money in the Chamber of Deputies in August 1835.

their wares "puffed"; politicians and other prominent figures were victimized by ridicule and imputations of misbehaviour; books were damned or praised at the discretion of the paper's owner.⁷ Such dubious practices were necessary because the financial basis of the "petite presse" was so precarious. Increased income from sales and advertising would at once enable the newspapers to win independence from political groups, to abandon blackmail, and to cater less to a taste for scandal. Girardin hoped to arrive at a newspaper press like the English; in England, he pointed out, newspapers were read primarily for their news and their advertising and only secondarily for their political doctrine and opinions.

Actually the system of paid advertisements had existed in France since 1827, and the *Journal des Débats*, despite a large number of subscribers and policies designed to attract advertising, had achieved no results that could be compared to those of *The Times*. Girardin did not in fact find advertising as important a source of revenue as he had hoped, and he also learned that the extensive sales which were so necessary to attract advertising could not be maintained by cheapness alone. Girardin accordingly concentrated on amusing the mass public – though he preferred to speak of educating it. The *Presse* dropped the regulation long political articles and substituted gossip, fashion, and journalistic stunts. Undoubtedly the greatest stroke was the introduction of the serial, an innovation caught up with tremendous enthusiasm by the new reading public that was anxious for diversion but not very interested in politics. Girardin was willing to do what was necessary to change the press from a political to a business enterprise, less a matter of principle than an "affaire". He "was odious to all those who dated from the time in which the press was only a means to propagate opinion. He was an admired figure to all those for whom the press is a business . . ." ⁸ Political agitation was subordinated to news, advertising, and entertainments, with the aim of building up the largest circle of readers; after 1835 newspapers seem to have been success-

⁷ This was the world immortalized by Balzac in *Illusions Perdues*. The Marxist critic George Lukacs, *Studies in European Realism* (London, 1950), p. 49, has described this as a novel of disillusionment, the *Don Quixote* of the bourgeoisie. "*Lost Illusions* is a tragi-comic epic showing how . . . the spirit of man is drawn into the orbit of capitalism. The theme of the novel is the transformation of literature (and with it of every ideology) into a commodity and this complete 'capitalization' of every sphere of intellectual, literary and artistic activity. . . ." The interpretation is persuasively argued, but the reverse of Lukacs' thesis would seem to be nearer the truth. Balzac was describing the beginnings of a new profession, and his journalists were venal not so much because they lived in a capitalistic society as because their society was not capitalistic enough. With the development of capitalism all the professions were to expand, as the public demand for their services grew, and with this expansion the public understandably began to insist upon certain standards of efficiency and probity. The professions usually met this demand by regulating themselves rather than provoke outside control. Also their economic rewards increased as society grew richer, so that the incentive to dishonesty lessened.

⁸ Charles de Rémusat, *Mémoires de ma vie*, Charles H. Pouthas (ed.), v. 1-3 (Paris, 1958-), III, 193.

ful to the degree that they played down politics.⁹ With this partial commercialization of the press journalism could become more of a distinct profession, a full-time career with defined procedures, rather than an easy way temporarily to earn a living for people whose main hopes and interests lay elsewhere.

Yet the evolution of the journalistic profession, as measured by developments in England and in Germany, seems to have been somehow incomplete. French newspapers remained political and venal to a surprising degree throughout the century, as if the political character of the French press had become inveterate. Probably the main reason was the obvious one of France's limited industrialization; there was also a failure to exploit advertising resources effectively.¹⁰ But there was also a political factor, and perhaps a limited explanation of the lasting characteristics of French newspapers should be sought in the pattern of political strife typical of modern France and never more so than in the period after 1815 in which the French newspaper press took shape.

The years 1815-1830, and to a lesser extent 1830-1848, were characterized by intense political absorption and discussion, as Frenchmen tried to think through basic problems of government and to develop satisfactory institutions. On the deepest level their problem was to define the sovereign power, to locate the final authority in French society. Did sovereignty reside in the monarch, the Chambers, the people, or in all three together? Or did it lie outside of any group of men? Even when men wished to avoid the problem they found they could not. The Revolution had destroyed consensus on fundamental matters, and now every specific issue seemed inevitably to lead back to the question of the respective rights of government and people, monarch and Chambers. Nothing created more difficulties of this sort than the subject of press regulation, so that the doctrinaire Charles de Rémusat wrote in his memoirs that liberty of the press was perhaps the great question of the century, and that anyone who wished to understand modern politics should study in detail the discussions on the subject from 1814 to 1830 in the press and the Chambers.¹¹

The newspaper press was important, new, and little understood. Article 8 of the Charter seemed to grant liberty of the press, but it was not originally clear that this would extend to newspapers; Beugnot, one of the authors of the Charter, later wrote that no member of the Committee preparing the

⁹ The tendencies typified by the *Presse* were also part of what seems to have been a change in the political climate, as Louis-Philippe's government took a stiffer line against its enemies. The press law of 1835 made opposition more difficult and so contributed to lessen the emphasis on political events, which were, in any case, less interesting in the period 1840-48, when the regime appeared to be at last firmly entrenched. See Jean Pierre Aguet, "Le tirage des quotidiens de Paris sous la Monarchie de Juillet", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, X (1960), 216-86.

¹⁰ R. F. Byrnes, *Antisemitism in Modern France* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1950-), I, 286-89.

¹¹ C. de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, II, 59-60.

Charter had intended the article to apply to newspapers.¹² It was by no means obvious what social forces the newspapers represented. It was frequently said that the newspapers represented public opinion, and as such contributed as directly as the Chambers or the monarch to the formation of public policy. René de Chateaubriand explained the relationships between public opinion and government by asserting that the Chambers existed to judge the particular interests of France, while the nation itself rendered its judgments through the medium of the press apart from the representative bodies.¹³ Pierre Royer-Collard thought of the press as a fourth power in the state, exercising some of the functions once associated with the corporate bodies of the *ancien régime*; the newspapers checked the power of the central government just as the *parlements* had formerly done. In this view freedom of the press was not only a liberty but also a power, inasmuch as the press balanced the other powers in society.¹⁴

A free press appeared to be a necessary part of representative government. Without it government and people would not understand each other. "In the discussions that necessarily arise between the ministry and the Chambers, how could the public know the truth if the newspapers were under the censorship of the ministry, that is, under the influence of one of the interested parties? How could the ministry and the Chambers know public opinion, that constitutes the general will, if that opinion could not be freely expressed?"¹⁵ Free elections required a free press. Only the press could provide a check on government in periods in which the Chambers were not in session. Newspapers were at all times indispensable as a medium for exposing the wrongdoing of individual officials.

Even the firmest defenders of the press, however, had in the end to admit that the simple identification of the newspaper press with something called public opinion would not altogether do. Why in any case assume that newspapers rather than the Chambers expressed public opinion? "A hundred persons in France would have the right that has been at times contested to the Chamber, to the king, and to his government, that of representing public opinion! What more menacing oligarchy could ever have been put together for the enslavement of peoples. . . ." ¹⁶ It was obvious moreover that the newspapers did not reproduce some opinion common to all elements in

¹² Jacques Claude Beugnot, *Mémoires du comte Beugnot*, Alfred Beugnot (ed.), 2 vols. (Paris, 1866), II, 156-57.

¹³ F. A. René Chateaubriand, "De la monarchie selon la charte", *Œuvres complètes*, 20 vols. (Paris, Lefèvre, Ladvocat, 1830-1831), XVIII, 290.

¹⁴ Gabriel Rémond, *Royer-Collard, son essai d'un système politique* (Paris, 1933), pp. 81 ff.

¹⁵ R. Chateaubriand, "De la monarchie selon la charte", *Œuvres complètes*, XVIII, 290.

¹⁶ M. de Salis, Chamber of Deputies, *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860: recueil complet des débats législatives et politiques des Chambres françaises*, 22 March 1820. [Future references to *AP*.]

French society, but rather different and often sharply opposed points of view. "The fifty, sixty, hundred men who edit newspapers," said Jean Villèle, "and who express a variety of thoroughly conflicting opinions, neither represent nor express public opinion."¹⁷ Nor did newspapers represent the opinions of individual citizens, since their columns were not habitually open to any one at all who wished to express his views on politics. The journalists were a group of self-selected men who assumed a political function; "they arrogate a kind of magistracy in the state. . . ." ¹⁸ Duvergier de Hauranne summed it up thus:

Several persons form an association, establish a periodical publication, and, depending on the degree of recognition accorded their talents, the party that they follow or the passions they flatter, gain a more or less substantial number of subscribers. At one stroke certain individuals have acquired the right to speak every day to all of France, to condemn or approve the acts of government, to inflame or appease passions: certainly the exercise of such a right requires some rules to prevent abuses; for, notice gentlemen, a newspaper is not a register in which all citizens are entitled to insert their claims; it is open only to the editors and those sharing their opinions.¹⁹

Thus newspapers were revealed as the organs of political parties, and it was this connection with party that made them seem so dangerous and their control so important. In an age that wanted nothing so much as peace and stability, the idea of party revived all the fears left by the factionalism of the Revolution. The prevailing fear of disorder inevitably colored men's thinking about the press, as the realization grew that newspapers offered a new and potentially very dangerous means of political agitation. Every age, Baron Pasquier told the Chamber of Peers, has its own fanaticism. In past ages this had been political in character, but in the present time "another fanaticism is dominant – that of political opinions. Where are the organs of this fanaticism found? By whom is it encouraged, cultivated, upheld, exalted? Who can deny, gentlemen, that it is by the newspapers and periodicals of every kind?" ²⁰

The potential danger of the newspaper press was made even greater by the fact that newspapers were not only political weapons but also business enterprises. "A journal is sometimes an affair of conscience, more often an affair of party, and nearly always an affair of money."²¹ The obvious danger was that political discussions in the press would be conducted ever more recklessly in an attempt to gain readers by providing excitement, novelty, and scandal.

The interest of the newspapers . . . is in agitation, in the successions of events, in a permanent state of inquietude and expectation; curiosity lives only from events and uncertainty, and for the newspapers the principle of existence and the elements

¹⁷ Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 27 March 1820.

¹⁸ Count Portalis, Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 22 March 1820.

¹⁹ Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 25 January 1817.

²⁰ *AP*, 28 February 1820.

²¹ M. Becquey, Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 23 March 1820.

of success lie in curiosity; the monotony of order and peace is fatal to them; the day when the reign of passions will end, when concord, so long exiled, will return to men, newspaper enterprises will no longer have nourishment or life.²²

To the argument that the newspapers as business enterprises were entitled to the rights enjoyed by other forms of property and that government regulation would hurt their commercial prospects, proponents of press regulation answered that if newspapers were property, they were property of an unusual kind. ". . . the journalists do not possess property; they have only a concession, a privilege, or at least their property, if one can call it such, is comminatory and conditional."²³

The image of the journalist revealed in these debates was that of a man either himself a political fanatic or willing to exploit the fanaticism of others for his own ends. The picture was overdrawn but not unjustified. The French press was undeniably factious and revolutionary.²⁴ In a country where political life was confined to the wealthy and literate, newspapers could exercise significant influence, and where the mechanisms of parliamentary government were as imperfectly understood as they were in France political opposition could easily slide over into revolution. Very often the aim of journalists was simply to gain office for themselves, and they threatened and blackmailed the men in power, with the menacing implication that if jobs and influence were not forthcoming peaceful intimidation might be succeeded by forceful overthrow of the government.

The aspirations of the journalists must be viewed in relation to the struggle for political office on the part of all sections of educated society in nineteenth-century France. Alexis de Tocqueville called the desire for office "the great, chronic ailment of the whole nation . . ."²⁵ The royalist Joseph Fiévée once wrote that if there were only two men living in France one would be soliciting the other for a place; Duvergier de Hauranne commented that Fiévée could have gone on to say that if there were three men in France the first would be soliciting the second for the place of the third.²⁶ In 1815 the returning Bourbons immediately found the demand for office a major problem. There were fewer offices than before because much of the administrative and military machinery needed to run the Napoleonic empire had become superfluous — Chateaubriand remarked that under Napoleon half of France had been supported by the other half.²⁷ There were more applicants because the Revolution had opened new opportunities to the sons of workers and peasants, and

²² Jean Baptiste Martignac, Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 19 January 1822.

²³ Élie Decazes, Chamber of Deputies, *AP*, 29 January 1817.

²⁴ Charles Ledré, *La presse à l'assaut de la monarchie, 1815-1848* (Paris, 1960).

²⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, J. P. Mayer (ed.) (New York, 1949), pp. 31-32.

²⁶ Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, *Histoire du gouvernement parlementaire en France 1814-1848*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1857-1872), III, 294.

²⁷ R. Chateaubriand, "De l'état de la France au 4 Octobre 1814", *Œuvres complètes*, XVIII, 81.

because the restored nobility now needed and wanted jobs and so competed for positions they would formerly have been ashamed to hold.²⁸ "I expect", wrote Stendhal in a letter of 10 April 1814 from Paris, "that M. le comte d'Artois is finding it most embarrassing to reconcile all conflicting claims. Thirty thousand noblemen with nothing better to do are flooding into the city in all the diligences to demand everything."²⁹ And the Duke de Richelieu, returning to France after a twenty-five-year absence, was appalled by the change in the national character and the coarsened manners of the upper classes. "The upper classes think of nothing but to push themselves forward, to enrich themselves, to get good jobs; all means are permissible to achieve that end. . . ." ³⁰ With the accession of Louis-Philippe fifteen years later there took place a purge of government personnel so extensive as to shock even the most sophisticated. Saint-Marc Girardin was caustic in an article in the *Journal des Débats*:

A fortnight ago there was the popular uprising, hours of courage and enthusiasm, hours of virtue and self-sacrifice. Today there is quite another insurrection: it is the insurrection of the petitioners, the mass uprising of all the office-seekers; they run to the antechambers with the same fervor with which the people ran to face the firing.³¹

This exaggerated desire for office was nothing new in France, where the evolution of bureaucratic government had for a long time led men to associate government positions with wealth, status, and security. What was new after 1815 was the conjunction, which was peculiar to France, of a relatively undeveloped economic system with the democratic and egalitarian tendencies inherited from the Revolution. The Revolution had sanctioned the goal of upward social mobility and rewarded the most aggressive personal ambitions. Comparable opportunities did not exist for the post-revolutionary generation. Certainly business offered opportunities and many young men did succeed in making fortunes, yet it was not easy to start with little or nothing; some capital, and much courage, talent, and hard work were usually required for success in business.³² And the educational system was not one calculated to orient the young towards business careers. The lycée offered a course grounded in the classics and almost entirely literary and theoretical in character, designed to prepare for careers in law, administration, and the liberal professions. The professions themselves required long and expensive preparation, and there is considerable evidence that they were overcrowded.

²⁸ Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration* (Paris, 1955), p. 322.

²⁹ Stendhal [pseudonym of Henri Beyle], *To the Happy Few: Selected Letters of Stendhal* (Grove Press, New York, 1952), p. 160.

³⁰ Quoted in Cynthia Cox, *Talleyrand's Successor Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis Duc de Richelieu 1766-1822* (London, 1959), p. 118.

³¹ Saint-Marc Girardin, *Souvenirs et réflexions d'un journaliste*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1873), p. 84.

³² Adeline Daumard, *La bourgeoisie parisienne de 1815 à 1848* (Paris, 1963), pp. 95, 160, 216-17, 284-85, 305-10, 404.

In such circumstances writing for the press must have seemed a godsend to many. It gave some of the prestige of an intellectual profession, since it required a literary education, but it did not demand a long and costly period of preparation. Nor did it require a man's full time and so was the ideal way for a poor law student or artist to make out temporarily. The same situation could be observed elsewhere in Europe. Everywhere men who were, in Girardin's phrase, victims of a university education, men who had not succeeded in becoming lawyers, doctors, or professors, turned to journalism.³³

What was unique about the French press was the intimate association between journalism and politics; writing for the newspapers was regarded as a normal step in a man's political career and an accepted means of gaining political office. The English were always impressed by this feature of French society because it contrasted so sharply with English practice. In England, wrote Walter Bagehot, a coalfitter's son looks to the bar and hopes to emulate Lord Eldon, whereas in France the pale young aspirant from the provinces goes to Paris and hopes to emulate Thiers. "Just consider for a moment what a difference this one fact shows between France and England. Here [in France] a man who begins life by writing in the newspapers, has an appreciable chance of arriving to be Minister of Foreign Affairs."³⁴

The part played by the press in the overthrow of Charles X and the profit the journalists drew from that event were obvious to all observers. Rémusat later recalled that the press was almost the sole instrument for the intellectuals in opposition during the Restoration: "All of us who fought in those wars . . . whatever we are we were made by the press."³⁵ The royalist Alfred Nettement in a book published in 1842 judged with considerable bitterness that the war waged by the *Journal des Débats* against the Bourbons had been motivated solely by self-seeking vanity. "For these men it was not a matter of ensuring that affairs were handled in this or that manner, but of ensuring that affairs were handled by themselves." He drew up a partial list of members of the staff rewarded by the new government: one of its founders now in the Chamber of Peers and four editors in the Chamber of Deputies; one given a chair in the Collège de France; one made aide-de-camp to M. le duc d'Orléans; one in the Council of Ministers; one first secretary in the London embassy; a number made prefects.³⁶

The July Monarchy in its turn found that it had to defend itself against the press. Chateaubriand, not without satisfaction, said of the new regime, "it

³³ É. de Girardin, "De la liberté de la presse", *Études politiques*, p. 406.

³⁴ "Letters on the French Coup d'État of 1851", *The Life and Works of Walter Bagehot*, Mrs. Russell Barrington (ed.), 9 vols. (London, 1915), I, 126.

³⁵ Charles de Rémusat, "Th. Jouffroy, mélanges posthumes", *Revue des deux mondes*, nouvelle série, XIV année, VII (1 August, 1844), 435.

³⁶ Alfred Nettement, *Histoire politique, anecdotique et littéraire du Journal des Débats*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1842), pp. 222-23, 295-96. The *Débats* had supported the king but opposed Polignac. Cf. R. G. Nobécourt, *La vie d'Armand Carrel*, 11th ed. (Paris, 1930), pp. 118-19.

lives by the press and the press is killing it . . .”³⁷ but he noticed also that the opposition did not want to overthrow Louis-Philippe but rather “. . . it makes a disturbance in order to gain places . . .”³⁸ The Tory *Quarterly Review* described the 1848 revolution as arising from “the accidental audacity of a dozen obscure agitators, the spawn of two printing offices. . . .”³⁹ and William Nassau Senior, having described how the journalists turned to Alphonse de Lamartine for a decision between regency and republic, noted that neither Lamartine nor anyone else seemed to have thought it odd that a handful of journalists should dethrone a king and themselves decide on a new form of government.⁴⁰

Much about the journalist’s role can be explained by the restriction of political life to a single class. Newspapers were written by and for the middle class; they were, in effect, weapons used by one part of the middle class against another. The opposition in these years wanted office, not mass uprising and a radical overthrow of existing society. Given the number of governments France had enjoyed, or suffered, since 1789, there was certainly no excessive reverence in the face of any particular existing government, and factions of the ruling class were willing to use extra-parliamentary methods to oust their opponents. Provided that violence did not go too far, street fighting could be useful. Politics, however, was intended to remain strictly a middle-class affair, and this exclusion of the lower classes had much to do with the character and importance of the press. The professor and *littérateur* Édouard Alletz saw a connection among the representative forms of government, the importance of the press, and the degree of education enjoyed by the common people:

Constitutional government establishes the reign of journalism . . . under this form of government the lower classes are excluded from all participation in sovereignty, and there remain, to exercise political rights, only the classes capable of deliberating through the written word. . . . In a country where there is more liberty than education, the press, instead of repeating what everyone thinks, attempts to determine what everyone thinks . . . you can be sure that in a country where the lower classes are quite ignorant the press will exercise too much influence. . . .⁴¹

Thus the political importance of the journalist was the result of a number of factors. In the absence of a mass press journalism was seen less as a profession in its own right than as a stepping-stone to other careers. Given the comparatively unprogressive French economy career opportunities were limited and the desire for political office accordingly remained very strong. At the same time new institutions of self-government offered the individual in-

³⁷ F. A. René Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, 6 vols. (Paris, Dufour, Mulat, and Boulanger, 1860), V, 337.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 293.

³⁹ *Quarterly Review*, LXXXIII (No. 165, 1848), 266.

⁴⁰ William Nassau Senior, *Journals Kept in France and Italy from 1848 to 1852 with a Sketch of the Revolution of 1848*, M. C. M. Simpson (ed.), 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1871), I, 3-4.

⁴¹ Édouard Alletz, *De la démocratie nouvelle*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1838), I, 63-66.

creased opportunity for political advancement, and the unsettled state of political opinion and practice gave scope to intellectuals to judge political events in the press.

GERMANY

The most striking feature of the German newspaper press was its mediocrity, which fact seemed the more remarkable in view of the high standards of German education and the vigor and productivity of German intellectual life.

An English observer, writing in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1844, could dismiss Germany's political press as being "without interest – without influence – without character – without sympathy".⁴² Made twenty years earlier the judgment would no doubt have been even more severe. After a brief period of growth in the immediate post-war years, German newspapers were reduced in the 'twenties to a condition of almost unrelieved nullity by the repressive policies in the Karlsbad decrees. The 'thirties and 'forties brought a somewhat freer political atmosphere and this was reflected in journalism, but the general level of the newspapers remained far below that of England and France during the whole period before 1848.

Germany did produce one great newspaper, Johann Cotta's *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, which next to *The Times*, was probably the foremost paper in Europe. About a half-dozen others were of superior quality. The great mass of newspapers, however, were at best no more than respectable local productions, few of which could attract men of talent, or afford staffs large enough for adequate news coverage and varied writing. Uninteresting and uninformative, they rarely reached more than a very limited public, and the fact that most existed at all was due less to their merits than to the extreme localism of German life; every town thought it should have its own newspaper and other types of periodical, and so insipid publications proliferated.

The state of the economy helps to explain the weakness of the newspaper press. Germany was still an agrarian country, considerably less advanced than France. Even by 1848 there was relatively little industrial production, few great capitalists, and a proletariat only beginning to take shape as a class. The middle class was composed of professional men, academics, state officials, and a business group made up largely of small shopkeepers and artisans. Obviously anything like the heavily capitalized newspaper based on advertising revenue and mass sales was economically and technologically impossible.

Economic backwardness, as in France, contributed to produce a large number of journalists of that ill-defined type characteristic of a beginning

⁴² *Foreign Quarterly Review*, XXXIII (No. 66, 1844), 372. On the German press in general see Ludwig Salomon, *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesen von den ersten Anfängen bis zur Wiederaufrichtung des Deutschen Reiches*, 3 vols. (Oldenburg, 1900-1906); Otto Groth, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Zeitungswissenschaft* (Munich, 1948).

profession. The appearance of such a group was an index of the lack of career opportunities. In contrast to England or even France, ambitious members of the middle class showed little enthusiasm for business. This fact can be accounted for both by the absence of exciting business opportunity and by the inordinate prestige of the professions and the bureaucracy; it seems safe to say that nowhere in Europe did the state official enjoy such respect as in Germany.⁴³ In consequence, career expectations were narrowly focussed on state employment. The professions themselves were dominated by the state, since in most instances positions in teaching, the church, and the law were state appointments. English observers marvelled at the extent to which the government managed social and commercial as well as political affairs, and some thought that the result was that "The young, the aspiring, the clever, and the small capitalists in particular, look for success in life to government employment, to public function, not to their own activity and industry in productive pursuits."⁴⁴ There were many Germans who agreed. The writer Karl Gutzkow, looking back to his days as a student in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, calculated that for every three independently-minded students there were 97 who wanted only to be pastors or officials.⁴⁵ His contemporary, Heinrich Laube, wrote that "A position connected with the state, and only such a position, was desired; every free activity that depended only on one's own independent strength was considered adventurous, even suspect."⁴⁶

As in France, the educational system was geared to the production of officials and professional men, and in Germany higher education was so cheap that large numbers of poor students managed to attend a university. There is evidence, as there is for France, of overcrowding in the learned professions and the bureaucracy. Various state governments, for example, tried during the 'twenties to discourage young men from studying for the civil service.⁴⁷ Foreign observers and Germans of various occupations and ranks agreed that Germany suffered from an over-production of intellectuals; the conservative

⁴³ The French legal historian Henri Klimrath contrasted French with German officials and saw "the essential difference that they are surrounded by respect and the greatest consideration. People fear them; everyone honors them." "Lettres écrites de l'Allemagne, deuxième lettre", *Nouvelle revue germanique*, XII (November, 1832), 201.

⁴⁴ Samuel Laing, *Notes of a Traveller, on the Social and Political State of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy, and other Parts of Europe, during the Present Century*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1846), p. 94; cf. William Howitt, *German Experiences: Addressed to the English; Both Stayers at Home, and Goers Abroad*, 3rd ed. (London, 1844), pp. 157-58.

⁴⁵ Karl Gutzkow, "Rückblicke auf mein Leben", *Gutzkow's Werke*, Peter Müller (ed.), 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1911), IV, 26-27.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Laube, "Erinnerungen", *Gesammelte Werke*, H. H. Houben (ed.), 50 vols. (Leipzig, 1908-1909), XL, 49.

⁴⁷ Johannes Conrad, *The German Universities for the Last Fifty Years* (Glasgow, 1885), pp. 19-24; Karl Venturini, *Chronik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, v. 1-22: 1801-1825; Neue folge, v. 1-10: 1826-1835, 32 vols. (Altona, 1805-1837), XIX (1822), 239-40; II (1827), 326-27, 359-60, 409. Also Ignaz Rudhard, *Ueber den Zustand des Königreichs Baiern nach amtlichen Quellen*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1825-1827), I, 104, 111, 221.

novelist and sociologist Wilhelm Riehl asserted that the intellectual proletariat constituted a permanent problem in German society: "Germany produces a greater intellectual product than it can use and support."⁴⁸

This abundance, or surplus, of intellectually trained men, would help to explain why the literary field was as crowded in Germany as it undoubtedly was; literature offered the poor university graduate the best of both worlds, the prestige of an intellectual profession without the expensive preparation for one of the established professions. Foreign observers seldom failed to be impressed by the number of books published in Germany.⁴⁹ In the period 1820-1840 the production of books in the country rose about 150%, with a similar increase in the number of booksellers, an increase proportionally greater than the rise in population during the same years.⁵⁰ "If authorship goes on in a similarly progressive ratio to that which it has lately done", speculated the English writer John Strang in the 'thirties, in what can be taken as partial seriousness, "it may be safely assumed, that in a few years the names of German authors will exceed the number of living German readers."⁵¹

The economics of German publishing made it easy to get into print. Prevailing market practices made it possible for German publishers to avoid risk. Publishers paid low prices for manuscripts, used cheap materials, and could publish without much discrimination because the lending libraries offered a safe outlet and because there was little respected literary criticism to be feared. The absence of a German copyright law before 1837 made pirating easy, and in addition an immense number of very cheaply prepared translations were issued.

German writers were poor not because it was difficult to publish but because it was too easy; Gutzkow noted that many of the small journals would accept anything provided that they did not have to pay for it.⁵² An 1846 article in the *Revue des deux mondes* described the 'litterat', the type figure of Leipzig, center of the German book trade. The literat made translations, corrections, annotations, and was badly paid for them all. He was ordinarily the child of a village schoolmaster, sent without money to a university, and driven by misery to attempt to support himself by writing. Sometimes he earned the doctor's title, sometimes he simply appropriated it. He was always in the front of radical social movements.⁵³ In short, he was the product of

⁴⁸ W. H. Riehl, *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1851), p. 300.

⁴⁹ André Monchoux, *L'Allemagne devant les lettres françaises de 1814 à 1835* (Paris, 1953); Heinrich Schneider, *Deutsche Art und Sitte im Spiegel französischer Reisebeschreibungen aus den Jahren 1830-1870* (Cologne, 1929).

⁵⁰ Johann Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1909-1913), IV, 199-219.

⁵¹ John Strang, *Germany in MDCCCXXXI*, 2 vols. (London, 1836), II, 41.

⁵² Karl Gutzkow, "Hitzig über die Existenz der Schriftsteller", *Vermischte Schriften*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1842-1850), II, 21-35. Written about 1838.

⁵³ "L'Allemagne du présent. Lettres au prince de Metternich", *Revue des deux mondes*, nouvelle série, XIV (1 May 1846), 397-99.

what Laube called Germany's "universal literary conscription".⁵⁴ Established writers were not in a much better position, and Germans were always amazed by the prosperity of successful French writers. "A poor German scholar", wrote Ludwig Börne, "turns yellow with vexation and envy when he sees how good life is for French men of letters."⁵⁵

Thus limited career opportunities combined with a relatively large number of educated men resulted in too many poorly paid writers supplying indifferent publications. Yet these factors in themselves do not seem sufficient to explain the low level of the newspaper press. Political disunity, as already indicated, certainly stood in the way of improvement. Above all the blame would seem to rest, as contemporaries judged, on the system of censorship common to the German states. William Howitt described the newspaper press to his fellow Englishmen:

The newspapers present a conglomeration of dry facts, relating generally far more to other nations than their own. . . . All those great questions which involve the political progress and development of a people form no part of their topics, these are reserved for the sole consideration and management of the government. . . . For over all the heads of such journals hangs the iron pen of the censor, and fills every writer with terror.⁵⁶

The question of press regulation brought into focus, as it did in France, the problem of political sovereignty. In Germany the prevailing political system was absolutism, and between absolutism and censorship there is an evident connection. If subjects have no natural right to participate in political affairs then public opinion can have no authority over government, and government consults the public, if at all, at its own convenience. What can be printed becomes a matter solely of government's decision as to what discussion is useful or harmful. The previously quoted critic in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* summed up the matter neatly: "The political journal, which is in England but ancillary, and in France the parent of a political party, may be regarded in Germany as one of the *regalia* of the crown. The preparation, manufacture, and sale of political intelligence, are as much a royal monopoly in Germany as those of tobacco in France. . . ." ⁵⁷

The logic of censorship was irrefutable if absolute government was accepted as legitimate, but in post-1815 Germany such acceptance was no longer complete. The example of revolutionary France, the impact of the late wars, and the real if slow growth in economic life, had led to a new spirit among the growing middle class. Monarchs and nobility were uneasy and defensive. In South Germany moderate constitutions were granted, and even in Prussia the king did not repudiate, although he did ignore, his war-time promise of self-

⁵⁴ H. Laube, "Erinnerungen", *Gesammelte Werke*, XL, 129-30.

⁵⁵ Ludwig Börne, "Briefe aus Paris", 5 November 1830, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8 vols. (Leipzig, 1899), V, 47. And see Theodor Mundt's reaction to meeting Jules Janin, "Tagebuch aus Paris", *Spaziergänge und Weltfahrten*, 3 vols. (Altona, 1838), I, 336.

⁵⁶ W. Howitt, *German Experiences*, pp. 131-32.

⁵⁷ *Foreign Quarterly Review*, XXXIII (No. 66, 1844), 373-74.

government. German society was in a condition of equilibrium, with power so distributed that no one social group was strong enough to have its way completely, and each group retained some freedom of action as against the others. Rulers became increasingly hesitant to insist on their full power and to demand complete control of the press. To decide in principle, however, on the permissible limits of public discussion proved next to impossible, and in practice the question of what could or could not be said in the press was left to be settled according to what expediency and the relative strength of journalists and government dictated. Censorship lacked guiding principles, with the result that any limit set up by government seemed arbitrary and any advantage taken by newsmen seemed revolutionary.

Journalists put themselves forward as the spokesmen of public opinion, and claimed to represent the different interests within society that should be taken into account by governments.⁵⁸ Thus they appeared to be something on the order of officials elected by the people to state popular wants to government; the radical Johann Wirth thought that journalists should actually be elected and paid by the people.⁵⁹ Governments, however, believed that the journalists manufactured public opinion rather than expressed it. In their eyes journalists were primarily subversive political figures, a handful of unprincipled men who stirred up social unrest for base motives of economic gain and personal advancement. Thus Metternich in 1819 could state that "All the German Governments have arrived at the conviction that . . . the press serves a party antagonistic to all existing governments."⁶⁰ It is such attitudes that are reflected in the special style of official pronouncements: the press "brings about unspeakable evil, by denigrating all authority, questioning all principles, attempting to reconstitute all truths . . .";⁶¹ "these papers serve as organs of a party that works undisturbedly for the overthrow of all that exists in Germany . . . the activity of these papers cannot be better indicated than by the name of open conspiracy . . .";⁶² "the daily increasing mischief of the press. . ."⁶³

This attitude of the governments involved a certain paradox, for the jour-

⁵⁸ O. Groth, *Geschichte der deutschen Zeitungswissenschaft*, pp. 106-07; Karl Gutzkow, "Säkularbilder", *Gesammelte Werke*, 13 vols. (Frankfurt a.M., 1845-1852), X, 292-306. "Säkularbilder" first published 1837.

⁵⁹ G. H. Schneider, *Der Press- und Vaterlandsverein 1832/33* (Berlin, 1897), pp. 22-23. L. Börne, "Briefe aus Paris", *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 102, expressed warm approval of Wirth's proposal. O. Groth, *Geschichte der deutschen Zeitungswissenschaft*, pp. 114-16 notes that there was discussion of this problem; Josef Görres was one to suggest that newspaper men be elected by the people.

⁶⁰ Prince Metternich, *Memoirs*, Prince Richard Metternich (ed.), 5 vols. (New York, 1880-1882), III, 289.

⁶¹ Freiherr von Münch-Bellinghausen, representing Austria, *Protokolle der Deutschen Bundesversammlung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1817-1866), 16 August 1824. [Future references to *PDB*.]

⁶² Freiherr von Blittersdorff, representing Baden, *PDB*, 2 March 1832.

⁶³ Freiherr von Lerchenfeld, representing Bavaria, *PDB*, 20 February 1832.

nalists were feared as dangerous revolutionaries but at the same time despised as second-rate writers who represented no one. The Baden liberal Ludwig Häusser attributed the failure to create effective pro-government newspapers directly to the governments' unwillingness to take the press seriously. Governments hired journalists to defend their policies but then treated these men without respect or consideration, as if they were mere hack writers, and the natural consequence was that the official press was usually so dull and unintelligent as to be unreadable. Likewise governments refused to meet seriously the arguments used by opposition journalists, dismissing them as the ravings of Jacobins or subversives.⁶⁴

The governments' fear is perhaps more understandable if it is remembered that formally constituted political parties were not permitted within the German Confederation and that journalism seemed to offer a means by which parties could be created. Newspapers could not be instruments of party in the same way as in France, but they could prepare for party life and serve as a substitute. In Germany the political press did in fact precede political association. The situation and some of its implications were analyzed by Marx:

See, they say, what firm, lasting, defined policies *English* and *French* newspapers have. They are based on actual life, they give the appearance of an *existing formed* power, they do not indoctrinate the people but themselves are the real doctrines of the people and its parties. You [the German newspapers], however, do not express the thoughts, the interests of the people, you first *create* them or rather you impute them to the people. You create party spirit. You are not its *creations*. Thus it is made a matter of reproach to the press first that *no* political parties exist, then that it tries to *correct* this deficiency and to create political parties. But this is obvious. Where the press is *young* the popular intelligence is *young*, and the political thinking of an awakening popular intelligence as expressed *day-by-day* will be less finished, less formed, more precipitate than that of a popular intelligence that has grown great and strong and self-conscious in political battles.⁶⁵

It is accordingly clear why governments clung to censorship, and equally why censorship became a prime target of the liberals. The writer Gustav Freytag later wrote that no feature of the old regime was more frequently denounced than the censorship, and that the sharpest attacks did not express the true degree of bitterness felt.⁶⁶ In practice liberals did their best to make the censor's life difficult.⁶⁷ His position was almost impossible to fill to everyone's

⁶⁴ Häusser's article on the press in Baden originally published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in April 1847 is reprinted in Leonhard Müller, *Die politische Sturm- und Drangperiode Badens, 1840-1850*, 2 vols. (Karlsruhe, 1905-1906), I, 127-34.

⁶⁵ Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, D. Rjazanov (ed.) (Frankfurt a.M., 1927-), Erster Abtheilung, I, Erster Halbband, 337. From the *Rheinische Zeitung*, 1 January 1843.

⁶⁶ Gustav Freytag, *Karl Mathy: Geschichte seines Lebens*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1872), p. 69.

⁶⁷ Friedrich Bassermann, *Denkwürdigkeiten, 1811-1855* (Frankfurt a.M., 1926), p. 35. An interesting special study is Karl Kruchen, "Die Zensur und deren praktische Anwendung bei rheinische Zeitungen in der vormärzlichen Zeit 1814-1848", *Düsseldorfer Jahrbuch*, XXXIV (1928), 1-136.

satisfaction, and no one, as a rule, wanted the job. The governments could not afford a large enough staff at adequate pay, so often the duties of censor were added as an extra burden to an already fully-occupied official, with predictable results – he either neglected his duties as censor or was badly overworked. Censors were always insecure, particularly those in subordinate positions, since they could never be perfectly sure what could or could not be allowed. Theodor Mundt, when being prosecuted by the Prussian Government as a member of the literary group Young Germany, was relieved to learn that a special censorship for the group was being established; he wrote to his friend Gustav Kühne that “higher officials are entrusted with it, from whose anxiety one suffers less than when one deals with the regular censors who are themselves under strong control.”⁶⁸ Karl Varnhagen von Ense noted disapprovingly that the Prussian censors cared very little about conscientiously excluding unfit material and were careful only with publications they thought the king might see.⁶⁹

Discussion of censorship gave liberals the opportunity to present their political program. The arguments for press freedom usually started from the premise that man has the right to express his thought, that the exercise of this right is necessary if man is to attain his full human stature, and that denial of the right is accordingly immoral. Argument then moved to the political sphere. In the South German assemblies speakers claimed press freedom as a necessity of constitutional government.

Active participation in public affairs is the foundation of a representative constitution. But without a certain degree of free communication of thought such participation is not possible. . . . Therefore it has long been recognized by all enlightened and thinking men that without freedom of the press every representative constitution is only a shadow without body which the first breath blows away.⁷⁰

Speakers pointed out that the German people lacked experience in self-government, hence needed the education in constitutional life that a free press could provide; without the press the people could not understand what their representatives were doing. Karl von Rotteck claimed freedom of the press as the foundation of all other freedoms, and quoted Sheridan, “‘Better no Parliament than no freedom of the press!’” Rotteck went on:

It [the press] guarantees the nation a parliament always in session, in its larger part incorruptible, always sincere. It assures certain victory for truth and justice, without force, solely through the divine judgement of unfettered public opinion, through the directing authority of human reason.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Edgar Pierson, *Gustav Kühne, sein Lebensbild und Briefwechsel mit Zeitgenossen* (Dresden, 1890), p. 34.

⁶⁹ K. A. Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1863), I, 58-59.

⁷⁰ Freiherr von Liebenstein, *Verhandlungen der Ständeversammlung des Grossherzogtums Baden*, Second Chamber, 28 August 1820. [Future references to *VSB*.]

⁷¹ *VSB*, First Chamber, 12 July 1820.

It was argued that a free press was also important for governments. Without it governments could not learn the true state of public opinion and so risked ruling against the wishes of the people. By forbidding discussion governments simply discredited themselves, because their subjects believed that the prohibition stemmed from fear, and they sacrificed efficiency and reputation when they failed to check subordinate officials whose wrongdoing could have been exposed through the press.

Liberals insisted that impartial censorship was an impossibility, if only because the members of modern society did not share a set of common values. The censor did not represent right as against wrong or truth as against error, but merely his own or his government's opinion. Thus by its very nature censorship had to be arbitrary. To the argument that only censorship prevented the dissemination of lies, slander, and immorality, liberals replied that the solution lay in giving the newspaper press more rather than less freedom, so that responsible writers could refute unworthy colleagues. The press would provide its own best corrective ". . . the true and indispensable political court of censorship today consists solely in complete legal publicity and in complete legal freedom for the public opinion of the Fatherland. . . ." ⁷²

In their advice to their governments the liberals managed a rather fine balance between reassurance and threat. On the one hand they benignly assured the rulers that revolution would not result from the grant of press freedom since German subjects were peaceable and devoted to their princes; the grant of press freedom would only confirm their devotion. On the other hand there were more ominous references to the wisdom of forestalling revolution by timely concession. The people, it was said, revolted when they were forced to stifle their criticism, not when they were free to express it.

Governments were urged to submit to the inevitable. "What is ripe in the life of the people happens, however much a shortsighted policy may strive against it." Freedom of the press, said Adam von Itzstein in the Baden assembly, had become a magic word to the people, and it would avail misguided princes nothing to try to withhold it. "A spring, gentlemen, can be stopped up, but it breaks out again on all sides with more destructive force." ⁷³ The liberals rightly sensed that governments were on the defensive. Rotteck pointed out that the governments conceded the virtues of a free press in the preambles of the very laws issued to restrain it.⁷⁴ The political climate had changed: "No king, no prince of the present day would permit himself the observation, I am the state." ⁷⁵

⁷² Karl Welcker, "Censur als Sittengericht", *Das Staats-Lexikon*, Karl Welcker and Carl von Rotteck (eds.) (Altona, 1848), III, 113.

⁷³ *VSB*, Second Chamber, 27 June 1831.

⁷⁴ *VSB*, First Chamber, 12 July 1820.

⁷⁵ Committee report on three motions regarding freedom of the press, made by Representative Hallwachs, *Verhandlungen der Landstände des Grossherzogthums Hessens*, Second Chamber, Beilagen, II, 461.

On pragmatic grounds opponents argued that censorship was ineffective, or did more harm than good. The foreign press was not and probably could not be kept out of Germany, so Germans could read all that could not be printed at home, and worse. Moreover people believed nothing they read in the censored press, particularly praise of the government, so governments got no credit even when deserved. In reaction to the official press readers sought out another kind of newspaper, exciting and vulgar; German speakers sometimes distinguished between the "schlechte" press and the ordinary press, somewhat as Englishmen of the time talked of the "respectable" and the "un-stamped" press. Liberals pointed out that German writers frequently had only the choice between displaying servility in the government press and catering to vulgarity in the sensationalist press, so that self-respecting men often avoided journalism altogether.⁷⁶ Karl Welcker, denouncing the irresponsible journalists, commented that this was the "essential misfortune of censorship, that only that kind of people make themselves heard in the newspaper, while a really honorable man seldom undertakes the important business of speaking to his people."⁷⁷ By leaving the newspaper field to the worst representatives of journalism the evils that censorship was designed to reduce were actually increased; governments "thus encouraged the darkness in which they [revolt, tumult, conspiracy] ripen to destructive outbreak".⁷⁸ Meanwhile governments, knowing what reserves of irresponsibility and even criminality had accumulated in certain circles, became increasingly committed to censorship because they dreaded the excesses that might follow its suspension.⁷⁹

Censorship was also intimately connected with the question of German unity. Speakers usually placed the main blame for harsh press regulations on the German Confederation rather than the state governments. It was felt that the Confederation had taken the lead in repression, and that individual state governments had either had reluctantly to comply, or had been able to defend their repressive policies by pleading the necessity of submission to the Confederation. Accordingly much of the criticism of censorship regulations attempted to prove that the Confederation had exceeded its legal competence. This line of attack led straight to the central problem of German unification, and many speakers who argued for a free press did so on the grounds that only a free expression of opinion could bring about the moral and intellectual unity of the German people.⁸⁰ Nationalist sentiment expressed itself also in resentment

⁷⁶ Karl Biedermann, *Mein Leben und ein Stück Zeitgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Breslau, 1886), I, 121-28; F. Bassermann, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 208; Program of the *Deutsche Zeitung* as given in L. Müller, *Sturm- und Drangperiode Badens*, I, 179; *Deutscher Liberalismus im Vormärz: Heinrich von Gagern Briefe und Reden 1815-1848*, Paul Wentzcke and Wolfgang Klötzer (eds.) (Göttingen, 1959), p. 353.

⁷⁷ *VSB*, Second Chamber, 24 March 1831.

⁷⁸ Committee report of Representative Hallwachs, *Verhandlungen der Landstände des Grossherzogthums Hessens*, Second Chamber, Beilagen, II, 465.

⁷⁹ Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, I, 272.

⁸⁰ E.g. Emilie Uhland, *Ludwig Uhlands Leben* (Stuttgart, 1874), pp. 244-47.

over the humiliating contrast between the treatment of the press in Germany and elsewhere: "The Germans feel the shame of being the only one among the educated peoples of Europe who lacks freedom of the press."⁸¹

Was the typical journalist the committed fighter for freedom pictured by liberals and feared by governments? In actuality many journalists wrote indifferently for whatever side paid best. Many, however, were principled liberals, and certainly the journalist himself stood to gain from a freer, more open society. He came as a rule from a relatively poor family and had probably made sacrifices to attend a university.⁸² He had prepared himself for one of the professions or for state service, and sometimes had practised his profession or worked for a government before turning to journalism.⁸³ In many cases he would have found his progress blocked because of his poverty, or because the good positions were monopolized by the wealthy, or because he resented the reactionary governments and in turn was distrusted by them; the state, fearful of liberalism in the universities, at times expelled the students it suspected, and such expelled students were natural recruits for opposition journalism.⁸⁴ For this kind of frustrated intellectual journalism offered a career of sorts, probably in many cases intended to be only temporary. At best it was not a career that brought great rewards in German society. Given the restricted sale of newspapers and the conditions of publishing, the journalist could not earn very much money and his social status was low.⁸⁵ Learning

⁸¹ Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, IV, 197-98. Also F. Bassermann, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 33.

⁸² In regard to the extent of university attendance, the reader of L. Salomon, *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesen*, III, cannot but note the high percentage of editors with the title of Dr. or Professor. Though one must bear in mind H. Laube's remark, "Erinnerungen", *Gesammelte Werke*, XL, 243: "... in Leipzig, every writer was called Doctor. . . ."

⁸³ The editors listed by L. Salomon, *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesen*, III, in almost all cases were originally professors, civil servants, pastors, lawyers, librarians, or military officers. The same picture is given by studies more restricted in scope: e.g. Werner Hanspach, *Die periodische Presse der Stadt Dresden in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Dresden, 1939); E. D. Witzleben, *Geschichte der Leipziger Zeitung* (Leipzig, 1860). Kurt Brunöhler, *Die Redakteure der mittleren und grösseren Zeitungen im heutigen Reichsgebiet von 1800 bis 1848* (Leipzig, 1933), on the basis of a study of ninety editors, concludes that editing was increasingly becoming a full-time occupation, that the greater number of editors came from the middle class, mainly from families of teachers and pastors, and that most had a university education. It must be born in mind, of course, that those journalists who did not rise to the rank of editor were probably in most cases from less educated and socially respectable backgrounds, but it seems safe to claim, in view of the nature of the profession and the structure of German society, that the great majority must have come from the lower middle class at least, and enjoyed a decent education.

⁸⁴ K. Gutzkow, "Vergangenheit und Gegenwart", *Gutzkow's Werke*, III, 165-66.

⁸⁵ L. Salomon, *Geschichte des deutschen Zeitungswesen*, III, 334, suggests that an idea of the public evaluation of the journalist can be gathered from a Prussian ordinance of 1848 that placed newspaper correspondents in the same category as those who rented out furnished rooms as a means of livelihood. Writing in the 1850's, the moderate liberal August Lammers described the press as in universal disrepute before 1848:

in itself did not provide direct entry into higher social circles; the German nobility had never cultivated artists and men of learning as had the French.⁸⁶ There is then nothing surprising in finding that the image of the journalist was so often associated with liberalism.

Insofar as the journalist played a political role it had to be, in Germany's political conditions, that of a teacher rather than a political leader. The point becomes clear through comparison with France. Börne in 1830 noted that Thiers, who had come to Paris as an unknown and who was barely thirty years old, had just been appointed Under Secretary of Finance, and he commented, "It is just as if Heine or Menzel or I had become a minister. And what are we?"⁸⁷ In the absence of representative institutions and free party life the German journalist had nothing like the political power of the French. Nevertheless he could play a political role, that of liberal theorist and prophet of the middle class.

The respect in which the German journalist most resembled his French counterpart was in the imprecise definition of his occupation. Journalism seems to have been a refuge more often than a choice. Towards the end of the century the liberal Karl Biedermann wrote of this earlier period:

The proverbial description of the writer for the daily press as a "man who had failed" was far truer then than today. Preparation for the profession of journalism by deliberately adopting an appropriate plan of study . . . which is increasingly the rule today, was very rare at that time. A certain widespread desire "to have one's say" seemed sufficient to enter upon the career of publicist.⁸⁸

Writers of the press frequently moved from journalism to another occupation and back again, or attempted to combine journalism with creative writing or scholarship. The representative figure of the eighteenth-century newspaper had been the reporter who passes along facts without comment, and the typical figure of the second half of the nineteenth century was to be the powerful editor of the great daily. The journalist of our period was typically the *Schriftsteller*, the man of letters, at once artist, professor, and political thinker.

"Today at least no one would any longer assume or say that he was too good to write for the newspapers. . . . The world has ceased to regard the writer for the daily press as a man who has learned nothing better. The press is no longer the last refuge open to those whose careers have been destroyed." "Zeitungswesen", *Deutsches Staats-Wörterbuch*, J. C. Bluntschli (ed.) (Stuttgart, 1857), XI, 290-91.

⁸⁶ William Jacob, *A View of the Agriculture, Manufactures, Statistics, and State of Society of Germany, and Parts of Holland and France* (London, 1820), p. 231; Henry Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany, in the Years 1825 and 1826* (New York, 1829), p. 63; Orié Long, *Literary Pioneers: Early American Explorers of European Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), pp. 122-23.

⁸⁷ L. Börne, "Briefe aus Paris", *Gesammelte Schriften*, V, 46.

⁸⁸ K. Biedermann, *Mein Leben*, I, 126.

ENGLAND

English journalism in this period came close to attaining full development as a profession. By mid-century it was a socially respectable, full-time occupation, distinct from other occupations, and with its own code of professional ethics. This development came with the growth of what was commonly designated the "respectable" press, the great daily newspapers typified by *The Times*. The "respectable" press was itself a product of English industrialization. The new middle class formed a wide literate public that wanted both political and economic news, so that for the first time it became possible for a daily newspaper to attract enough readers and enough advertisers to be self-supporting, without reliance on either political subsidies or unworthy methods of journalism.

This commercialization made it possible for the journalistic profession to mature. The wealth of the press was the chief factor. The great papers, led by *The Times*, began to pay high salaries so that better men were attracted to the field, and the reporter could live on a social level not too out of line with that of the established professions. The wealth of the press also made possible improvement in professional ethics; when the financial rewards of honest reporting were so high, blackmailing individuals and selling one's convictions to politicians seemed unnecessary. The idea became established that the primary function of a newspaper was to report the news accurately and not to slant it for political purposes; *The Times* from 1803 on refused political subsidies.⁸⁹ In addition, writing for the press became increasingly a full-time occupation rather than accessory to another or a step on the way to something better. The journalist could now be more readily distinguished from the printer, the law student, and the professional man of letters. It took some time, certainly, before reputable men were willing to associate themselves openly with journalism. Even the first great editor of *The Times*, Thomas Barnes, a university graduate and one of more than average culture, met with considerable social discrimination, and a man like Thackeray for years thought it necessary to use a pseudonym for his writings in the press. Similar cases could be multiplied. By mid-century, however, journalism had in general attained a measure of respectability.

It was important that the development of industry in England made it easier than elsewhere to separate journalism from politics. A commercialized press made it possible and profitable for the journalist to devote himself permanently to his job without being tempted to use it as a means to political office. Moreover the general abundance of career opportunities in business and the professions diverted men from preoccupation with political office, and thus militated against repetition of the French pattern of revolutionary politics. The contrast was remarked by the French historian Élie Halévy who,

⁸⁹ *The Times*, London, *The History of The Times*, 4 vols. (London, 1935-1952), I, 122.

writing of England after the passage of the 1832 Reform Bill, observed that there was nothing "of that fury with which in France the classes new to power stormed the citadel of government and when once installed in power disputed among themselves the precarious tenure of office."⁹⁰

The character of English politics, moreover, precluded the journalists' assumption of a political role comparable to that of the German or French writer. The English journalist, operating within long-established institutions of representative government, could certainly not be a type of political prophet, as the German journalist tended to be. The French model was also unlikely because of the greater stability of English political life, which rested on consensus as to what constituted legitimate government, and on agreement as to the way in which power was to be transferred from ministers who had lost public confidence to an alternative group of leaders. In the absence of a fully-developed party structure the system was imperfect, but it worked well enough so that the French kind of revolutionary politics, in which the press took so large a part, could be avoided.

There was, however, a newspaper press in England that must be recognized as essentially political. This was the "unstamped" press, quite distinct from the "respectable" press, and with an even larger circulation.⁹¹ Written by and for the lower classes, it expressed the discontent of a large, wretched laboring class suffering the full impact of rapid industrialization; this press was described by a knowledgeable French observer as "nothing more than a weapon of war".⁹² It did not have the same function as the political press in France, since there political conflict was largely confined to one class, nor was it equivalent to the kind of thing seen in eighteenth-century England when elements of the governing class intermittently used the press to win support from the lower orders. Rather the radical press spoke for the emerging proletariat, the laborers who were becoming conscious of themselves as a group with common economic interests and were attempting to organize as a class. The press assumed particular importance for the working class, since there were heavy restrictions on labor's right to organize, violence was self-defeating, and periodical publications offered practically the only means of protest and organization. Hence freedom of the press became one of labor's chief demands. Faced by oppressive libel laws and taxes designed to keep up the price of newspapers, the lower class defined freedom of the press quite differently from writers for the "respectable" press. For men like Barnes it meant chiefly economic independence and freedom from political subsidy.

⁹⁰ Élie Halévy, *The Triumph of Reform, 1830-1841* (London, 1950), p. 265.

⁹¹ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1964), pp. 718-19. See also W. H. Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press, 1819-1832* (London, 1928).

⁹² Léon Faucher, "La presse en Angleterre", *Revue des deux mondes*, quatrième série, VII, (1 September 1836), 695.

For the workers, freedom of the press came to mean immunity from prosecution for criticizing the government, and freedom from taxes that made newspapers too expensive for the laborer to buy.

In the circumstances it was natural that leadership of the working class fell very largely to the journalists. Frequently they combined a number of callings; a man like William Cobbett, for example, was not permitted to be only a journalist, but was forced by events to be a political leader and organizer as well.⁹³ Comparison can perhaps be made with German journalists of the same period, but the Germans were not revolutionaries; they wanted to liberalize society and government so that they might benefit from the resulting freedom to advance themselves in the world. English journalists of the working-class press stemmed mainly from the class of artisans and skilled laborers, and they were in the main a group seriously committed to the cause of the workers and involved in the struggle in the most direct way.⁹⁴

The radical press owed its existence to the conditions of early industrialization; eventually it declined as industry developed, and many of the evils prevalent in the first part of the century proved to be transient rather than permanent features of the capitalist system. Earlier workers had responded with incomprehension, violence, and bitter attacks on the social order in their press. To the governing class the working-class journalists had seemed the most desperate revolutionaries; as German governments thought any questioning of their political monopoly a threat to civilization itself, so the wealthy in England tended to regard criticism of their traditional social privileges as no less than criminal subversion of religion and morality. As the century progressed the laborers adjusted to the new conditions and began to develop peaceful means to win reforms, and this change was reflected in their press. Accordingly the governing class, reassured as well by having held the line at moderate suffrage reform in 1832, grew less alarmed at working-class agitation. After 1832 there was a growing conviction, particularly among the Radicals, that the working class needed to be educated politically, and the stamp tax came to be opposed as a "tax on knowledge". Working-class and Radical agitation led to a reduction in the stamp tax, and the "unstamped" press proved to have been only a temporary feature of working-class politics.

The profession of journalist by mid-century, then, was in general characterized by respectability. What it lacked was prestige. One reason for this was that in the process of freeing themselves from direct reliance on political subsidy the great dailies had become dependent upon the public; it was obvious that, with sales and advertising crucial, no newspaper could long sustain a position that led to loss of readers. This aspect of the press led to serious criticism by the Radicals; they saw that newspapers were too com-

⁹³ E. P. Thompson, *English Working Class*, pp. 623, 674, 757-58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 745.

mercialized to fulfill the function of educating the mass of the people.⁹⁵

Against this background judgments like that of John Stuart Mill become understandable:

You know in how low a state the newspaper press of this country is. In France the best thinkers & writers of the nation, write in the journals & direct public opinion: but our daily & weekly writers are the lowest hacks of literature, which when it is a trade, is the vilest & most degrading of all trades, because more of affectation & hypocrisy, & more subservience to the baser feelings of others, are necessary for carrying it on, than for any other trade, from that of a brothelkeeper upwards. . . .⁹⁶

In France the newspapers, for all their venality, long remained the forum for a political discussion pitched at a comparatively high level, often written by men of intellectual distinction who knew themselves to be addressing a small, educated public. Thus the French journalist retained a kind of eminence and importance denied his English counterpart. The price of this eminence was incomplete professionalization; the French journalist was politician and artist as well as a writer for the daily press. In England journalists in the main continued to have only an indirect relationship to government. The support of *The Times* was important for any ministry, as Barnes had good cause to know from the attentions paid him by major political figures. *The Times* nonetheless was a commercial paper dependent on sales and consequently very limited in the extent to which it could hope to form rather than reflect opinion; there seems no reason to doubt Barnes' sincerity when he wrote of *The Times'* opposition to the Poor Law of 1834: "Having never myself been impressed with the idea of that enormous power of the Times to which you refer I never for a moment supposed that we could prevent a measure from being carried which Parliament had thru a thousand channels been prepared to support."⁹⁷ While safe seats in Parliament were sometimes given to deserving newspaper supporters,⁹⁸ the press never became a stepping-off place for a political career to the same extent as in France. Barnes himself never entered politics in a formal way, and he strongly disapproved of journalists who did.⁹⁹

This limitation of political activity and influence on the part of English journalists, partly self-assumed and partly imposed by society, had as its effect the isolation of newspaper men from the social circles where important political decisions were made. Edward Bulwer Lytton wrote that the journal-

⁹⁵ E.g., *Westminster Review*, XVIII (No. 35, 1833), 200-01, 206; XXXVII (No. 2, 1842), 416.

⁹⁶ J. S. Mill, "The Early Letters of John Stuart Mill 1812-1848", Francis E. Mineka (ed.), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, v. 2, 3, 12, 13 (Toronto, 1963-), XII, 38-39.

⁹⁷ Quoted in a letter to Denis Le Marchant, Lord Brougham's secretary, in Derek Hudson, *Thomas Barnes of 'The Times'* (Cambridge, England, 1943), p. 72.

⁹⁸ *History of The Times*, I, 228.

⁹⁹ D. Hudson, *Thomas Barnes*, p. 62.

ists were "a peculiar and separate body . . .".

They live more separated from sympathy with aristocratic influences than any other class: belonging, chiefly, to the middle order, they do not, like the middle order in general, have any dependence on the custom and favour of the great; literary men, they are not, like authors in general, courted as lions, who, mixing familiarly with their superiors, are either softened by unmeaning courtesies, or imbibe the veneration which rank and wealth personally approached, instil into the human mind, as circumstances at present form it.¹⁰⁰

The great and esteemed profession of England was the law,¹⁰¹ and there can be little doubt that the prestige of the man of law came largely from his traditionally close link with politics. Some of the social prestige that seems always to come with the exercise of political power attached to the English lawyers, as, in quite different ways to be sure, it did to the French journalists of our period. This consideration, suggestive of the intricate connections among politics, economics, and professional growth, helps to explain why, at the very time that in France men like Girardin were trying to modify the political character of the French press by creating commercial newspapers based on sales and advertising, in England critics like Mill were judging the emergence of the commercialized press and the professional journalist as loss rather than gain.

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¹⁰⁰ Edward Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English*, 2 vols. (London, 1833), II, 43-44.

¹⁰¹ Francis Jeffrey as editor of the *Edinburgh Review* had risen as high in journalism as probably any man could, but he appeared to regard law as his real profession and complained about the amount of time he spent in editorial work, while his friend Sydney Smith commiserated with him and agreed as to the obvious superiority of legal practice in terms of money and honor. On the prestige of the great reviews see Ian Jack, *English Literature, 1815-1832* (= *Oxford History of English Literature*, 10) (Oxford, 1963), pp. 8-9. On Jeffrey see John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1815* (London, 1957), pp. 43-45.