

The French Revolution as a European Media Event

by Rolf Reichardt

The French Revolution can be considered an epochal medial event in two ways. First, it resulted from an unprecedented explosion of text, images and oral media – a democratization of political mass communication which the Revolution, in turn, accelerated. Second, it consisted of a chain of spectacular and sensational key historical events that were communicated throughout Europe by newspapers, translated graphic satires, songs and printed images.

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Media of the Revolution – Revolution of the Media

The French Revolution was the largest media event (→ Media Link #ab) since the days of the Reformation (→ Media Link #ac) – it was a revolution of spontaneous mass movements, rousing speeches and public festivals, but especially a revolution of print media. The pamphlets and newspapers, picture and song prints, posters and medallions multiplied by print were simultaneously the driving force behind, and products of, the incredible events. The alleviation of censorship and the acceptance of citizen participation in politics unleashed an unprecedented flood of political journalism which, although restricted under the Jacobin dictatorship, ultimately lasted until the coup of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) (→ Media Link #ad). Instead of comprehensive books and ornate engravings for the wealthy and educated, the printing industry was now ruled by cheap short-form writings and topical products intended for everyone. Insofar as this type of journalism appealed particularly to the general population and was disseminated in the dense communication network of the 6,000 Jacobin clubs and popular societies across the country, it contributed significantly to mobilizing supporters and opponents of the Revolution and incorporating them into an on-going public debate.¹

▲ 1

Pamphleteering

Among the more than 40,000 prints and pamphlets of the revolutionary period, a number of processes can be observed which were used by all political camps to appeal to the public. Thus the often anonymous, patriotic writers would tend to couch their polemics against the old aristocracy and express their joy over the 'good news' of the Revolution in the familiar guise of the Catholic liturgy. *Litany and Magnificat of the Third Estate*, *Confession of the Sins of Nobility*, *Gospel of Freedom*, *The Citizen's Ave and Credo*, *the Lord's Prayer of the Sans-Culottes*: These are just a few of the suggestive titles of the sometimes satirical, sometimes solemn booklets.

▲ 2

Even more overtly didactic were the political catechisms that adapted a standard form of Christian instruction for revolutionary purposes. The most notable of these, as well as the most successful popular book of the Revolution, was the

Almanach du Père Gérard by the former actor Jean-Marie Collot d'Herbois (1750–1796) (→ Media Link #ae), which was awarded a prize in competition by the Paris Jacobin Club in 1791. In a series of conversations, it narrates how the farmer Michel Gérard, the only peasant member of the National Assembly, returns to his home in Brittany to explain to his fellow villagers the benefits of the new constitution.²

▲ 3

The principle of observing the language of the people was taken quite literally, as hundreds of pamphlets placed their arguments in the mouths of well-known figures from the fun fair theatres. In scenic depictions, they made use of the coarse language of the Parisian indoor markets. Their most popular title character was the stove-fitter Père Duchesne: a straight-talking commoner, whose moustache and pipe smoking in public were as offensive to bourgeois sensibilities as his foul-mouthed "fuck-filled" curses. (→ Media Link #af) Whether he colloquially dressed down King Louis XVI (1754–1793) (→ Media Link #ag) or urged the sans-culottes to take on the fight against the Church's 'new aristocracy', he always knew how to emphasize his radical agitation with dramatic language and symbolism.³

▲ 4

The Press

Even more than by the prints, the French Revolution was sustained by the explosive growth of the press.⁴ Under the sign of the Revolution, newspapers that were once an affair of the elite suddenly developed into a mass medium – something that is taken for granted today. If the number of political bulletins in France before the Revolution could be counted on one hand, it soon mushroomed to over three hundred weekly and daily newspapers between July 1789 and 1790. They were typically "one-man newspapers", for the profitable pre-industrial conditions of production (low wages, cheap materials, simple hand presses) still predominated. These papers competed to win the favour of a dramatically growing readership with low prices. Some 1,600 different newspapers were established during the Revolution, many though for only a short time. The highest print runs over several years were achieved by radical revolutionary papers (→ Media Link #ah) like the *Révolutions de France* under Louis-Marie Prudhomme (1752–1830) (→ Media Link #ai) and the *Annales patriotiques* (10,000–12,000 copies) under Jean-Louis Carra (1743–1793) (→ Media Link #aj) and Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814) (→ Media Link #ak). The ultra-royalist *Ami du Roi* founded by the Abbé Thomas-Marie Royou (1743–1792) (→ Media Link #al), however, also had 5,700 subscribers, still twice as many as any journal in Old France. The total daily circulation of the Parisian newspapers alone amounted to 130,000 copies in 1791, reaching the 150,000 mark in 1797. About half of this production was regularly sent to the provinces, forcing the postal service to greatly expand its capacity. The social reach of the new press was considerable, especially since each individual newspaper at the time was commonly received by an average of about ten adult readers, due to collective reading which was common at the time. This meant three million readers or over ten per cent of the population, which in turn was an exceptional impetus to the democratization of political information and opinion.

▲ 5

New journalistic techniques were also incorporated in the revolutionary press, starting with the external aesthetics and mode of public presentation. The unstructured, narrowly printed text columns of the old gazettes gave way to a layout with headlines, editorials and regular categories. This is especially noticeable in the poster newspapers of the Paris *Commune*. The more radical the paper, the more eye-catching and blatant was the appearance. Hence the headlines in each edition of *Ami du Peuple* from Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) (→ Media Link #am) took up a large part of the title page for the hawkers to call them out. In France, newspapers were first sold on the street at the time of the Revolution (→ Media Link #an), as the example of the *Journal du soir* under Etienne Feillant (1768–1840) (→ Media Link #ao) confirms: 10,000 copies of the paper were printed up, delivered, and "sung" at night by 180 paperboys on the streets of Paris in 1792.

▲ 6

At the same time, the revolutionary press cultivated a populist style of writing with an emphasis on opinion-based journalism. More than one paper was named *Père Duchesne*, most prominently the paper of choice of the Parisian sans-culottes edited by Jacques-René Hébert (1757–1794) (→ Media Link #ap).⁵ (→ Media Link #aq) To address the farmers, the former Jesuit Joseph Cerutti (1738–1792) (→ Media Link #ar) founded a special "village newspaper" with his *La Feuille villageoise*. (→ Media Link #as) It was distinguished by its catchy diction and reported on the achievements of the Revolution, highlighting intimate scenes and dialogue. Published from 1790 to 1795, the paper had up to

15,000 subscribers, including many teachers and pastors, the most important cultural mediators in rural settings. Nevertheless, no newspaper of the Revolution appealed as forcefully to the "people" as the *Ami du Peuple*, headed by the former physician and underground writer Jean-Paul Marat. Marat used this platform every day to speak to the people as if he were addressing his children. He tirelessly scolded their artlessness, urged vigilance, warned of a new "aristocracy" and denounced "conspiracies" that threatened the Revolution. In presenting himself as an effective tribune of the people, Marat embodied the new ideal of the eloquent and socially committed journalist.

▲7

Picture Journalism

Great quantity, mass appeal and increased presence in public spaces – these features certainly characterize the non-written media (→ Media Link #at) of political communication. They are media of an oral culture of displaying and seeing, speaking and listening, which, although it had been suppressed by the Enlightenment, returned with the Revolution. In April 1796, German freedom pilgrim Heinrich Zschokke (1771–1848) (→ Media Link #au) was still able to report from Paris that "Büsten, Kupferstiche, Gemälde, Bibliotheken, Possenreißer, Marionettenspieler, Taschenspieler zeigen sich in allen Stadtgegenden, und haben einen größern oder kleinern Schwarm von Bewunderern und Tadlern um sich versammelt. Selbst Melodien werden verkauft, und dem Ohre der Käufer eingezeigt".⁶ The ubiquitous wall newspapers, town criers, street singers, itinerant actors and picture dealers no doubt lent the revolutionary communication a certain cheap sensationalism. (→ Media Link #av) Just the same, their methods presented an effective way to mobilize ordinary citizens who were often barely literate. By virtue of their characteristic emotionality, captivating melodies and visual presence, the political songs and graphic satires had a much stronger impact on the collective consciousness than texts and speeches.⁷

▲8

A brief survey of the revolutionary picture journalism shows that the mass-produced items were largely made by unknown artists and distributed by small printers and publishers. Their roughly coloured sheets reached printings of one to three thousand copies, and frequently this was multiplied by re-prints and pirated copies. In Paris, they were displayed to the general public at the markets, on house walls in the boulevards and under the arcades of the Palais-Royal. In contrast to the established engravers, who preferred mythological subjects and genre scenes, the new image makers used the more rapid and freer etching technique to offer immediate satirical commentary and interpret current events. They gave emblematic expression to deeply symbolic occurrences, political principles and hopes and fears by means of illustrated reports of popular uprisings, caustic imagery directed against the aristocrats, idealised pictures of patriotic unity, heroic images of the Bastille victors and sans-culottes, horrific depictions of the Jacobin dictatorship and ideograms of *Liberté*, *Égalité* and the *République*.⁸

▲9

The revolutionary caricatures were especially popular.⁹ Impressively, they knew how to politicise the familiar motifs of the iconographic tradition and combine them with original pictorial inventions in summarizing form. (→ Media Link #aw) Their most popular motifs were copied and compiled on single sheets, effectively miniature galleries for the small budget. The derision expressed in these cartoons was often provocative and, in fact, heightened class tensions. Eye witnesses report how the crowds of curious onlookers, full of sardonic pleasure, would push around the picture dealers' displays to view the latest creations: the liberated peasant who rides triumphantly on the back of his former oppressors; the "patriotic barber" who shaves the clergyman and cuts off the nobleman's pigtail; the representatives of the three estates in the unanimous "forging" of the constitution; the "patriotic arithmetician" who gruesomely works out a mental calculation with severed heads. Accordingly, the conservative journalist Jacques-Marie Boyer-Brun recognized in this satirical imagery "the thermometer of public opinion" and an effective catalyst during the Revolution for mobilizing the "rabble".¹⁰

▲10

The Revolution's Medial Transfer

As the writer Heinrich Christian Boie (1744–1806) (→ Media Link #ax) remarked in December of 1789, it seemed unnecessary to describe the revolutionary events in France "da Deutschland mit Schriften darüber bis zum Eckel überschwemmt [werde]". Nonetheless, to Boie, the resonance of the Revolution around Europe was quite striking:

Wie ein elektrischer Schlag, der von Paris ausging, wirkte sie auf alle Nationen; bis nach Dalmatien drang dieser Geist. Sogar Völker, die so abgespannt waren, dass sie alle Begriffe von Freiheit verloren zu haben schienen, die Römer, wurden begeistert, und fühlten einen Augenblick einen Drang nach einer bessern Lage. Auf kein Land wirkte sie aber stärker, als auf unser Deutschland. ... Bis in die kleinsten deutschen Dörfer drang dieser Schlag, und bei der Unzufriedenheit, mit der die meisten Menschen in der Welt leben, erregte er Neigung zur Empörung. Wenige deutsche Staaten werden gewesen sein, in denen nicht Gährungen entstanden sind.¹¹

This assessment is largely true from a media-historical perspective. To be sure, in their broader outlines, the sensational Parisian "journées révolutionnaires" were an exceptional news story everywhere. And with the revolutionary forces gaining ground, revolutionary texts, images and hymns were exported on a large scale since the autumn of 1792, and even more so between 1796 and 1799, from the Austrian Netherlands and Brabant to Switzerland and the Italian "sister republics". In the UK, meanwhile, where Edmund Burke's (1729–1797) (→ Media Link #ay) *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) (→ Media Link #az) unleashed an intense prints war¹² (→ Media Link #b0) and the French example sparked a large club movement among craftspeople, two dozen newspapers reported in 1789 on the heroism of the assailants of the Bastille and the beheading of Governor Bernard-René de Launay (1740–1789) (→ Media Link #b1).¹³ Several London theatres also brought depictions of these sensational events to the stage,¹⁴ while the London publisher William Holland (1757–1815) (→ Media Link #b2) tried to capture the historical moment through allegorical imagery. (→ Media Link #b3) However, the multi-media transfer of the latest happenings in France and the culture of the Revolution was the most immediate, dense and continuous in the territories of the Old Empire. The following sketch will therefore focus on the German-speaking countries and the exemplary members of the long chain of events that constitutes the Revolution as a "total event".

▲ 12

A Message of Freedom in the Name of the Bastille

While revolutionary politics had attracted increasing attention in Germany since the convening of the Estates-General of France, it did not, however, become an international media event until the Bastille was taken on 14 July 1789. Under the headline "Like Paris, liberty takes France by storm ... General revolution", the lead editorial of the Hamburg *Politisches Journal* announced unprecedented news:

▲ 13

Die [französische] Nation singt nicht mehr – wurde vor mehreren Monaten ... in unserem Journale bemerkt. – Am 12ten Julius fieng die Nation an zu schreyen, und auf ihr Geschrey fielen die Mauern der Bastille ein – die wohl stärker waren, als die von Jericho. Unser Zeitalter ist voller Wunder. Die religiösen haben aufgehört. Es geschehen lauter politische Wunder ... Die Tage vom 12ten bis 15ten Julius gehören zu den merkwürdigsten in der Geschichte des menschlichen Geschlechts.

To rank the shocking developments within the horizon of what might have seemed politically possible, the editor further made use of an illustrative volcano metaphor:

▲ 14

Die Explosion war schnell. Aber das Feuer hatte lange geglüht. Die Revolution zu Paris ist im Grunde von altem Datum. Besonders wurde ihr Grund vor 3 Jahren gelegt. Da fieng sie in den Köpfen an, und am 14ten Julius führten sie die Hände aus.¹⁵

Like this *Journal* under Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach (1743–1804) (→ Media Link #b4) – which had 8,000 subscribers and was the most widely read political periodical in German reading societies – almost all of the two hundred newspapers in the German-speaking world reported on the events of July (with an interval of eight to 14 days) with approval or even enthusiasm.¹⁶ Drawing from the French daily press and other foreign organs such as the *Gazette de Leyde* (→

Media Link #b5) or the *London Chronicle* as well as letters from German commercial travellers and "freedom pilgrims" in Paris,¹⁷ they formed a dense communication network by selectively quoting and copying each other. Even though the populist approach of the French revolutionary papers was absent in the German papers, the latter were no less popular among subscribers: from the *Augsburgischen Ordinari Postzeitung* (circulation: 10,000 copies) (→ *Media Link #b6*) and the *Erlanger Real-Zeitung* (18,000 copies) to the *Hamburgischen unpartheyischen Correspondenten* (circulation: 30,000 copies). Overall, week in and week out, they reached about 3 million readers through group reading and public readings.¹⁸

▲ 15

The daily press was the quickest, but not the only medium to spread the "good news" of the conquest of the Parisian "Schreckensburg" ("tower of horrors") by the rebellious people. Its effect was enhanced by an abundance of rapidly printed leaflets, mostly German translations of French pamphlets. They gave the events a dimension of historical depth, even if they often drew on older Germanized scandal reports from famous Bastille prisoners, which publicly denounced the state prison in word and image as a "despotisches Schandmal" ("despotic infamy") of the enlightened age and called for its destruction.¹⁹ (→ *Media Link #b7*) On 9 August, the enthusiastic "revolutionary tourist" and Brunswick pedagogue Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746–1818) (→ *Media Link #b8*) predicted that "the whole of Germany will soon be flooded with Bastille narratives".²⁰

▲ 16

In fact, the latest revelations from the looted archives of the Bastille in Paris aroused the general curiosity so much that the respective transmissions competed with each other on the German book market. A few examples can be mentioned here: various translations of the anonymous multi-volume "documentation" *La Bastille dévoilée* (1789–1790) were simultaneously published by the Bayreuth newspaper printing house²¹ and Donatius in Lübeck.²² German versions of the *Mémoires historiques et authentiques sur la Bastille* (1789) attributed to Jean-Louis Carra (1743–1793) (→ *Media Link #b9*) were published in Frankfurt and Leipzig by Varrentrapp & Wenner,²³ in Leipzig and Vienna by Jacobäer and Stahel²⁴ and in Heidelberg by Pfähler.²⁵ The twenty-page excerpt from *Remarques historiques sur la Bastille*, prepared by the Berlin publisher and journalist Carl Spener (1749–1827) (→ *Media Link #ba*), was already published in August 1789 under the concise title of *Die Bastille*, not only in a special supplement of the *Berlinische Nachrichten*, the *Hannover'schen Magazin* and the Kempten *Neuesten Weltbegebenheiten*, but also in two separate booklets.²⁶

▲ 17

Beyond this, the surge of Bastille journalism sparked a veritable mania for collecting among German writers such as Christian August Vulpius (1762–1827) (→ *Media Link #bb*) in Frankfurt. In October 1789, the brother-in-law of Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832) (→ *Media Link #bc*) wrote anonymously:

▲ 18

Seit zehn Wochen, sind in Frankreich und England über 60 Satiren, 6 Stück Confessions, 8 Stück Beschreibungen, 34 Erzählungen, 80 Kupferstiche, und etliche tausend Epigrammen mit und ohne Salz, bei Gelegenheit der Zerstörung der Bastille, der Flucht einiger Großen des Reichs, der Rückkehr Neckers, der allenfalls noch zu erwartenden Ereignisse, etc. etc. erschienen.²⁷

Vulpius was eager to make his collection known to the German public. Yet, as he was unable to translate the abundance of documents, he instead composed them into a loose succession of dramatic events in his *Szenen in Paris, während und nach Zerstörung der Bastille* (Scenes in Paris, during and after the Bastille's demise). The enlightened Neuwied author Ludwig Ysenburg von Buri (1747–1806) (→ *Media Link #bd*) went even further than this by working up the Bastille writings into two tragedies for the theatre.²⁸

▲ 19

As implied here, it was not sufficient for many contemporaries to simply read about the destruction of the Bastille as a media event. They also wanted to sensuously experience and re-live the occasion with like-minded people. Along with theatre performances, this social need was further met by a series of public celebrations of the first anniversary of the 14th of July in Frankfurt, Göttingen, Marburg and Leipzig. Particular excitement was aroused by the "Freiheitsfest zu Ehren der Französischen Revolution" ("Freedom Festival in Honour of the French Revolution") on the banks of the Elbe, to which the liberal merchant Georg Heinrich Sieveking (1751–1799) (→ *Media Link #be*) also invited the foreigners re-

siding in Hamburg. From distributing tricolour bands and cockades and odes recited by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) (→ Media Link #bf) to the collective singing of a composition by the host, Christoph Daniel Ebeling (1741–1817) (→ Media Link #bg) – *Kantate: Der vierzehnte Julius* after melodies from George Friedrich Händel's (1685–1759) (→ Media Link #bh) *Messiah* – and toasts to the "abolition of despotism" in Germany, all media were dedicated to strengthening patriotism following the French model.²⁹ Thus the Bastille, anchored in the collective social conscience, became an integral part of the culture of remembrance.

▲ 20

Insofar as picture journalism was able to condense what had occurred and give it iconic resonance to a transnational audience, its contribution to the sensory transmission of the media event was no less significant. As observations from those like Campe and Vulpius attest, the popular graphic satires undoubtedly found their way from France into the Old Empire through colporteurs and travellers, providing a range of models for German engravers. Their numerous representations of the Bastille³⁰ adhered to the Parisian originals as faithfully as their reproductions of complementary motifs. Two typical examples can be highlighted here:

▲ 21

One concerns a fictitious event: the liberation of the so-called Comte de Lorges, an imaginary figure representing numerous ideas. Unlike the seven prisoners freed by the victors at the Bastille on the evening of 14 July – all counterfeiters or mental patients – he embodied the ideal of the "freedom martyr". An anonymous Parisian engraving shows him as a bearded old man in a dark prison cell welcoming his liberators, who have just broken through the cell door with torches in hand. (→ Media Link #bi) An inverted, slightly enlarged copy of this fantasy image served as the frontispiece of the first revolution story of a German eyewitness. It was distributed by the Berlin publisher Friedrich Vieweg (1761–1835) (→ Media Link #bj) just in time for the Easter mass in 1790. (→ Media Link #bk) The author was Friedrich Schulz (1762–1798) (→ Media Link #bl). After Schulz had made his way from Leipzig to Paris in May 1789 to conduct some literary research, the events surrounding the storming of the Bastille took him by surprise. He described the liberation of a prisoner using the same language some French newspapers and prints employed to report on the Comte de Lorges:

▲ 22

Er streckte beide Hände nach ihnen [seinen Befreiern] aus und flehete, daß man seine Qual nur kurz machen möchte. Ein Grenadier rief ihm zu: "Fürchten Sie nichts, guter Alter, wir wollen Sie nicht umbringen, sondern retten! Ihr Henker ist tot. Sie sollen leben." Er trug ihn auf den Armen heraus. Die freie Luft machte ihn anfangs ohnmächtig, als er aber wieder zu sich selbst kam, lachte, fragte und sprach er wie ein Kind. Er war seit dreißig Jahren eingekerkert gewesen.³¹

The other example is the razing of the Bastille – a spectacle of weighty symbolism that attracted tens of thousands of onlookers for months on end and was portrayed in numerous prints, fashionable articles and medallions.³² Its depiction was particularly impressive in a colour etching published in several versions by the brothers Le Campion (→ Media Link #bm). The Augsburg image maker Johann Martin Will (1727–1806) (→ Media Link #bn), who had already marketed French media events before the Revolution, immediately put out an engraved reproduction. (→ Media Link #bo) He presented an eye-catching depiction of what the reports of the German press such as the Erlanger *Real-Zeitung* of 31 July 1789 were simultaneously portraying:

▲ 23

So strömt alles in die Strasse St. Antoine hin, um den bezaubernden Anblick der Niederreissung der so gefürchteten Bastille, darin so mancher Unschuldige das Opfer von Privatabsicht und Rachsucht wurde, zu geniessen, woran seit Morgens 3 Uhr vom 16ten 2000 Handwerksleute arbeiten, die mit ihrer Arbeit zum größten Unwillen des Publikums nicht schnell genug fertig werden können; und während daß Ludwig XVI. am einen Ende in die Stadt Paris kam, verstärkte man am andern mit 500 Mann die Zahl der Arbeiter, die dieses verhaßte Monument des Despotismus niederreißen. So oft ein Stein herunterstürzt, klopf das Volk in die Hände, und schreit aus vollem Halse: bravo, frisch dran! Macht geschwind, wir werden euch bar bezahlen; und Erfrischungen werden den Arbeitern in Menge gebracht.³³

The stone blocks being dragged around in the foreground of both pictures are a significant detail, for the revolutionary

tourists had a tendency to take Bastille stones along with them as souvenirs and, as the patriotic song writer and journalist Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart (1739–1791) (→ Media Link #bp) observed, to give them away. When he received such a "relic" from Paris, he dedicated the exuberant verses from *Auf eine Bastillentrümmer von der Kerkertüre Voltaires* (To a Piece of Bastille Remains from Voltaire's Prison Door) in his *Vaterlandschronik* to it:

▲ 24

Thank you, my friend, from the bottom of my heart
For the relic of the dreadful Bastille,
Which the free citizens' strong hands
threw crushed as debris and sand.³⁴

Between Jacobinism and "Regicide"

All of this was the beginning of an on-going medial Franco-German "revolutionary transfer", which the sovereigns' censorship measures could hinder, but not prevent. The evidence of broad cross-border communications – be they verbal, written or visual – ranges from wearing tricolour cockades during popular unrest in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine (1789/1790) to the rebellious peasants of Saxony citing the French news stories in the press (summer 1790) and the planting of liberty trees in fifty locations between Bingen and Bergzabern (1792/1793).³⁵

▲ 25

a) The communication processes underlying such social movements can be identified as having taken hold in the Republic of Mainz from 1792/1793.³⁶ Under the auspices of the French occupation overseen by General Adam-Philippe de Custine (1740–1793) (→ Media Link #bq), a rudimentary democratic culture developed here for a short period. The 500 member strong Mainz Jacobin Club not only corresponded with the "parent organisation" in Paris, but also with a dozen other clubs in the French provinces. The Jacobins of Strasbourg sent a delegation of German-speaking members to Mainz to help organize an authentic revolutionary mission. At this time, the lawyer Frederick Christopher Cotta (1758–1838) (→ Media Link #br) played an especially prominent role: his folksy summary of the *French Constitution* was systematically distributed in 9,500 copies, partly in poster, partly in booklet form. And, with his *Handwerker- und Bauernkalender des alten Vaters Gerhard* (Craftsmen and Farmers' Almanac of Old Father Gerhard), he was able to congenially transmit the successful popular writings of Collot d'Herbois, which he skilfully enriched with local Palatine colour.³⁷

▲ 26

At any rate, within a few weeks a substantial as well as intensive revolutionary journalism evolved, consisting in two-column printed posters in the German and French languages, popular teachings on the new democratic principles, anti-aristocratic pamphlets and, above all, a dedicated political press.³⁸ Just how closely this press was tied to the revolutionary media in France can be ascertained from the speeches and writings of Georg Forster (1754–1794) (→ Media Link #bs). Determined to import to Germany the new patriotic enthusiasm of the French, which he had witnessed first-hand in July of 1790 at the Champ de Mars in Paris, Forster founded a daily newspaper that clearly found inspiration in Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, the *Neue Mainzer Zeitung oder der Volksfreund*. In addition to translations of French revolutionary texts, he regularly published the latest news from the National Convention in Paris and the trial of Louis XVI, examples of patriotic sacrifice and reports on freedom movements throughout Europe.³⁹

▲ 27

As a result of its democratic culture following the French model, the Republic of Mainz became itself a media event in Germany, and indeed it was – from the perspective of the conservative majority – an example of frightful "revolutionary anarchy".⁴⁰ This was all the more true as the initial enthusiastic reception in the Old Empire of the news from Paris mainly turned to condemnation in the course of France's political radicalization. Of course, this tended to increase, rather than minimize, the "fascination of the terrible". In contrast to the absolutely vast amount of text journalism, it is easier to notice with the graphic satire how the French revolutionary media became anti-revolutionary instruments when transferred to German-speaking lands between 1792 and 1794. This tendency is even more clearly observable in the political cartoons and allegorical prints of the period than in those images merely depicting events.⁴¹

▲ 28

b) The startling news of Louis XVI's beheading on 21 January 1793 – the "bloodiest disgrace of our century"⁴² – was disseminated, for example, throughout Europe by means of numerous event etchings, most showing similar details beneath a descriptive heading. Surrounded by a military cordon and a gaping crowd, the executioner is standing next to the guillotine, staging the lightning-fast execution by holding the former king's severed head up by the hair and showing it to all the bystanders.⁴³

▲ 29

By zooming in on this gesture, the Parisian engraver Villeneuve brought the aesthetics of suddenness and horror associated with guillotining to a climax. (→ Media Link #bt) Along with the undistorted, rather regally illustrated head of the king, the naturalism of the neck wound and the blood dripping from it shocked the viewers. Since the avenging arm of the executioner was detached from its relationship to a specific individual, additional mythological and religious associations were brought to mind, such as Perseus and the head of Medusa or Salome and the head of John the Baptist. The Phrygian cap and the plumb line in the cartouche emphasize that the king was beheaded in the name of freedom and equality. The writing in the picture also plays its part: the caption warns, "A lesson to crowned imposters", and, quoted below, is the mocking final verse of the *Marseillaise* (→ Media Link #bu) "may the impure blood fertilize our furrows". The image legend also cites from a newspaper article by Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–1794) (→ Media Link #bv), who had praised the guillotining of the king as a "great act of justice" in the name of "destroying superstitious royalism".⁴⁴ The bookseller Johann Georg Bullmann (1740–1811) (→ Media Link #bw) commissioned a reproduction of this suggestive tableau with the engraver Boll in Augsburg, an influential centre of popular prints. However, the censor only authorized it for publication and sale after the cartouche had been removed and the inscriptions had been changed.⁴⁵ (→ Media Link #bx) The threatening title of the prototype was altered into a sobering statement: "Wahre Abbildung des Unschuldigen Königs Ludwig XVI, der den 21. Jänner 1793 durch die Guillotine öffentlich unter Anschauung vieler tausenten Enthauptet worden ist." ("The true image of the innocent King Louis XVI who was publicly beheaded by guillotine before many thousands of onlookers on 21 January 1793.") The image's new legend moralizingly entreats the viewer to mourn: "Mensch wen bey diesem Bild, dein Aug nicht Tränen stand, / Dan bis du härter noch, als selbst die Henkershand." ("Lo, if your eye does not tear when looking upon this image/then you have even less feeling than the hand of the executioner.") Thus, despite the same representation of the head, the new writings allowed the revolutionary shaming image to be transformed into a picture of counter-revolutionary martyrdom.

▲ 30

c) The above-mentioned examples were part of an extensive general transfer of the Revolution as a media event, specifically communicated via an enormous array of German translations of French texts. The journalist Johann Wilhelm von Archenholtz (1743–1812) (→ Media Link #by), who had moved from Berlin to Paris and, finally, to the censor-free town of Altona near Hamburg, insightfully noted:

▲ 31

Die Begierde deutscher Schriftsteller und Buchhändler, ausländische Schriften zu verdeutschen, ... ist in Hinsicht Frankreichs jetzt aufs Höchste gestiegen. Die dortigen großen immer fortdauernden Ereignisse, die in Paris auferstandene Preßfreyheit, und der Umstand, daß diese französischen litterarischen Producte nicht Bücher, sondern fast alle Broschüren und kleine Tageblätter sind, ermuntern manchen Verlagerüstigen Mann zu dieser Jagd, die er bey starken Büchern und Werken vielleicht unterlassen würde.⁴⁶

In fact, during the decade of the Revolution – the translations in the daily press not included – some 1,900 political texts on current events from France were published in German, almost half of which were small prints and graphic satires.⁴⁷ Insofar as these transfers were specifically launched by a translation office for the French government or by the Jacobin press in Alsace, they pursued primarily propagandistic aims.⁴⁸ In most cases, however, they were largely a commercial product that was guided by the audience's current main interests. To satisfy their curiosity about spectacular events like the September Massacres (1792), the siege of the Tuileries (1792) or the fall of Robespierre (1794), the magazine – such as Archenholtz' *Minerva*, (→ Media Link #bz) delivered monthly to 3,000 subscribers – was the preferred medium.

▲ 32

The Zurich physician Paul Usteri (1768–1831) was especially systematic in his approach. As an avid collector and reader of French revolutionary journalism, he planned to compile and provide translations of it for German readers in a

"Bibliothek der freien Franken" ("library of the free Franks"). In order to avoid public exposure, he set up a "translation workshop" for the Mainz writer Ludwig Ferdinand Huber (1764–1804) (→ Media Link #c0), who had fled across the border to the Swiss village of Bôle, and had the Germanized texts put into print by the Leipzig publisher Peter Philip Wolf (1761–1808) (→ Media Link #c1). They supplied the materials themselves to the volumes of *Beyträge zur Geschichte der französischen Revolution* (1795/1796), specially created for this purpose, and to the journals *Humaniora* (1796–1797), *Klio* and *Neue Klio* (1795–1798).

▲ 33

This "revolutionary library" was representative of the media at the time for three reasons. On the one hand, due to the massive size of the undertaking and its use of fifty printing locations distributed throughout German-speaking lands, the library bears witness to a broad and sustained media response to the French Revolution. Leipzig in particular towered over all other printing centres, followed by Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Strasbourg and Vienna. A prominent mediating role was also played by bookstores oriented towards France like Decker in Basel, Fontaine in Mannheim, Hoffmann in Hamburg and Dyck in Leipzig.⁴⁹ On the other hand, though, this extensive medial transmission of the French Revolution was selective and thus characteristic of the limited receptiveness on the German side, as it preferred moderate, more "liberal" texts but had little interest in radical "plebeian" revolutionary journalism. Lastly, it served as a structure-forming catalyst in that it continually politicised and accelerated the flow of news from France to Germany, (→ Media Link #c2) as the journalist Archenholtz once again aptly observed:

▲ 34

Eine von den vielen Folgen, die die französische Revolution für Deutschland gehabt hat, ist die große Menge neuentstandener politischer Schriftsteller, Blattschreiber, und Buchmacher, die aus Zeitungsblättern (sollten es auch die elendesten im südlichen Deutschlande seyn) ihre Kenntnisse schöpfen, und dann sogleich die Feder in die Hand nehmen, um ihre Urtheile über die großen Begebenheiten des Tages, der Welt mitzutheilen.⁵⁰

Rolf Reichardt, Mainz / Gießen

Appendix

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Notes

1. ^ Reichardt, *Plurimediale Kommunikation* 2008.
2. ^ Hébrard, *La Révolution* 1989; Lüsebrink / Reichardt, "Colporter la Révolution" 1996, pp. 77–80.
3. ^ Elyada, *Presse populaire* 1991.
4. ^ Gough, *The Newspaper Press* 1988; Rétat, *La Révolution* 1989; Popkin, *Revolutionary News* 1990; Chisick, *The Press* 1991.
5. ^ Vogel, *Die Pariser Père Duchesne-Zeitungen* 2001.
6. ^ "Busts, engravings, paintings, libraries, clowns, puppeteers, jugglers show up in all urban areas, and have a larger or smaller throng of admirers and critics gathered around them. Even melodies are sold and presented to the buyers' ears", transl. by C.R. (Zschokke, *Auszüge aus Briefen* 1796, p. 171).
7. ^ Lüsebrink / Reichardt, "Colporter la Révolution" 1996; Schneider, *Der Formen- und Funktionswandel* 1988; Mason, *Singing the French Revolution* 1996; Reichardt, "Macht ein solches Bild nicht einen unauslöschlichen Eindruck?" 2005.
8. ^ Herding / Reichardt, *Die Bildpublizistik* 1989.
9. ^ Reichardt / Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution* 2008, pp. 35–90.
10. ^ Boyer-Brun, *Histoire des caricatures* 1792, p. 10.
11. ^ "Germany had been inundated with enough writings about it to induce nausea [...] Like an electric shock emanating from Paris, it affected every nation, its spirit spreading all the way to Dalmatia. Even a people like the Romans, who were so jaded they seemed to have lost any notion of liberty, were excited and felt an urge for a moment to improve their lot. Nowhere was the impact felt more strongly, however, than in Germany. The shock wave hit even the smallest German villages and, as a result of the discontent most people experienced, induced a tendency to rebel. There were probably few states in Germany where no kind of unrest developed", transl. by C.R. ([Anonymus], *Ueber Voltaires Vorhersagung* 1789, pp. 636f.)
12. ^ Claeys (ed.), *Political Writings* 1995.
13. ^ Schürer, *The Storming of the Bastille* 2005.
14. ^ Taylor, *The French Revolution* 2000, pp. 42–51.
15. ^ "It was noted several months ago in our journal that the [French] nation is no longer singing. On the 12th of July, the nation began to cry out, its cries causing the walls of the Bastille, which were probably stronger than those of Jericho, to crumble. Our age is full of wonders. The religious ones have ended. Series of political miracles occur... The days from the 12th to the 15th of July belong to the most remarkable in the history of mankind. [...]The explosion was sudden. But the fire had been smouldering for many years. The revolution in Paris in fact has an old origin. Its groundwork was especially laid 3 years earlier. The revolution that started to take root in peoples' minds at that time was then set into motion on the 14th of July", transl. by C.R. (Schirach, *Wie Paris* 1789).
16. ^ Reichardt, *Bastillen in Deutschland?* 1988, pp. 422–454.
17. ^ Grosser, *Reiseziel Frankreich* 1989, pp. 183–220.
18. ^ Welke, *Gemeinsame Lektüre* 1981, p. 30.
19. ^ Reichardt, *Die Bildpublizistik zur "Bastille"* 1989, pp. 23–27.
20. ^ Campe, *Zweiter Brief aus Paris*, p. 288.
21. ^ Charpentier, *Die entlarvte Bastille* 1789–1791.

22. ^ Charpentier, Die enthüllte Bastille 1789–1791, 7. Lieferung.
23. ^ Charpentier, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bastille 1789–1790.
24. ^ [Anonymus], Merkwürdige Inquisitionsakten 1790.
25. ^ [Anonymus], Merkwürdige in dem Archive der Bastille wirklich gefundene Inquisitions-Akten 1790.
26. ^ Reichardt, Bastillen in Deutschland? 1988, p. 428.
27. ^ "In the last ten weeks, there have appeared in France and England over 60 satires, 6 confessions, 8 reports, 34 narratives, 80 engravings and several thousand epigrams with and without teeth on the occasion of the destruction of the Bastille, the escape of a few nobles from the realm, Necker's return, the events that are at least anticipated, etc. etc.", transl. by C.R. (Vulpius, Scenen in Paris 1790, Sammlung 1, p. 3).
28. ^ Buri, Die Bastille 1790; idem, Die Stimme des Volkes 1791.
29. ^ Ebeling, Kantate 1790, pp. 157–159, with music; see also Lüsebrink / Reichardt, Die Bastille 1990, p. 216f.
30. ^ Reichardt, Probleme des kulturellen Transfers 1992, pp. 118–128.
31. ^ "He stretched both of his hands to them [his liberators], and implored them to make his suffering brief. A grenadier called out to him: 'Fear nothing, good man, we do not want to kill you. We want to save you. Your executioner is dead. You shall live.' The grenadier carried him out in his arms. The open air made him faint at first, but when he came to himself again, he laughed, asked questions and spoke like a child. He had been imprisoned for thirty years", transl. by C.R. (Schulz, Geschichte der großen Revolution 1989, p. 97f. [emphasis in the original]). See Lüsebrink/Reichardt, Die Bastille 1990, pp. 122–128.
32. ^ Reichardt, L'imagerie révolutionnaire 2009, pp. 112–124.
33. ^ „Everyone thus flocked to the street St. Antoine to enjoy the enthralling sight of the destruction of the dreaded Bastille, where so many innocent people had been victimized by private vendettas and the thirst for revenge. Although 2,000 craftsmen started work at 3 o'clock in the morning on the 16th, as far as the public were concerned, they couldn't complete it fast enough. And as just Louis XVI entered Paris at one end of the city, the number of workers engaged in tearing down this odious monument of despotism was increased by 500 men. Whenever a stone falls, the people clap their hands, and cry out loud: bravo, and now another one! Work quickly, we'll pay you cash; and the workers are offered lots of refreshments", transl. by C.R. (Erlanger Real-Zeitung, July 31, 1789).]
34. ^ Cited after Schubart, Werke 1959, p. 327. Schubert first published the three-verse poem in his *Vaterlandsschronik* no. 69 from autumn 1789 and later added to the title: "die dem Verfasser von Paris geschickt wurde" ("which was sent to the author from Paris").
35. ^ Reichardt, Kokarden 2009.
36. ^ Dumont, Die Mainzer Republik 1992.
37. ^ Neugebauer-Wölk, Der Bauernkalender 1985.
38. ^ Behrens, Die Schriften der Mainzer Jakobiner 1994; Reichardt, Französische Revolutionskultur 1993; idem, "Im Namen der Frankenrepublik" 1994.
39. ^ Reichardt, Zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich 1994, pp. 235f.
40. ^ Dumont, "Singen will ich von Klubbisten" 1993.
41. ^ Schoch-Joswig, "Da flamt die gräuliche Bastille" 1989; Danelzik-Brüggemann, Ereignisse und Bilder 1996.
42. ^ Schirach, Die Ermordung 1793.
43. ^ Arasse / Rousseau-Lagarde, La Guillotine 1988; Wagner, Die Rezeption des "Königsmordes" 1997; Pelzer, Die Wiederkehr des girondistischen Helden 1998, pp. 161–170.
44. ^ Reichardt / Kohle, Visualizing the Revolution 2008, pp. 82–84.
45. ^ Rieber, Liberaler Gedanke 1969, pp. 85–87.
46. ^ "The desire of German writers and booksellers to Germanize foreign journals ... has now reached a peak with respect to France. The great, always persistent events there, the resurrected press freedoms in Paris and the fact that the French literary productions are not books, but almost completely brochures and small dailies, encourage some game publishers to take up this hunt, which they would perhaps avoid in the case of entire books and other works", transl. by C.R. (Archenholtz, Worte 1795, p. 562).
47. ^ Reichardt, "Freyemüthigkeit, doch kein Sans-Cülotismus..." 1988; Pelzer, Die Wiederkehr des girondistischen Helden 1998, pp. 141–161 and 327–486.
48. ^ Schlieben-Lange, Das Übersetzungsbüro Dugas 1979; Lachenicht, Information und Propaganda 2004.
49. ^ Reichardt, "Freyemüthigkeit, doch kein Sans-Cülotismus..." 1988; Nohr, Von Amberg bis Zweibrücken 1997, p. 366.
50. ^ "One of the many consequences that the French Revolution has had in Germany is the large amount of newly emerged political pundits, page printers and bookmakers, who draw upon the knowledge of newspapers (even the most deplorable ones from southern Germany), and then immediately take pen in hand in order to communicate their opinions about the great events of the day to the world", transl. by C.R. (Archenholtz, Deutschland 1794, p. 163).

Translated by: Christopher Reid
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- European Media Events (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-media/european-media-events/frank-boesch-european-media-events>)

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


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
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
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
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

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

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
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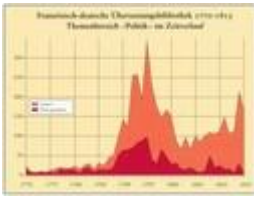


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