

Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760–1820

Edited by

Hannah Barker

University of Manchester

and

Simon Burrows

University of Leeds



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1 The cosmopolitan press, 1759–1815

Simon Burrows

The celebrated cosmopolitanism of Enlightenment Europe was bound together by a common elite culture, a common elite language (French) and a common news media. In consequence, it is surely not unreasonable to envisage a European public, and even a pan-European public sphere, albeit a narrow and largely aristocratic one, which transcended national publics. For from the Huguenot diaspora to the Napoleonic period, there existed beyond French borders a French-language press that aimed to provide a steady flow of news information and, increasingly, opinion, to an international elite. This press – comprising political newspapers produced beyond France’s direct sphere of influence for a European audience – is the subject of this chapter. Although these papers were written in French, and at times circulated widely inside France, the chapter’s focus will be on Europe generally, both because the role of international papers inside ancien regime France is discussed below in Jack Censer’s chapter, and because they had difficulty circulating there after 1792. Journals aimed primarily at local francophones in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and other countries are not considered here, nor are the specialised journals that proliferated in eighteenth-century Europe. While most international papers were what Jerzy Lojek has termed ‘international gazettes’,¹ a few periodicals – such as the *Journal encyclopédique* or Jean-Gabriel Peltier’s émigré publications – which contained substantial news sections are also worthy of mention. However, they could not compete with the gazettes for freshness, and risked accusations of providing ‘news which is not news’.² This survey is also limited by the secondary literature, for despite extensive recent work on the international French press in the Enlightenment,³ our knowledge and bibliographic sources are still patchy,⁴ and the situation with regard to émigré papers is worse.⁵

Despite the international focus of the cosmopolitan press, there is no escaping the fact that the French Revolution was the most decisive event in its history. Before 1789, French readers found their freshest, most independent news of France in gazettes produced outside the Bourbon realm.

Table 1 *Leading extra-territorial gazettes during the late ancien régime*

Common title	Place of Publication	Dates	Rank ⁷
<i>Courier de l'Escaut</i>	Malines (?) (Austrian Netherlands)	1784–1819?	3 / 12
<i>Courrier d'Avignon</i>	Avignon (Papal territory)	1733–1793	3 / *
<i>Courier de l'Europe</i>	London, with Boulogne reprint	1776–1826	2 / 4
<i>Courier du Bas-Rhin</i>	Cleves, Wesel (Prussia)	1767–1807?	1 / 2
<i>Gazette d'Altona</i>	Altona (Denmark)	1758?–1775+ ⁸	3 / 11
<i>Gazette d'Amsterdam</i>	Amsterdam (United Provinces)	1663?–1795?	2 / 5
<i>Gazette d'Utrecht</i>	Utrecht (United Provinces)	1689?–1787	2 / 3
<i>Gazette de Berne</i>	Berne (Switzerland)	1689–1798	3 / *
<i>Gazette de Cologne</i>	Cologne (Archbishopric of)	1734–1794	3 / 7
<i>Gazette de La Haye</i>	The Hague (United Provinces)	1744–1790?	3 / 6
<i>Gazette de Leyde</i>	Leiden (United Provinces)	1677–1811	1 / 1
<i>Gazette des Deux-Ponts</i>	Mannheim (duchy of Deux-Ponts)	1770–1798	3 / 8
<i>Gazette de Bruxelles</i>	Brussels (Austrian Netherlands)	1649–1791	3 / 10

After the collapse of royal control over the printed word in July 1789, foreign gazettes no longer offered either advantage. In Paris new journals whose coverage focused heavily, often exclusively, on events inside France, now Europe's hottest news story, proliferated as France's boldest political publicists returned from exile, while foreign gazettes lagged days behind. But although the market for foreign gazettes inside France rapidly dried up, a lively French-language press survived outside the country until the end of the Napoleonic era, staffed largely by émigrés.

Before the revolution, the international francophone press was large and increasingly influential, but it remained significant thereafter. Between 1760 and 1789 about sixty French-language political papers were produced outside France for an international audience, although many were short-lived.⁶ The most significant are listed in table 1. All these papers were classic *international gazettes*, most of which appeared twice-weekly, and provided readers with news bulletins and official texts (such as relations, laws, ordinances, peace treaties and remonstrances), usually without comment, in a set order, under the putative place and dateline of the report's origin. Often several reports would cover the same story, giving different versions. Readers themselves were expected to make sense of these discordant reports. This gazette form prospered for over 130 years, largely due to its commercial orientation: gazettes existed primarily to sell news information, not to peddle ideology, in marked contrast to the papers of the revolutionary era. Editorial comment was therefore very limited – far less significant in terms of space and emphasis than news bulletins and official texts.⁹

Table 2 *Leading émigré political papers in Europe, 1789–1815*¹⁵

Title	Emigré editors	Place	Dates
<i>Abeille du nord</i>	Barons d'Angely	Altona	1799–1810
<i>L'Ambigu</i>	Peltier	London	1802–1818
<i>Annales politiques du XIXe siècle</i>	Paoli de Chagny	Hamburg Ratisbon	1805–1806
<i>Censeur</i>	Bertin d'Antilly and Mesmont	Hamburg	1799–1800
<i>Correspondance politique</i>	Peltier	London	1793–1794
<i>Courier d'Angleterre</i>	Regnier	London	1805–1815
<i>Courier de Londres = Courier de l'Europe</i>	Verduisant, abbé Calonne, Montlosier, Regnier, Gérard	London	1776–1826
<i>Mercure britannique</i>	Mallet Du Pan	London	1798–1800
<i>Mercure de France</i>	Anonymous committee of six	London	1800–1801
<i>Mercure universel</i>	Paoli de Chagny	Ratisbon	1797?–1803
<i>Paris pendant l'année</i>	Peltier	London	1795–1802
<i>Le Pour et le contre</i>	Paoli de Chagny and Sabatier de Castres	Hamburg	1805
<i>Reveil</i>	Mesmont	Hamburg	1798–1799
<i>Spectateur du Nord</i>	Baudus and Villers	Hamburg	1797–1802

Nevertheless, within these parameters, different gazettes developed differences in tone and approach, especially as the Revolution approached, and from the late 1760s three leading papers, the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, *Gazette de Leyde* and *Courier de l'Europe* (founded 1776), began increasing editorial comment.¹⁰ When French subscriptions to international gazettes dropped sharply after 1789, reputation, political engagement – and in the case of the *Courier de l'Europe* ideological prostitution – helped these three papers to survive. For by 1791–2, faced with the demands of partisan politics, it was becoming difficult for international gazettes to retain their detachment and appeal.¹¹ Hence, most disappeared in the 1790s and several others came under the influence of the émigrés, including the *Gazette de Cologne*, *Courier du Bas-Rhin* and *Courier de l'Europe*.¹² However, the 1790s also witnessed the establishment of numerous papers by the émigrés themselves. London alone had eleven émigré papers between 1793 to 1818, including the *Courier de l'Europe*, which under the title *Courier de Londres* survived until 1826, adapting its politics to political contingency.¹³ A brief survey of titles produced elsewhere identified thirty-three more papers edited by émigrés on mainland Europe and in the United States.¹⁴ The most important European émigré papers are listed in table 2.

From 1759 to the Revolution, France was the most important market for the cosmopolitan press. Although ancien regime French readers had

been introduced to an illegal literature of ideas by a flourishing clandestine pamphlet trade, they found fresh, miscellaneous political news – especially of France – hard to come by until the 1760s. The handful of foreign gazettes that were permitted to circulate in the post – notably the *Courrier d'Avignon*, *Gazette d'Amsterdam* and *Gazette d'Utrecht* – were prohibitively expensive, and the only domestic newspaper, the *Gazette de France*, was insipid, heavily censored, court-centred and offered little French political news.¹⁶ However, after the so-called 'postal revolution' of 1759, the government tolerated the importation under licence of various foreign gazettes and granted a monopoly over their distribution at a moderate fixed price via the postal service. The postal revolution cut prices by around 70 per cent and thereafter sales of international gazettes rose rapidly: 3,100 subscribers in 1747 had become 14,000 by 1781. This compares with a circulation of almost 30,000 for domestically produced newspapers.¹⁷ After the postal revolution France became the most important market for international gazettes. As a result they proliferated and the French government gained increased powers of suasion over them.

Total sales of international gazettes and individual titles were closely connected to political events. They boomed in the Seven Years War, fell back after the peace, peaked again during the American Revolution, and then began to climb again in the pre-revolutionary crisis.¹⁸ After the French Revolution subscriptions inside France to all categories of foreign news periodical fell to negligible levels. However, there was also a significant market beyond France. In November 1778, the *Courier de l'Europe's* London print-run was 700,¹⁹ a level that was probably relatively constant until further boosted by the pre-Revolution and coming of the émigrés.²⁰ Until the Revolution a much larger edition for the continent was printed at Boulogne. The *Gazette de Leyde's* circulation peaked during the American Revolution at 4,200 subscribers, of whom only 2,500 lived in France or Brabant, plus perhaps 2,000 more for counterfeit editions.²¹ The *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, although banned in revolutionary France, had a circulation of 1340 in 1793 and 530 in 1801.²² Among émigré journals, Peltier's *Correspondance politique* boasted at least 225 subscribers in Britain and 450 in continental Europe and Mallet Du Pan's twice-monthly *Mercurie britannique* probably had 2,000 to 2,500 subscribers plus perhaps 1,500 more for its various counterfeit editions. Regnier's *Courier d'Angleterre* distributed an average of 490 copies per issue in 1808.²³ Surviving evidence allows us to speculate that before the Revolution international gazettes had a total of perhaps 10–15,000 subscribers outside France, roughly matching their circulation inside. This total excludes the phenomenally successful *Annales politiques, civiles et littéraires du dix-huitième siècle* of

Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet, more a commentary on political events than a newspaper, which sold over 20,000 copies Europe-wide. After the Revolution, despite enormous upheavals in the market and the collapse of many international gazettes, French extra-territorial papers continued to have several thousand subscribers outside France. These numbers, though small, were not insignificant, especially given multiple readers and the social status of the readership.

Although detailed subscription lists do not survive, there is no doubt that the extra-territorial French press served an elite audience. Jeremy Popkin's analysis of the content of the *Gazette de Leyde* convincingly demonstrates that it performed the main function of an 'elite press', delivering the highest possible quality political news to a wealthy cosmopolitan audience. Like the other French international gazettes and émigré papers, it was almost wholly reliant on subscription revenue.²⁴ However, what little advertising it carried targeted the wealthiest strata of ancien régime society, the potential purchasers of large estates and luxury goods across Europe and beyond. For according to the abbé Bianchi 'the Dutch gazettes are read at Constantinople, Smyrna, Cairo, in the Levant, in both Indies, just as at the Hague and in the cafés of Amsterdam'.²⁵ German papers were also widely available. The *Gazette des Deux-Ponts*'s distribution spanned London, Versailles, the Rhineland, Berlin, Rome and Vienna while in 1768 the newly founded *Courier du Bas-Rhin* was circulating widely in France, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, the Low Countries, Switzerland and Italy.²⁶ As Popkin notes, the international gazettes were required reading for diplomats and politicians,²⁷ but they were also available to readers from other social strata. Paul Benhamou found French readers could pay to read international gazettes in the premises of Parisian *gazetiers*, and in numerous *cabinets de lecture* (public reading rooms), *sociétés d'amateurs* (associations of literature enthusiasts who subscribed for journals collectively) and *chambres de lecture* (clubs of individuals who gathered to read and discuss papers purchased in common) across France. There were also a large number of sociable sites where gazettes, though not the primary attraction, were usually available *gratis*, including cafés, clubs, gambling dens and smoking rooms.²⁸ International gazettes might be encountered in the remotest corners of Europe and the Mediterranean. By the late 1780s, a French soldier in the Russian army in Moldavia could buy fresh editions of the *Gazette de Leyde* from Jewish merchants, and the comte de La Motte could read the paper in a Glasgow café.²⁹ A decade later, while campaigning in Egypt, Napoleon updated himself on French affairs from copies of the *Courier de Londres* acquired from the British navy,³⁰ while French police reports reveal that in 1811 Peltier's *L'Ambigu* was circulating at Tunis 'in the cafés, *auberges* and other public places'.³¹

These examples suggest that international gazettes were reaching social groups well beyond politicians, diplomats and courtly and aristocratic elites and that a variety of titles were available to the public at a modest price in moderate-sized towns across Europe and even beyond.

After the Revolution, émigré papers continued to serve an elite audience. Mallet Du Pan's *Mercure britannique*'s readers included British princes and ministers, various European diplomats, Tsar Paul I, the Duke of Brunswick, the Prince of Brazil and 'many other persons of rank and of parliamentary and literary distinction'.³² The *Courier d'Angleterre* circulated among some of the Tsar's leading Francophobe advisors, Swedish aristocrats and the leading counter-revolutionary publicists.³³ But émigré journals also served other audiences, notably French exiles and French-speaking merchants.

The most successful international gazettes were based along major trade routes, mostly in smaller states with considerable autonomy and liberal censorship regimes. The oldest were established in the United Provinces by Huguenot refugees in the late seventeenth century. Others were published in the German Rhineland, the German free city of Hamburg, the neighbouring Danish free city of Altona and a handful of small states along the French frontier. These included the principality of Bouillon; the Prussian enclave of Cleves (home to the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*); the Duchy of Deux-Ponts and the papal enclave of Avignon. London emerged as a publishing centre belatedly, and only for political reasons. Cut off from the sources of Continental news, it only became a viable base in the 1770s and early 1780s, when Britain's struggle to retain its American colonies became Europe's leading story. The *Courier de l'Europe* was launched to take advantage of these circumstances, but its proprietors soon felt the need for a Continental edition at Boulogne. After the peace, subscriptions fell sharply. Moreover, until the French Revolution, London's French journalists were widely acknowledged to be the lowest class of muck-rakers. The *Courier de l'Europe*'s founding editor, Alphonse-Joseph de Serres de La Tour, was a romantic refugee from royal justice, who had absconded to London with the aristocratic wife of his well-connected employer. His successors Charles Théveneau de Morande and Joseph Perkins MacMahon were blackmailers and *libellistes*. Morande was also a French spy. London only became the premier French extra-territorial news centre once more in the mid-1790s, as revolutionary armies advanced, quashing Dutch and German press liberty. Increasingly, only London seemed to offer both a reasonably free press beyond the reach of French influence and a significant French community. By 1798 Mallet Du Pan could write to a friend: 'As for the public . . . one must leave the continent in order to speak to it; for there is no longer

anywhere where anyone can print a line against the Directory and its manoeuvres . . . Only in England can one write, think, speak or act.³⁴

Before the Revolution, France had few career journalists. According to William Murray, Mallet Du Pan and Linguet were probably the first.³⁵ However, both began their journalistic careers beyond French borders, and there the situation is not so clear. In London several pre-revolutionary exiles worked on more than one paper, including Serres de La Tour, Perkins MacMahon and Morande. Jean Manzon, the Piedmontese editor of the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, and his arch-rival Jean Luzac, who edited the *Gazette de Leyde* from 1772 to 1798, should also be considered career journalists. So perhaps should Jacques-Pierre Brissot, who was the indexer of Linguet's *Annales* and an administrator and later journalist with the *Courier de l'Europe* before establishing a succession of papers. The revolutionary journalistic partners Pascal Boyer and Antoine-Marie Cerisier also began their careers with the extra-territorial press before 1789.

Among numerous motives that drew these men to journalism, money was certainly important. The profits for a successful journalist-proprietor were considerable. According to Brissot, Serres de La Tour often boasted that he earned more money in a year from his one-third share in the *Courier de l'Europe*'s profits than Jean-Jacques Rousseau had made in a lifetime as a *philosophe*.³⁶ Likewise, Jean Luzac's revenues from the *Gazette de Leyde* exceeded those of the entire University of Leiden, where he was also a professor.³⁷ Even émigré journalists earned considerable sums. Mallet Du Pan's income as editor-proprietor of the *Mercure britannique* exceeded the lavish salary of 18,000 livres he had earned in the 1780s as political editor of Panckoucke's *Mercure de France*, despite a much smaller circulation. His rival Peltier lived extravagantly, and journalism helped him to recover from a series of bankruptcies.

Journalism also offered exiles an opportunity to remain politically involved. For many it was a conscious choice for this reason and even before 1789 the most successful journalists were characterised by their ideological commitment. Both Jean Luzac and Manzon promoted moderate variants of Enlightenment: Luzac championing representative bodies, Manzon supporting enlightened absolutism, penal reform and d'Holbachian materialism.³⁸ Linguet used his journal primarily as a 'tribune' to advance his views rather than record news,³⁹ and his example was followed from 1787 by Morande, who, finding an independent journalistic voice, espoused the cause of patriotic reform in his editorials and *Lettres d'un voyageur*. Morande's articles were highly engaged, topical and prescriptive. They broke new ground in French newspaper journalism and attempted to lead public debate. Nothing like them appeared in other French-language newspapers during the pre-Revolution.⁴⁰ Their

style was imitated by journalists in revolutionary Paris, where it created a 'new type of demagogue', the tribune of the people, who transformed Linguet's activism into calls for direct action.⁴¹ Commitment to a cause became a hallmark of émigré journalism too, as Mallet Du Pan made explicit when he declared the *Mercure britannique*'s aim 'of reviving in every quarter the courage of governments and nations overwhelmed or menaced by the French Republic; of showing them the necessity of resistance, and inspiring the hope of success, if supported by united endeavours and the rectitude of intention'.⁴²

Given their audience and the sensitive information and heterodox ideas they sometimes carried, it is hardly surprising that ancien regime governments sought to contain or control the content of international papers. Their most obvious expedient was to ban gazettes from circulating on their own territories. Joseph II punished the *Gazette de Leyde* by giving a third party exclusive rights to reprint and disseminate the journal in the Habsburg realms, allowing news to circulate but hitting the newspaper's owners in the pocket.⁴³ Until 1759 the French also permitted cheap reprints, but found that this left editors no financial incentive to adopt a moderate tone: perhaps this is why they eventually decided to admit cheap foreign gazettes.⁴⁴ They also found that temporary interdictions were more flexible. They briefly banned the *Courier du Bas Rhin* in 1767 for publishing extracts of an anti-religious tract; the *Gazette d'Utrecht* in 1771 in order to intimidate other papers; and the *Courier de l'Europe* in 1776 for publishing a letter mistreating Marie-Antoinette and Maurepas.⁴⁵

However, bans could not prevent the circulation of unfavourable news information on foreign soil and among the policy-makers and diplomatic corps of rival powers. Ancien regime governments therefore often resorted to diplomatic complaints to silence recalcitrant journalists, with varying success.⁴⁶ From the late seventeenth century onwards there was a steady stream of diplomatic complaints against Dutch international gazettes.⁴⁷ The authorities in the Netherlands often took positive action in response to complaints. One from the Prussian government in 1790 led to a temporary interdiction on the *Gazette de La Haye*, which resulted in its permanent closure.⁴⁸ But such brutal effectiveness was rare and the influence that the Prussians enjoyed in Holland after their intervention in the patriot revolution in 1787 was exceptional. Usually diplomatic complaints had lesser effects. Jean Veycrosse has traced thirty complaints against Dutch gazettes in French archives dating from the period 1760–1785, most originating from the highest levels of French society rather than government. Of these thirty cases, the French government took action over twenty-eight, pressurising the journalists to

back down and print retractions or corrections in at least twenty-four.⁴⁹ Complaints elsewhere forced similar retractions: in 1768 the *Gazette de Berne* was forced to print a humiliating retraction of a 'false and calumnious' notice which had wrongly attributed a scandalous banned work to Voltaire, after the *philosophe* complained to the Bernese authorities.⁵⁰ Sometimes complaints resulted in sanctions. In 1776, Etienne Luzac was reprimanded for offending the Grand Master of the Order of Malta and ordered not to print commentaries in future.⁵¹

Despite the high success rate of such complaints, warnings, bans and admonitions seldom had much lasting effect. In the Netherlands, at least, this was in part due to the devolved power structure, and the same was possibly true, to a certain extent, in the Holy Roman Empire. Moreover, if pushed too hard, editors might imitate Gueudeville who, finding his *Esprit des cours de l'Europe* suppressed in 1701, merely changed its title.⁵² Or they might move their operation, like Pierre Rousseau, whose peripatetic *Journal encyclopédique* moved from Liège to Brussels before finally finding a safe home in Bouillon.⁵³ Moreover, bans and complaints could prove counter-productive. Jean-Baptiste de la Varenne, editor of the *Glaneur historique*, welcomed them, believing that they promoted sales, while in 1776 the *Mémoires secrètes* predicted that the *Courier de l'Europe*'s notoriety would win it many subscribers once the French government lifted its interdiction.⁵⁴ Dutch editors could sometimes afford to be defiant. In response to French complaints in 1772 Etienne Luzac replied that if he limited himself to French news published in the *Gazette de France*, 'it would alert the French public that we were holding back and produce the opposite of the desired effect'.⁵⁵ In the same year he refused to bow to Danish complaints that he had refused to endorse charges brought against the reforming minister Struensee, who was executed after a palace coup. However, Luzac's bold declaration that he would 'never depart from the truth either out of enmity or from a desire to please men in high places' was largely bluster. Already in 1771, following French complaints, he had ceased publishing material on the Maupeou crisis in France.⁵⁶ The *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, *Gazette de La Haye* and *Gazette d'Utrecht* bowed before similar pressure.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Etienne Luzac's comments showed that governments were caught in a cleft stick. If they wanted to persuade a broad European public of their version of events, they had to use news channels that enjoyed that public's confidence and maintained their appearance of independence by publishing documents from all parties. In turn, this meant that governments were forced to attempt to persuade. In the process they admitted tacitly that they recognised the legitimacy of the judgements of a 'public', however limited, and existence of alternative sources of authority

and hence, that monarchs were not the only political actors within their states.⁵⁸

Realising that they could not always suppress hostile news coverage, governments sought more effective means to moderate and guide coverage of affairs in the international press. One way to achieve this was to attempt to bribe editors and proprietors. Thus, Manzon – who readily sold his pen on issues which affected neither Prussian interests nor his own personal crusades – was paid to push a pro-Polish line by the Polish King, Stanislaus-Augustus Poniatowski, until 1772–3, when Russian pressure forced the journalist to change tack.⁵⁹ In the 1740s, it was rumoured that the French had bribed the only Dutch gazettes permitted to enter France. It was said that Du Breuil, the editor of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, was paid 2,000 livres for allowing the French ambassador to vet his paper, while Madame de Limiers was said to have received 12–15,000 livres for pro-French coverage in the *Gazette d'Utrecht*.⁶⁰ The French postal revolution of 1759 was also a form of bribe, for by opening the frontiers to other selected gazettes and slashing the cost of postage, the French were opening up the largest market in Europe. No editor could afford to ignore this incentive, although one complained that the circumspection required to gain admission had made his gazette too 'dull' for readers outside France.⁶¹ Moreover, according to manuscript newsletters the French government 'bought' the *Courier de l'Europe* during the American Revolution with a mass-subscription, allegedly for 4,000 copies, an improbably high amount.⁶² But if it was to remain a credible organ they had to allow it considerable leeway for, as its proprietor remarked, it would lose all interest if it was sensed to be written from Paris.⁶³ This paradox dogged the French in their attempts to moderate the foreign gazettes. It would also prove problematic to British attempts to use the émigré press after 1803.

Governments also began to develop techniques of news management. Several German powers established international gazettes as a means to exercise direct control over a paper while promoting their interests with an international public. The *Gazette de Cologne*, founded in 1734, fought assiduously for causes supported by its prince-bishop electors. It opposed the *philosophes* and religious laxity and became a mouthpiece for the Jesuits after their expulsion from France.⁶⁴ The liberal Duke Christian IV of Deux-Ponts, who had close ties with the *philosophes*, established a literary journal to be their organ and contemporaries saw a similar influence behind the *Gazette des Deux-Ponts*, which was edited under bureaucratic supervision.⁶⁵ So was the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, which served notoriously as a Prussian 'propaganda bridgehead' into Western Europe.⁶⁶ However, although his paper regularly published Prussian-inspired disinformation and commentaries on international affairs and was no freer in

its domestic coverage than the *Gazette de France*, Manzon's relationship with the Prussian authorities was complex and far from servile. His paper, like many other international gazettes, was not permitted to report freely or comment on events in its homeland.⁶⁷ However, he was allowed to follow instructions on international affairs with considerable interpretative latitude, and expected to comment freely on the internal politics of other countries and philosophic matters.⁶⁸ The French attempted to control news flows internally by releasing a flood of supportive information and suppressing contrary stories and externally by feeding information to their vassal papers in Avignon and London.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in the 1770s, they launched a number of substitute papers, including Panckoucke's 'clandestine' foreign papers the *Journal de Genève* and *Journal de Bruxelles*, and the propagandist *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*.⁷⁰ American diplomatic agents supplied propaganda essays to the handful of international gazettes that accepted such pieces, but such efforts were dependent on individual initiative. Moreover, the Americans had little control over editors. When John Adams decided to stop sending materials to the *Gazette de Leyde* and start patronising the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* after Jean Luzac argued for peace based on a territorial compromise, it did nothing to popularise the American cause.⁷¹

A more sophisticated method of control was to direct reporting at source. Stanislaus-Augustus tried to ensure a pro-Polish coverage by supplying bulletins to Dutch and German journalists;⁷² and in the early 1780s, if not earlier, the French established close supervision over the Parisian correspondents of the foreign gazettes. Certainly, a system of direction existed from January 1781, when they arrested several Parisian newsmongers, including Pascal Boyer, formerly a correspondent for the *Courier de l'Europe* and Charles Fouilhoux, who corresponded with the *Gazette d'Utrecht*. Both were rapidly released on a good behaviour bond and given official sanction and materials to continue their trade. Moreover, the government apparently arranged for Boyer to run a news bureau supplying the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, *Gazette de Leyde* and possibly Europe's best-selling paper, the German-language Hamburg *Correspondenten*.⁷³ Systematic supervision may have existed already in the 1770s, for in March 1780 the British press entrepreneur Samuel Swinton alerted the editor of his new gazette, the *Gazette anglo-françoise-américaine*, that his Paris correspondent also supplied the *Gazette de Cologne*, *Gazette d'Utrecht*, *Gazette d'Amsterdam* and *Gazette de Leyde*.⁷⁴

Whether newspaper editors were fully aware of their correspondents' links to the French administration is not entirely clear, but this relationship was indicative of the gazetteers' symbiotic reliance on government. Journalists needed governments to supply fresh and reliable information,

whilst governments wished to suppress certain stories, at the same time as publicising others. By the early 1780s, these developments had created an integrated system of political reporting covering all Europe, especially with regard to bulletins from France. Thus, in late July 1789, exactly the same initial report of the fall of the Bastille appears in the *Gazette de Leyde*, *Gazette de Berne* and *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, with only slight editorial variations.⁷⁵ This inter-textuality has important implications for our understanding of European public opinion and responses to key issues, especially the generally warm reception given to the early stages of the French Revolution. The response was similar across Europe, at least in part, because across the Continent elites were reading similar reports based on the same printed and manuscript sources in international gazettes. And in many cases these reports also served as sources for domestic papers.

Given the degree of integration of the international gazettes, it is worth making a few generalisations about editorial content, especially as editorial interventions became increasingly common after 1750. From the late 1760s and early 1770s, after the founding of the *Courier du Bas Rhin* and *Courier de l'Europe*, and Jean Luzac's accession to the editorship of the *Gazette de Leyde*, ideological discourses also begin to appear more frequently in these papers.⁷⁶ The most reticent among them was the *Gazette de Leyde*. Although in this period it was Europe's paper of record and aimed at comprehensive and impartial reporting, Jean Luzac's commitment to representative, though not democratic, forms of government was evident in editorial comments and his willingness to accept American propaganda materials. His stance was even clearer in the 1780s when he emerged as a leader of the moderate faction of the patriots during the Dutch Patriot Revolution.⁷⁷ Luzac's arch-rival, Jean Manzon, who edited the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, was more outspoken, especially in favour of enlightened absolutism. In his 'Cleves' column and long notes and explications, Manzon offered both opinion and interpretation, often while launching tirades against other newspapers.⁷⁸ More innovative still was the London-based *Courier de l'Europe*, whose early numbers resembled British newspapers and offered regular coverage of the sessions of parliament, large numbers of readers' letters, essays, occasional poems and literary contributions. This formula proved too radical for readers, and the paper rapidly adopted the traditional quarto form of the international gazettes and reduced cultural content and correspondence. However, it continued to offer more commercial news and cultural and literary content than its Continental counterparts and from 1787, as we have seen, contained Morande's essay articles, which advocated political reform as the means to 'regenerate' France.

All three leading gazettes promoted Enlightenment, albeit in diluted and divergent forms, and the same is generally true, though to a lesser extent, of most of their competitors. All international gazettes tended to favour freedom to circulate information, but few, if any, supported unbridled freedom of expression. To varying degrees they supported more humane punishments and legal codification. They also tended – with rare exceptions such as the *Gazette de Cologne* – to be secular, anti-Jesuit and, in Manzon's case, materialist. Most favoured political emancipation and representative government, usually supporting representative bodies in their struggles against ministerial and monarchic power. Even Manzon believed liberty should be the ultimate aim and crowning achievement of a strong regime, but he saw absolutism as the only guarantee against social disintegration. In fact, Manzon's fear of demagoguery and democratic forces was shared by the other international journalists, but in a more muted manner. The political preferences of the international gazettes thus covered the spectrum of enlightened elite opinion. However, after 1770 the unity of that elite was strained in the face of political developments. The American Revolution and Dutch Patriot Revolution of the 1780s in particular were decisive in formulating European opinion prior to 1789. As these political developments were reported and interpreted by the press, it is legitimate to ask whether the international gazettes contributed to the spread and development of reformist and democratic ideas.

It has been suggested that the ideals of the American Revolution, with their emphasis on liberty and the principle of no taxation without representation, constituted a direct challenge to the powers of ancien regime Europe, and that the publication of American proclamations and constitutions in the gazettes was deeply subversive.⁷⁹ However, as Jack Censer's contribution to this volume suggests, we should exercise caution with such claims, even in a French context. Moreover, 1789 appears to have changed the way in which European readers understood these documents.⁸⁰ The response of the *Gazette des Deux-Ponts*, whose editors viewed the insurgents' struggle as a just battle against ministerial despotism, is probably typical.⁸¹ Jean Luzac seems to have taken the Americans' part largely for similar reasons.⁸²

The coverage of representative politics, especially the British parliament, has also been seen as subversive, especially in France.⁸³ In 1793, Peltier even accused the *Courier de l'Europe* of precipitating the Revolution by creating a vogue for opposition.⁸⁴ Again, it is necessary to urge caution. However, it seems fair to argue that through the *Courier de l'Europe* in particular, educated Europeans became familiar with the political vocabulary of British representative politics, leading old French terms

such as *opposition*, *majorité*, *minorité* and *responsabilité* to be invested with modern political meanings.⁸⁵ But conversely British political life was often depicted as tumultuous, divisive and faction-ridden, and this may have reinforced prejudices against representative politics, at least in their British incarnation. The *Courier du Bas-Rhin* admired Britain, but saw her ‘liberties’ as a distraction to mask ministerial despotism at a deeper level: it argued that Voltaire received more protection in France than John Wilkes in Britain.⁸⁶ Morande likened the British constitution to a beautiful woman showing the blemishes of age.⁸⁷ These ambiguous depictions may help to explain the rejection of the British political model by the French Constituent Assembly in September 1789, despite decades of Anglophilia in enlightened circles.

Events in the Netherlands in the 1780s – where traditional tensions between the Stadholderate and representative provincial estates backed by urban interests erupted into open conflict – also seem to have had a decisive influence on the political views of many international journalists. Dutch papers like the *Gazette de Leyde* and *Gazette d’Amsterdam* gave the so-called *patriots* vigorous support in their struggle against the Stadholder – until silenced by Prussian intervention in 1787 – as did the French-sponsored *Courier de l’Europe*, keen to support France’s traditional allies. The *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, not surprisingly took the Stadholder’s part, castigating the *patriots*, whom it labelled ‘*le parti démagogique*’ and accused of bribing correspondents to papers like the *Gazette de Cologne* in order to mislead European opinion.⁸⁸ The *Gazette d’Amsterdam* in contrast stigmatised the Stadholder’s supporters as ‘the party opposed to liberty’ and accused them of wishing to sow disunity among the patriots.⁸⁹ The rebellion in the neighbouring Austrian Netherlands (modern Belgium) was treated in a somewhat different manner. Manzoni naturally was antipathetic: a typical report in December 1786 denounced staff at the University of Louvain for fomenting resistance to reforms that all Europe applauded.⁹⁰ But this time the Dutch patriot Luzac and French agent Morande concurred with him. While both applauded outbursts of popular resistance to despotism elsewhere in Europe, they had little sympathy for the conservative, priest-led rebellion against the enlightened rationalising policies of Joseph II.⁹¹

The international gazettes’ response to the French Revolution is perhaps best illustrated by considering their reports of a pivotal event, the fall of the Bastille. As we have seen, the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, *Gazette de Leyde* and *Gazette de Berne* all carried the same report, save for minor editorial differences. The report glorifies the success of the ‘*Peuple*’ on a day which ‘will forever be celebrated in our annals’. It told of the storming of the Bastille and murder and decapitation of its governor, de Launay,

but spoke of his treason in ordering his troops to fire on the crowd and gloated, 'How the instruments of despotism quake in horror once the people throw off their yoke and takes their vengeance.' However, the report also shows characteristic elite anxieties about popular violence, though it excuses it on this occasion, asserting, 'Posterity may excuse the people of Paris to some extent; today they fought only for their liberty and only immolated those who provoked and betrayed them.' Crucially, however, the *Gazette de Leyde* deleted this phrase, hinting at a lesser sympathy; and another summary report in the same issue talks disdainfully about the 'vile populace' and their hopes of pillage amidst the disorder.

A survey of reports in four other gazettes shows the prevalence of similar viewpoints. All speak of the '*Peuple*' rather than a mob. The *Gazette d'Amsterdam*'s correspondent was horrified by de Launay's decapitation, but described the people as 'justly incensed' ('*irrités*') by his actions and rejoiced that the fall of the Bastille had saved France.⁹² The *Gazette des Deux-Ponts* lamented the dismissal of Necker that had provoked the disturbances; celebrated the heroism and impetuosity of the attackers; and described de Launay as a 'traitor' and 'the people' as a 'model of wisdom' – a phrase bearing chilling similarities to the Rousseauist rhetoric of St-Just and Robespierre.⁹³ Later, the paper gave sensationalist reports of the demolition of '*cette horrible prison*' and discoveries in its ruins and archives.⁹⁴ The *Courrier de l'Europe*'s main account saw Necker – 'the only man who could save France' – as a victim of an aristocratic party and briefly glossed over the events of this '*tumulte horrible*'. However, the editorial column explained that the rebellion was against the abuses of centuries rather than Louis XVI; stressed that the murders were not pre-meditated or cruel, because 'they weren't committed in cold blood'; and asserted the King had showed his love for his people by submission to their will.⁹⁵ The *Courrier d'Avignon*, perhaps the most lukewarm paper, explained the motives for the murder of de Launay and Flesselles but described the events as 'deplorable'; nevertheless, it felt that the King's response was the best way to appease the situation.⁹⁶

This elitist, ambiguous response to the Revolution – praising reforms, looking forward to regeneration but deploring and fearing mob action and demagoguery – continued to characterise the leading international gazettes for the next couple of years. From 1789 to 1791 Morande saw the Revolution as part of a pan-European movement for liberty and upheld the principles of 1789 while castigating extremists of both left and right. Although he claimed to be a *patriote royaliste*, he insisted that the new constitution took precedence over the King.⁹⁷ My sampling of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* in early 1790 suggests it was anti-*aristocrat*, supportive of Lafayette and Necker, and alarmed by both the activities of royalist

intriguers such as Favras and extreme press liberty. The *Gazette des Deux-Ponts* welcomed the Revolution wholeheartedly until the National Assembly abolished feudal dues in August 1789, thereby threatening the Duke's property rights and income, but did not totally abandon the Revolution until the rise of the Jacobins.⁹⁸ The *Gazette de Leyde*, despite huge misgivings about the revolutionaries, was optimistic the constitution would re-establish order and applauded the abolition of Church land and the Le Chapelier law, which severely curtailed workers' rights. However, like the *Gazette des Deux-Ponts*, it refused to collude in the National Assembly's official lie that Louis XVI had been kidnapped when he fled to Varennes and by late 1791 the paper was 'vehemently anti-revolutionary'.⁹⁹ Thus, by early 1792, the international francophone press was thoroughly politicised and ideologically committed to counter-revolution: the ancien regime international press system had come to an end.

The ancien regime system worked largely because of a balance of power preventing any state from being able to assert itself without provoking counter-measures. This guaranteed the survival of smaller states and allowed princelings of tiny enclaves like Bouillon to gamble on sheltering controversial publications in return for economic benefits. In effect, if international gazettes remained moderate in their comment, they would survive. But this impunity was precariously posited on the survival of the existing states' system and, with the coming of the French Revolution, proved unsustainable. International newspapers were banned from France under the Jacobin Republic and again in 1797. As the French Republic expanded, her government began a more systematic campaign against hostile newspapers across Europe, especially after Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in November 1799, until by 1803, the Whig lawyer Sir James Mackintosh could claim credibly that Britain had 'the only free press remaining in Europe'.¹⁰⁰

The Napoleonic assault on the independence of the European public sphere began in January 1800 with a decree reducing the Parisian press from seventy-three to thirteen titles. By 1811, further decrees, forced mergers, bankruptcies and suppressions had reduced them to just four and the government controlled the appointment of editors. In 1807, the provincial political press was limited to one paper per *département*, to be edited by the prefect.¹⁰¹ Foreign news was only permitted if it had already appeared in the official *Moniteur*. Hostile papers were forbidden from circulating in France, as were German-language papers save the pro-French *Minerva*. However, the European newspaper-reading public was too extensive to be served only by French subsidised newspapers, so similar measures were extended to conquered territories and satellite states. For example, a press censor was established in Amsterdam and after the

Act of Mediation in Switzerland (1802) the press there also came under French control.¹⁰² The German press was finally subjugated after the campaign of 1806–7, when several international gazettes including the *Courier du Bas-Rhin*, the *Gazette de Frankfort*, the *Gazette de Bayreuth* and several Hamburg papers were suppressed.¹⁰³ The *Correspondenten* was reduced to abject servitude, forced to publish as a bilingual news-sheet and rapidly lost subscribers.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the only significant German paper not to fall under direct government control in this period was the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and even it was effectively bent to Napoleon's will and forced to depend on the *Moniteur* for material.¹⁰⁵ Besides, after 1804, when he had the Nuremberg publisher J. P. Palm seized and shot, few publishers dared to defy Bonaparte.

Napoleon also sought to silence or convert 'enemy writers' beyond his immediate sphere of influence, using a mixture of intimidation, payment, argument and diplomatic complaints. As a result, in July 1800, the Hamburg Senate suppressed the *Censeur* and arrested its authors, although Russian pressure prevented their extradition.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, by 1801, two leading émigré editors, Louis Baudus of the *Spectateur du nord* and Montlosier of the *Courier de Londres*, were won over to the new regime.¹⁰⁷ However, during the Peace of Amiens (1802–3), Bonaparte failed to silence criticism in the London press and above all Peltier's journals and the *Courier de Londres*, now edited by Jacques Regnier, a *pur* royalist. Although keen to placate Bonaparte, the British ministry insisted that they could not legally expel Peltier, agreeing instead to bring him to court, where he was found guilty on a charge of criminal libel. Nevertheless, the French were dissatisfied with the British government, feeling that their denial of legal authority to punish Peltier was provocative hypocrisy, especially as the Aliens Act was used to expel pro-French editors in both 1793 and 1803. The dispute rapidly soured relations between Britain and France, accentuating mutual perceptions that the other acted through malevolence and hastening the descent into war. Contemporary observers including the French Foreign Minister Talleyrand, the British Ambassador Whitworth and Napoleon's secretary Bourienne agreed that the press issue was a decisive factor in the outbreak of a war which, at that stage, both sides would have preferred to avoid.¹⁰⁸

The objective of French press policy was to prevent certain types of news becoming known, especially those damaging to the army, France's allies, social harmony or popular sovereignty. Many subjects, including religious affairs, the Bourbons, military movements and Napoleon's actions or speeches, could only be discussed if reports had already appeared in the *Moniteur*. Other topics, including events in Spain and Rome in 1808, were placed under temporary interdict; the word 'Poland' was banned.¹⁰⁹

These bans were not intended merely to portray Napoleon as the only public actor in Europe and to keep French citizens and subject peoples in ignorance. Their other purpose was to establish a French monopoly over the distribution of ‘agenda-setting’ information, keeping enemies and wavering allies alike in the dark as to French intentions, dispositions and weaknesses. Nor should it be forgotten that alternative sources of information for governments were breaking down in the Napoleonic period. Postal services between combatants were interrupted. Merchant activity and correspondence were inhibited, especially after the instigation of the British blockade and Napoleon’s Continental system. Diplomatic reports, themselves often partly reliant on press sources, were constrained by censorship, blockade and war. Even foreign travellers, traditionally a useful information source, found their movements inhibited by the new ‘rules’ of revolutionary warfare, especially after Napoleon arrested all Britons unfortunate enough to be in Paris at the opening of hostilities in 1803.

In consequence, after 1803, Napoleon’s enemies were forced to rely increasingly on self-serving reports from spy-masters like Fauche-Borel and the comte d’Antraigues for information and – as the British Foreign Minister Castlereagh explained – on French-language journals for ‘Conveying instruction to the Continent when no other means could be found.’¹¹⁰ Thus, the British government hired émigré newspapers to fight its propaganda war, including Peltier’s *l’Ambigu*, the *Courier de Londres* and Regnier’s *Courier d’Angleterre*, a succession of journals produced in Germany by Paoli de Chagny, the Altona-based *Abeille du Nord* and possibly Hyde Neuville’s *Journal des dames* in New York. In response the French obtained the suppression of Paoli de Chagny’s *Mercure universel* at Regensburg and bans on the *Courier de Londres* in the Batavian Republic, Hamburg and Saxony in 1804–5.¹¹¹ Moreover, in April 1805, Regnier was sacked from the editorship of the *Courier de Londres*, apparently at the instigation of the British government, possibly to remove an obstacle to peace negotiations.¹¹²

After the battle for Germany was lost, the British propaganda campaign switched to Russia and Sweden, where Regnier’s new paper, the *Courier d’Angleterre*, as well as the *Courier de Londres* and *l’Ambigu* were distributed at British expense with the connivance of the local authorities. After the peace of Tilsit between France and Russia and the coup d’état of 13 March 1809 in Sweden, this connivance was withdrawn, but highly placed anti-French elements in both countries continued to distribute the papers by clandestine means until the Francophobes regained the ascendant in 1811.¹¹³ From 1808, following Napoleon’s invasion of

the Iberian peninsula, émigré propaganda papers were also distributed there, and sometimes translated into Spanish and Portuguese.¹¹⁴

Despite the importance of their objectives, the British Foreign Office failed to exercise a close supervision over what its hirelings wrote, due to lack of resources and limited means of coercion, especially as government subscriptions to émigré journals were not necessarily essential to their financial survival. Although the *Courier d'Angleterre* folded rapidly following the peace, the *Courier de Londres* and *l'Ambigu* both published for several years after the remaining émigrés went home in 1814 and the government withdrew support in 1815. Thus, although funding to these three papers exceeded the entire sum the government expended 'corrupting' the British press in the 1780s and 1790s, the émigré journals' support for the British government was contingent rather than absolute. But the émigré press also enjoyed considerable freedom because the government wished its links with the papers to remain a secret. This allowed them sufficient latitude to expound disagreeable doctrines, including polemical articles that justified and incited Napoleon's assassination.¹¹⁵

Such murderous partisanship would have been unthinkable to the late eighteenth-century international gazettes and represented a considerable mutation. They had belonged to a world of controlled knowledge and aspired, at most, to freedom of information, not freedom of opinion. For the wider public they provided materials, rather than a forum, for policy discussion. Only the established political authorities who produced these materials and a handful of more outspoken newspaper editors actually participated in debate in their pages. Nevertheless, by exposing political actors to scrutiny, by forcing them to justify their positions in public documents, in freeing information flows and in cautiously supporting political reforms, the international gazettes were agents for the diffusion of Enlightenment, cosmopolitanism and confident reformism among Europe's francophone elites. But after the Revolution polarised Europe, the international gazettes and émigré organs that survived beyond French reach became organs of party and committed advocates of counter-revolution, shedding their characteristic detachment in the process. After 1802, when most émigrés returned to France and the pan-European public sphere was systematically transformed into a French-controlled space, exile journals were reduced to serving the interests of allied propaganda and forlorn, outspoken vitriolic attacks on Bonaparte. Finally, in the era of romanticism, nationalism and the steam press after 1815, the cosmopolitan press had outlived its purposes and rapidly disappeared. The old Europe of francophone elites bound together by common language, culture, values and media had gone forever, the emigration

was over and, as one journalist remarked, with the coming of peace 'a French newspaper printed in London is the most useless thing in the world for the [British] government'.¹¹⁶ In the revolutionary struggles, the pan-European public had disintegrated.

NOTES

- 1 Jerzy Lojek, 'Gazettes internationales de la langue française dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIème siècle', in P. Deyon (ed.), *Modèles et moyens de la réflexion politique au XVIIIe siècle*, 3 vols. (Lille, 1977), vol. 1, 369–82.
- 2 Laus de Boissy to Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, 9 March 1780, Ms. STN 1173, fos. 320–1, Bibliothèque publique de la ville de Neuchâtel, cited in Michel Schlup, 'Diffusion et lecture du *Journal helvétique*, au temps de la Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, 1769–1782', in Hans Bots (ed.), *La Diffusion et lecture des journaux de langue française sous l'ancien régime* (Amsterdam, 1988), 59–71, p. 69.
- 3 The standard bibliographical work is Jean Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire de journaux*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1991); Henri Duranton, Claude Labrosse and Pierre Rétat (eds.), *Les Gazettes européennes de langue française (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Saint-Etienne, 1992) is devoted to the topic.
- 4 While researching this chapter I discovered a uniquely rich collection of international gazettes for the years c. 1774–90 in the Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles, most of which went unreported in the survey of holdings in Duranton *et al.* (eds.), *Gazettes européennes*, pp. 331–46. It comprises the *Courrier d'Avignon* (1775–89); *Courier du Bas-Rhin* (1774–90); *Courier de l'Europe* (1776–91); *Gazette d'Altona* (1774–5); *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (1748–91); *Gazette de Cologne* (1774–85); *Gazette de La Haye* (1752–87); *Gazette de Leyde* (1774–91); *Gazette d'Utrecht* (1750–84); and *Gazette des Deux-Ponts* (1774–84; 1789–91).
- 5 On the émigré press see Simon Burrows, *French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792–1814* (London, 2000); Hélène Maspero-Clerc, *Un Journaliste contre-révolutionnaire: Jean-Gabriel Peltier, 1760–1825* (Paris, 1973) and her articles 'Journaux d'émigrés à Londres', *Bulletin d'histoire économique et sociale de la révolution française* (hereinafter *BHESRF*) années 1972–3 (1974), 67–79; 'Montlosier, journaliste de l'émigration', *BHESRF* année 1975 (1977), 81–103; Samuel J. Marino, 'The French refugee newspapers in the United States, 1789–1825', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan (1962); Paul Hazard, 'Le Spectateur du Nord', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de France* (1906), 26–50.
- 6 Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire de journaux*. Title counts are my own and necessarily approximate. 601 French language serials appeared between 1760 and 1789; 37 per cent of French serials published before 1789 appeared outside France.
- 7 The first ranking figures follow the three tentative groupings given by Lojek, 'Gazettes internationales', pp. 376–80. 1 = systematically penetrated countries across Europe; 2 = widely read in France, Germany and Austria and often other countries; 3 = less widespread but widely read in more than one country. The second ranking corresponds to Lojek's rankings of individual papers,