

Effectiveness of Media Changes in Spreading Nationalism in the French Revolution and under Nazi Germany

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Abstract: This paper examines the transformative impact of the media during the French Revolution, focusing on how newspapers such as *L'Ami du Peuple* and *Le Père Duchesne* mobilized nationalist and radical public sentiment. By analyzing the exponential growth of print culture, the relaxation of government censorship, and the increase in literacy, the paper demonstrates how newspapers became a powerful tool for spreading revolutionary ideas and uniting different social groups under a national identity. Comparing it to broadcast propaganda in Nazi Germany, the paper highlights the evolution of the media's role in shaping ideology and mobilizing the masses. Finally, it reflects on the parallels between historical and contemporary media, emphasizing the crucial role of communication technologies in promoting and controlling radical movements. These findings provide insights into how past and present forms of media influence collective consciousness and political structures.

Keywords: French Revolution, Nazi Germany, media, propagate, nationalism

1. Introduction

This article explores the central role that media change played in spreading nationalism and radical ideas during the French Revolution, focusing on how newspapers such as *L'Ami du Peuple* and *Le Père Duchesne* inspired national consciousness and political radicalization through strong emotional language and accessible narratives. Through the analysis of these journals, this paper attempts to reveal how the rise of mass printing culture, the loosening of government censorship, and the growing literacy of the French populace combined to promote the widespread dissemination of revolutionary ideas and the drastic transformation of society. It also aims to guide readers to think critically about the influence of media in history and modern society, and to gain a deeper understanding of the role of print and social media in shaping public sentiment, spreading extremist content, and guiding social ideology. It is hoped that this historical perspective will help readers re-examine the content of contemporary social and traditional media and recognize the media's critical responsibility in promoting or curbing radical ideas and collective consciousness.

2. Media in the French Revolution

During the French Revolution, print media—including newspapers, pamphlets, and essays—became essential tools for spreading revolutionary ideals to a broad audience. The development and influence of printed media during this period cannot be overlooked, and the increasing number of publications clearly stated the popularity among French people during the revolutionary period. According to the

history of information, there were 10,000 to 12,000 copies of individual newspapers [1], which stated the importance of newspapers over all other printed media. Newspapers, particularly *L'Ami du peuple* (the friend of people) and *Annales patriotiques* played a pivotal role in mobilizing radical nationalism by disseminating revolutionary ideas and helping shape the course of the revolution.

2.1. The popularity of newspapers

Newspapers' development was based on the processing of the French Revolution. By closing the censorship of publications, newspapers mushroomed.

Before the revolution, there are a handful number of newspapers which are controlled by the royal family and the government. From 1789 to 1790, the number of newspapers quickly grew into over three hundred weekly and daily newspapers. From the paper of Noam, there was a clear growth of newspapers; 1,600 different newspapers were established during the revolution, and many thought for only a short time. There were 130,00 copies of the Parisian newspaper in 1791, and it reached 150,000 copies in 1797 [1]. This dramatic growth of newspapers was related to the printed Culture in the 18th century and its accessibility.

2.1.1. Print culture in 18 centuries

The exponential growth of newspapers during the French Revolution was closely linked to the broader development of print culture in 18th-century France. According to Morse's investigation, print culture is "a study that has emerged from traditional book history scholarship to encompass a wide range of printed materials and the social, political, material, and economic processes of their production, circulation, and reception" [2]. To specify the research, print culture refers to the production and consumption of printed materials like books, pamphlets, and newspapers which laid the foundation for the rapid dissemination of revolutionary ideas.

In the 15th century, a functioning news network was essentially the exclusive domain of the European elite, international merchants, princes, nobles, and churchmen. After the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, from 1520 onwards (albeit in the 16th century), news could be shared with a radiant circle of new readers through the medium of print, especially cheap print media [3]. This move allowed more civilians (e.g., small businessmen such as townspeople) to take an interest in and learn about politics and the royal situation.

Overall, the invention of the printing press in the 15th century and improvements in the 16th century made printing no longer exclusive to royalty and nobles, and the news wasn't just for the wealthy anymore. During the French Revolution, cheap and affordable printing technology laid the groundwork for the rise of print media, especially newspapers.

2.1.2. The weakness of government censorship

Before the French Revolution, government censorship in France was strict and highly regulated. The French monarchy had a strict system of press controls, which included a requirement that all printed material be approved in advance by a royal censor. This system applies not only to newspapers but also to books, pamphlets, and other printed matter. Only publications that have been vetted by the authorities and granted "privileges" can be legally distributed. At the same time, because many periodicals and print media are dependent on the Royal Mail system for dissemination and delivery, censorship is guaranteed to be viable [4]. During this period, there were newspapers published and pressed under the support and permission of the French monarchy and government. Due to the immaturity of journalism and government interference, the newspapers were dominated by praise for the authorities, or the royal family, and reports of foreign events [3]. The typical example of this newspaper is the *Paris Gazette*, as a monopoly provider. The paper also paid unusual attention to

domestic news, or at least to the activities of the king and the court. In this regard, its coverage was relentlessly fawning and flattering.

During the French Revolution, government control became weaker than before. As the central government lost control of press censorship, the publication and distribution of new newspapers and radical political pamphlets became easier. The collapse of the *Ancien Régime*, combined with increased political unrest, created an environment in which previously suppressed ideas could circulate freely [5]. Newspapers such as "L'Ami du Peuple" and "Le Père Duchesne" flourished, spreading revolutionary ideas and stimulating public sentiment. Political pamphlets and newspapers became important tools for revolutionary leaders and their opponents to mobilize mass support for various political agendas.

2.1.3. Overall literacy rate in France

The relatively high literacy rate of French people is another reason for the popularity of newspapers in the period of the French Revolution. The ability to read is necessary for the media like newspapers and pamphlets. According to the book written by T. C. W. Blanning, in the century between the 1680s and the 1780s, the literacy rate in France rose from 29% to 47% for men and from 14% to 27% for women [6]. This literacy rate is relatively high compared to other European countries, such as 18th century Spain which has an average literacy rate of 20%-25%, and the literacy rate in Portugal in the 18th century is estimated to be less than 20%, and may reach 25-30% for men and even lower for women [7]. The rising literacy rate supported the popularity and dissemination of newspapers, revolutionary pamphlets, and written media during the Revolutionary period.

2.2. Newspapers' role in spreading nationalism

Nationalism usually unites people by fostering a common sense of identity, mission, and belonging. It mobilizes mass support, defines revolution as a struggle for a national future, and legitimizes efforts to overthrow existing power structures in favor of self-determination and national sovereignty. The newspaper is one of a crucial role in spreading and propagating national ideas through literacy skills, which is almost 3 perspectives: selection of emotional words, easy and clear language, and fuzzy concepts. These skills can be reflected clearly in the two famous newspapers such as *L'Ami du Peuple* and *Le Père Duchesne* during the period of the French Revolution (1790-1792).

Of all the newspapers, we have focused mainly on *L'Ami du Peuple* (The Friend of the People) and *Le Père Duchesne*, both of which were very typical political newspapers of the Revolutionary period. *L'Ami du Peuple* and *Le Père Duchesne* were the main propaganda tools that helped to mobilize the masses and create a sense of national identity among the people.

2.2.1. L'Ami du Peuple

L'Ami du Peuple is a famous newspaper published from 1789 to 1793, the author of this newspaper was Jean-Paul Marat who was a political theorist and a journalist during the French Revolution. Marat's newspaper was to address "the people". "The people" are the sans-culottes, which mainly are the people from lower-class status in 18th-century France [8]. According to Hoffman's research, the sans-culottes were people with similar political aims, including small shopkeepers, laborers, journeymen, and the poor [9]. As Hoffman noted in his research, most sans-culottes were egalitarian and anti-aristocratic. The language style is emotional and aggressive rhetoric appeals to workers and the urban underclass.

Newspaper language is direct and inflammatory and can galvanize readers into anger and action. Marat's inflammatory language in *L'Ami du Peuple* fueled nationalism by framing counter-revolutionaries, aristocrats, and moderates as enemies of "the people." This reinforced mass

identification with nationalism, leading to events like the September Massacre, where Marat's propaganda sparked violent action. The events that Marat instigated through *L'Ami du Peuple* caused riots by emphasizing the notion of the people, the notion of the nation, the creation of a new France, and so on. The most direct example is the September massacre, in which Marat galvanized popular participation through inflammatory or revolutionary language. By using "Citizens, did you want a revolution without revolution?" Robespierre, Danton, and Marat insisted that the "new bloodletting" had been a spontaneous popular movement.

2.2.2. Le Père Duchesne

Le Père Duchesne was an extreme radical newspaper during the French Revolution written by Jacques Hébert who was a French journalist and leader of the French Revolution. This newspaper was published from 1790 to 1794. Hébert's *Le Père Duchesne* was aimed at the lower classes, which included the oppressed proletariat, such as the workers, peasants, and commoners of Paris. Knowing this group's passion for the revolution and anger at the upper classes, Hébert used easy-to-understand language and humorous and ironic expressions to attract these people's attention. The most exact sample is: "The National Assembly prevented this, the fucking bankruptcy, that in your heart of hearts you desire" [10].

The central message that Hébert disseminated through *Le Père Duchesne* was radical nationalism, blurring several concepts and combining revolution with the state, and the people with the republic. This led to the notion that the counter-revolution was a traitor, a betrayal of the French people and nation. For example, Hébert called King Louis XVI a "hypocrite" and accused him of betraying the French people and the revolution, a personalized attack that made the King a target of nationalism and galvanized the popular defense of national sovereignty.

Le Père Duchesne gave impetus to revolutionary action and the ideological development of radical nationalism. He defined France as a "people's country" [11] and emphasized that the proletariat should control the state against the old aristocratic and bourgeois powers. Through his propaganda, the French people began associating nationalism with class struggle and developed a radical conception of nationalism.

To sum up, both Marat and Hébert emphasized the universality and legitimacy of the revolution, making it not just a movement of a particular city or class, but the cause of the entire French people. By ridiculing moderates and counterrevolutionaries, Hébert further promoted the idea of a "people's state," emphasizing that ordinary people should decide the nation's fate. This universal narrative helped to shift from a local to a broader national identity, advancing the notion of the "French people" as a unity. The influence of newspapers, not only at the ideological level but also in actual acts of violence and policy promotion, greatly contributed to the spread of radical nationalism in the French Revolution.

2.3. Effectiveness of newspaper

2.3.1. Wide dissemination of information

Unlike books, which are sold only in bookstores, newspapers are widely distributed through street vendors and postmen. Especially during the Revolution, newspapers quickly reached the streets of Paris and other cities in a more mobile and flexible way. This direct access to the public allows newspapers to quickly deliver the latest news and effectively expand their audience.

2.3.2. Prices of newspapers

During the revolution, newspapers were printed in large quantities and at relatively low prices. This made it possible for people with modest incomes to afford a newspaper, or for several workers to buy a newspaper together and read it. This high circulation made newspapers far more influential than other printing forms and became an important means for the rapid spread of nationalist ideas.

3. Radio as a propaganda tool for NAZI

3.1. Popularization of mass broadcasting

In the 1930s, radio grew to be the most important tool of mass communication in Germany, and when the Nazis came to power in 1933, they quickly recognized its potential as a key medium for controlling and mobilizing the population. The Nazi government designed and implemented inexpensive broadcasting equipment, the “people's radio” (Volksempfänger) [12], which dramatically lowered the cost of purchasing radio and made it affordable for working-class people and peasants. By 1939, some 70 percent [13] of German households owned radios, creating an unprecedented distribution network that allowed the Nazis to reach most of the country by radio.

3.2. State-people linkages

In the broadcasts, the Nazis constantly emphasized the indivisibility of the German state and the “German people,” creating a sense of ethnocentric identity. This nationalist narrative united Germans around a “common destiny” and a “common enemy,” reinforcing their sense of belonging and responsibility to their country. For example, Hitler's speeches, often broadcast directly to the nation, emphasized the unity of the German people, their pure ethnic ancestry, and their defense against foreign enemies, successfully shaping a “common enemy” and “us versus them” narrative.

3.3. The effectiveness and advantages of radio

The Media under Totalitarianism and the Spread of Nationalism clearly describes the characteristics of radio [14]. Radio, this newly invented media has great impact on spreading extreme nationalism. The directness and immediacy of the broadcast allowed Hitler and the Nazi leadership to speak “directly” to the nation through this medium. It can be reflected in Goebbels's idea that playing the radio in a crowded hall would make every listener a direct participant in the event. It means that radio is an instrument not only to create uniformity but also to guide public opinion towards the Nazi concept of ‘national community.’” The Nazis' direct access to domestic space through radio enhanced the effective dissemination of their message and gave listeners a stronger emotional connection to Hitler and the Nazi government, helping to solidify nationalist sentiment.

Undoubtedly, the widespread availability of radio also enabled the Nazis to tightly control the flow of information, eliminating opposition and ensuring a monopoly on the dissemination of their nationalist messages. The government monopolized radio broadcasts and banned any information that opposed or questioned Nazi policies. This single-channel flow of information ensured the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda and made it nearly impossible for the population to be exposed to other points of view, thus deepening their belief in Nazi nationalism.

In conclusion, the Nazis effectively spread radical nationalist ideas through the radio. The wide reach of the audience, the inflammatory emotional language, and the monopoly of information dissemination make radio a powerful tool for mobilizing and controlling the population. This monopoly of information and the omnipresence of radio enabled the Nazis to successfully shape a

society with a strong national identity, which facilitated the development and consolidation of radical nationalism.

4. Compare and the conclusion

4.1. Percentage of target audience (cover of target audience)

4.1.1. Newspaper during the French Revolution

During the French Revolution, newspapers were one of the most important tools for spreading information, especially after literacy rates increased and printing costs fell, and the general public began to have access to cheap newspapers, especially radical political papers such as *Le Père Duchesne* and *L'Ami du Peuple*. These newspapers were widely distributed to the working class and the lower classes of the public through peddlers and messengers. Due to limited literacy rates (about 47% of men and 27% of women can read and write) [1], the influence of newspapers has been concentrated in urban areas, especially among the working class and urban poor. Nevertheless, newspapers remained an important vehicle for the dissemination of radical nationalist ideas, helping to extend the "revolutionary" narrative to a wider segment of society.

4.1.2. Radio during the Nazi era

Radio had a much wider reach in Nazi Germany. Through the popularization of "people's radios," radio ownership rose rapidly throughout the country, and by 1939 some 70 percent of German households owned radios. Radio coverage was no longer limited by literacy or geographic location, and its immediacy allowed the Nazi message to reach a large portion of the country's population, including rural and remote areas, in real time. Compared to the dissemination of newspapers, radio had a wider reach, reaching directly into homes and reaching different classes and social groups.

To sum up, Despite the influence of newspapers during the French Revolution, their audience could have been more diverse due to literacy and geographic constraints. In contrast, the Nazis' use of radio broke down these limitations, allowing the nationalist message to spread widely and quickly across the country, encompassing even the most marginalized groups. As a result, radio was much more effective in reaching a wider audience.

4.2. Ways of propaganda(pressing)

4.2.1. Newspapers of the French Revolution

Newspapers have a long production and dissemination cycle, relying on printing technology and human distribution, which means that information travels relatively slowly. However, newspapers allow for longer stretches of analysis and discourse, elaborate ideas, and sophisticated propaganda. Newspapers such as *Le Père Duchesne* appealed to the lower classes through accessible language and radical emotional expression, helping to shape the binary of "the people versus the enemy" and spreading radical nationalist ideas.

4.2.2. Radio during the Nazi era

The immediacy of radio made it possible for messages to reach millions of listeners in a short time. Through real-time speeches and live broadcasts, Nazi leaders such as Hitler and Goebbels could speak directly to the nation, using infectious and emotionally charged language that was highly effective at emotional mobilization. The content transmitted by radio is more concise and direct than that of

newspapers, focusing mainly on provocative and emotion-provoking content rather than complex analysis, which allows information to be spread and accepted more quickly and widely.

Newspaper dissemination requires more time and material resources, and the speed of information dissemination is also slower, but ideas can be discussed and studied in depth. Broadcasting, on the other hand, quickly stimulates people's emotions through real-time transmission and direct emotional mobilization, so it has more advantages in terms of speed and immediacy of transmission.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing the print media during the French Revolution, this study reveals the key role of newspapers in spreading nationalism, stimulating public sentiment, and shaping social consciousness. The press, represented by *Le Père Duchesne* and *L'Ami du Peuple*, mobilized the political passions of the people widely and promoted the development of radical nationalism and the revolutionary process through emotional and provocative language. These historical examples show that the change in media form can profoundly affect collective thinking and become an effective tool for social mobilization and ideological dissemination.

Looking ahead to future research directions, it is possible to further explore the functions and strategies of different media in spreading extremism and state ideology by comparing broadcasting during Nazi Germany with news during the French Revolution. The Nazis' ability to control and direct public opinion more effectively across geographic borders through instant communication media such as radio offers new perspectives on how modern media technologies can be used to strengthen regime control and shape group consciousness. By comparing the similarities and differences between the two, future research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between traditional print media and electronic media in political mobilization and provide valuable historical insights into how we can rationally respond to media influences. In the modern world.

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