

Peter Ufer. *Leipziger Presse 1789 bis 1815: Eine Studie zu Entwicklungstendenzen und Kommunikationsbedingungen des Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenswesens zwischen Französischer Revolution und den Befreiungskriegen.* Münster and Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 2000. 367 pp. EUR 19.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8258-3164-6.



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Saxon Press Elites and Publications during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era

In the past twenty years numerous studies on European print culture during the revolutionary era have illustrated the dynamic role of the press in engaging, reflecting, and shaping fundamental political, social, and commercial transformations that constitute the emergence of a modern civic society. If scholars of France, Britain, and even North America associate closely the role of the press with emergent popular politics, research on German Central Europe generally regards the press as a central tool of Enlightenment and reform discourse.[1] Peter Ufer's work places the Saxon city of Leipzig in the same category with such eighteenth-century centers of Enlightenment as Hamburg, Weimar, Jena, Berlin, Göttingen, and Halle, and argues that Leipzig experienced a fundamental civic transformation documented by its press during the decades between the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna. His study explores the personalities and ideas that shaped Leipzig's press and contests traditional historiography that the city peeked during the early Enlightenment only to remain a political and cultural backwater until the nineteenth century. His book portrays the emergence of a dynamic urban press culture in Leipzig and provides an important compara-

tive perspective on the regional German press.

Home to a university and trading houses, Leipzig, as Ufer argues, was an anachronism in German Central Europe, both commercially and culturally. Furthermore, the dynamics of dynastic loyalty, political conservatism, and economic growth shaped the development of Leipzig's press. Ufer breaks his study into distinct chronological periods based on the influence of differing elites on the press. He commences his study with the decades following 1763 to illustrate significant breaks in the city's print culture between 1790 and 1815. Ufer highlights the personalities that directed the city's press and divides them into two groups: the established reform-conservative elites and the emergent reform-liberal elites, and distinguishes the ideas and interests that directed their publications. He introduces the establishment press comprised of the reform-conservatives who treated the press as a tool to support enlightened absolutism and economic mercantilism. Closely associated with the Saxon dynasty, these elites represented the power, goals, and needs of the state and employed the press to support the economy, culture, and the cultivation of good taste.

The *Leipziger Zeitung*, for example, featured international events and court news as well as trade and exchange information. Of Leipzig's fifty journals prior to 1790, most were directed to small learned circles. His overview of these publications seems very familiar and comparable to print culture in other eighteenth-century German cities.

After 1790 periodicals produced by a new circle of Leipzig publishers appeared. These publications featured a new perspective on Enlightenment reform, supported an exchange of public opinion between different interest groups, and articulated progressive economic notions already prevalent in the English and French press. In fact, economic motives rather than political ones inspired the emergent reform-liberal elites. Specifically, this group viewed the press as a vehicle for articulating civic interests with an economic focus and a means of commercial success. Varied in its social and economic composition and clearly outside the traditional social hierarchy, this elite, according to Ufer, was independent from the academic philistines of the reform-conservative elite and beneficiaries of Leipzig's recent economic growth. Distanced from the state apparatus and dynasty, reform-liberal elites sought to liberate the press from the state and transform it into an independent commercial venture.

Ufer argues that despite censorship restrictions which focused on political writings, Leipzig's press between 1790 and 1805 articulated the desires and voices of the upper and middle classes. He provides a detailed overview of several papers and journals to support this claim. Leipzig's new publishers and editors directed their publications as commercial ventures to a broad and varied public, and he asserts that they succeeded in creating new markets for their publications. Like their predecessors, the reform-conservatives, economic reforms remained predominant for the reform-liberals even after the politicizing events of the French Revolution. Ufer offers the *Journal für Fabrik, Manufaktur, Handlung und Mode* as an example of the post-1790 periodical. It sought to reach a broad public of merchants, manufacturers, industrialists, bankers, state administrators, educated elites, and the fashionable world. Along with articles on finance, exchange rates, transport, materials, and textiles, it featured fashion and humorous anecdotes. It appeared both a pragmatic voice for economic reforms and a successful commercial venture.

Reading for entertainment and pleasure also shaped new periodicals as evidenced by journals on music, theatre, and, after 1795, fashion. Ufer views such emerging

fashion journals as *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* as an expression of middle-class self-assertion in opposition to the nobility and claims it affirmed a liberal perspective of individual development with its focus on the family, the home, the garden, and the body. Entertainment and practical education also met in the *Volksfreund*, a conversational journal filled with advice on raising children, saving money, and selecting horses, as well as stories, songs, anecdotes, fables and puzzles. Each of these journals represented a new kind of periodical in Leipzig's print culture, attracted new circles of readers, and were neither financed nor supported by the state, all factors that characterize the publications of the reform-liberal elite.

After 1806 the French determined Leipzig's press. Ufer points out that the *Leipziger Zeitung*, now published by a member of the reform-liberal elite who viewed Napoleon as a great reformer, could only print political news from the *Moniteur*. Napoleon clearly understood the importance of the press and manipulated it to his advantage whenever possible. In fact, Ufer argues that Napoleon's attention to the political implications of the press finally persuaded the Saxon dynasty to regard the press as more than an informative and administrative tool. In response to the highly manipulated and international focus of the *Leipziger Zeitung*, the *Leipziger Tageblatt* emerged in 1807 as a product of the reform-liberal elite. It was apolitical, conversational, and clearly oriented to local news and announcements. This paper, directed to the middle and upper class of the city eventually emerged as the "voice of Leipzig" (p. 176).

New papers and journals also appeared during the Napoleonic Wars that stood in direct opposition to Napoleon and French expansion. Ufer introduces the *Deutsche Blätter*, and two journals, the *Europäischer Aufseher* and the *Sächsischer Patriot*, products of the liberal-reform elite; these publications espoused different notions of patriotic sentiment—ranging from German unity, to cosmopolitan and humanitarian reform, and local Saxon traditions and loyalty. Published in 1813 and 1814, these publications characterize the brief era of spontaneous freedom of the press and explosive growth in the printed word throughout German Central Europe. War lyrics, poetry, song books, pamphlets, and civic and military newspapers (*Feldzeitung*) proliferated during the period, leading one scholar to describe the wars as a "communication event."^[2] Ufer's descriptive cataloging of Leipzig's publications supports analytical studies that illustrate that such terms as *Volk*, *Vaterland*, *Patriot*, *Nation*, and *Vaterlandsliebe* referred to different allegiances in different contexts during the Napoleonic Wars.^[3] In

Leipzig, as elsewhere in German Central Europe, such publications did not articulate a common national vision or goal aside from overcoming French occupation.

Ufer charts the monopoly of press under the reform-conservative elite and identifies a new liberal-reform elite emerging in 1790 with a specific emancipation program which disassociated the press from the state apparatus. Unlike the homogenous reform conservatives, the new reform-liberals came from a variety of social backgrounds that shaped differing mentalities and world views, but Ufer argues they shared a fundamental belief in the opportunities of the market place and individual development and endeavored to keep their publications free from state apparatus. By 1815 this new elite produced many novel kinds of publications. In particular, they championed the non-political local conversational paper and a range of journals that featured economic success more than political aspirations. Yet, the relationship between economic development and civic emancipation within the reform-liberal agenda remains unclear in Ufer's work. He seems to relate the notion of civic emancipation solely to a rise in middle-class individualism and opportunities of the market. Political discourse appears marginalized in this study on urban political culture, which never clearly connects how the carving out of new economic spaces and opportunities relates directly to a commitment to developing public opinion.

The transition from one press elite, the reform-conservatives, to another, the reform-liberals, remains inadequately addressed. Ufer points out that shifts within the urban social hierarchy began in 1763, but were not apparent until after 1789 when society appeared increasingly fragmented by special interests, and traditional political status and dynastic connections declined as arbitrators of social prestige. Without really engaging the literature or controversy of the Reading Revolution, known to contemporaries as the *Leseflut*, Ufer offers the emergence of a new reading public during the second half of the eighteenth century to account for the rise and influence of the reform-liberal elite. Although he features reading societies as the social headquarters for a new reading culture, he does not elucidate the role they played in society. He addresses the market for these publications, the readers, at the end of each chapter primarily to assert the expansion of reading and formation of new circles of readers including women. Thus, the connection between the publications, their reading public, and the formation of public opinion remains weak in this study. He also shortchanges such public spaces that stimulated print culture as coffee houses, taverns, and the

Beygangssche Museum, Leipzig's most important library. He points out, for example, the rise in reading libraries after 1809, but fails to account for this phenomena during a period of intense Napoleonic censorship (p. 195). Ufer is clearly less interested in readers than in the periodicals themselves and their publishers. In fact, at least one third of the book comprises detailed appendices of all Leipzig publications and their publishers during this era.

In conclusion, Ufer adds to our knowledge of print culture at the turn of the nineteenth century by underscoring the emergent middle-class participation and commercialization of the press. He distinguishes between two elites that directed Leipzig's press. In contrast to the Habermasian model, he does not view the emergence of the public sphere as an oppositional response to state authority. Rather than criticize the state, the reform-liberals sought to distance themselves from it. Ufer regards 1790 as a key turning point in the development of Leipzig's press and public sphere, yet finds political discourse less important in the press than economic reform and commercial success. In Leipzig, the French Revolution did not appear to polarize and politicize the reading public, rather it engendered anxiety among the ruling elites who responded by intensifying censorship, which in turn tolerated the emerging reform-liberals new apolitical periodicals. He also suggests how the new print culture, especially those works that emerged during the Wars of Liberation, introduced shifting notions of community and regional identity. Yet, he neglects a central part of the transformation of the press in this crucial era, its transition from a source of facts and material of public discussion to an institution representative of public opinion and political reflection. Despite the emphasis on the different publishers and journalists, there is not significant attention to the emergence of the editorial voice and analysis of events that marks the modern press. He only suggests this transition periodically in his study by describing correspondence networks between Leipzig publishers and leading German writers, publishers, and book merchants. We are left wanting to know more about how these publications appealed to and fostered public opinion in Leipzig. Yet, as suggested above, the main purpose of the book is to introduce Leipzig's press as an important component of Germany's print landscape rather than a Saxon backwater. For scholars of Saxony, urban Germany, and the press generally, Ufer's study and his detailed appendices will provide a useful factual reference.

Notes

- [1]. For a recent comparative analysis see Hanna Barker and Simon Burrow, eds., *Press Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- [2]. Jürgen Wilke, "Der nationale Aufbruch der Befreiungskriege als Kommunikationsereignis," in *Volk-Nation-Vaterland*, ed. Ulrich Hermann (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1996), pp. 353-368.
- [3]. Ernst Weber, *Lyrik der Befreiungskriege (1812-1815). Gesellschaftspolitische Meinungs- und Willensbildung durch Literatur* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1991); Jörg Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus (1770-1840)* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1998); Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Karen Hagemann, "Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre". *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

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