

JOSEPH KLAITS

Printed Propaganda under Louis XIV

Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion



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PRINTED PROPAGANDA
UNDER LOUIS XIV

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*Absolute Monarchy and
Public Opinion*

BY JOSEPH KLAITS

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Published by Princeton University Press,
Princeton, New Jersey
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press,
Guildford, Surrey

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
will be found on the last printed page of this book

Publication of this book has been aided by
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Printed in the United States of America
by Princeton University Press,
Princeton, New Jersey

FOR MY PARENTS

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PREFACE

THIS book seeks to integrate a pair of related themes: the political-diplomatic history of Louis XIV's reign and the role of print in the second half of the seventeenth century. My hope is to contribute to two active areas of historical scholarship. First is the renewed—or perhaps simply new—interest in the last part of the reign of Louis XIV, a concern spurred by the recent revisionist syntheses of John B. Wolf and Lionel Rothkrug, authors who, for different reasons, stress the significance of the long twilight that closed the Sun King's reign. Second is the problem of the sociology of the book, which in recent years has become a leading theme in the historiography of early modern Europe. The stimulating articles by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein and Robert Darnton and, for seventeenth-century France, the remarkable work of Robert Mandrou and Henri-Jean Martin have helped to kindle interest in such topics as censorship, clandestine pamphleteering, and the origins of the periodical press, all central themes of this monograph.

During the years this book has been in preparation, my research has been supported by generous fellowship and grant support which I am pleased to acknowledge here. A Fulbright-Hays fellowship and awards from the University of Minnesota helped subsidize fourteen eventful months of dissertation research in Paris during 1967 and 1968. A summer fellowship from Oakland University permitted a return to Paris in 1971 for research that led to significant broadening of the manuscript. Finally, a research fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library in 1974 enabled me to complete the writing under ideal working conditions.

No American who has written a book on French history can fail to have accumulated a long list of institutional debts

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on two continents. A glance at this book's bibliography will indicate the extent of my obligations to the staffs of the Archives Nationales in the Hôtel Soubise, the Archives des Affaires étrangères on the quai d'Orsay, the Archives du Ministère de Guerre at Vincennes, the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, and the Bibliothèque Nationale's departments of Imprimés and Manuscrits. Less obvious are debts to a number of libraries in the United States for granting access to numerous rare printed works, among them many which I could not locate in France. These are the Library of Congress, the Folger Library, the libraries of Columbia University, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Michigan, and the University of Minnesota.

A shortened version of chapter 2 appeared in the *Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Western Society for French History* with the title "Censorship Under Louis XIV." Several paragraphs have been reproduced from my article, "Men of Letters and Political Reform in France at the End of the Reign of Louis XIV: The Founding of the Académie Politique," *Journal of Modern History*, 43:4 (1971), 577-597.

At different times many people read or listened to parts of this book and were kind enough to offer suggestions. I wish to thank in particular Paul W. Bamford, Richard M. Brace, William F. Church, Georges Dethan, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, Ragnhild Hatton, Robert M. Kingdon, Philip A. Knachel, B. Robert Kreiser, George T. Matthews, John C. Rule and Howard M. Solomon. Thanks also to Donald Bailey, Richard Bingham and Richard Jackson, each of whom took time from his own research in Paris to check a stray source, thus sparing me the transatlantic scholar's endemic dismay over the missing citation.

With appropriate symmetry, John B. Wolf, under whose direction at the University of Minnesota this book began, also oversaw the final draft's composition in a seminar at the Folger Library. In the years between, his suggestions and

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encouragement continually rekindled my enthusiasm. He has my deepest thanks, as does Orest Ranum, who ever since undergraduate days has been generous with his time, with good advice, and with warm support.

I am delighted to acknowledge the singular professional help and personal concern of Marian Wilson, editorial adviser in the College of Arts and Sciences, Oakland University. Among numerous other services, she unraveled my chronically messy syntax, introduced some order into the anarchy of the footnotes, and delivered my translations from the English equivalent of *franglais* which was their original condition. As many others have discovered, producing a manuscript with her is both education and pleasure for an author.

My greatest thanks are to my wife, Barrie, who contributed her many talents at every stage. Without her this project never would have progressed to print.

Waterford, Michigan

Thanksgiving 1975

Reading proof gives me a welcome opportunity to thank the members of the seminar on popular culture of the Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University for the careful criticism they gave parts of this book in February 1976. In particular, Lawrence Stone, Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Ralph Giesey, Robert Forster, Theodore K. Rabb and Herbert Rowen were most helpful in pinpointing problems and suggesting alternate formulations; I want to acknowledge their assistance even if most of their excellent ideas must await the occasion of another book or, more likely, the skills of another writer. Plainly these people and the others named above have contributed only to the book's strengths; the author alone is responsible for its weaknesses. Finally I would like to express my appreciation to Lewis Bateman of Princeton University Press for his exacting and sympathetic editorship.

J. K.

ABBREVIATIONS

THE following abbreviations are employed in the notes:

- AAE Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris
CP = Correspondance Politique
MD = Mémoires et Documents
AG Archives du Ministère de Guerre, Vincennes
AN Archives Nationales, Paris
BA Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris
BN Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Imp. = Département des Imprimés
Ms. fr. = Manuscrits français
N.a.fr. = Nouvelles acquisitions françaises

PRINTED PROPAGANDA
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CHAPTER ONE

The Nature of Early Modern Propaganda

MONARCHY AND THE ADVENT OF PRINT

PROPAGANDA is as old as rulership and as novel as twentieth-century technology. Today propaganda calls to mind the instruments of mass communication and socialization: radio, television, film, large-circulation newspapers, and compulsory public education. Without these tools the modern propagandist is unimaginable; with them, he can reach and hope to manipulate virtually every member of an advanced industrial society. Yet the lineage of propaganda can be traced back at least to the emperors of ancient Rome, whose coins, commemorative arches, and other forms of display demonstrate that in antiquity awesome magnificence was a necessary part of governance. In medieval Europe impressive ceremonial continued to be a symbolic representation of princely power, and often, as in the rite of coronation and the ritual of the king's touch, these ceremonies served to lift the monarch to the threshold of the supernatural. Ritual and display, then, are ancient elements in the psychology of authority.

To be sure, the audience for premodern propaganda was not only comparatively small by current standards, but also comprised a much more limited segment of the total population; before the advent of mass states the "political nation" was a larger or smaller elite.¹ It would nevertheless be a serious mistake to assume that the definition and character of

¹ See Melvin Small, "Historians Look at Public Opinion," in *Public Opinion and Historians, Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Melvin Small (Detroit, 1970), p. 14.

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the "public" remained fixed from ancient times to the nineteenth century. During this long period there were important transformations in the audience for and hence in the nature and purposes of propaganda. For example, the two great church-state confrontations of the high Middle Ages—the so-called investiture controversy of the eleventh century, and the conflict two hundred years later between Pope Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair of France—each evoked a distinctive brand of polemic. The tracts of the Gregorian reform were Latin manuscripts directed at clerics and monks almost exclusively. But by the thirteenth century Philip's councillors issued a barrage of written pieces directed at a nonecclesiastical audience, perhaps as a response to growing lay literacy. For the still illiterate majority, the crown took its cue from church preachers and sent orators around France to address the populace with speeches composed by the king's ministers. A socially broadened audience for propaganda dictated a difference in tone, and so in this dispute, for the first time in the Middle Ages, the concerns of the people at large were introduced into the discussion. Significantly, Philip the Fair convened the Estates General, an assembly of notables, and a general assembly at Paris to listen to and advertise their support of the king.² The French Renaissance monarchy proceeded to develop the tradition of propaganda through assemblies. By carefully blending sessions of local and provincial assemblies with meetings of the Estates General, the crown cultivated a procedure that allowed it to summon the representatives of several orders to suffer flattering harangues, impressive visual displays of royal majesty, and other devices calculated to bind them to the interests of the crown. For similar reasons of propaganda as well as finance, princes all over Europe fostered their estates during the Renaissance.³

² Helene Wieruszowski, *Von Imperium zum nationalen Königtum* (Munich, 1933), pp. 114-140.

³ J. Russell Major, *Representative Institutions in Renaissance France* (Madison, 1960), *passim*.

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These predominantly aural methods of propaganda were profoundly affected by the advent of print at the end of the fifteenth century. Although the importance of printing has long been a commonplace to historians of early modern Europe, until recently remarkably little attention was devoted to defining the precise nature of its impact. We are just beginning to understand, for example, the role of print as a precondition for the ideological revolutions we call the Reformation and the Enlightenment.⁴ Clearly, printing helped make rapid social change possible in early modern Europe, if only by multiplying enormously the size of a writer's potential audience. Yet the invention of printing also reinforced the cleavage between the literate and the illiterate. In the age of print the written word came to assume an ever increasing role. Since in most parts of Europe the vast majority of people remained unlettered until after the French Revolution,⁵ the period from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries saw the emergence of two parallel cultures: a relatively small reading public, and a larger illiterate group which existed in a culture of sound. Doubtless the lines dividing these groups were often blurred and indistinct. Long after Gutenberg, literate people continued to cultivate habits of memory and oral rhetoric derived from the age of script. On the other hand, the visual world of print was

⁴ See the excellent articles by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, esp. "Some Conjectures About the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Modern History*, 40:1 (March 1968), 1-56; and "L'Avènement de l'imprimerie et la Réforme," *Annales-E.S.C.*, 26:6 (1971), 1355-1381. On the effects of printed pamphlets in the eighteenth century, see Robert Darnton, "Reading, Writing and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature," *Daedalus*, 100:1 (Winter 1971), 214-256.

⁵ Michel Fleury and Pierre Valmary, "Les Progrès de l'instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon III," *Population*, 12 (1957), esp. 80-91; F. Furet and W. Sachs, "La Croissance de l'alphabétisation en France XVIII^e-XIX^e siècle," *Annales-E.S.C.*, 29 (1974), 714-737; Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," *Past and Present*, No. 42 (February 1969), pp. 69-139.

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impinging even on the auditory universe of the unlettered. By the seventeenth century there had grown up an extensive printed popular literature destined for an illiterate audience through the medium of the village storyteller.⁶

This kind of crossover was particularly common in the area of propaganda. Princes who had employed the cumbersome methods of manuscript to communicate with their subjects switched quickly to print to announce declarations of war, publish battle accounts, promulgate treaties, or argue disputed points in pamphlet form. Theirs was an effort, as one authority has put it, to "win the psychological war which prepared and accompanied the military operations" of rulers.⁷ In France, the content of this propaganda literature conveyed much the same sort of message as did the royal speeches to the estates, addresses which were themselves regularly circulated in print. The root idea was to evoke the notion of the *patrie* as the realm of France and to represent the king as the personification of this *patrie*.⁸ In similar fashion, the English crown under Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell made systematic use of both Parliament and press to win public support for the Reformation.⁹

For a time after the invention of printing, then, the estates and the printing press remained twin pillars of princely propaganda. But beginning in the early seventeenth century, a number of rulers and ministers—dubbed "absolutist" by

⁶ Eisenstein, "Some Conjectures," pp. 30 ff.; Geneviève Bollème, *Les Almanachs populaires aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1969), esp. pp. 14 ff.; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 189–226.

⁷ Jean-Pierre Seguin, *L'Information en France de Louis XII à Henri II* (Geneva, 1961), p. 46.

⁸ André Bossuat, "La Littérature de propagande au XV^e siècle," *Cahiers de l'histoire*, 1 (1956), 142–146; P. S. Lewis, *Later Medieval France, the Polity* (London, 1968), pp. 7–8, 63–66, 77. See also M. Yardeni, *La Conscience nationale en France pendant les guerres de religion (1559–1598)* (Louvain, 1971).

⁹ G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police, the Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 171–216.

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later historians—began to abandon assemblies of estates. Composed of articulate and increasingly well-organized orders, the estates in many parts of Europe were becoming foci of opposition to the crown instead of tools that served princely power. In France the regency of Louis XIII saw the last meeting of the Estates General before 1789; it also saw the founding of the first royally sponsored newspaper in Europe. The replacement of the volatile assembly by the controlled weekly *Gazette* is a concurrence symptomatic of the importance Cardinal Richelieu attached to print in his state-building objectives.¹⁰

Richelieu well understood the significance of public opinion in the state and the role of print in forming opinion.¹¹ A writer sympathetic to the cardinal stated Richelieu's own assumptions about polemical writings: "Those who wish to subvert a state try by all manner of means to imprint [*imprimer*] in the minds of subjects a bad opinion of the Prince. Writings are the chief tool used in drawing this picture. They are the gate from which emerge both respect and rebellion."¹² The obvious conclusion drawn by Richelieu was that writings must be regulated to protect against rebellion as well as to promote respect. The latter, positive use of the pen was especially necessary, given the ultimate futility of effective censorship restrictions. Although the Code Michaud of 1629 made writers of illegal works on

¹⁰ Major, *Representative Institutions*, pp. 19 ff. On Richelieu and the *Gazette*, see Howard M. Solomon, *Public Welfare, Science and Propaganda in Seventeenth Century France: The Innovations of Théophraste Renaudot* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 100–161.

¹¹ There is a considerable literature on Richelieu's propaganda. Three major recent works are Etienne Thuau, *Raison d'état et pensée politique à l'époque de Richelieu* (Paris, 1966), esp. pp. 169–177 and 214–226; Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVII^e siècle, 1598–1701*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1969), esp. pp. 258–275, 433–471; and William F. Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 109–115, 340–349, and *passim*.

¹² *Discours au roi touchant les libelles faits contre le gouvernement de son état*, quoted in Thuau, *Raison d'état*, p. 170.

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affairs of state subject to trial for lèse majesté, Louis XIII's chief minister knew that the limited enforcement powers of the crown would never close off the flow of clandestine publications printed in France and abroad.¹³ Thus, as Gabriel Naudé summarized the policy he helped to shape, the prince himself must hire "skilled pens, have them write clandestine pamphlets, manifestos, artfully composed apologies and declarations, in order to lead [his subjects] by the nose."¹⁴ For these reasons, Richelieu not only fostered Théophraste Renaudot's *Gazette* but also employed numerous scholars, poets, and mere hacks to explain and justify royal policy and to exalt the image of Louis XIII in France and Europe. As another of Richelieu's writers put it: "Arms uphold the cause of Princes, but well-tempered books publicize their equity and orient public affections to regard them as epiphanies of justice."¹⁵

To censor and to sponsor—this formula summarizes Richelieu's policy on printed opinion. In applying this maxim the cardinal-minister was far from unique among seventeenth-century statesmen, although certainly he was unsurpassed in his systematic thoroughness. Richelieu communicated to his creatures and other subordinates his concept of the royal servants' duty to glorify and publicize their monarchical master. How then did Richelieu and other seventeenth-century statesmen differ from modern propagandists? Are there in fact any differences beyond those stemming from technological resources?

In answering these questions, it is important to observe that, while historians often have underestimated the novel consequences of printing in seventeenth-century Europe,

¹³ On the mechanics of Richelieu's censorship, see Martin, *Livre*, pp. 441-466. The absence of regularized censorship under Henry IV is discussed by Alfred Soman, "The Theatre, Diplomacy and Censorship in the Reign of Henri IV," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 25:2 (1973), 276, 282, 284.

¹⁴ Quoted in Thuau, *Raison d'état*, p. 172.

¹⁵ F. de Colomby, quoted *ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

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equally misleading would be any attempt to define the essential character of the age in the light of this giant technological step. Concerning all the basic conditions of life, European society in the seventeenth century remained overwhelmingly premodern. Even literacy remained a minority achievement everywhere in Europe despite the impetus of print. The innovation of printing was absorbed by a social and cultural order altogether different from our own and essentially continuous with earlier patterns of life and thought.

If we are to understand early modern propaganda without anachronism, then, we should consider the fundamental assumptions of the day about the nature of authority and human psychology. In the seventeenth century the right of established authorities to censor dangerous ideas was rarely questioned. The dominant paternalist patterns of thought held that all authorities were servants of God and bidden to shield their flocks from ungodly ideas.¹⁶ Further, since truth was regarded as unitary and knowable, men of state and other authorities had no reason to doubt that in censoring they were acting as upholders of truth. Only with the Enlightenment did the European consciousness come to regard truth as elusive, multiple and relative. Thus, while liberal-democratic political assumptions preclude authoritarian thought control, the assumptions of absolutism made censorship a mandatory concern of authoritative government.

In France the crown fought a long and ultimately successful battle to wrest the right of censorship from the church. This outcome reinforces the conclusion that in early modern Europe the state had become the chief official arbiter of public morality. That society could not long cohere without some such arbiter was an opinion so universally held that people hardly ever bothered to formulate it. Moreover, the state was perceived not only as a referee which would prevent and penalize violations but also as an active supplier of information and tutelage. According to the political

¹⁶ Church, *Richelieu*, p. 507.

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precepts of the age, a government which failed to guide and lead citizens to a correct understanding of disputed points would have been judged unworthy of its high calling. Thus the French monarchy was duty bound not only to regulate printed opinion but also actively to direct it.¹⁷

Does this imply that seventeenth-century propaganda was intended to be as manipulative as our modern varieties? In their private correspondence Richelieu and his contemporaries described themselves not as falsifiers but as enlighteners, bringing the beacon of truth to people who were searching for guidance.¹⁸ Before dismissing such appraisals as an advanced form of self-serving delusion, we might pause to consider in what ways the propaganda of absolutist France differed from the modern variety. Contemporary propaganda rests on a base of psychological assumptions which were unknown in Richelieu's day. Axiomatic for today's propagandists is the notion that men are creatures of their conditioning and can be manipulated by the application of suitable stimuli. Thus modern propaganda is intentionally contrived to exploit the mythic and irrational, attempting to undermine critical, independent thinking.¹⁹ The concept of the malleability of man, from which modern propaganda derives, is still another Enlightenment postulate that flew in the face of the conventional wisdom of Christian

¹⁷ Cf. Peter Fraser, *The Intelligence of Secretaries of State and Their Monopoly of Licensed News, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 117; "... the reasons of state that justified the Secretarial monopoly of news were not considerations of the inconvenience of hostile comment so much as the belief that unofficial news would be 'false news' founded upon rumour or bad intelligence."

¹⁸ Later, Daniel Defoe stated that the purpose of his political gazette, *The Review*, was "to open the eyes of the deluded people and set them to rights in the things in which they are imposed upon." See Marjorie Nicolson, introduction to *The Best of Defoe's Review*, ed. William L. Payne (New York, 1951), p. xvi.

¹⁹ Unusually acute comments on modern propaganda can be found in Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda, the Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York, 1965), pp. 6, 25-26.

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Europe.²⁰ In the early seventeenth century man was defined not by his capacity for change (or "improvement," as Enlightenment thinkers were optimistically to put it) but by his innately unchanging nature. Man's very immutability severely limited the potential range of propaganda.

Further, in its vision of political and cultural life the seventeenth century was dominated by strong biases toward continuity and against change. Aristocracy, religion, classical learning, and monarchy itself were cults whose prestige derived from their lengthy lineage. Innovations, even radical ones, had to be justified by reference to past precedents which were often misreadings or nostalgic imaginings of historical reality. And in political confrontation the authority of the past was perceived as the best kind of weapon. That there was nothing new about this in seventeenth-century Europe is precisely the point, for the burden of the past weighed upon the age of Richelieu quite as much as and possibly more than upon Philip the Fair's.

The cult of kingship, which became the central expression of political feeling in seventeenth-century France, was built upon a long tradition of reverence for the monarchy. As a sacred being who could transmit divine cures by his touch, the ruler of France was infinitely far from the modern politician seeking legitimacy by manipulating the public with a variety of propaganda devices and techniques. Nor did the monarchy need to validate itself with an ideology built upon contract theory or concepts of social utility. Instead, the cement of the French state was a set of widely held and deeply felt traditional values about authority, shared assumptions which cast the king not as a political actor explaining his actions and seeking approval but as a quasi-divine personage whose will was the very expression of right action, truth, and justice. Thus a major theme of printed propaganda during the first half of the seventeenth century was the French king's miraculous power to bring about a

²⁰ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1967-1969), II, 511-521.

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cure for scrofula by touching the diseased. Habsburg pamphleteers attempted to play down the importance of this gift; Henry IV's personal physician published an elaborate and very popular treatise upholding the divine origins and miraculous effects of the royal touch; and in Richelieu's time a supporter of the French cause in Catalonia appealed to the royal miracle as an argument conceived to win local support for the Bourbon side.²¹ No instance better illustrates the principle of the continuity of royal symbolism in the new age of print.

THE SUN KING AND THE COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTION

If the traditional propaganda of the French monarchy was expressed in a variety of symbolic images which reflected aspects of the just, pious, and brave king, the reign of Louis XIV brought this tradition to its climax. For this monarch prestige was the very substance of power. From the earliest years of his personal rule the young king's actions reflected deep concern for the psychological component of kingship. An elaborate court etiquette whose theme was service to the king's person made Louis a living embodiment of monarchical supremacy. The choice of Apollo's emblem further symbolized the centrality of the Sun King. And since every god must have his temple, the complex of Versailles was created at least partly for the purpose of impressing Frenchmen and foreigners with the grandeur of the French monarchy. All this represented an effort to make tangible the mystique of kingship that lay at the heart of absolutism, lifting the monarch above mere humanity to the plane of supernatural myth. The man who wore the crown had to

²¹ Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges. Etude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg, 1924), pp. 342-344, 365-367; see also Roland Mousnier, *The Assassination of Henry IV*, trans. Joan Spencer (London, 1973), pp. 240-250.

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play the part of a demigod, and Louis XIV fulfilled the role brilliantly. As virtuoso performer in the elaborate piece of baroque stagecraft that was his reign, he wanted Europe to believe that he also had composed the script, built the set, designed the costumes, and directed the action. By identifying himself totally with his role of monarch, Louis gave dynamic life to absolutist ideology.²²

In the artwork of the absolutist state, French society was to be much more than a passive audience. Louis XIV's government intended that the king's subjects should participate in the ceremony of monarchy. Thus under Colbert's leadership a variety of corporate groups were founded and molded into vehicles of royal grandeur. We see this most clearly in the drive to organize science, letters, and the arts under the umbrella of royal academies. Richelieu had created the French Academy for literary men, but Colbert went much further when he introduced the principle of functional division in founding academies for music and the dance, for inscriptions and medals, for painting and sculpture, for architecture, and for the sciences. Each of these specialized academies organized a branch of learning or expression under royal control and made service to the crown its primary purpose.²³ The Academy of Music, for example, produced operas and ballets which not only glorified the idea of kingship and the person of the ruler but also took their themes from current political developments. The Academy of Inscriptions was charged with designing medals appropriately commemorating the achievements of the Sun King. Even the Academy of Sciences, it was hoped, would achieve technological advances that might find economic or military

²² On these general themes, see John B. Wolf, *Louis XIV* (New York, 1968), pp. 269-285, 357-378.

²³ Probably the best introduction to these academies is the last chapter of Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1947). Martin, *Livre*, pp. 436-439, 667-670, 769-771, places strong emphasis on the crown's use of royal academies for propaganda purposes.

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applications. The artistic academies were closely tied to the court ceremonial that so impressed visitors to Versailles. In particular, the productions of the Academy of Music were a mainstay of the ceaseless round of spectacles devised by Louis' government as the aesthetic manifestations of the Sun King's magnificence. By translating the king's actions into the symbolic language of music and poetry, the academicians performed an artistic apotheosis of politics.²⁴ In itself the act of apotheosis was no novelty, but what Colbert added was a set of corporate institutions through which such portrayals could be systematically, even bureaucratically, expressed.

Important as they were, these awesome academic and other spectacles could reach only that tiny fraction of the public resident at court. The enormous scale of Versailles nonetheless was dwarfed by France's twenty million inhabitants. Thus royal servants recognized the need to transmit the idea of the king's grandeur beyond the narrow orbit of the court and capital. Intendants, provincial governors, and other officials throughout France were mobilized to accomplish this purpose through techniques similar in many ways to those in use at the court. Visual and musical spectacles echoed the king's military triumphs, celebrated royal births and escorted members of the king's family to provincial cities. Fireworks, elaborate tableaux, and sumptuous feasts complete with fountains spouting wine became regular items of expenditure in every *généralité*. In these celebrations all urban dwellers might take part. Only the municipal elite and other "persons of quality" could cap the festivities with balls at the intendant's residence, but such public manifestations as cannon fire, street illuminations, and the pealing of church bells were enjoyed by the *peuple* as well.²⁵ Thus

²⁴ Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King* (Ithaca, 1973), esp. pp. 103-113, 150-169, 336-349; Roger Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Academy of the Sciences, 1666-1803* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 1-83.

²⁵ Among many surviving accounts, see esp.: *Feu de joie tiré à Dijon le dimanche 28. Novembre 1688 pour la prise de Philisbourg*

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the centralized domestic administration created by Colbert and his associates during the 1660's and 1670's provided a vehicle for systematically communicating the traditional message of monarchical grandeur.

Of all the mythic imagery enhancing the cult of monarchy, that of religion was the most fundamental. It was, for example, an ancient practice of French kings to fulfill the biblical injunction by offering thanksgiving to God for blessings bestowed. Their providential view regarded God as the source of all good fortune, and the monarchy translated this abstraction into Te Deum ceremonies that crystallized the message of divine protection for the king. After each manifestation of God's favor, Louis XIV unfailingly sent letters to the bishops and archbishops of France ordering them to arrange thanksgiving services throughout their dioceses. While each parish church carried out the king's order by holding its own Te Deum ritual, those of the cathedral churches were particularly impressive. In attendance there at the king's orders were the municipal authori-

(Dijon, 1688), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.3933; *Description du feu de joie dressé devant l'Hostel de Ville pour la prise de la ville de Namur* (n.p., 1692), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4012; *Relation sommaire de ce qui a été fait à Toulon pendant le séjour que Nosseigneurs les Ducs de Bourgogne et de Berry y ont fait* (Paris, 1701), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4162; *Relation de ce qui s'est fait à Lyon, au passage de Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne et de Monseigneur le Duc de Berry* (Lyon, 1701), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4166; *Relation de ce qui s'est passé à Châlon sur Saône à l'entrée de Msgr. le Duc de Bourgogne, le 14 Avril 1701* (Lyon, 1701), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4168; *Relation des réjouissances faites à Caen par Monsieur Foucault, . . . Intendant de Basse-Normandie, pour la naissance de Monseigneur le Duc de Bretagne* (Caen [1704]), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4267; Alexandre Dubois, *Journal d'un curé de campagne au XVII^e siècle*, ed. Henri Platelle (Paris, 1965), p. 141; *Journal d'un bourgeois de Caen, 1652-1733*, ed. G. Marcel (Paris, 1848), *passim*. Raymond Céleste, "Bordeaux au XVIII^e siècle, le roi d'Espagne à Blaye, Bordeaux et Bazas (1700-1701)," *Revue historique de Bordeaux*, 1 (1908), 49-61, 134-149, discusses Philip V's passage through southwestern France. For a general evaluation, see Isherwood, *Music*, pp. 295-298, 313.

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ties, resplendent in their robes of office. In a dozen cities of France the judges of the parlements were also required to lend their prestige by their presence. The magnificence of these occasions made Te Deum services a species of entertainment in the seventeenth century. More than this, by means of religious ritual the crown reinforced the sense of shared symbolism that bound the king and his Catholic subjects.²⁶

The prelates of the Gallican church soon learned how to refine their role as servants of Louis XIV's national policies. Typically they saw to it that the king's letters ordering a Te Deum service were printed for wide circulation in the dioceses. But the clerics were more than simple agents of transmission. The bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, for example, amplified the king's laconic order for a Te Deum upon the birth of a royal heir in 1704 into an elaborate model sermon which he printed and sent to every priest under his jurisdiction. The sermon expatiated upon the unmatched advantages of an assured succession to the French throne. Thus armed, even the least imaginative priest in the diocese should

²⁶ 1 Timothy 2:1-2. *Journal d'un bourgeois de Caen*, pp. 66-67, 75, 114-115, 117-118, 135-136, 139, 146-147. The Bibliothèque Nationale has dozens of royal orders for Te Deum services from this period, among them the following: *Lettre du Roy, envoyée à Monseigneur l'Archévêque de Paris, sur le sujet de la prise de la ville et Château de Tournay* (Paris, 1667), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.3579; *Lettre du Roy, envoyée à Monseigneur l'Archévêque de Paris, sur la prise de la Ville de Douay et Fort Descarpel* (Paris, 1667), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.3582; *Lettre du roy envoyée à Messieurs les Prevost des Marchands et Echevins de la Ville de Paris, pour assister au Te Deum, et faire faire des feux de joye, et autres réjouissances publiques, pour la prise de la Ville de Maëstrick* (Paris, 1679), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.3641; *Lettre du roi écrite à Monseigneur l'Archévêque de Paris, pour faire chanter Te Deum en l'Eglise de Nôtre Dame, afin de remercier Dieu de la prise de la Ville de Philisbourg par l'armée du Roy, commandée par Msgr. le Dauphin* (Paris, 1688), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷. 3930; *Lettre du Roy, écrite à Msgr. l'Archévêque de Paris pour faire chanter le Te Deum en l'Eglise Nôtre Dame, en action de grâces de la prise de Barcelonne par l'armée de Sa Majesté en Catalogne* (Paris, 1697), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4099.

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have been able to deliver an oration acceptable to king and bishop. The medium of the press served here to regularize and extend throughout the realm an ancient form of propaganda.²⁷

There were, however, few occasions for public celebration in the problem-ridden second half of Louis XIV's reign. The number of military victories dwindled during the exhausting War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697) and sank nearly to zero in the catastrophic War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). Meanwhile famine stalked the land in 1693-1694 and, even more ferociously, in 1709-1710. The prospect of an orderly succession to the throne evaporated with a stunning series of deaths in 1711-1712, leaving only a frail infant to protect France from a constitutional crisis. There seemed no end to the tragedies and, while Louis finally came to believe that God had abandoned him, the prelates of France, long used to triumphal services, now took it upon themselves to organize public prayers and processions beseeching the return of divine favor.²⁸

²⁷ *Lettres du Roy écrites à Monseigneur l'Evêque Comte de Châlons, Pair de France, pour faire chanter Te Deum dans l'Eglise Cathédrale, et dans toutes celles de son Diocèse, en action de grâces de la Prise de la Ville de Suze par l'Armée du Roy, commandée par Monsieur le Duc de la Feuillade; Et de la naissance de Monseigneur le Duc de Bretagne. Avec le Mandement de Mondit-Seigneur* (Châlons, 1704), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4264.

²⁸ BN, Mss. fr. 23209, fols. 210, 231, 251; these are letters from Colbert de Torcy to the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne discussing the prayers ordered by the prelate. A satirical verse of 1704 addressed to the Virgin Mary pointed to the irony of Te Deum orders in Louis XIV's reduced circumstances (*Mercure historique et politique*, October 1704, p. 440):

Faut-il toujours, Reine des Anges,
Qu'au lieu de chants de joye, et de chants
de louanges,
Louis jadis vainqueur, à present atterré,
Ordonne au Cardinal, son Cousin de Noailles,
Comme en un jour de funerailles,
De chanter le *Miserere*.

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Still the royal government continued to resort to the Te Deum service as a way of arousing patriotic fervor, blaming France's enemies for the prolonged warfare. Clearly, the king's Te Deum orders were politically motivated during the disastrous last wars; they did not abate even when Louis was reduced to seizing upon minor skirmishes as the occasion for reassuring celebrations. As one of Louis' enemies grudgingly admitted in 1690, "Whenever the king wins a battle, takes a city or subdues a province, we [i.e., Frenchmen] light bonfires, and every petty person feels elevated and associates the king's grandeur with himself; this compensates him for all his losses and consoles him in all his misery."²⁹ Meanwhile, Louis' printed episcopal letters took every opportunity to confide to his subjects during the War of the League of Augsburg that "if there be any thing that Flatters Me in a Conquest of this Importance, 'tis not so much the Glory that attends it, or the Enlarging my Dominions, as the hope which it gives me, that My Enemies, wearied with their Losses, will condescend at length to the Offers I have made 'em long since, for the putting an End to this War: 'Tis also this Hope, which obliges Me, to redouble My Thanksgivings to Heaven, and to protest, at the same Time, before Him that knows the very Thoughts of My Heart, that there is nothing which I more ardently Desire, then to put My Subjects into a Condition, of Glorifying Him in Peace."³⁰

²⁹ *Les Soupirs de la France esclave, qui aspire après la liberté* (1690), in *The Impact of Absolutism in France*, trans. and ed. William F. Church (New York, 1969), p. 108. (Cf. the similar comments of Nicolas Gueudeville, publisher of the anti-Louis *L'Esprit des cours de l'Europe*, quoted by M. Yardeni, "Gueudeville et Louis XIV, un précurseur du socialisme, critique des structures sociales louis-quatorziennes," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 19 [1972], 602, 606.)

³⁰ *Lettre du Roy, écrite à Monseigneur l'Archêvesque de Paris . . . pour faire chanter le Te Deum en action de grâces de la prise de la Ville de Namur* (Paris, 1692), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4011; trans. in *The Present State of Europe*, July 1692, pp. 258-259.

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When Louis at last "gave peace to Europe," as he put it in 1697, the king once again used the printing press to emphasize his willingness to abandon dynastic goals for the sake of his subjects:

The happy successes with which God has favored my arms in the course of so long a war have never removed me from the sincere desire I have for peace, which was the unique purpose I aimed for in all my enterprises. Although the glorious expeditions of this campaign and the advantages they promised for me might have engaged me to uphold my interests and press my claims even further, I have abandoned them . . . and have made it my rule to consecrate the fruits of my conquests to the repose of Europe. I am sufficiently recompensed for everything that this moderation costs me by the end it makes of all the evils of war. The prompt comfort which will accrue to my people and the pleasure I receive in rendering them happy are sufficient compensation for everything I sacrifice on their behalf. And the *éclat* of the greatest triumphs is not worth the *gloire* of repaying the zeal of my subjects, who have lavishly expended their blood and their goods unceasingly and with uniform ardor.³¹

The coming of peace was an event marked by government- and church-sponsored celebrations throughout France. The inevitable Te Deum services were accompanied by drum-and-trumpet processions of municipal authorities, the magistracy, clerical officials, and platoons of soldiers. In Paris the peace was proclaimed in customary fashion at twelve separate locations, with the better part of a day taken up in formal parade from the Hôtel de Ville to the Tuileries, the Pont Neuf, the Place Royale, and so forth. At each

³¹ *Lettre du Roy, écrite à Monseigneur l'Archévêque de Paris, pour faire chanter le Te Deum en l'Eglise Nôtre-Dame, en action de grâces de la Paix* (Paris, 1697), BN, Imp., Lb³⁷.4102.

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stop a herald formally announced the peace, to the accompaniment of brass fanfares, shouts of "Vive le Roy" and other "joyful acclamations." Under the supervision of the lieutenant general of police, the participants completed their appointed rounds and disbanded at the Saint-Jean cemetery. Later there were bonfires, cannon displays and fireworks. Provincial communities celebrated on a lesser scale but with equal gusto. Near Tournai, at the extreme northern corner of France, the magistrates and the abbot of Saint-Amand staged religious processions and secular tableaux, officially proclaimed the peace in three different corners of their tiny community, made the air ring with trumpets and no less than a ton of exploding cannon powder, and finally threw a magnificent banquet for all and sundry. Even those who could not read the king's public letters could appreciate the symbolic joining of the king's peace to the nation's celebration.³²

These rites of peace illustrate the way traditional ceremonial practices were amplified in the Sun King's reign by the application of bureaucratic regularity and the use of print. The printed word also communicated the king's verbal messages abroad, as foreign gazettes habitually published Louis' edicts and public letters verbatim. From 1660, and particularly after 1680, the political periodical, one of the seventeenth century's most lasting innovations, grew rapidly in circulation. More than a dozen French-language gazettes were published in Holland in the second half of Louis XIV's reign, most of them edited by Huguenot émigrés escaping the Sun King's persecutions. The non-renewal of the licensing act in 1695 permitted a similar explosion of journals in England. Thus the maritime enemies

³² Ceremonies were often the occasion for bitter disputes over precedence, as at the coming of peace in 1678; see Andrew P. Trout, "The Proclamation of the Peace of Nijmegen," *French Historical Studies*, 5:4 (Fall 1968), 477-481. On the celebrations at Saint-Amand, see Dubois, *Journal*, pp. 118-119.

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of Louis XIV harbored a flourishing group of periodicals that provided a rich and regular source of information and opinion. Appearing at intervals varying from semi-weekly to bimonthly, these gazettes soon became a permanent feature of western European life. We are dealing here with a new phenomenon whose social implications, though hard to measure with exactitude, were profoundly important.³³ The democratizing communications revolution that stemmed from the birth of the periodical press certainly contributed to a breakdown in cultural isolation and helped produce a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan culture in which provincial and even national boundaries were blurred. This was particularly true of the French-language Dutch gazettes, whose messages were directed as much at readers outside

³³ Short titles of major French-language gazettes published outside France before 1715, with founding dates: *Gazette de Bruxelles* (1649), *Gazette de Leyde* (1680), *Gazette de Rotterdam* (1683), *Mercurie historique et politique* (The Hague, 1686), *Gazette d'Amsterdam* (1688), *Gazette de Berne* (1689), *Gazette de La Haye* (1690), *Lettres historiques* (The Hague & Amsterdam, 1692), *La Quintessence des nouvelles* (The Hague & Amsterdam, 1697), *L'Esprit des cours de l'Europe* (The Hague & Amsterdam, 1699), *Gazette d'Utrecht* (1710); see Gabriel Bonno, "Liste chronologique des périodiques de langue française du XVIII^e siècle," *Modern Language Notes*, 5 (1944), 3-7. Bonno is now superseded by J. Sgard, "Table chronologique des périodiques de langue française publiés avant la Révolution," in M. Couperus, *L'Etude des périodiques anciens: Colloque d'Utrecht* (Utrecht, 1970), pp. 172-211. On these publications, see E. Hatin, *Les Gazettes de Hollande et la presse clandestine au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1865), *passim*. For a bibliography of English and continental gazettes published between 1660 and 1688, see Fraser, *Intelligence*, pp. 167-169. Pierre Bayle (quoted by Louis Trenard, in C. Bellanger et al., *Histoire générale de la presse française* [Paris, 1969], I, 159) remarked shortly after 1700 that "le nombre des gazettes qui se publient par toute l'Europe est prodigieux" and proposed a historical analysis of the phenomenon. Nearly three centuries later his call remains unanswered, although M. Yardeni, "Journalisme et histoire contemporaine à l'époque de Bayle," *History and Theory*, 12:2 (1973), 208-229, has recently attacked one side of the problem.