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"THE TIMES" AND THE REVOLUTIONARY CRISIS OF 1848

T.P. Morley

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Council for National Academic Awards for the degree of Ph.D.

Thames Polytechnic

February 1985

## "The Times" and the Revolutionary Crisis of 1848

T.P. Morley

The thesis seeks to examine how The Times functioned within mid-nineteenth-century British society and to suggest how the newspaper can be used to read the history of the period from the perspective of the dominant elements within it. It begins by analysing the uses made of the newspaper by historians and questions the assumptions which lie behind them. Chapters 2 and 3 assess the dominant role of The Times within the newspaper press and explore the relationship between the newspaper and its readers and their mutual perceptions. Chapter 4 analyses the structure of contemporary society and the common values which lay within, while the following chapter indicates the extent to which The Times in its treatment of the French revolution of 1848 constructed its version of reality within those values and thereby defined and defended them. Chapter 6 completes the location of the newspaper by considering the extent to which it was independent of Government, yet dependent on individual politicians.

The locating of The Times within contemporary society enables its treatment of the crisis of 1848 to be critically examined in chapters 7 and 8. This reveals the extent to which events in London and Ireland were associated together and perceived as parts of a revolutionary movement which encapsulated the basic fears of the possessing classes and threatened their vital interests. In defending those interests The Times was at its most potent and 1848 demonstrated the ability of the paper to orchestrate and direct opinion on specific issues. The role of The Times and its importance are evaluated by means of the perceptions contemporaries had of events, the way they reacted to them, and the judgements subsequently made by historians. The thesis emphasizes the importance of The Times both as an agent within society and a source for the study of it.

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## Abbreviations

Add. MS.	Additional Manuscript, Department of Manuscripts, British Library.
Clar. dep.Irish	Clarendon Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford
HO	Home Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew
MSS. Clar. dep.	Clarendon Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
RA	Royal Archives, Windsor
WO	War Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew

## Notes

Place of publication, unless otherwise indicated, is London. The edition used is the first edition, unless additional information is given.

## CHAPTER 1

### "A true reflection of passing events": Historians and "The Times"

On March 15, 1854 The Times proudly declared its mission to "present a true reflection of passing events, and a true estimate of prominent characters". Dominant over its rivals in sales and advertising revenue, The Times stood unequalled in the breadth of its reporting, the gravity of its tone, the grandeur of its pretensions and its sheer physical bulk. Having exploited circumstances favourable to the newspaper press in general better than any of its rivals, The Times saw itself as an institution acting as the independent and indispensable link between public opinion and the governing institutions of the country. It also saw itself as the repository of national history with a responsibility "the same as that of the historian - to seek out truth, above all things."<sup>(1)</sup> Contemporaries acquiesced in this lofty ambition. Bulwer Lytton declared in the House of Commons in 1855 "if I desired to leave some remote posterity some memorial of existing British civilisation, I would prefer, not our docks, not our railways, not our public buildings, not even the palace in which we hold our sittings; I would prefer a file of The Times newspaper."<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1975 Times Books published The Times Reports The French Revolution which was prefaced by the claim that the newspaper "is an institution to be ranked in the social history of Britain alongside the Civil Service, the Church and the Monarchy, rather than among the rest of the press" and therefore "to cite The Times carries special weight".<sup>(3)</sup> Historians specialising in the nineteenth century have been only too willing to use it as historical evidence. Easily accessible in bound volumes or microfilm, the columns of the paper have

long been the quarry of historians who wanted to use the particular authority of The Times to prove a point, lend weight to an argument, or merely to carry the burden of narrative. The Times, however, like any other newspaper was a kaleidoscope reflecting a variety of influences, and forever seeking to give expression to the relationship it shared with its purchasers. The influences upon it and the relationship that encompassed it may, for a given period, be capable of some definition - in which case the newspaper becomes a valuable source for the historian. The Times was never, though, that unchanging monolith reflecting the opinion of the nation, that it claimed to be and some historians have assumed it to be.

Most frequently used by historians are the leading articles of The Times. Written on occasions by politicians, or at their behest, (4) they were the very part of the paper where influence was most likely to be exerted, where leader-writers would float speculative arguments in order to test readership reaction and where changes in what The Times discerned as the opinions its readers would be most likely to be reflected. Occupying pride of place in the newspaper, they were authoritatively written in classically structured prose, abounding in colourful and highly quotable phrases and were printed in larger type than most of the paper. They appeared to exude that unique authority which the newspaper so successfully claimed for itself.

The earliest of the major histories of the nineteenth century was, however, more critical in its use of sources than many succeeding works. S. Walpole's History of England (1890) provided an impartial analysis which was well researched and documented. His use of The Times was cautious, as his footnote on the Oxford movement in 1845 indicated: "The language of the Times may perhaps be accepted as an indication of the feeling at that time". (5) H. Paul's History of Modern England

(1904), on the other hand, lacked balance in its judgements and few sources were identified. He referred on three occasions to The Times of mid-century as being "then at the height of its power" (6) and his treatment of 1848 strongly suggested that he used without acknowledgement the leading articles of The Times. (7) S. Low and L.C. Sanders in The History of England During The Reign of Victoria (1907) stressed in their "Appendix on Authorities" that "For the study of foreign affairs and home politics the newspapers and periodicals are indispensable" and hinted at their indebtedness to The Times by pointing out that "The parliamentary debates somewhat more compressed than in Hansard can be found in The Times". Their account of 1848 again smacked of that newspaper but never was it identified as a source. Similarly G.M. Trevelyan in his British History in the Nineteenth Century (1921) commented on the importance of The Times and its views: "when the great paper declared pontifically.....Belgravia and its dependencies believed what they read". (8) His appendix on sources at the end of the work was, however, headed "List of Books" and The Times was not even mentioned as useful reading.

Typical of modern historians who take for granted the authority of The Times and its importance as a source for historians is W. Hinde who in George Canning (1973) quotes or refers to the attitude of the paper on nineteen occasions. Such usages are prefaced by remarks such as "The Times was benevolently approving.....", "The Times with lofty foresight...", "The Times with starry-eyed optimism..." (9) Nowhere is there any attempt to evaluate the newspaper as a source by referring to its circulation, its personnel or the influences upon it - apart from the comment that it was misled in 1822 "by its almost pathological dislike of Canning". (10) Others who use The Times in a less flamboyant manner, but who nevertheless make tacit assumptions about

it, include A. Briggs, J.B. Connacher and J. Prest. (11) Of course they are correct in assuming the overall importance of The Times in mid-century but at that time in particular The Times was adapting itself to the fundamental changes taking place within society and to the changes in its own key personnel which made it particularly susceptible to outside influences and pressures.

Some historians using The Times in studies of the mid-century period have attempted to locate the newspaper in its context. E. Halévy in volume IV of A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century refers to it as "such an independent and central paper".(12) N. Gash identifies it in one volume as "that infallible barometer of public opinion" and in another as "that great organ of middle-class opinion", (13) while H. Perkin refers to the paper under the editorship of both Barnes and Delane - that is from 1817 to 1877 - as "almost a fourth arm of the Government". (14) D. Roberts in Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State rightly warns in his bibliographical essay at the end of his work that "it would be a mistake always to read the voice of the Times as the voice of the nation" and illustrates the point by accusing it of speaking "shrilly and irresponsibly" on the Poor Law issue. In his text, however, he refers to the newspaper as "the voice of England" and the representative of "power and intelligence" without further comment. (15) All these observations have an element of truth within them but all of them implicitly accept an institutional role for the paper and a consistency and unique authority which it certainly claimed but which was far removed from the reality of the daily newspaper business.

Scholars concerned with sectional interests in nineteenth-century England have used The Times slightly differently and seen it as



"representing the lines of educated opinion" and therefore equated it with contemporary orthodoxy. (16) J. Kent in his work on Victorian Revivalism quotes from a variety of Nonconformist newspapers and uses The Times alone to illustrate the view of the contemporary establishment. (17) J. Bentley, however, in his Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain quite rightly points to the "lopsidedness which comes from quoting only the partisan religious newspapers of the time or else The Times (as if somehow it represented the country as a whole)". (18)

The Times, nevertheless, continues to be used selectively by historians. H. Perkin illustrates the triumph of the "entrepreneurial ideal" by showing that by 1845 the newspaper was supporting repeal of the Corn Laws and "all the dogmas of free trade". (19) D. Roberts, on the other hand, claims that the columns of The Times in the 1840s bore "the final imprimatur of paternalism". (20) Such is the stature of The Times that no discussion of contemporary ideology, appears to be complete without reference to it. This can lead to contradiction. D. Goodway, whose recently published work has done much to emphasize the importance of metropolitan Chartism in 1848, implicitly associates The Times with the ruling classes and notes the role that it played in distorting the Chartist image and creating the myths that have surrounded the events of April 1848. The Times is then subsequently used by him to seek to prove that metropolitan Chartism reached an insurrectionary peak during the summer of that same year. (21) The authority of the paper is also used by him to give some credibility to the evidence in Chartist trials of F.T. Fowler who is referred to as "a free-lance reporter for The Times and other newspapers", (22) but who in fact admitted at the trials under oath that he was not employed by the paper, that he could not take shorthand and that he worked as a penny-a-line reporter selling his copy where he could. (23)

In the most recent work on Chartism H. Weisser has emphasized the importance of newspapers as a source for historians and has used them as the basic evidence to support his analysis. His stated aims are "to open up the sources, relive some of the events". (24) No attempt is made by him, however, to locate individual newspapers and their readers in their social context, to identify the ownership and public profile of the newspapers and the sources of their information. Only two daily newspapers, The Times and the Morning Chronicle are used and they, with the addition of provincial and weekly newspapers are referred to as the "established press". (25) The neglect of the other daily newspapers means that their different perspectives and, in particular, the critical stance of the Daily News, are not noted. Failure to analyse the structure of the newspaper press in 1848 means that the dominant role of The Times and its particular influence over the rest of the press is not perceived. What Weisser may be seeing is the view of The Times refracted through other newspapers. In a work which aims "to penetrate the distortions of the past and come as close to perceiving reality as is humanly possible", (26) uncritical use of newspapers as evidence is apt to perpetuate traditional misconceptions or to create new ones. Thus the "Iron Duke" is seen as playing a crucial role on April 10 and June 12, (27) the much quoted tale of the butcher's boy who knocked down the French agitator is given as fact on the basis of a leading article in The Times, (28) while the name of the Irish Confederate leader Mitchel is consistently misspelt by Weisser with the double final consonant as given in The Times. (29)

Both the use and abuse of The Times tacitly recognise the importance of newspapers as a source for historians. The first of the modern media, they filled contemporaries with admiration or awesome fear and had no serious rivals throughout the rest of the nineteenth



century. They flourished in response to demand for information, comment and entertainment. No movement, no interest, no pressure-group could exist without the support of newspapers and in this sense they mirrored the age and revealed it in its most self-conscious form. They reveal in their columns a cultural contour which linked both newspapers and readers in what G.M. Young called "the real central theme of history... not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening."<sup>(30)</sup> In particular they act as an antidote to what W.L. Burn called "selective Victorianism", <sup>(31)</sup> the tendency of historians to neglect the issues which were of most concern to contemporaries in order to emphasize those most relevant to contemporary debate. Bitter disputes over religion, taxation and war scares with France may seem strangely irrelevant to us but they were nevertheless capable of dominating public concern in the 1840s.

Historians have long admitted the potential of the newspaper press. As early as 1931 E.L. Woodward argued that "The value of newspapers is perhaps greater than historians have been willing to admit" and pointed out that "Journalism is almost a term of reproach among the learned".<sup>(32)</sup> Not a lot changed, however, and T. Wilson could still refer in 1966 to the newspaper press as "the greatest untapped source for the writing of recent British political history", <sup>(33)</sup> and S. Koss in 1981 could write that "a good deal has been written about the press without consulting its contents".<sup>(34)</sup> No doubt one of the reasons for this is the sheer bulk of the nineteenth century newspaper which, for much of the period, tends to intimidate with its dense compacted miniscule type and its heavy florid style. Another reason is the methodological problem involved in identifying communicated information and ideas and evaluating their impact without the quantifiable evidence of a readership survey. Probably the most

important part of the explanation, however, is the overlong survival in British historiography of the concept of the newspaper press as the 'Fourth Estate'. It is this which has both hindered a proper evaluation of how newspapers function in society and encouraged the misuse of The Times.

The term 'Fourth Estate', as applied to newspapers, first appeared in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Koss states that the phrase was attributed to Hazlitt among others and that its usage was popularised in 1828 by Macaulay. (35) Its appearance was related to the enhanced status of the newspaper press which had freed itself from government's legal and fiscal controls and now, as a result of commercial viability, saw itself as independent. What was needed, though, was a role within society which would legitimate its past, raise the social standing of journalists and ensure for the newspaper press a recognized and respectable place in the British political system. In such circumstances was created what G. Boyce has called "a political myth", "the ideological baggage which has accompanied the British newspaper press into the twentieth century". (36) At a period when many British institutions were appearing or were hardening into their modern form, the newspaper press appeared to take its proper place.

It was wholly appropriate that the The Times should have first fully articulated the concept, since that newspaper appeared to have led the way in earlier decades to the achievement of independence and, in its dominant position in mid-century, it seemed to serve as the very model of the 'Fourth Estate'. Articles on February 6 and 7, 1852 contrasted the responsibilities of the statesman and the journalist and claimed for the latter the higher duty of making known the truth. The newspaper press, it claimed, acted as independent guardian of national interests and, in contrast with the statesman, represented the widest

constituency, the opinion of the country, against which all else was powerless. Henry Reeve, who as leader-writer on The Times contributed to both those articles, expressed the argument even more clearly in the Edinburgh Review of October 1855: "Journalism is now truly an estate of the realm; more powerful than any of the other estates". "In the newspaper every individual Englishman possesses a protector whose value cannot be exaggerated, and that aggregate of individuals which we call the public possesses a guardian of its interests which no power can silence, no money can corrupt, and no flattery can lull to sleep."(37)

This evaluation of the press, which was now adorned with a capital letter, was widely accepted by contemporaries and became an orthodoxy in the nineteenth century histories of journalism. F. Knight Hunt entitled his work of 1850 The Fourth Estate and A. Andrews, H.R. Fox Bourne, J. Grant and C. Pebody were all agreed on a glorious period in mid-century when the newspaper press, led by The Times, recognized its powers and responsibilities and claimed its rightful place among British institutions as the independent mediator between government and people. (38) "The Press today is an independent power" wrote Pebody. "It is independent of the Government in its intelligence. It is independent of Parliament in its criticism. It is independent of everything, except the public sentiment".(39)

This version of newspaper history was then incorporated within the Whig interpretation of history which took as axiomatic the gradual broadening of British liberties. W.H. Wickwar wrote in 1928 that "institutions have been continually.... . changed, in accordance with the changing demands of the developing Public Opinion of mankind. To this extent men and women of the early nineteenth century were right in looking upon a free printing-press in all its aspects as the symbol

of human progress and emancipation", (40) while G.M. Trevelyan referred specifically to The Times in 1841 as "the latest comer in the hierarchy of accepted institutions". (41) Despite the systematic dismantling of the Whig interpretation of history, the concept of the 'Fourth Estate' has proved remarkably resilient. R.K. Webb produced a classic statement in 1969: "Newspapers, rapidly emancipating themselves from servility to the politicians who had subsidized them, thrived on a growing readership and the revenue of advertising to become a true fourth estate of the realm, jealous of their independence and proud of their influence". (42) In the 1970s I. Asquith referred to the growth of advertising revenue which was "the most important single factor in enabling the press to emerge as the fourth estate of the realm" and I.R. Christie has concluded that "In Great Britain the progress of the press towards the role of 'fourth estate', which it achieved by the middle of the nineteenth century, was intimately interconnected with the broadening of political liberty, which led onward to the political democracy eventually achieved some half a century later". (43)

It is the pervasive influence of this interpretation of the press which has both prevented analysis of the social and political role of newspapers and led to an excessive and indiscriminate use of The Times by historians. If newspapers were part of an independent institutional structure that, on the one hand provided information and, on the other hand simply reflected the views of the groups they represented, then the nature of newspapers and the influences upon them were of secondary importance. It was the readership that mattered and gave the newspaper its significance and no other paper could compete with the readership of The Times in number or quality. According to this argument the dominant élite who took The Times either saw in its columns a reflection of their own views or identified with those views since they

were already an orthodoxy by appearing there. The Times therefore was presented as playing a passive role in reflecting opinion and merely stamped upon it the imprimatur of its own unique authority. To quote The Times was not to quote the opinion of a newspaper but to have instant access to the orthodoxies of the day on all issues. To use the newspaper in this fashion, however, is to misunderstand the role of The Times and the nature of public opinion.

The willingness of historians to accept at face value the claims put forward by the newspaper press in the middle of the nineteenth century was reinforced by much of the research in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s within the social sciences on the role of the media. The academic study of mass communication dates from the early decades of this century. It rose in response to the development of new media forms and the interest in them and was much influenced by anxieties about the growth of commercial advertising and the apparent potency of the media in Fascist Germany and Italy. Not surprisingly much of the initial research was therefore concerned with short-term media effects. This highly empirical approach tended to assume a liberal, pluralist model of society as a complex of competing groups and interests none of which was predominant all the time, while the media served as largely autonomous and neutral channels of communication. (44) The newspaper press in this interpretation performed its classic role as guardian and watchdog of public interests in much the same way that The Times defined it in 1852.

The mass manipulative model of society, on the other hand, also emphasized the importance of the newspaper press since it tended to see the public as an atomized mass, passive receptacles of messages originating from a monolithic and powerful force. The right-wing version of this saw the media as lowering cultural values and



encouraging permissiveness while the left-wing model saw the press as an instrument of class domination. Marx, like most contemporaries, was much impressed by the power of the newspaper press. A journalist himself, he paid grudging testimony to the domination of The Times referring to it as "the Leviathan of the English press...now modestly comparing itself with the Delphic Oracle, now affirming that England possesses only one single institution worth preserving, namely, The Times, now claiming absolute rule over world journalism". (45) For Marx, though, the newspaper press was an important part of the means whereby the interests of the ruling class were asserted at the expense of subordinate classes. In the German Ideology of 1846 he claimed that "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production....The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material interests, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas". (46) Marx never properly developed his analysis of the press but Marxist researchers have tended to adopt an approach very different from that of those in the liberal tradition and have emphasized the ideological content of the press and, in contrast to the empirical approach, have striven for a theoretical framework within an overarching view of society.

Particularly important in the Marxist tradition was the work of Gramsci who did much to free Marxism from the crude deterministic approach that Marx himself would have resisted. Though Gramsci's approach, in the last resort, rested upon a monocausal explanation, his work emphasized not the base but the superstructure of society and his concept of hegemony provided a flexible and nuanced account of the way dominant classes asserted their influence and won the consent of subordinate groups. (47) This approach has narrowed the distance

between the Marxist and the liberal explanations of nineteenth century society. The ideological barrier remains, though there is some evidence that researchers in the liberal tradition recognise that there is a tendency for élites to perpetuate themselves and for beliefs consonant with their interests to dominate in society, while researchers in the Marxist tradition recognize tensions within the dominant class and the need for constantly renewing and maintaining their ideological dominance in the face of strong reaction from below. (48) Both these approaches assign to the media a much more complex role than either rigid adoption of the liberal or Marxist perspective would allow.

New approaches in the 1970s to the study of the media were long overdue. The net result of research into media effects had demonstrated not the potency of the media but their marginal impact on changing individual opinions, attitudes or behaviour. (49) The findings did draw attention, though, to the need to broaden the approach, lengthen the time-scale and pose different questions in evaluating the role of the media. The social studies approach, by way of response, has emphasized that the media are neither neutral channels of communication nor monolithic ideological systems but that they and their audience are located within the structure of society as a whole which influences both of them and the relationship between them. The emphasis is therefore removed from the impact on the individual to a broader analysis of ownership, production and control of media and to closer attention to audience groups. (50) The cultural studies approach, on the other hand, has placed greater emphasis on the media message itself and regarded language and messages as the crucial area where the development of society and its ideas were worked out and a consensus arrived at as to what shall constitute its accepted values. (51) Both these approaches provide for historians new and fascinating

insights into the nature of nineteenth century society through the medium of the newspaper press. Historians have, however, been slow to exploit them and much of the mythology that surrounded the nineteenth century press remains.

The standard nineteenth century histories of the newspaper press were all written by journalists. F. Knight Hunt, A. Andrews, J. Grant, C. Pebody and H.R. Fox Bourne provided colourful, sometimes anecdotal and essentially descriptive histories. (52) Written from a narrow perspective, they represented an essentially biographical approach to editors, journalists and the newspapers themselves. All were agreed on the role of the press as the 'Fourth Estate' and its importance in the social and political transformation of society. Andrews referred to "an army of Liberty... a police of public safety, and a sentinel of public morals", (53) while Grant went even further: "The Press has before it one of the most glorious Missions..to Enlighten, to Civilise, and to Morally transform the World". (54)

This narrow approach, which largely ignored the particular economic, social and political context within which the newspapers and their readers were located, continued beyond the nineteenth century. H. Herd, The March of Journalism (1952) and F. Williams, Dangerous Estate (1957) noted the exaggerated claims of the newspaper press and the increased commercialization of the late nineteenth century but their work nevertheless remained confined within traditional perspectives. These are still dominant in the more recent work of G.A. Cranfield, The Press and Society: from Caxton to Northcliffe (1978) and P. Brendon, The Life and Death of the Press Barons (1982), while S. Harrison's Poor Men's Guardians (1974) provides a left-wing critique of the press which is largely the Whig tradition in reverse.



Detailed studies of individual newspapers have tended to reflect the same shortcomings. As was most appropriate the most impressive study of a nineteenth century newspaper was devoted to The Times. The two volumes of this official history which covered the period to 1884 were published anonymously in 1935 and 1939 and represented the collective work of a group of past and current employees of the paper. Thoroughly researched and well documented the History of The Times was nevertheless a glorification of the newspaper's past and a commitment to its future. The manuscript sources quoted in volume II occasionally revealed the way that politicians manipulated the paper but the implications of this were not noted in the text, which proudly proclaimed the doctrine of the 'Fourth Estate' "which The Times championed as a theory and earnestly sought to follow in daily practice".<sup>(55)</sup> The Story of The Times (1983), written by two employees, O. Woods and J. Bishop, is a popularized version of the official history, which lacks its scholarship but perpetuates its tendency to corporative deference. Thus the relationship between politicians and The Times is coyly noted: "Editors of The Times have had a tendency to acquire advisors on whom they relied for ideas."<sup>(56)</sup>

Biographies of its editors also testified to the importance traditionally attached to The Times, but added little to an understanding of the paper and its relationship to contemporary society. D. Hudson's Thomas Barnes of the The Times (1944) provided useful biographical material, while A.I. Dasent's biography of his uncle, John Thadeus Delane 1817-1879; His Life and Correspondence (1908), was a scholarly but appropriately respectful tribute, which was largely repeated in Sir Edward Cook's Delane of The Times (1916). Where The Times is particularly fortunate is that, of all the London

nineteenth-century dailies, it alone has preserved its archives. They are infuriatingly slight for the first half of the nineteenth century, since both Barnes and Delane appear to have systematically destroyed the abundant confidential information they received. They do, nevertheless, reveal many of the influences which shaped the content of the paper. The archives have been open to researchers since 1967 and G. Phillips has produced a brief indication of their contents in Business Archives (No. 41, Jan. 1976).

Of the metropolitan rivals of The Times only one has a work devoted to it, though W. Hindle's The Morning Post 1772-1937 (1937) is much less informative than the History of The Times. As far as the provincial press is concerned the Guardian shares the uniqueness of The Times in having archival material. This accounts for the scholarly nature of D. Ayerst's Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper (1971) though the limitations of the work are indicated by its subtitle. G. Cranfield in The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760 (1962), has meticulously documented the structure of the trade and outlined the views of the proprietors but has not attempted to assess their impact, while D. Read, Press and People 1790-1850: Opinion in Three English Cities (1961) similarly places the emphasis on the views of owners. For the rest little exists beyond memorial issues and hagiographic accounts of editors and owners, though there is some evidence that this state of affairs is changing and that efforts are being made to study the provincial press in its context. (57)

It is the economic, political and social background of the newspaper that makes it intelligible to the historian. S.R. Morison's The English Newspaper 1622-1932 (1932) made a valuable contribution by analysing the typographical aspects of the nineteenth century press and A.P. Wadsworth's invaluable article on "Newspaper Circulations,

1800-1954" (Manchester Statistical Society, 1955) summarized the evidence available in the House of Commons Accounts and Papers. The importance of economics in the 1950s was reflected in works on technical aspects of newspaper production. Printing The Times was published in 1953 and A.E. Musson made a useful study of production techniques.(58)

The interest in labour history which developed strongly in the 1960s resulted in attention being paid to the working-class press. J.H. Wiener, The War of the Unstamped (1969), and P. Hollis, The Pauper Press (1970), both dealt with the unstamped press and Hollis in particular broadened her assessment to include ideological content and sought to relate working-class journalism to working-class politics. As Hollis pointed out; "It is extraordinarily difficult to assess the influence of a paper or press... But it is not a problem which dissolves if it is ignored. It must at least be tackled if the press is to be fitted into its community and social and political climate." (59) It is the study of the working-class press that has continued to lead the way in broadening the approach to it. J. Epstein has investigated the Northern Star while L. James has studied popular journalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. (60) Content analysis has been used by V. Berridge to reflect the life and attitudes of the readership of popular periodicals while C. Fox has shown the problems involved in using periodical illustration as historical evidence. (61) Much of the work on the press continues to be produced in this area. (62) The establishment newspaper press is left with much of its mythology intact.

Both H. Perkin and R. Williams stressed two decades ago that the newspaper press was a phenomenon grounded in economic and social reality. (63) The establishment press nevertheless continues to be

studied from a narrow political angle. A. Aspinall's Politics and the Press (1949) was a most definitive analysis of the relations between politicians and the newspaper press and documented the transition from direct government control to indirect influence during the first half of the nineteenth century. S. Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain vol.1 (1981), follows in the same tradition and by charting the complex relations between politicians and editors effectively destroys the claims of the press to be independent in the second half of the century. His work, though important in its conclusions, is narrowly conceived within a political framework Koss himself points to the problem: "Conceptually as well as methodologically, the press is difficult to encompass. To deal with it in all its aspects would baffle the wits and exhaust the lifetime of the most assiduous student.....Nevertheless a good deal has been written about the press without consulting its contents and that is surely unsatisfactory. How and where does one strike a balance?"(64)

The approach to the newspaper press has widened recently. I.R. Christie and I. Asquith have both related its development to economic and social change in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though their overall conclusions are framed within the concept of the press as the 'Fourth Estate'. (65) L. O'Boyle, A. Smith and P. Elliott have dealt with the status and professional ideology of journalists, while A.J. Lee has studied the press from the side of production, dealing with structure, ownership and control. (66) The most important single contribution to the understanding of the nineteenth century press is, however, the collection of essays in Newspaper History: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day, edited by G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (1978). The essays seek to combine recent developments in the social sciences with the more

traditional approaches of historians. A beginning is made in stripping away some of the mythology that surrounds the press and in locating it within the overall framework of society. G. Boyce effectively demolishes the myth of the 'Fourth Estate' and J. Curran demonstrates the limitations of earlier conceptions of the press while promoting his own version of the press as an agency of social control. Apart from the studies of working-class and popular journalism, nothing is done to resolve the central problem of how to relate the content of newspapers to society. The volume recognizes that the newspaper press in the nineteenth century was the most important single medium in the communication of ideas but as M. Harris points out "The newspaper is an elusive subject for study. Touching society at all points, it presents considerable problems of definition and focus, many of which are compounded by the historical perspective." (67) More recently The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings edited by J. Shattock and M. Wolff (1982) provides a series of specialized studies on the periodical press including a refutation by B. Harrison of Curran's argument. The introduction to the volume reminds readers, however, that "the systematic and general study of that press has hardly begun" (p.xiii).

The crucial problem of how to use the nineteenth century newspapers remains. They were regarded as hugely important by contemporaries, with radicals seeing them as the engine of reform and conservatives seeing them as siege-weapons of destruction. Every aspect of life was covered in their columns from births to the services of wet-nurses, through the heady draughts of politics, to auction sales, entertainment notices and dubious pills and potions. Newspapers remind us of the priorities of contemporaries and indicate the framework of references within which most people lived, worked and thought and from which they derived their sense of the outside world. They are the most



important source of evidence about public opinion. Editors, ever aware of daily sales, had, in that alone, an index of public reaction to particular attitudes adopted by the paper. They became adept at testing opinion by the floating of tentative arguments, which warmed to their cause if the response was satisfactory. W. Thomas has argued that the newspaper editor "is therefore in a much closer and more intimate relationship with public opinion than an electoral agent or a party whip" and regrets that "Modern historians seem much more interested in the analysis of poll books which yield their meagre information in modishly 'quantifiable' form than in newspaper articles which resist such treatment".(68)

Historians may have problems in studying the structure of the press as a result of lack of evidence but there is no shortage of material for the study of content. The essential problem is how to use that evidence. Content analysis, whether by the counting of symbols or column inches, is tedious, expensive and often unproductive. (69) The categories used by researchers impose an artificial rigidity and do not allow for the variety of influences upon the newspaper, nor the variety of interpretations adopted by the readers. (70) It may well be that what is of most importance to the historian is not the manifest content of the daily news, but what lies behind it, the spoken and unspoken assumptions, the vision of social reality that linked together a newspaper and its readers.

Recent research in media sociology has contributed to our understanding of this process. News is now recognized as "the account of the event, not something intrinsic in the event itself". (71) Despite the traditional distinction made in newspapers between 'hard news' and editorial comment, both in fact draw upon a shared framework of references. S. Hall, in particular, has stressed the process of identification, classification and contextualisation whereby the media

make the product intelligible to the audience. (72) News values, in this sense, do not exist in a vacuum but are both a reflection and a reinforcement of that conception of reality which the newspaper must share with its readers if it is to communicate and sell its copy. The media therefore contribute powerfully to the construction of social reality through their role of providing information, defining boundaries of debate and emphasizing consensual values. This argument can be extended to the conclusion that the media faithfully produce dominant ideology and are therefore powerful instruments of social control in the hands of the ruling classes. (73) In the last resort this amounts to a sophisticated revision of the basic Marxist analysis. Without accepting the predetermined conclusions of that model of society, one can nevertheless use this approach to the media as a method of historical analysis. News is a social product. Its selection, classification and contextualisation and the rhetoric and imagery with which it is expressed can be used retrospectively to throw light upon that part of society which produced and consumed it and to reveal the cultural contour that linked newspaper and readers.

Research, then, in a variety of disciplines within the broad compass of the social sciences has suggested new ways of studying the role of newspapers within society and using them as historical evidence. Historians, within the discipline as traditionally defined, have been slow, however, to take advantage of this. No newspaper demands more urgent attention than The Times because of its wide availability, the survival of its archives and, above all, because of that characteristic ethos which so impressed contemporaries and so many later historians.

The Times must be read, and read over a period of time, if it is to be of use to the historian. It provides a wide and slow moving

panorama of one important section of society, but a single frame is prone to distortion. The case-study is therefore concerned with a single year which is wide enough to identify the ideological content of The Times, yet precise enough to enable the paper and its readers to be located in their particular context. The year 1848 has been chosen since the dramatic events on the continent, the danger of revolution in Ireland and the Chartist agitation at home, focused attention on newspapers as virtually the sole source of information and therefore allowed their role in society to be more clearly perceived.

If The Times is to be properly located, a study must be made of the technical and commercial aspects which buttressed the fortunes of the paper, and the work routines and communication networks which influenced the production of news. Details of ownership and professional skills have to be considered, together with evidence of circulation and readership, in order to establish the mutual perceptions of the paper and its readers. The structure of contemporary society and the spectrum of opinion within it must also be identified so that the location of the paper can be confirmed by an analysis of its ideological content and the role of the paper can be considered in reflecting and reinforcing consensual values and beliefs.<sup>(74)</sup>

The newspaper has also to be located within the contemporary political structure since both the paper and many of its readers were convinced of its institutional role. Politicians tended to encourage this for their own purposes. The revolutionary threat in Ireland and the Chartist agitation in London both reveal the way that politicians could manipulate The Times and equally the way that the paper could in the short-term contribute powerfully to the moulding and orchestration of opinion. For a rare moment on April 10, 1848 the readers of The Times marched out to be counted.



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- 25) Ibid., e.g. pp.22, 24, and 30.
- 26) Ibid., p.xiii.

- 27) Ibid., See chapter 7 and chapter 8.
- 28) Ibid., p.114.
- 29) Ibid., passim.
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## CHAPTER 2

### "Leviathan of the English Press": "The Times" and Its Contemporaries

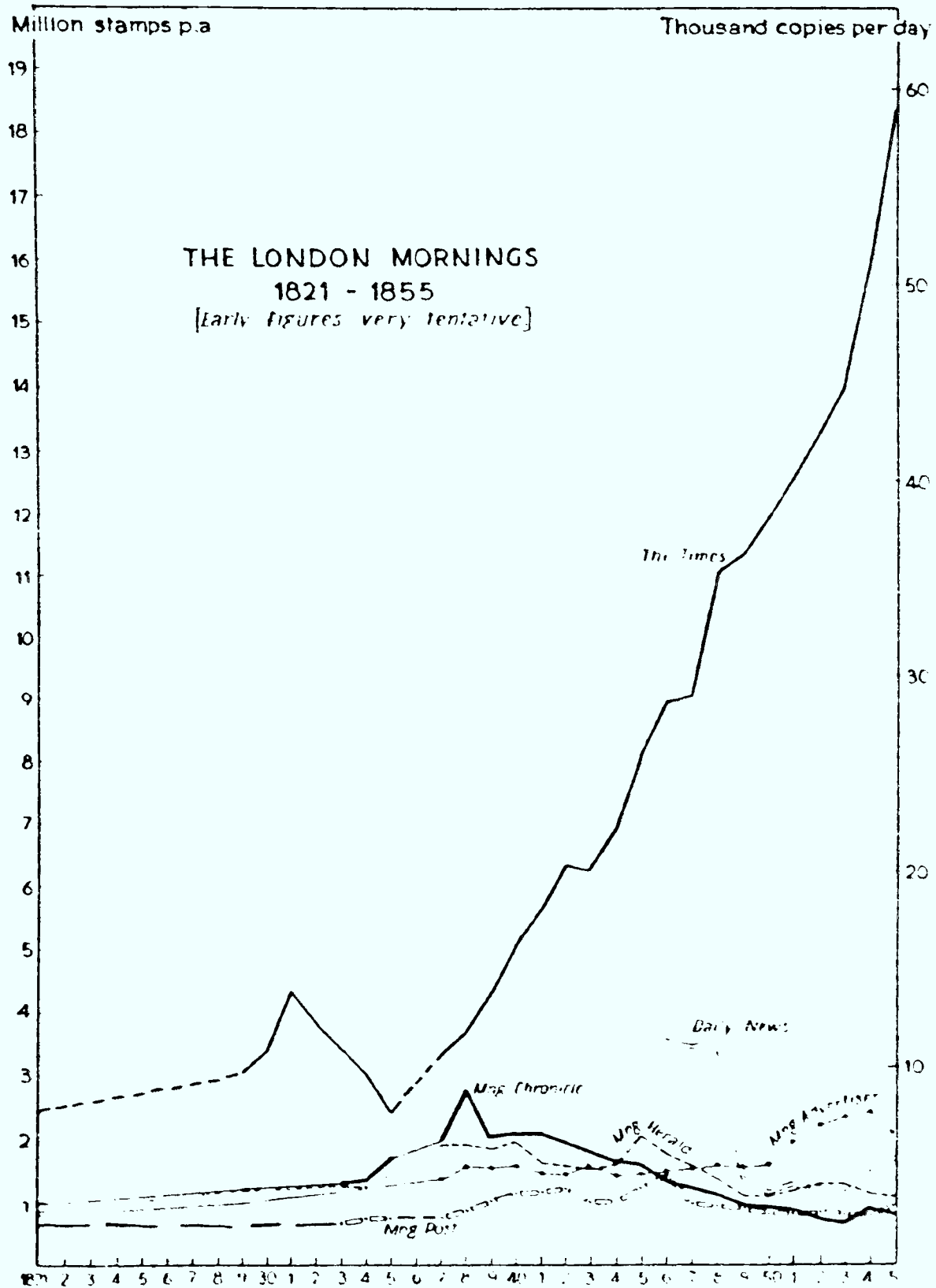
"I now come to the Times - the greatest journal the world has ever witnessed"; so wrote James Grant the former editor of the Morning Advertiser. (1) Comprehensive in its coverage, magisterial in its style, The Times in the middle of the nineteenth century exercised a unique domination over the rest of the newspaper press. Contemporaries easily recognized in Trollope's The Warden the newspaper referred to as the Jupiter, located in the "Vatican of England" whence "those infallible laws proceed which cabinets are called upon to obey; by which bishops are to be guided, lords and commons controlled, judges instructed in law, generals in strategy, admirals in naval tactics, and orange-women in the management of their barrows". (2) In an age much in awe of new technology and the raw power associated with it, the printing press appeared to rank equal with the steam engine in its capacity to transform the world and particular importance was attached to "the daily booming of a tocsin, which, year after year, proclaims progress, and still progress to the nations". (3) Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory for 1847 could proudly proclaim that "This, the leading journal of Europe, has for the field of its circulation, emphatically the WORLD, and its influence is coextensive with civilisation"; but not all were equally impressed. The Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps in 1851 was much concerned with the way that the existing newspaper duties tended towards a monopoly situation, while Henry Reeve, who had been a leader-writer on The Times for many years warned in 1855, from his new vantage point as editor of the Edinburgh Review, of the paper's "extraordinary and dangerous eminence". (4)



The clearest indicator of the supremacy of The Times lay in circulation figures. The ability of one newspaper consistently to outsell its rivals was of particular importance since advertising was, at this period, crucially linked to circulation. Estimates of newspaper sales have to be based on the annual returns of stamps bought by newspapers under legislation that applied till 1855. The original returns, however, were scheduled for destruction under the Public Record Office Act of 1877 and the only returns to survive are those fragmentary extracts published in the various volumes of the House of Commons Accounts and Papers. (5) The problems are further compounded by the practice of London newspapers buying stamps in order to impress their advertising patrons and subsequently reselling them to country newspapers. This was made more difficult after 1836 when the stamp was issued in the form of a distinctive die for each newspaper. Both A.P. Wadsworth and J.H. Wiener have concluded that after 1836 the returns can be used with greater confidence. (6) Mowbray Morris, Manager of The Times, testified before the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps that the circulation of his newspaper on 27 May, 1851 was 39,000 while the calculations from the stamp returns put the average for the year at 40,100. (7)

The returns must still, however, be used with caution. Between 17-20 February, 1841, a vigorous exchange took place in the columns of the Morning Chronicle and The Times over the allegation by the former that the latter, when its sales were declining in the mid-1830s, had purchased additional stamps, which were subsequently destroyed, in order to impress advertisers since "The profits of a morning paper are chiefly derived from advertisements, and advertisements are derived from an appearance of large sales". (8)

On the basis of the returns available A.P. Wadsworth has estimated the circulation of the London morning dailies as below: (9)



The detailed evidence presented to the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps in 1851 enables the circulation of the London morning dailies to be calculated for 1848 as follows:

<u>Daily News</u>	11,316
<u>Morning Advertiser</u>	4,930
<u>Morning Chronicle</u>	3,687
<u>Morning Herald</u>	4,279
<u>Morning Post</u>	3,034
<u>The Times</u>	35,338

The Times was also published in partial form three times weekly as the Evening Mail and this had an average circulation in 1848 of 3,846. What impressed contemporaries was that as the demand for daily newspapers increased the dominance of The Times became even more pronounced. Indeed of the competitors of The Times, that had existed throughout the 1840s, only the Morning Advertiser, with its sales fortified by the brewing trade, had maintained its circulation, while that of the others had actually fallen.

What in the last resort lay behind the phenomenal success of The Times was a policy, consistently applied, of exploiting to the full the changes taking place in the economy and society. These changes were to the advantage of all newspapers, but no other newspaper exploited them more consciously or more fully. It was wholly appropriate therefore that when the Daily Universal Register was launched on January 1, 1785, it was intended primarily as a demonstration of the commercial viability of a new technology. John Walter, said by H. Crabb Robinson, who knew him well, to be "as dishonest & worthless a man as I have ever known, at least among those who preserved appearances", (10) had failed as merchant at the Coal Exchange and as a Lloyd's underwriter, but was determined to recover his fortunes by entering the printing

business and exploiting the patent rights of the logographic press. The impracticability of arranging 50,000 pre-set words before the printer frustrated Walter's ambition and he had increasingly to depend for his income on the uncertain prospects of his newspaper. The newspaper, renamed The Times in 1788 in order to prevent confusion with the Annual Register or Harris's Register of Ladies, prospered largely as a result of the efforts of his son. By the will of 1812, however, John Walter II was made sole and absolute owner of the printing side of the business with the right to print The Times and charge it appropriately, but as far as the newspaper was concerned, though given responsibility over it with a sliding-scale salary, he was given only three of the sixteen equal shares, with an option to purchase two more. According to H. Crabb Robinson, this was a final piece of malignancy on the part of the old man, (11) though it could also be interpreted as an inducement to concentrate, not on the risky newspaper enterprise, but on the original purpose of the business at Printing House Square. What it did, though, was oblige John Walter II to redirect his energies from journalism to printing. The timing was most fortuitous for it coincided with the crucial breakthrough in the development of the newspaper press.

On November 29, 1814, The Times announced in its leading article "the greatest improvement connected with printing since the discovery of the art itself." With a circulation of around 5,000 the newspaper was obliged to duplicate composition at heavy cost, or risk delaying publication. Koenig's press, built of iron and powered by steam, harnessed to The Times the technology of the age and thereby secured the newspaper's future. Capable of over 1,000 impressions per hour as opposed to 250 from existing wooden presses, the steam press avoided the expense of double composition, made possible the production of a

larger sheet and facilitated the printing of the latest news. (12) No other daily newspaper was so large, so compressed, or so punctual and this was reflected in its rising circulation, while its rivals remained caught in the vicious circle of low circulation and backward technology till the 1830s. (13)

The commitment to technology, which had so vindicated itself, remained consistent. Edward Cowper and Augustus Applegarth, who became, according to A.E. Musson, "the most outstanding designers of printing machinery in the first half of the nineteenth century", (14) were employed by John Walter II to keep the production of The Times ahead of its ever-increasing circulation with the result that the newspaper was the first to be printed on both sides at once and hourly production rose to 4,000 in 1827 and 6,000 at the end of 1848. (15) The technological revolution of the period could also be applied to other aspects of the newspaper business and steamers and locomotives were quickly exploited by The Times and its rivals, resulting in the most frantic and unscrupulous scramble for the 'earliest intelligence'. (16)

In a business where news as a product diminished in value by the hour, the daily demand for a newspaper related to its ability to print the latest news and also to print earlier than its rivals. The clock device of The Times, which first assumed its proud position before the leading articles in 1803, was both a commitment to speedy publication and a device to prevent unscrupulous newsmen from substituting alternative newspapers on the grounds that The Times was late. It was precisely here in the supplying of news that the greater resources of The Times, securely based on its increasing revenues, enabled it to out-distance its rivals.

News was a precious commodity during the early years of The Times and the public appetite had been whetted by the French Revolution and wars. As Hazlitt admitted in his review of the periodical press in 1823, "The Times rose into notice through its diligence and promptitude in furnishing Continental intelligence, at a time when foreign news was the most interesting commodity in the market". (17) A foreign news service maintained by correspondents, agents and couriers responsible to Printing House Square had never been organized before on such a scale and by 1836 The Times could boast of "correspondents, all over the inhabited world, who have access to the most authentic sources of information in foreign courts and countries". (18) The special priority of the Indian mail was reflected in the elaborate network of an overland route which by 1840 was costing £10,000 a year. When the French Government, resentful of this exclusive intelligence, attempted to impede the system, The Times was able to devise a new network through Trieste, Cologne and Ostend which greatly impressed contemporaries by beating the French route by two weeks. (19)

Foreign news bulked large in the columns of The Times, especially when Parliament was not in session, and dominating all other areas was interest in France. Head of the foreign correspondents of The Times was their representative in Paris since 1836, Andrew O'Reilly. He acted as central information bureau for the entire continent and collected and to some extent edited European newspapers before transmitting them to Printing House Square. His importance is attested by the fact that both Clarendon and Palmerston, unknown to his employer, were in communication with him and Palmerston admitted in 1849, "it was through him that we used from time to time to get some very useful and interesting information". (20)



The reputation of The Times for foreign news was fully acknowledged by Greville: "it is in vain to look for private or official information, for the 'Times' always has the latest and the best" and in 1845 he referred to "those huge Powers, Foreign Office and the 'Times' newspaper". (21) Peel's Government on several occasions in the 1840s was indebted to The Times for overseas intelligence which reached it before its own sources. (22)

In the provision of domestic news The Times sought the same pre-eminent position that it established in foreign intelligence. A network of agents was set up throughout the country and no expense was spared in rushing their communications to Printing House Square. In Parliamentary reporting, City intelligence and law reports The Times eclipsed its rivals as a result of its greater resources. Palmertson stressed to Queen Victoria the critical inter-relationship between news and circulation; "that paper gets the widest circulation which is the most amusing, the most interesting and the most instructive. A dull paper is soon let off. The proprietors and managers of The Times therefore go to great expense in sending correspondents to all parts of the world where interesting events are taking place, and they employ a great many able and clever men to write articles upon all subjects which from time to time engage public attention". (23)

At the same time as its domination of the newspaper press increased, The Times was able to gain increasing access to political information. Politicians of all parties sought to gain advantage by manipulating the newspaper, while Greville, no mean hand at the art himself, wrote to Clarendon in 1848: "it always amuses me to think what a machine the paper is, and how and by whom the strings of it are pulled". (24) However, no matter what the motivation, the main inducement offered to the newspaper was information and this added

further to the paper's stature. So well informed was he that Delane could reject confidences. As he wrote to Sir John Rose: "I don't much care to have 'confidential papers' sent to me at any time, because the possession of them prevents me from using the information which from one source or another is sure to reach me without any such condition of reserve." (25) It was this combination of omnipresence and omniscience that made the newspaper increasingly attractive to the purchasing public.

The crucial factor, however, in the viability of a daily newspaper in mid-century was revenue from advertising. Against a background of economic change which favoured them both, advertisers and newspaper proprietors became increasingly dependent upon each other; advertisers needed a vehicle for their messages at the same time as technical developments in newspaper production made possible a higher level of circulation. Without the revenues from advertising as inducement, capital investment in newspapers would not have been forthcoming. T.R. Nevett has shown how the amount spent on advertising in newspapers rose from some £160,000 in 1800 to about £500,000 in 1850, while the number of advertisements rose from 511,258 in 1800 to 1,902,322 in 1848. (26) The revenue from this advertising was to be the life-blood of the newspaper press in the first half of the nineteenth century. C. Mackay, who was on the staff of the Morning Chronicle from 1835 to 1844 recorded in his Forty Years' Recollections: "It is curious and not flattering to the public to reflect that no newspaper published in London... has been able to pay its way by the profit of its circulation. If for any reason the country took it into their heads to spend no money in advertising, there is not an existing newspaper that would be able to live. It is trade alone that supports political literature, that pays for all the news that arrives from every part of the world, that enables newspapers to keep

reporters in the galleries of the Lords and Commons, and in the law courts, and to make known to civilisation what is done and said in its centres, whether at home or abroad." (27)

Not only were the quality of the newspaper and circulation inter-related, but advertising revenue was the third factor in the relationship. Advertising made expensive by the imposition of duty necessarily followed circulation. A.P. Wadsworth has shown how The Times moved steadily ahead of its rivals in this respects: (28)

	<u>Duty paid 1829</u>	<u>Duty paid 1840</u>
	(at 3s 6d. each)	(at 1s 6d. each)
<u>The Times</u>	£16,332	£13,887
<u>Morning Herald</u>	£7,325	£4,415
<u>Morning Advertiser</u>	£5,560	£3,822
<u>Morning Chronicle</u>	£3,714	£4,607
<u>Morning Post</u>	£5,854	£3,467

Advertising revenue for The Times, however, remained ancillary to the revenue from sales. The earliest accounts surviving in the archives of The Times show that income from sales in 1849 amounted to £174,469 while income from advertising was £107,014. Such was the demand from advertisers that, beginning in 1822, the newspaper increasingly resorted to an advertising supplement issued free. By mid-century this supplement of four pages, though occasionally of eight, appeared on most days. (29) Other newspapers rightly concluded that with a stamp duty of ½d. for the four page sheet, and 1d. for the double sheet, the supplement was unprofitable. Mowbray Morris, the Manager of The Times, testified to the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps that the cost of producing the four page supplement equalled revenue while the eight page supplement incurred a loss. (30) The accounts of The Times for the year ending December 31, 1849, reveal that the supplement entailed

a loss of £1,220 -2s. -4d. What the supplement did, however, was make the newspaper even more attractive to its readers and therefore it boosted its circulation further.

From its beginnings The Times has consciously aimed at revenue from advertising. The founder of the newspaper, with his background in the City, was well aware of the potential demand and in its declaration to the public The Times in its first edition listed its great objects in appropriate order: "to facilitate the commercial intercourse between the different parts of the community through the channel of advertisements; to record occurrences and to abridge parliamentary debates." (31) Daniel Stuart of the Morning Post and Courier and James Perry of the Morning Chronicle were equally alive to the opportunities and, through the development of advertising revenues, contributed equally to the increasing wealth and status of journalists. (32) At the decisive moment in 1814 Perry rejected the steam press and it was The Times alone that harnessed its power and thereby secured its pre-eminent position. It rose in circulation and advertisements and its profits enabled John Walter II to move his residence from Printing House Square, to set up an estate at Bear Wood and to enter the House of Commons as a knight of the shire of Berkshire.

Advertising revenue did more than secure the future of newspaper proprietors. More importantly it freed newspapers from the direct influence and control of political groupings. After the breakdown in the late-eighteenth century of some of the major restrictions on the press and its reporting as a result of Wilkes's struggle with the Commons and Fox's Libel Act, successive governments attempted to restrain the newspaper press by enclosing it within the financial strait-jacket of high costs and low circulation. The preamble of the Newspaper Stamp Duties Act of 1819 which broadened the definition of a

newspaper in order to include the cheap Radical press within its scope, openly admitted that its aim was not to raise revenue but "to restrain the small publications which issue from the Press in great numbers and at a low price". (33) The Times, like its rivals, was therefore obliged to supplement its revenues by allowances from government or opposition. John Walter received between 1789 and 1799 £300 p.a. in "reward for the politics" of The Times. (34)

The independence of The Times dates from the first decade of the nineteenth century. It was precipitated by the loss to the printing side of the business of the Custom House contract and the recognition that commitment to an unpopular government could have severe consequences for circulation. It was made possible, though, by the commercial opportunities now opening for the newspaper press. Independence, like news itself, was a marketable commodity. With the increasing demand for early and accurate intelligence and the growth of advertising, it was now possible for a newspaper to escape from the restrictions of political influence and high costs by a combination of independence, large circulation and advertising revenue. It was The Times that first seized this opportunity. Direct political control of the newspaper's columns was at an end and the History of The Times proudly proclaims: "The Times is the earliest and most conspicuous example of a journal conducted in the nineteenth century without subsidy or reward to its Proprietor or Editor from either of the historic English parties." (35) What really had ended, however, was direct control, for politicians soon discovered new ways of achieving their ends by indirect means.

The commercial opportunities of the first half of the nineteenth century were obvious to all proprietors. Some historians have been slow to recognize the significance of this. S Koss, whose recent work has



done much to dispel some of the myths that surround the newspaper press as the Fourth Estate, nevertheless claims that only in mid-century did the newspaper press escape from direct government control. Newspapers were, "Emancipated from state control in the 1850s" and from that period were "no longer clients of the state" and "No longer annexed to the administration of the day". (36) These statements ignore the abundant evidence that commercial success had already ended direct government control from as early as the second decade of the century. A daily newspaper might identify its market in political terms and seek to reflect that orientation in its columns, but no newspaper would choose dependence on Government when independence brought more rewarding and less demanding obligations. As early as 1815 Lord Liverpool pointed out to Castlereagh that "No paper that has any character, and consequently an established sale, will accept money from the Government; and, indeed, their profits are so enormous in all critical times, when their support is most necessary, that no pecuniary assistance that Government could offer would really be worth their acceptance." (37) In 1831 Earl Grey chided Princess Lieven for her inability to understand the limits of government control: "We might purchase a paper that is not read, which would do us no good till it got into circulation; and then it would do just like the others. The truth is, that the profits of a paper extensively taken are so great, that they are quite beyond any temptation that could be held out to them. I really thought that you had been long enough in England to understand this matter, and that nothing could lead to more erroneous conclusions than a belief that any of these papers, on matters of general policy, speak the opinion of the Government".(38) Not all foreign observers were unaware of the new reality. The French chargé d'affaires reported in 1823: "here a newspaper hardly yields to money;



one manages it by getting it a greater number of subscribers (by getting it information). Every other means of influence is almost without result."(39)

Marxist writers on the newspaper press have interpreted these developments differently. J. Curran has recently argued that the newspaper press in the first half of the nineteenth escaped from government control only to fall, through the interplay of market forces, into the hands of developed capitalism. The middle class, he claims, succeeded, where legal censorship and repression had failed, in eliminating oppositional voices and rendering the press a more powerful instrument of social control. (40) Though recent scholarship in the Marxist tradition has contributed much to an understanding of how the media function in society, the approach, no matter how refined, still carries with it an ideological commitment that may well obscure reality. (41) Where Marxists are undoubtedly correct, however, is in emphasising the fact that commercial forces had by 1848 moulded the shape of the daily newspaper press and no individual paper more than The Times.

The reduction in 1833 of the duty on advertisements from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. and in 1836 of paper duty from 3d. to 1½d. per lb. and stamp duty from 4d. to 1d. resulted in a rapid expansion of the newspaper press which benefitted The Times alone. While the circulation of its rivals remained relatively static or fell, that of The Times increased 360% between 1837 and 1848. The reason for this was that while the duties and taxes remained they produced a monopolistic impulse that caused both sales and advertising revenue to flow in the same direction. The Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps was very much aware of this. M.J. Whitty of the Liverpool Journal declared that "The effect of the high price was to give the newspaper a monopoly; it gives one

newspaper in every town a monopoly, similar to what the 'Times' has in London", while H. Greeley of the New York Tribune gave a more precise explanation; "advertising duty is an enormous help to any paper which has the most circulation; it tends to throw the advertising always on the greatest concern, and the persons who take, as I know men in this town do take, one journal mainly for its advertisements, must take the 'Times' because everything is advertised there; consequently advertisers must advertise in it for the same reason." (42) Not surprisingly Mowbray Morris sought, before the same committee, to maintain the status quo, while the History of The Times saw the campaign to remove the 'taxes on knowledge' as "War with The Times", largely inspired by jealousy and resentment. (43) Certainly there could be no denying the quality of the newspaper but it was commercial success that underpinned all its virtues. As Henry Reeve, who as a leader-writer had been in a position to know, commented: "Superior wealth enables it to outbid others in command of talent. Public favour fills its coffers; and full coffers enable it to serve the public in superior style." (44)

While fiscal burdens on the newspaper press worked to the particular advantage of The Times over its London rivals, they also hindered the development of the provincial press. The 1d. stamp, which all paid, conferred carriage by post and enabled the metropolitan dailies to compete with local papers in their own vicinity. Rowland Hill declared before the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps that the London Post Office dispatched 150,000 newspapers every day, though the vast majority of these would be the editions of the previous days retransmitted under the privilege of the stamp, sometimes in bundles weighing 10 or 20 lbs. (45)

Speed was of the essence in merchandising news. W.H. Smith, who claimed to transmit one seventh of the total output of the daily press to the provinces, claimed that only a small proportion of the morning papers were sent by the Post Office, the majority being sent by special railway trains with the cost usually absorbed by the newspaper agent. (46) Determined to get the daily papers to the provinces in time to secure a good sale, W.H. Smith in 1847 chartered special trains to Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham. Shortly afterwards he added Carlisle and in 1848 Edinburgh and Glasgow. The morning papers thereby arrived at Birmingham at 11 a.m. and Manchester and Liverpool at 2 p.m. Even at Castle Howard, in a remote part of North Yorkshire, daily newspapers arrived shortly after dinner and Viscount Morpeth recorded in his diary on December 29, 1847 his astonishment at being able to read at 9 p.m. Louis Philippe's speech delivered in Paris on the previous afternoon. (47)

The advantage given to the London newspaper press by the railway network would soon be cancelled by the development of the electric telegraph which would enable provincial papers to have cheap direct access to the sources of the news. Until that time, however, news was, in the main, structured round the presses of the London morning dailies. John Cassell, the publisher, when asked to account for the superiority of morning papers over evening papers explained: "Because such are the whole arrangements throughout the kingdom, and I may say the world. The evening papers cannot furnish the Parliamentary debates from their own collecting, because they take place in the evening after they have published. The arrival of intelligence is generally at three and four o'clock in the morning by the mail trains, or by the electric telegraph...The great events arrive early in the morning." (48) He

might also have added that they arrived in London! The size, wealth and status of London supported the daily morning newspaper press while national and international communications reinforced its position as focal point of the news-gathering process.

Not surprisingly then, no daily newspapers existed in England outside London. Manchester and Liverpool had bi-weekly newspapers, but the rest of the country had weekly papers only, and all of them were heavily dependent for foreign intelligence upon the copy of the London dailies. While national and international news could travel only as quickly as the newspaper train, daily news was a product of the metropolitan morning press. As John Cassell declared: "if that local paper wanted to compete with the 'Times' it must go to the same expense as the London morning papers do in obtaining intelligence." (49)

I. Asquith has shown how the scale and cost of newspaper enterprises had escalated. (50) By mid-century the staff on a daily morning newspaper included twelve to sixteen parliamentary reporters, about six law reporters, a foreign correspondent in every major European capital, leader writers, a number of provincial correspondents and 'penny-a-liners'. Between 1790 and 1820 the estimated cost of publishing a daily morning paper varied between £2,000 and £5,000, the bulk of the capital being required to sustain the paper till sales and advertising revenue were sufficient. In 1851 W. Johnston in his analysis of contemporary England declared that £50,000 would be needed to set up a morning paper in London and "with the exception of setting up an Italian opera-house, there are perhaps few speculations which would afford more rapid opportunities of losing that sum, or perhaps much more." (51) H.R. Fox Bourne claimed that it cost £200,000 to establish the Daily News in 1846 and sustain it during the first ten

years of its existence. (52) By 1845 the dividend on The Times had reached £29,600 (53) but there were likely to be few challenges to its domination while the factors governing the market remained unchanged.

The Times, then in the middle of the nineteenth century stood supreme. Richard Cobden wrote in 1851: "what an absurd position we are in...completely dictated to and domineered over by one newspaper", (54) while G.A. Sala in his account of the sights of London, reminded his readers that, whether they agreed with the politics of the paper or not "the publication of the 'Times' is a great, an enormous, a marvellous fact." (55) Committed to technological development, it had exploited the market potential better than any of its rivals and benefitted from a particular set of circumstances which favoured the London dailies in general and The Times in particular. Compressed by the exigencies of the stamp and demand from advertisers into a mass of barely relieved print, The Times bore the unmistakable hallmark of success. It was comprehensive in its coverage, magisterial in its style and it commanded sources of information and literary talents beyond the reach of its rivals. They frequently paid The Times the compliment of discussing at considerable length its leading articles, while The Times largely ignored their existence. (56) Its leading writers were paid more than the usual rates (though its printing workers had earlier in the century received less) and they shared in a mystique, naturally fostered by the management, that writing for The Times was akin to membership of some exclusive and dedicated order. (57) All that remained was for the newspaper to receive the ultimate accolade and to be elevated from the ranks of ordinary newspapers into becoming a national institution.



The middle decades of the nineteenth century saw the hardening of many new or reformed institutions in British society into the shape they were to retain throughout the rest of the century and beyond. The newspaper press, with The Times at its head, was to participate in that process and surround itself with an appropriate mythology. Typical of Victorian commentators on the newspaper press is C. Pebody who referred to the prestige of The Times as "an intangible influence - an invisible efflux of personal power, a magical force, which touches the imagination" and he argued that the newspaper had become "the most striking and characteristic of English institutions." (58)

Journalists had long, however, been regarded as literary hacks or rabble rousers, though by mid-century the profession was in general characterized by respectability. What it lacked was prestige. (59) As William Johnston wrote in 1851: "The profession of journalist gives no social distinction, and the occupation is not avowed, except to intimate friends... the feeling of society towards journalists is more that of fear or curiosity than that of respect or esteem" (60)

It was wholly appropriate that The Times from its pre-eminent position should have articulated at this period the doctrine of the Fourth Estate which sought to establish the status of the journalist, the newspaper press in general and The Times in particular. Not only was the newspaper proclaimed as the indispensable link between public opinion and the governing institutions of the country but it was to function on a higher moral plane. "The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian - to seek out truth, above all things, and to present to his readers, not such things as statecraft would wish them to know, but the truth, as near as he can attain it." (61) Such was the aspiration of The Times in mid-century and many of its readers acquiesced in its ambition.



Notes for Chapter 2

- 1) J. Grant, The Newspaper Press: Its Origins , Progress and Present Position, 3 vols. (1871), vol.1, p.418.
- 2) A. Trollope, The Warden (1855; Oxford 1961 edn.), p.168.
- 3) G.A. Sala, Twice Around the Clock; or the Hours of the Day and Night in London (1861), p.22.
- 4) "The Fourth Estate", Edinburgh Review, vol.102, no.CCVIII (Oct. 1855), p.470.
- 5) F.W. Bateson ed., Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (Cambridge 1966), vol.III, pp.795-7.
- 6) A.P. Wadsworth, "Newspaper Circulations, 1800-1854", Manchester Statistical Society (March 1955), p.33.  
J.H. Weiner, "Circulation and the Stamp Tax" in Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research J. Don Vann and R.T. Van Arsdel (eds.) (New York 1968), p.163.
- 7) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", Parliamentary Papers, vol.xxii (1851), q.2042 and Appendix 4.
- 8) J. Don Vann, "The Times, the Morning Chronicle and the Newspaper Stamp Tax", Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, no.17, September 1972.
- 9) Wadsworth, op.cit., p.9.
- 10) Henry Crabb Robinson, "Diaries and Reminiscences" (Dr. Williams's Library), vol.2, p.363, Nov.16, 1812 (Typescript copy).
- 11) Ibid. vol.2, p.376, Nov. 29, 1812. (Typescript copy).
- 12) A.E. Musson, "Newspaper Printing in the Industrial Revolution", Economic History Review, 2nd series, vol.x, April 1958, pp.411-426.

- 13) L. James, "Economic Literature: The Emergence of Popular Journalism", Victorian Periodicals Newsletter, No.13, Sept. 1971, p.14.
- 14) Musson, op.cit., p.415.
- 15) Printing The Times since 1785, (1953), p.41.
- 16) For the rivalry between newspapers over the foreign mailpackets see F. Knight Hunt, The Fourth Estate: contributions towards a history of Newspapers and of the liberty of the press, 2 vols. (1850). vol.2, pp211-213.  
For the devious tacts used by newspaper reporters see A. Hankinson, Man of Wars: William Howard Russell of The Times (1982), pp.25-26.
- 17) "The Periodical Press", Edinburgh Review, vol. 38, no.LXXVI, (May 1823) p.364.
- 18) The Times, June 22, 1836.
- 19) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), pp.72-74.
- 20) MSS. Clar. dep. (Bodleian Library, Oxford), c.524, Palmerston to Clarendon, Jan. 6, 1849. For O'Reilly's anxiety lest his duplicity be discovered see O'Reilly to Clarendon, April 1, 1848: "I take the liberty of making this "private" in the knowledge that I have the Honour of being in communication with Your Excellency and would materially injure me in a certain quarter in London." Clar. dep. Irish, box 21.
- 21) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey, and R. Fulford, 8 vols. (1938) vol.2, p.21, August 2, 1839 and vol.5, p.199, Jan. 18, 1845.
- 22) See for example Peel Papers (British Library), Add. MS. 40,455, f.308, Aberdeen to Peel, Feb.4, 1846: "very important intelligence ..... just received from the 'Times' office."

- 23) A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher (eds.), Letter of Queen Victoria, 3 vols. (1908), vol.3, p.590.
- 24) MSS. Clar. dep. c.521, Greville to Clarendon, Feb. 24, 1848.
- 25) Delane to Sir John Rose, Jan. 12, 1860, quoted in A.I. Dasent, John Thadeus Delane 1817-1879: His Life and Correspondence, 2 vols. (1908) vol.2, p.3.
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See also,  
I. Asquith, "Advertising and the Press in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries: James Perry and the Morning Chronicle, 1790-1821", Historical Journal, vol.xviii (1975), p.703.
- 28) Wadsworth, op.cit., p.8.
- 29) During May and June 1848 there were only two publishing days without a supplement. Of the 51 supplements issued in that period 9 were of double size.
- 30) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps" op.cit., q.2042.
- 31) History of the Times, vol.1 (1935), p.27.
- 32) Asquith, op.cit., p.721.
- 33) Quoted in A. Apsinall, Politics and The Press c.1780-1850 (1949; Brighton 1973 edn.), p.9.
- 34) History of The Times, vol.1, (1935), p.51.
- 35) History of The Times, vol.2, (1939), p.193.

- 36) S. Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: vol.1 The Nineteenth Century, (1981), p.3, p.20, p.410.
- 37) Quoted in C. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 2 vols. (1925-31; 1963 edn.), p.26.
- 38) G. Le Strange (ed.), The Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Earl Grey, 2 vols. (1890), vol.2, pp.182-183.
- 39) Marcellus to Chateaubriand, March 11, 1823. Quoted in H.W.V. Temperley, The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827 (1925; 1966 edn.), p.299.
- 40) J. Curran, "The Press as an Agency of Social Control: an Historical Perspective" in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (eds.), Newspaper History; from the seventeenth century to the present day (1978), pp.51-75.
- 41) See Chapter 1. p.21.
- 42) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps" op.cit., q.580 and q.2978.
- 43) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), pp.203-4.
- 44) "The Fourth Estate", Edinburgh Review, vol.102, no.CCVIII (Oct, 1855), p.493.
- 45) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps" op.cit., q.1748.
- 46) Ibid., q.2822.
- 47) Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, Dec. 29, 1847.
- 48) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps" op.cit., q.1460.
- 49) Ibid., q.1462.

- 50) I. Asquith "The structure, ownership and control of the press, 1780-1855" in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (eds.), Newspaper History; from the seventeenth century to the present day (1978) p.109.
- 51) W. Johnston, England As It Is: Political, Social and Industrial in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century, 2 vols. (1851; Dublin 1971 edn.) vol.1, p.231.
- 52) H.R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism, 2 vols. (1887), vol.2, pp.143 and 144.
- 53) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.21.
- 54) R. Cobden to F.W. Cobden, Nov. 4, 1851. Quoted in J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden, 2 vols. (1881; 1910 edn.) p.565.
- 55) G.A. Sala, op.cit., p.22.
- 56) See for example the Daily News April 7, 11 and 13, and the Morning Advertiser May 3 and June 1, 1848.
- 57) A. Hankinson, Man of Wars: William Howard Russell of The Times (1982), p.32.
- 58) C. Pebody, English Journalism and the Men Who Have Made It (1882), p.133. See also Grant, op.cit., vol.2, pp.53-4 and A. Andrews, The History of British Journalism 2 vols. (1859), vol.2, p.251.
- 59) L. O'Boyle, "The Image of the Journalist in England, France and Germany 1815-1848" in Comparative Studies in Society, vol.x, (1968), pp.290-317.
- 60) Johnston, op.cit., vol.1, pp.227-8.
- 61) The Times, Feb. 7, 1852.  
See also, The Times, March 15, 1854.

### CHAPTER 3

#### 'Floating with the tide': "The Times" and Its Readership

"Britain cannot function without a strong, informed and morally healthy governing class. The Times was, is and will continue to be the organ of that class. It will remain so even under a non-capitalist economy."<sup>(1)</sup> Such was the eternal mission claimed by The Times in a brochure addressed to advertisers in 1958. It was an assertion of a role first articulated a century earlier which, in that context, was readily accepted by large numbers of its readers.

Newspapers, no matter how grandiose their pretensions, are firmly rooted in economic and social reality. The Times owed its early success to its ability to satisfy a demand from the burgeoning metropolitan commercial interests. Twenty-five years of revolution and war had created an insatiable appetite for news and a demand for intelligence which would influence commercial strategies. Such intelligence must, of necessity, be early, accurate and free from the distortions of political interest. Resting on its sound commercial and technological base The Times was able to provide the commodity demanded and thereby make itself independent of direct political influence and government sources of news. By 1819 The Times could declare itself "a free journal, unattached to any other cause than that of truth and given to speak boldly of all parties".<sup>(2)</sup> Independence as defined by The Times became a vital element in the projected image of the newspaper which found full expression in mid-century in the concept of the Fourth Estate. In reality, the claim to be independent was the commercial response to consumer demand and the recognition by The Times that this afforded a market wider and more stable than one dependent on political affiliation. Freed from government patronage The Times was,



nevertheless, dependent upon the patronage of its advertisers and readers. Hazlitt's penetrating comment on The Times in the Edinburgh Review of 1823 made the point very clearly: "It is not ministerial; it is not patriotic; but it is civic. It is the lungs of the British metropolis; the mouthpiece, oracle, and echo of the Stock Exchange; the representative of the mercantile interest."<sup>(3)</sup>

What the relationship meant in practical terms was that The Times functioned as a newspaper within that set of dominant values shared by its readers. News had to be selected, shaped and given meaning within those parameters, whilst the leading articles of the paper must respect them also. Hazlitt recognized this: "The Times is not a classical paper. It is a commercial paper, a paper of business. It floats with the tide; it sails with the stream."<sup>(4)</sup> Stung by these allegations, The Times referred to Hazlitt who had written for the paper in the past, as "a discarded servant" but conducted its principal defence by reasserting its much-vaunted independence: "We will venture to assert boldly, that The Times is the ONLY journal that has made any great independent effort on any critical public occasions. Other parties.... have all advocated the side which they has espoused, adopted, and never felt themselves at liberty to deviate from the strict line of dependent service."<sup>(5)</sup> Hazlitt's riposte stressed the commercial nature of the newspaper business: "there is such a thing as leading public opinion by following it - by taking up a popular cry, and making more noise about it than anybody else...That discreet paper never bores the public with an opinion of its own a minute before they are ripe for the market."<sup>(6)</sup>

It was the commercial nature of newspapers that so alarmed Conservatives. They were quick to recognise that newspapers, in providing daily news and comment, would at the same time, be able to

propagate what they regarded as poisonous and corrupting doctrines. No matter how ably a paper was conducted it must necessarily pander to the mass of its readers. In this way the influence of ten Radicals, uniting together to purchase daily papers, neutralized the influence of the great nobleman whose income was two hundred times theirs put together. Suggested remedies varied from repealing newspaper duties in order to break the stranglehold of The Times to establishing "A Vauban of the Press, a Conservative newspaper organized at the expense of Government or the higher orders".(7)

That the "higher orders" felt themselves to be under attack was the result of economic and social changes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The creation and redistribution of wealth that characterised those decades had resulted in the expansion of the middle classes, the most pluralistic part of an increasingly pluralistic society. Brougham in 1831 identified them as "the most numerous and by far the most wealthy order in the community"(8) and already constituting 15% of the population at that time, they appear to have increased to 20% by 1851.(9) Confronted by what increasingly appeared to be a static, hierarchical society which denied them political power, economic opportunity and social status, the middle classes were obliged to seek changes which ultimately would remould society in their own image. A. Briggs and H. Perkin have shown how important for the development of the consciousness of the middle classes were the years after 1815 when landed power appeared determined to defend rent at the expense of profit and wages. (10) It was precisely in those years that The Times committed to the new technology, sought to widen its market and broaden its appeal.

It was Thomas Barnes, Editor of The Times from 1817 to 1841, who steered the paper to its new commercial orientation. A literary scholar

of distinction, who according to Le Marchant "was one of the best masters of the English language and literature I ever knew", (11) Barnes wrote little himself. His special skill lay in recasting the work of others. It was this that enabled him to give the paper an essential unity of content and continuity of argument. Under Barnes the leading article became the most vital part of the paper and was characterised by a vigorous style and trenchant wit that on occasion exploded into violent and intemperate language. All the leader-writers were encouraged to write in the same vein; as he informed one correspondent, the articles were "good as far as they went, but they wanted a little devil in them. Newspaper writing is a thing sui generis; it is in literature what brandy is in beverages. John Bull, whose understanding is rather sluggish - I speak of the majority of readers - requires a strong stimulus... and you must fire ten-pounders at his densely compacted intellect".(12) Carlyle, with considerable justification, wrote at this period of the "emphatic, big-voiced, always influential and often unreasonable Times".(13)

That Barnes was able to exercise such freedom was partly the result of the will of 1812 which made John Walter II responsible for the newspaper but without the same direct financial interest in journalist matters that he had in the printing side of the business. This was further reinforced by Walter's acquisition of a country seat at Bear Wood in Berkshire. Since journalism and social aspirations were as yet deemed incompatible, Walter began to reduce his financial interest in the paper as such and by 1827 he possessed but one thirty-second of the shares. Despite statements to friends and neighbours that he ceased to be the Chief Proprietor in 1819, he still in fact maintained a powerful, if distant, influence. Barnes referred to this in a letter to Walter in 1819: "I entirely assent to your doctrine of mutual

control tho. I shall endeavour to avoid the necessity of any exercise of it on myself by checking of my own accord, my scribbling propensity".(14)

Subject to this overall constraint Barnes was able to stamp The Times with his own personality. A lifelong friend of Leigh Hunt, Barnes appears by personal inclination to have favoured reform, detesting the aristocracy for "their selfishness, their stupidity, etc. etc.". (15) In seeking to make The Times the organ of the middle classes Barnes was no doubt also aware of the potential of the market, by which both he and the newspaper were in the last resort judged. Sir Denis Le Marchant noted in the early 1830s: "The interest of his paper was all he looked to and he told me his study had been to identify it with that of the middle classes whose representative he professed to be." (16) Barnes sought to give the middle classes the commercial and political information so vital to their development but he also sought to develop amongst them a collective consciousness and confidence. As the History of the Times proclaims: "Barnes found the middle classes nervous and irresolute; he taught, urged and thundered their duty to them in his daily articles until they recognised themselves as the largest and most coherent body in the State." (17)

Vital to the argument so consistently propounded by The Times were the concepts of "the people", "the nation" and "public opinion". Increasingly used from the late-eighteenth century onwards, these concepts were themselves evidence of a growing dissatisfaction with society as then constituted, but in the leading articles of The Times they enabled high-sounding rhetoric to be combined with sectional interests. (18) An anonymous survey of the periodical press in 1824 pointed out that The Times increasingly fought on the side of "the people" and noted: "This, we confess, is rather an unintelligible term, which means, in its most legitimate sense, that source of remuneration

which is found most productive." (19) H. Crabb Robinson, having identified the popular stance adopted by the paper during the Queen Caroline affair, observed, after a visit to Printing House Square: "I have no doubt W (Walter) really thinks he is doing right and I believe he may be - but he is not aware perhaps how much he is influenced in this line he is pursuing by finding that since the trial the sale of his paper has risen from 7,000 to more than 15,000!!!" (20) What the newspaper was doing was following the implications of its own material existence by adapting its opinions to the purchasing powers of the middle classes as readers, advertisers and consumers of the goods and services advertised.

In order to represent the interests of his constituents, Barnes organised a network of correspondents throughout the most populous parts of the country and became adept at testing reactions to proposals floated tentatively in his columns. Le Marchant referred to "the quickness with which he caught the earliest signs of public opinion". (21) Indeed it was the success of The Times in adapting itself to current opinion that earned for it the reputation of "Turnabout" or "Weathercock". Fraser's Magazine expressed a commonplace of the period when it referred to "its truckling and trimming" and it added: "Whoever writes for that paper must prostitute himself to the prevailing bias....neither the Times, nor any other London paper, extensively circulating among the lower classes, dare, for a single week, advocate opinions at variance with those of the great majority of their readers. The leading journal has occasionally attempted this, but has invariably failed." (22) Contemporaries were well aware of the accuracy of The Times in this respect. Earl Grey reminded Princess Lieven that the newspaper "being conducted without the least regard to principles of any kind, and solely with the view of an extension of its



sale, may in its frequent changes be taken in general as no bad barometer of the general sentiment", (23) while Charles Greville recorded in his diary: "always struggling, as this paper does, to take the lead of public opinion and watching all its turns and shifts with perpetual anxiety, it is at once regarded as undoubted evidence of its direction and dreaded for the influence which its powerful writing and extensive sale have placed in its hands."(24)

Nothing better illustrates the relationship of The Times with the middle classes than the Reform agitation of 1830-32. Having reported on January 27, 1830 that "The whole thing is nonsense, and may probably die away quietly", The Times soon recognized the intensity of feeling and declared on November 27: "Beyond all doubt the necessity for a reform of Parliament is the main and prime necessity under which this country labours." At this critical moment for British institutions, the newspaper press in general acted as a powerful complement to the platform but The Times in its dominant position sought consciously to put itself at the head of the movement. Conscious of the unity and strength of opinion on this issue among the middle classes throughout the country, Barnes sought to articulate and orchestrate this demand and to direct it where it would have most impact. Daily it 'thundered' for reform, its columns were filled with reports of meetings and petitions, tactics were suggested and dire warnings issued to those who proved obdurate. On March 26, 1831, it celebrated prematurely: "The people, the brave English people have won...They petitioned, - they addressed, - they resolved. We proposed these courses to them, we urged the prosecution of them with vigour, and our advice prevailed to a degree that even we, used as we are to move the noble feelings of our countrymen in a just cause and on subjects of vast moment, could hardly have conceived, and were almost



surprised at our success." When Reform was finally achieved, Peel acknowledged the role of the paper when referring in the Commons to "the great, principal and powerful advocate of Reform - The Times newspaper." (25) Thus the apparent triumph of the middle classes further enhanced the status of The Times. It also increased its circulation and the paper could boast that during the year 1831 its circulation had increased by nearly a million.

M. Walker in his analysis of twelve newspapers, each of which occupies an élite status as part of the national establishment of its own country concludes: "there is one distinct pattern that emerges. Newspapers originally achieve élite status by supporting a radical opposition at a time when the old order is crumbling." (26) Certainly The Times, having already achieved what it regarded as independence, and claiming to represent "the people", now saw itself as part of the institutional framework of society playing a vital role in the formulation of opinion and making that opinion effective. The concept of the Fourth Estate had thus already emerged, though it was not yet formally articulated. There were sound commercial reasons for the dominant position of The Times and the quality of its product, but already that characteristic ethos that surrounded it for so long had been developed to the mutual satisfaction of the newspaper and its readers.

The History of The Times after proudly proclaiming the position of the newspaper in 1832 went on to stress its institutional role: "It brought energy and sagacity to the direction of opinion, it sustained and encouraged every effort to correct abuse. For the first time the country possessed a supremely competent, independent political guide." (27) The caricatures of the period bear witness to the importance attached by contemporaries to The Times (28), its leading

articles and news columns were quoted throughout the provincial press, while certain of its phrases such as "Thunder for Reform" and "The Bill, the whole Bill and Nothing but the Bill" achieved proverbial status. Conservatives were particularly alarmed at the new phenomenon and Blackwood's Magazine referred to the role of the press "as originating and enforcing opinion" and concluded "Thus the great changes of recent times have been mainly owing to the influence of the press" and "it has effected a greater change in human affairs than either gunpowder or the compass." (29) Few indeed heeded the common sense reply of the Radical writer in the Westminster Review: "The men of the Press are only trumpeters of their respective regiments, - they serve to rouse and inflame, to incite and encourage the efforts of the people, and to make a common understanding will, but they do not create ....." (30)

The efforts of politicians, in the years after 1832, to harness the energies of The Times to their own causes bore public testimony to the newspaper's importance. The enormous efforts of the Whigs to build up the Morning Chronicle after the desertion of The Times in 1834 flattered it by imitation, while the events of Peel's brief ministry of 1834-5 seemed to cast the newspaper as kingmaker and constituted, according to his biographer, "Barnes's greatest hour". (31) According to Charles Greville, Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, referred to Barnes as "the most powerful man in the country" and urged the Duke of Wellington to seek to win him over "so great and dangerous a Potentate is the wielder of the thunders of the press." (32) Increasingly conscious of opinion outside Parliament, a number of politicians saw the newspaper press as the key to it and themselves as the manipulators of the key. This belief in the potency of newspapers was elevated by some into a new version of the conspiracy theory which replaced the men

of letters of the eighteenth century with the men of newspapers of the nineteenth.

The Times itself adjusted to its sales and status by occupying a more central position within the spectrum of opinion. The Reform Act of 1832 had removed the principal barrier of resentment between the upper and middle classes and the social tensions and fears of the 1830s and 1840s drove the possessing classes together. In a society dominated by an oligarchy of wealth The Times was one with its readers. Property it praised as "first, the means of obtaining education; next, a stake in the maintenance of law and order; and lastly, independence of ordinary temptations", (33) while demons of old were combined with new terrors when the newspaper warned, with a nice sense of priorities, of "the alarming advances of democracy, socialism, and Popery, formidable alike to property, morality, trade, civic order and religious freedom." (34) Political divisions there would be and the abandonment of the Whigs in 1834 caused a brief but dramatic loss of circulation. Even such contentious issues as the Poor Law and the Corn Laws were never seen by the newspaper in terms of the rivalry between classes which characterized its coverage of the Reform agitation. The Times now spoke for the nation, as it defined it. "Firm in our defence of the nation's rights and liberties" claimed The Times in 1834, "we look only to the peace and welfare of the nation without reference to the interests of individuals or of parties". The nation it claimed to speak for was, however, "the vast majority of the respectable and the intelligent classes", and, in the perception of The Times intelligence and respectability were equated with property. (35)

John Walter III, who succeeded in July 1847 as owner of the printing business and Chief Proprietor of The Times was particularly conscious of the newspaper as an institution with a particular function

in English life. An ardent supporter of the Oxford Movement, who at one time may have contemplated religious orders, he combined his financial interests with a strict moral earnestness which obscured for him many of the realities of the newspaper business. He exercised a distant but supervisory control and the Walter Papers in the Archives of The Times bear ample witness to the constant stream of comment and suggestions from him and explain why Delane, in writing to George Dasent, his Assistant Editor and brother-in-law, frequently referred to Walter as "the Griffin" or "the Griff". (36) Within a week of his appointment a leading article expressed his commitment: "We belong to the public...we are proud to think that England is proud of its Times." (37) Other newspapers might rely on shrewd promoters, clever writers or news agencies but The Times would have a higher role in recording events. As the History of The Times declares: "Walter envisaged nothing less than a national repository of history to which intelligent people would willingly go for the authentic day-to-day account". (38) So important was accuracy in fulfilling this duty, which appeared to Walter as his vocation in life, that on occasion publication was delayed because of his insistence that all proofs be systematically read five or six times

The Editor who succeeded Barnes also shared this high dedication to the newspaper. John Thadeus Delane, the best known of all nineteenth century Editors, presided over The Times at the height of its influence in the middle of the century. Whereas Barnes, however, had been in essence a literary man of strong personal views who used The Times as a means of expressing his identity, Delane subsumed his whole identity within that of the newspaper. Deprived of a normal family relationship through the illness of his wife, Delane devoted himself entirely to the interests of the newspaper. The complete journalist, he was interested in the great events and developments of his day only in so far as they

were worthy of being reported. When offered high office in the Civil Service by Palmerston, he wrote to Walter: "My whole life is bound up with the paper; I must either work for it or not at all." (39) Though writing very little himself in the columns of the newspaper, his correspondence illustrates the absolute authority he wielded over the staff, suggesting topics and lines of argument to leader-writers and checking all drafts.

Delane's conception of The Times found clearest expression in the leading articles of February 6 and 7, 1852, produced in response to criticism in both Houses of Parliament of the hostile attitude of the newspaper press to Louis Napoleon. Written by Robert Lowe, they were the result of long deliberations by Walter and Delane. The essential argument had already been enunciated by Henry Reeve, the senior leader-writer of The Times in his correspondence with the Earl of Clarendon and Charles Greville. (40) It was now publicly proclaimed in what amounted to the first full exposition of the doctrine of the Fourth Estate of the press. In appropriately high-flown sentiments the articles proclaimed the independence of the press and its responsibilities as a national institution. Statesmanship was characterized by "Concealment, evasion, factious combinations, the surrender of convictions to party objects, and the systematic pursuit of expediency" while "the first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time and instantly by disclosing them, to make them the property of the nation". Not entirely forgetful of itself The Times reminded its readers: "Of all journals, and of all writers, those will obtain the largest measure of public support who have told the truth most constantly and most fearlessly."



In such ringing phrases did The Times encapsulate what it saw as its own history; independence had been the prerequisite leading to the institutional role of representative of public opinion. Even the often inglorious journalistic expedients used to obtain information were glossed over by implication: "The statesman collects his information secretly and by secret means". Objective truth was the quarry of the journalist and even the newspaper's ambition of whipping up a campaign - and circulation as well - could be appropriately cloaked: "it is daily and for ever appealing to the enlightened force of opinion - anticipating, if possible, the march of events - standing upon the breach between the present and the future, and extending its survey to the horizon of the world."

Greville's reaction to this was to remind Reeve of reality: "I am not sure I understand what you mean by 'the duty of a journalist lying apart from that of the members and agents of the Govt.' The practice of most journals is to do the best for their own interests or those of the party they serve, without troubling themselves much about very high motives". (41) Nobody knew better than Greville how Delane obtained his information and that the price paid for the dramatic disclosures in the leading articles of The Times was manipulation by politicians. When The Times again protested its integrity in 1855, Greville exploded to Reeve: "It is pretty good that the Times should so indignantly repudiate the alleged duty of an Editor to seek information and advice from eminent persons, ministers, ambassadors etc, when we know what the habits and practice of Delane have long been." (42)

Though Delane was thus susceptible to a variety of influences which reflected themselves in the columns of The Times, he nevertheless remained convinced of his fundamental independence. There was no permanent commitment to any individual or grouping. Delane felt that



he could take the political bait without becoming permanently hooked. Greville had to admit to Clarendon that there were limits to his influence over the paper: "I can not penetrate the arcana of that great machine", "I am much inclined to fire into Delane but it is of no use - he does not mind what I say". (43)

What buttressed Delane against dependency on politicians was his respect for a higher authority, public opinion. Public opinion for The Times was usually a concept which enabled interests which were sectional to be articulated as national. Whereas under Barnes The Times had sought to identify with the middle classes as a whole, Delane, however, focussed the paper even more narrowly upon those interests on which the prosperity of the paper depended. Public opinion, for Delane, was the opinion of the metropolitan upper middle classes and he made it his life's work to identify those interests and views and reflect them in his paper. The contradiction was well illustrated in Mitchell's Newspaper Directory for 1847: "Never is the voice of the English nation heard with more impressive power than when the eloquence of the Thunderer, on appropriate occasions, makes its manly appeals to the national feeling", but, "If, however, there be any class in the community with whom this journal is more than any other associated, perhaps it is the mercantile. Its sympathies, probably, are rather with London than with Leeds, with Bristol than with either Buckingham or Birmingham". (44)

On February 7, 1852, The Times proclaimed its highest duty: "If we do not represent the opinion of the country we are nothing." With agents throughout the urban centres, Delane was kept well informed. Thanks to the technicalities of production, however, he was able to add his own personal fine tuning to the identification of opinion. Since his presence was not required at Printing House Square till 10 or

11 p.m. he could spend his evenings in London society, attending its clubs, professional organizations and social functions. As a result of this and the correspondence which came to him daily, he was particularly well placed to identify the interests that concerned him most. Contemporary newspapers had no doubt about this and the Morning Post referred to The Times as "the organ of the great mercantile interest" while the Northern Star made the same point rather more graphically when it referred to "those gold-gorged conspirators who pull the wires of the Times". (45) Once aware of a strong movement or opinion among those groups, Delane became impervious to political pressure. The Earl of Aberdeen who exercised a powerful influence on the paper throughout the 1840s was reminded by Delane during the campaign against Palmerston in 1850 that "The press alone has hitherto endeavoured to withstand him and I can assure Your Lordship it is already wearying of a course which leaves it without any public support to bear the odium of a factious and personal opposition." (46)

The Times under Delane reflected faithfully its commercial base. C. Babbage in his survey of British institutions in 1851 saw clearly what had happened: "It is tolerably certain that some one paper supported by greater capital, and conducted with greater skill, will endeavour to represent the opinion of the largest class of those who purchase these sheets of diurnal information. The first place being thus occupied, other journals will arise to represent the opinions of smaller, yet, perhaps, of powerful classes....The press then may advantageously be considered as expressing the opinions of classes, not individuals." (47) The primacy of the 'leading journal' was reinforced, however, by the tendency of politicians to utilise its powerful energies for their own purposes. The failure of early attempts to exercise a direct control over the newspaper press did not

discourage politicians but rather reinforced them in their determination to manage it by indirect means. The inducement they offered was information. To a superior news-gathering and reporting service The Times was able to add an almost monopoly of official information, political gossip and disclosure. The Quarterly Review of 1830 had noted that "In England, no mortal ever looks at a newspaper to learn what its editor thinks on any given question, - indeed, no one ever knows or cares who or what the editor is. The print is read solely to learn what is thought by the best informed men of that particular party, of which it happens, for the time being, to be considered as the organ."<sup>(48)</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century The Times claimed to represent, not a particular party, but the nation and its domination of circulation and sources of information seemed to many of its readers to justify it in that claim.

This was the "extraordinary and dangerous eminence" referred to by Henry Reeve in the Edinburgh Review of 1855. "A daily organ which has reached this paramount position, is read every morning by hundreds of thousands who read nothing else, who imbibe its doctrines, who accept its statements, and who repeat both to every one they meet, till the whole intellectual and moral atmosphere of the nation becomes insensibly coloured and imbued. It of itself forms, and is the opinion of the country."<sup>(49)</sup> D. Urquhart in 1855, combining a penetrating analysis of the processes by which opinion was shaped with his customary Russophobia, showed how the influence of The Times was reflected through other metropolitan and provincial newspaper: "The commercial classes in England are spared even the reading of a leader. The Telegraph gives them a summary of Times' leaders. 'First leader of the Times says so and so; second leader so and so; third leader so and so'. The very comment is now the news."<sup>(50)</sup>

It was not surprising that the growing middle classes should require information and guidance since they were so conscious of lacking the background, traditions and education that would enable them to fulfil their political and social aspirations. The rapid expansion of the periodical press in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the comprehensive nature of the review article, reflected this demand for instant knowledge. Accompanying it, however, was the assumption that there existed an élite with superior insight and the authority that went with it. In such a period of transition what was sought was not only knowledge but certainty and the resolution of doubt. It was this that prompted Carlyle in Signs of the Times in 1829 to comment: "The true Church of England, at this moment, lies in the Editors of its Newspapers. These preach to the people daily, weekly; admonishing kings themselves; advising peace or war, with an authority which only the first Reformers, and a long-past call of Popes were possessed of". (51) By the middle of the century Trollope had changed the metaphor from the press as the Church of England to The Times as the Vatican! (52)

A.W. Kinglake in his analysis of the influence of The Times in 1855 recognized that it provided a commodity which none of its competitors could supply. It sold the orthodoxies of what many considered to be public opinion. "Their method was as follows: they employed able writers to argue in support of the opinion which, as they believed, the country was already adopting; and supposing that they had been well informed, their arguments of course fell upon willing ears. Those who had already formed a judgement saw their own notions stated and pressed with an ability greater than they could themselves command; and those who had not yet come to an opinion were strongly moved to do so when they saw the path taken by a company which notoriously strove

to follow the changes of the public mind."<sup>(53)</sup> R. Cobden, who was anxious after the successful outcome of the Corn Law agitation, to lead the middle classes against what he considered to be other bastions of aristocratic power was particularly resentful of the influence of The Times. "A monopoly of publicity was, indeed, virtually possessed by one London journal whose conductors had thus power of giving the impress of public opinion to whatever views they chose to espouse."<sup>(54)</sup> Cobden's biographer, J. Morley, who well knew the realities of journalistic practice had to admit that "Just like the Athenian Sophist, the newspaper taught the conventional prejudices of those who paid for it."<sup>(55)</sup>

At a price of 5d. the purchasing public of The Times remained essentially that of the upper middle classes, the urban commercial and professional interests. The Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps in 1851 repeatedly stressed that the result of the newspaper taxes was to restrict circulation.<sup>(56)</sup> It nevertheless also emphasized the enormous importance attached by contemporaries to newspapers. Comprehensive in its coverage, serious in its tone and forbidding in appearance, the daily morning newspaper was virtually the sole source of prompt information about national and international events. C.D. Collett produced figures, based on the annual stamp returns, to show that the dramatic events of 1848 had raised circulation above the levels of 1847 and 1849 and concluded that "the natural vent for any political excitement in this country is the newspaper press".<sup>(57)</sup>

Readership of newspapers far exceeded circulation returns, however. It was estimated in 1829 that, on average, every London newspaper was read by thirty people,<sup>(58)</sup> Coffee-shops and public-houses provided access to newspapers. The keeper of the Crown Coffee House in the Haymarket explained to the Committee on Import



Duties, 1840, that the reason why he had from 1500 to 1800 customers daily was partly the low price of his coffee, partly the excellence of his supply of newspapers. (59) The Rev. T. Spencer argued on behalf of the Temperance Society before the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps that newspaper taxes put a premium on drunkenness and quoted a parishioner who was frequently intoxicated: "I tell you, Sir, I never go to the public-house for beer, I go for the news". (60) Subscription rooms, reading societies where newspapers were read out and discussed, and news-rooms attached to Mechanics Institutes all provided further opportunities. T. Hogg, Secretary to the Union of Mechanics Institutes in Lancashire and Cheshire claimed that of the hundred Institutes in his area nine-tenths had a news-room and added: "there can be no doubt that every news-room that wishes to be so, must take a copy of the Times". (61)

In one ironic sense the stamp duty could be said to have increased the readership of newspapers. The minority draft report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps claimed that one result of the 1d. stamp was to facilitate the re-transmission of papers which were gathered in large bundles and dispatched without cost through the post. W.H. Smith estimated that London daily papers were transmitted at least three times. (62) Even more informal means could be utilized in order to obtain a newspaper; newsagents hired out copies at depreciating rates and C.D. Collett pointed out that "many of the working classes will club together to take newspapers even when they do not altogether approve of them". (63)

With an average circulation in 1848 of over 35,000, The Times would appear to have had a readership of several hundred thousand. Mowbray Morris, the Manager of The Times, claimed, before the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, that the paper "is in the hands of large



numbers of the common people." (64), though W.E. Hickson declared that "my experience as educationist has shown me that journals so well written as the Times, and so classically written as the Times, really overshoot the comprehension of the working classes of the community". (65) The daily reading of a newspaper required a commitment in time and money that few could afford. As reformers continually found, improving literature tended not to reach the desired audience but to be swallowed up by the voracious demand of the middle classes. Samuel Smiles pointed out to the Select Committee on Public Libraries in 1848 that Mechanics Institutions were failing in their objective of providing educational facilities for the benefit of working men and argued that were improperly named since "they are for the most part Institutes of the middle and respectable classes".(66)

"Who below the rank of a merchant or wholesale dealer can afford to take a daily paper at five pence?" asked Cobden in 1850.(67) Purchased by the urban commercial and professional interests and with a regular readership that spanned the middle classes The Times dominated a restricted market. Not surprisingly Mowbray Morris argued strongly in favour of retention of the stamp duty, though, with the demand from advertisers in mind, he urged the abolition of the tax on supplements. Newspapers, he argued, should be produced by the wealthy: "persons who have capital and some stake in society, something to lose, should have these papers in their hands".(68) They should also be read by the wealthy since a good press and a cheap press were, according to him, incompatible.

There were, Mowbray Morris conceded, other papers perhaps as good as The Times, but, "there is a prestige attached to its name, and they take it in preference to the Chronicle or other daily papers"(69); The Times as he said had indeed "got the ear of the market".(70)

Anxious to maintain its image, as well as its circulation, it aspired to be its voice also. In a period of emergency The Times would see itself as having an important role to play. Commenting on the deterioration of the French press during the revolution of 1848, Mowbray Morris declared that "in the crisis of a country a good press might be the saving of it". (71) Doubtless he had The Times and 1848 in mind.

### Notes for Chapter 3

- 1) Quoted in S. Harrison, Poor Men's Guardians (1974), p.155.
- 2) The Times, October 22, 1819.
- 3) "The Periodical Press", Edinburgh Review, vol.38, no.LXXVI (May 1823), p.364.
- 4) Ibid..
- 5) The Times, August 28, 1823.
- 6) P.P. Howe (ed.), The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, 21 vols. (1930-34), vol.20, pp.142-3.
- 7) "The Influence of the Press", Blackwood's Magazine, vol.xxxvi, no.CCXXVI; (Sept. 1834), "Influence of the Newspapers", vol.iv, nos.xx-xxi (Sept. and Oct. 1831).
- 8) Quoted in J.R.M. Butler, The Passing of the Great Reform Bill (1914; 1964 edn.), p.284.
- 9) T.W. Heyck, The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England (1982), p.28.  
B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962).
- 10) A. Briggs, "Middle-Class Consciousness in English Politics 1780-1846" Past and Present, vol. 9 (April 1956), p.68.  
H. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880 (1969), pp.213-4.
- 11) Archives of The Times (New Printing House Square), Extract from the journal of Denis Le Marchant, box no.12, file no.4.
- 12) Quoted in History of The Times vol.1 (1935), pp.210-211.
- 13) T. Carlyle, The Life of John Sterling (1851; 1881 edn.), p.208.

- 14) Archives of The Times, Walter Papers, box 3, Barnes to Walter, March 31, 1819.
- 15) Lord John Russell (ed.), Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence of Thomas Moore (1856), vol.v, p.293.
- 16) Archives of The Times, Extract from the journal of Denis Le Marchant, box no.12, file no.4.
- 17) History of The Times, vol.1 (1935), p.247.
- 18) G. Stedman Jones has noted how, after 1832, in radical terminology the "people" became equated with the "working classes". "The Language of Chartism" in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.) The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860 (1982), pp.13-14. In the columns of The Times the "people" became increasingly equated with property.
- 19) The Periodical Press: An Inquiry into the State of Public Journals (1824), p.105.
- 20) Henry Crabb Robinson, "Diaries and Reminiscences", Dr. Williams's Library, vol.8, p.111, Oct. 13, 1820 (Typescript copy).
- 21) Archives of The Times, Extracts from the journal of Denis Le Marchant, box no.12, file no.4..
- 22) "Influence of the Newspapers", Fraser's Magazine, vol.1V, no.xx (Sept. 1831), pp.140-142.
- 23) G. Le Strange (ed.), The Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Earl Grey, 2 vols. (1890), vol.1, p.167.
- 24) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey and R. Fulford, 8 vols. (1938), vol.2, Feb. 27, 1833, p.362.
- 25) Quoted in History of The Times, vol.1 (1935), p.283.
- 26) M. Walker, Powers of the Press (1982), p.14.

- 27) History of the The Times, vol.1 (1935), p.283.
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## CHAPTER 4

### "The Gospel of Mammonism": The Possessing Classes and Their Consensual Values

The Times in 1848 functioned as a complex organization within the structure of contemporary society and the consensual values shared by its members. These values must be identified so that the content of The Times can be located within them. The Times, however, claimed to speak on behalf of "the whole body of England". (1) On closer definition those whom it claimed to represent were the possessing classes, with education, with a vested interest in the maintenance of law and order, and with the financial means of purchasing The Times and the goods and services it advertised. The historian seeking to analyse this spectrum of society and its values is immediately confronted with the problem of the concepts to be used. Certainly contemporaries used the language of classes, though they also used eighteenth-century terms such as 'orders', 'ranks', 'degrees', or 'interests'. (2) The emphasis of Marx upon class has tended, however, to petrify thinking on British society in the nineteenth century around the structure which he identified. His threefold definition of classes owed much to Ricardo's scheme in which the three classes of landowners, capitalists and workers were distinguished by the varying ways in which they received their income. As Marx wrote in 1864: "The owners merely of labour power, owners of capital and landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-labourers, capitalists, and landowners, constitute then those big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production". (3) Marx was capable of pursuing the analysis much further, as he did in The Class Struggles in France (1850) but his

primary aim was not just to understand contemporary society but to emphasize the process of change leading to the inevitable polarization between the two major antagonistic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The three-class analysis of nineteenth-century British society has, nevertheless, become an orthodoxy among historians who use the term without comment and in very imprecise ways. G. Best in Mid-Victorian Britain 1851 - 1875 grapples with the problem at the beginning of his work but comes down on the side of imprecision. "I have used the language of class more as it was used by mid-Victorians than as it is used by any ancient or modern school of theorists; i.e. I have used it continually and confusedly. Mid-Victorian society, it is hardly too much to say, was obsessed by class and riddled with class consciousness, and generally not at all clear what it all meant." (4) Confusion on the part of contemporaries does not, however, entitle historians, aided by hindsight and armed with modern conceptual tools, to perpetuate the same.

Attempts to use the language of classes without precise definition almost invariably lead to confusion. Classes, when referred to in the plural form, do at least conform to the usage of contemporaries and permit a breadth of definition and a degree of fluidity that makes them useful categories. Classes expressed in the singular form, however, imply an identity of interests which rarely existed in practice. The problem is compounded when both forms are employed at the same time. A. Briggs, after pointing out that in the 1830s and 1840s "The difference in experience and outlook of different sections of the labouring population makes it difficult to employ the term 'working classes' with any degree of precision", nevertheless

uses the plural term interchangeably with the singular, (5) while P. Hollis in Class and Conflict in Nineteenth Century England 1815 - 1850 (1973) groups contemporary writings which used the plural terms 'middle classes' and 'working classes' under sections headed 'middle class' and 'working class'. E.P. Thompson has rightly warned of the danger of the historian becoming the slave to his own categories and protested against classes "which are marshalled, sent on manoeuvres, and marched up and down whole centuries". (6)

A number of historians have recently sought to do rather more than assume the traditional three-class model with its economic base. E.P. Thompson has stressed that class is a cultural as well as an economic formation, that it is "embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms" and that it "cannot be defined abstractly, or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes; and, ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time - that is, action and reaction, change and conflict." (7) H. Perkin in The Origins of Modern English Society 1780 - 1880 (1969), although arguing that fundamentally classes were in conflict about income, has pointed out that the actual observed conflicts were not couched in material terms but had been transmuted into struggles between rival class ideals. R.S. Neale has also argued that approaches to class should be distanced from classifications based on income and has emphasized political factors, since class consciousness "must embrace a consciousness of position in a set of relationships of authority and subordination, i.e., a consciousness of the nature and distribution of power in society and one's place in it, accompanied by sensations of a collective identity with people in similar positions." (8)

Despite the variety of approaches, there does seem to be agreement that class terminology has to be utilized in order to comprehend the nineteenth century. The language of classes must be a scalpel, though, and not a bludgeon if it is to prise open the past and the terms are best used in the plural form in order to allow for the variations within them. In defining classes, occupation, income and standard of living are all involved, but so also are collective consciousness and the sharing of common values by virtue of way of life, education, status or aspiration. In the last resort classes were not independent entities or self-defining categories but were useful though imprecise categories of social stratification, recognized as such with all their limitations by contemporaries. The terms must never in the hands of historians become crude stereotypes, nor conceal the fact that other dividing lines existed over gender, religion, politics, national identity and over urban and rural values. It may well be true that the coherence of classes was more external as an attitude to others, than it was an internal self-awareness. Where such awareness was at its sharpest, however, and where the terminology is therefore of most relevance to the historian, is when society itself seemed to be threatened with convulsive change. Such moments occurred in 1832, in 1846 and also in 1848.

The most obvious reality to contemporaries was the continued domination of all aspects of society by a landed élite, which was growing in wealth, social cohesion and numbers. Constituting the upper classes in society, they conformed to no rigid pattern and indeed their conventions permitted a great deal of colourful eccentricity which aspirants to the upper classes sometimes found difficult to understand. They were, however, as F.M.L. Thompson has pointed out "all shaped by a readily identifiable mould. They formed a loosely-knit club

whose unwritten rules ensured that all members were gentlemen, and it was they above all who formed the standards of gentlemanly conduct".

(9) The prerequisite of membership was a background of landed wealth. Thompson has identified, in the year 1873, 363 owners of estates of over 10,000 acres who were roughly equivalent to the landed aristocracy, and 3,000 owners of estates between 1,000 and 10,000 acres who constituted the gentry and the squirearchy. (10)

Landed wealth was not the sole determinant of membership of the upper classes but it was the basis of a whole variety of values which characterized members of the upper classes and enabled them to identify others in their social grouping. The aristocracy, the gentry and the squirearchy were alike in seeing in land economic wealth, political power, social status and a way of life. The characteristic self-confidence and authoritarian style of the upper classes, the unquestioned assumption of an inborn right and duty to lead others, their manners, social conventions and leisure interests were all inculcated within the close confines of the landed estate where the bonds of social deference held firm. These values were subsequently reinforced at public school, and Oxford and Cambridge, which helps explain why education in those particular environments came to be so highly prized by social aspirants. R.W. Emerson, after a visit to England in 1847, noted the distinguishing characteristics of the upper classes: "the sense of superiority, the absence of all ambitious effort which disgusts in the aspiring classes, a pure tone of thought and feeling, and the power to command, among their other luxuries, the presence of the most accomplished men in their festive meetings". (11)



The Industrial Revolution had not constituted the challenge to the ascendancy of the landed élite which some had hoped for. As John Bright lamented on March 25, 1848: "We are the slaves of a privileged class - brutal in its propensities, assured of its power". (12) The great landowners, as W.L. Burn has pointed out, came to terms and very profitable terms with the process of industrial change. (13) Land which was required for houses, factories, warehouses and the construction of railways, land from which was extracted the mineral prerequisites of industrial processes, brought enormous advantages to those who owned it.

Politically, too, the landed élite remained dominant. As the unpaid magistracy they exercised power directly at the local level in the sphere of county government at a period when many counties included urban and suburban areas. At the national level they dominated the institutions of central government. The Reform of Parliament in 1832 had not in fact transferred power from the traditional holders of it; as Russell stated at the time "it must necessarily give a preponderance to the landed interest" (14) and the subsequent history of the reformed Parliament was to prove him right. The Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 represented an equally timely concession to outside pressures but one which also saw no decisive shift in the distribution of power. The vital decision to repeal was the victory of one section of the landed élite over another. As Peel himself pointed out "the land is the stable basis of the state. I should deplore the day when the land lost its legitimate influence. But that day will never come, the land always must, and will retain, its legitimate influence". (15) As late as 1865 it was pointed out by B. Cracroft that of the 652 Members of Parliament, 502 were "territorialists" while 326 were members of the peerage or baronetage or connected with those orders by marriage or descent. (16)

At the very centre of government the Cabinet was overwhelmingly representative of landed power. Greville could refer in 1855 to the "members of aristocratic families, of whom all Governments have for the most part been composed". (17) The Russell administration of 1846-1852 was no exception. The last purely Whig administration in the nineteenth century, it was composed of landowners. (18) John Bright was perfectly accurate when he told the Commons in 1848: "This House and the other House of Parliament are exclusively aristocratic in character. The administration is therefore necessarily the same, and on the Treasury Board aristocracy reigns supreme". (19) The narrowness of the ruling élite and the social cohesion that existed between members of it suggest that politics were conducted on lines of social as well as political division. Certainly the strategy adopted by the Cabinet in the crisis of April 1848 was the mobilization of the middle classes in order to ward off the perceived threat from lower society. (20)

Behind Russell's Cabinet stood the shadowy figure of the Duke of Bedford. He declined to play a formal part in politics, but, as head of the Russell family, he doled out to his younger brother, the Prime Minister, much needed assistance for his financial problems and perhaps less needed advice on political matters. In that role he serves to remind that hierarchy and patronage applied within the aristocracy as well as outside it. His precise influence is difficult to assess. Clarendon probably flattered him when he wrote: "Your work is indeed severe. Perhaps no man in England has a private correspondence so extensive and I am sure none elaborates out of it the same amount of public good". (21) Greville confided in his diary that "his

correspondence, whenever it sees the light, will be more interesting, and contribute more historical information than that of any other man who has been engaged in public life." Unfortunately his suggestion of "epistolary reform" was not heeded and the Duke ultimately announced that he had been much engaged in destroying his correspondence. (22)

The power of the upper classes found expression in a variety of ways less formalized than political institutions. The English ruling classes were, as Namier put it, "amphibious". (23) Spending half the year on their estates, where they played out their role as head of the rural hierarchy, they spent the other half in the metropolis where they enjoyed to the full the pleasures of the London season, the excitement of politics and made strenuous efforts to maintain that carefully-fostered illusion of knowing all those who mattered in their social grouping. The Greville Memoirs testify to the narrowness of the social élite and the social contact that existed between them in the formal and informal gatherings of London 'society'.

Vital to their power and influence, however, was the willingness of others to defer to them. It was natural that the rural gentry and squirearchy should have acquiesced in the leadership of the aristocracy and that those born in the shadow of a great house should have willingly accepted the upper classes at their own evaluation. With the increasing urbanization of society and the dramatic growth of the middle classes in numbers, wealth and self-confidence, change could have been expected and it intrigued contemporaries that this had not in fact occurred. W. Bagehot noted in his work on the English constitution that "In all countries new wealth is ready to worship old wealth, if old wealth will let it....but I doubt if there has ever been any in which all old families and all titled families received more ready observance from those who were their equals, perhaps their superiors,

in wealth, their equals in culture, and their inferiors only in descent and rank." (24) Cobden, who devoted so much of his life to the overthrow of the landed élite, bemoaned in 1863 that "feudalism is every day more and more in the ascendant in political and social life. So great is its power and prestige that it draws to it the support and homage of even those who are the natural leaders of the newer and better civilisation". (25)

Behind the bland mask of deference there frequently lurked self-interest. Greville pointed out in 1856 that "patronage has been the great instrument of keeping parties together". (26) It had a wider role than that, however, and acted as a sort of social cement, binding together a whole variety of interests that might otherwise have more bitterly resented the monopoly of power by the traditional élite. Bishops, deans and incumbents of Crown livings, judges, recorders, stipendiary magistrates, ambassadors, consuls, civil servants, military commanders, all were appointments in the hands of government. Commissions, livings, pensions, sinecures, social elevation or merely social acceptance were an important means whereby the landed aristocracy maintained its influence within the ranks of the upper classes in general, but also over those groups beyond. Undoubtedly social antagonism grew sharper in the first half of the nineteenth century, but, overlaying the rivalries of classes, was the traditional network of bonds and loyalties which spanned the possessing classes as a whole and prevented divisions within them widening into dangerous proportions.

As F.M.L. Thompson has pointed out "one of the virtues of aristocratic leadership was that it always tried to lead in at least two different directions." (27) The result was that political divisions were not likely to be exacerbated by coinciding with rivalry

between classes. Both the gentry and the middle classes were obliged in moments of disenchantment to switch from one aristocratic party to another. In both 1832 and 1846, when the middle classes were at their most self-conscious, they were obliged, in order to achieve their ends, to accept the leadership of an aristocratic party on its own terms. Macaulay in 1843 pointed to the essential weakness of the Anti-Corn Law League: "people who know anything of the way in which this country is really governed know that there is in fact a small class of men who have a real veto on all public measures which they agree to oppose. There must be a Government. You cannot make a Government out of men without weight, talents, knowledge or experience". (28) All these qualities were seen by Macaulay and many others as concentrated within the ranks of the traditional élite, still strongly entrenched in its powers and well skilled in maintaining them.

To see this determination to defend an established position as warfare between classes tightly drawn in self-conscious battle array would be to substitute crude Marxist ideology for historical reality. Divisions existed within classes as well as between them. Nowhere was this more marked than within the middle classes. R.S. Neale in his five-class model of English society has distinguished between a middle class of large industrial and commercial property owners, senior military and professional men, all aspiring to acceptance by the upper class and a middling, petit bourgeois class. (29) H. Perkin has referred to the "forgotten middle class" who "belonged to the non-capitalist or professional middle class, a class curiously neglected in the social theories of the age, but one which played a part out of all proportion to its numbers". (30) Even Marx and Engels seem to have been uncomfortably aware of an anomaly in the three-class system and, in order to accommodate themselves, identified an



intellectual élite which breaks away from the ruling class at the crucial moment and joins the revolutionary class. (31)

Certainly for mid-century Britain the concept of the upper middle classes is a useful tool of analysis. Matthew Arnold referred to "a middle class cut in two...a professional class brought up on the first plane" and "that immense business class...brought up on the second plane, but cut off from the aristocracy and professions". (32) By the 1840s large and self-conscious professional groups had resulted from the first phase of industrialization. Profiting from the process, but not directly involved in it, they sought to enhance their social status by distancing themselves from what were seen as the demeaning cash transactions, which linked work and income for most of the middle classes, and by acquiring the facade of gentility. As G. Best has pointed out, the idea of the 'gentleman' was of enormous importance in the history of British society, "not only because it represented the striking of a kind of bargain between the traditional ruling class and their rivals" but because "it added weight and..... respectability to the social strata to which the middle middling and all lower orders deferred". (33)

Crucial for acceptance as a gentleman was a liberal education. Gladstone put the point very clearly when he declared that such an education "can only apply to that small proportion of the youth of any country who are to become in the fullest sense educated men. It involves no extravagant or inconvenient assumptions...in which the necessities of specific training must more or less limit general culture". (34) Liberal education must come first, vocational training could come later. The very word 'profession' itself changed to meet the new circumstances. W.J. Reader has shown how from meaning 'calling, vocation, known employment' in the eighteenth century, the word became



associated with the adjective 'liberal' and then gradually drew into itself all the implications of being educated as a gentleman. (35) The church, medicine, the bar, which were also called the 'learned professions' constituted the basis of the professions and provided the models of professional organization which created elaborate hierarchies, laid down standards of competence and sought to achieve and consolidate social status. The Royal College of Surgeons which was chartered in 1800 was followed by the Law Society in 1831, the Institute of British Architects in 1837, the Pharmaceutical Society in 1844 and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1847. The census of 1841 included only clergy, lawyers and medical men in the category of 'professional persons', and calculated the number for England and Wales at 54,000. By 1851 that number had risen to 63,666 and the census of that year commented "their importance cannot be overrated". (36)

The upper middle classes were wider, however, than the census of 1841 allowed. The return itself admitted this by referring to 81,372 men who were defined as being in "Other pursuits requiring education". (37) Many of these were public officials, professors, and lecturers, members of the newer professions or of that category, the men of letters, which flourished in response to the insatiable demands of the printing press. Authorship now became a profession in the material sense and Trollope spoke on its behalf when he admitted: "my first object in taking to literature as a profession was that which is common to the barrister when he goes to the Bar...I wished to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort." (38) Commercial interests too figured within this social grouping and W.D. Rubinstein has stressed the contrast between manufacturers in the North of England who were directly involved in industrial production and the commercial interests in London who far surpassed them in wealth, education and social status. (39)

It was the metropolis which was the real unifying factor among the upper middle classes. London, with a population in 1851 of 2.685 million, represented 15% of the population of England and Wales. (40) The focus of national politics and society, the largest and wealthiest market in the country, it also exerted in the 1840s a cultural dominance because of the presence of the largest reading public and the concentration within it of printing, publishing and news industries. It also contained within it that nexus of organizations and clubs which were essential to the gentlemanly ethos and which enabled the upper middle classes to mix on what they regarded as equal terms with the governing élite and thereby to prove to themselves that they had indeed passed the acid test. The Athenaeum founded in 1824, the United University in 1827, the Oxford and Cambridge in 1830 and the Garrick in 1831, testified to the wealth of the upper middle classes and their social ambitions. The founding of public schools, Cheltenham 1841, Marlborough 1843, Rossall 1844 and Wellington 1853 and the increased demand for places at Oxford and Cambridge indicated the same ambition extended to their children.

The illusion of social acceptance was easier to achieve than the reality. Greville and Clarendon were always clear in their correspondence as to those who belonged to the special élite and those who were merely tolerated. W. Johnston, a barrister writing in 1851, commented: "It is doubtful whether, socially the aristocratic classes have permitted that advance into their domain which politically they have not had the skill or energy to prevent." (41) Politically, however, the upper middle classes were important and it was their opinion, filtered through the network of London clubs and society, which reached the ears of government and was frequently regarded as constituting 'public opinion'. Where a broader public was canvassed,

the metropolitan upper middle classes were still especially important because of their wealth, status and influence over the middle classes in general. In an age so much in awe of the printed word, the power of the press was controlled by the upper middle classes. H. Byerley Thomson, a legal author of some eminence, wrote in the 1850s: "The importance of the professions and the professional classes can hardly be overrated, they form the head of the great English middle class, maintain its tone and independence, keep up to the mark its standard of morality, and direct its intelligence." (42) Bagehot looking back from 1870 put the point very clearly: "Twenty years ago, and still more forty years ago, the political importance of London society was very great - indeed so great as to be almost overruling. The opinion of a limited class, living on a rather confined district, alarmed ministers, affected the House of Commons, and surely, though slowly, influenced the whole country. News came first from that class. The papers which reflected their views gave the tone of all discussion. The clubs, which were full of their thoughts, were the clubs whose thoughts it was needful for whippers-in and editors to ascertain. This power has passed away." (43)

Until that power passed away the middle classes throughout the country were unable to exercise the influence to which their numbers and wealth appeared to entitle them. Contemporaries were much impressed by the rapid growth of this particular section of society. The Westminster Review commented in 1826: "The value of the middle classes of this country, their growing numbers and importance are acknowledged by all. These classes have long been spoken of, and not grudgingly, by their superiors themselves, as the glory of England". (44) Edward Baines, editor of the Leeds Mercury, wrote: "Never in any country

beneath the sun, was an order of men more estimable and valuable, more praised and praiseworthy, than the middle class society in England." (45) Not all subscribed to this fulsome praise and Cabinet correspondence in 1848 referred to them as "shopkeepers". (46) When society appeared to be threatened in that year, the strategy adopted by the Cabinet, for both England and Ireland, was to rally the middle classes, since their loyalty and support was seen to be as crucial at home as their alienation had been fatal in France.

Like all classes in society, the middle classes contained many different groups, from manufacturers and merchants to the growing army of clerks and office workers. In the last resort the middle classes consisted of those who thought of themselves as such, though contemporaries seem to have agreed upon certain essential criteria. A sufficient and steady source of income was required in order to fulfil the normal range of expectations of the middle classes and to ward off the nightmare of impoverishment which haunted the lower classes. An occupation or calling was required which was free from the taint of manual labour. There was also a whole range of values relating to education, religion, sex, social behaviour and domesticity, which gave cohesion and confidence to the middle classes. J.F.C. Harrison has described these as "fences erected by a superior social class to mark itself off from, and to protect itself against, an inferior culture." (47)

Growing in numbers throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the middle classes appear to have constituted around 20% of the population by mid-century. (48) It was their rising income and the desire to give expression to it in tangible form that dominated the market and dictated popular taste. Their growth in numbers and wealth

was also accompanied by an increasing awareness of themselves as a powerful but little acknowledged element in society. A. Briggs has traced the development of this consciousness, born at the end of the Napoleonic wars, maturing in the conflict over reform of Parliament and reaching full stature with the repeal of the Corn Laws. "During the long battle for repeal, middle-classes consciousness was forged as it had never been before". (49) Some contemporaries certainly saw in repeal the triumph of the middle classes. G.J. Harney, who described himself in a letter to Engels in 1846 as "the teacher of 'strange doctrines'", went on to announce the glad tidings: "complete middle-class domination, an increased agitation for the Charter, complete estrangement between the proletarians and the middle class, and the beginning of the conflict which will be social as well as a political one." (50) Richard Cobden, six days before Peel's resignation, advised him to base his support on the middle classes: "Do you shrink from the post of governing through the bona fide representatives of the middle classes?....There must be an end of the juggle of parties, and some man must of necessity rule the state through its governing class. The Reform Bill decreed it; the passing of the Corn Bill has realized it. Are you afraid of the middle class? You must know them better than to suppose that they are given to extreme or violent measures. They are not democratic". (51) Peel ignored the offer.

Repeal of the Corn Laws fragmented the party system but it did not change the balance of power and Cobden writing in 1864 could still lament: "We have the spirit of feudalism rife and rampant in the midst of the antagonistic development of the age of Watt, Arkwright and Stephenson". (52) Repeal of the Corn Laws turned out to be a timely, tactical adjustment which avoided confrontation with the middle classes



but left power and influence in the hands of the traditional élite. In the exercise of this power they were aided by the upper middle classes who remained bound by ties of social aspiration and self-interest. It was the upper middle classes who blurred the raw edges of rivalry between classes and who exercised a potent and restraining influence over the middle classes as a whole.

The middle classes, on the other hand, were never intent on direct confrontation with the ruling élite. Cobden might announce his intention of "beating down the aristocracy" (53) but even he was unwilling to take up the obvious weapon, a programme of radical parliamentary reform, because he feared its democratic implications. Resentment of the power of the aristocracy was in no way equalled by their fear of the masses. Despite the differences between them, there was remarkable unity among the possessing classes when they looked beneath them.

Shared values were indeed the norm among the possessing classes, though they might well be nuanced to reflect the interests of particular groups. J. Joll is right in stressing that "it is only by studying the minds of men that we shall understand anything", (54) but that is the most difficult part of the historian's task. W.L. Burn has warned of the "distorting mirror" of the past and the dangers of excessive emphasis on individual idiosyncrasies or wide generalizations. (55) The historian has to be wary of evaluating the past in the light of his own or her own experience. Concepts used in past contexts may have had meanings very different from current ones and language itself is not static but, as R. Williams has pointed out, is "a continuous social production in its most dynamic sense". (56) The historian's attention tends to be attracted by the eminent, the talented, the noisy and the verbose and it may neglect the muted tones



which more accurately reflected reality. Contemporary novels and sermons may exaggerate and distort in order to command the attention of the audience and no soaring imaginative talent deserves to be constrained within historical pigeon-holes.

Minds, however, can only be studied through their product. Literature in the broadest sense of letters, diaries, history, sermons, as well as novels and poetry, is a product of its age. The imagination takes its subjects from the reality that surrounds it. Literary men, who live by the pen, must use it within a framework of reference that is meaningful to their audiences and they will tend therefore to reflect the main preoccupations and assumptions of the age in which they live. In the middle of the nineteenth century the men of letters stood in particularly close relationship with their purchasing public. In a period of doubt and uncertainty readers looked to them for assistance with contemporary problems. In an age of great social mobility when education was so highly prized, readers looked to them for that useful knowledge which their background and lack of education had denied them. The popularity of the great Reviews bears witness to the demand for concise synopses of contemporary thinking, which masqueraded as reviews of books. As Bagehot wrote in the National Review of 1855, "It is indeed a peculiarity of our times, that we must instruct so many persons". (57) The result was the rise in numbers and status of the men of letters, but relevancy and realism were to be the immediate hallmarks of their trade. Of all the heroes in Carlyle's Pantheon, the most modern form of hero was "Hero as a Man of Letters". "What he teaches, the whole world will do". (58)

The close relationship of mid-century literature to social reality does not, of itself, resolve the historian's problem of analysing contemporary opinion. Ideological commitment can still predetermine conclusions. R. Gray, using Gramsci's approach, has argued in favour of "bourgeois hegemony", (59) while P. Anderson has berated the bourgeoisie for having carried out a capitalist revolution but having failed to break the dominant ethos of the landed élite. (60) The thought of the 1840s is best seen, however, not as a single dominant stream but as a rich confluence of sources. The Enlightenment with its emphasis on reason, the natural order and progression, was gradually assimilated in pragmatic form into that part of society where change was most visible. The evangelical revival, which had created Methodism and permeated the Church of England and the old Dissent, reinforced the impetus to improvement, while emphasising its own priorities. Romanticism with its hazy emphasis on emotion and self-development, and political economy with its 'iron laws', all fed into that rich intellectual mix from which individuals drew their own diverse conclusions.

Certain opinions were, of course, shared by large numbers of people. What emerges most clearly, in a study of the possessing classes, is what they all feared. What they thought ought to be done in the positive sense was influenced to a greater extent by their position within the social and economic framework. T. Carlyle voiced the anxieties of the 1830s and 1840s in "Signs of the Times" which he wrote in the Edinburgh Review of 1829: "There is a deep-lying struggle in the whole fabric of society; a boundless, grinding collision of the New with the Old." (61) Carlyle, the self-appointed prophet of his age, was accepted as such, in his early years, by large numbers of

contemporaries. J. Mazzini, writing in the British and Foreign Quarterly Review in 1844 noted that "Mr Carlyle has instinctively all the presentiments of the period" while G. Eliot wrote in Leader in 1855 "there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings". (62) The vigour and variety of social protest in movements like Chartism and the anti-Poor Law agitation, and the plethora of reform movements from the pragmatism of adult education to the aspirations of millenarianism, all bore witness to the general unease. J.A. Froude, writing particularly of 1843, noted that "the intellectual lightships had broken from their moorings and it was then a new and trying experience." (63) Marx and Engels sensed the same fears and anxieties of the possessing classes and wove them in The Communist Manifesto into a universal system. (64)

What lay at the basis of the anxieties and tensions of the 1830s and 1840s was the nature, speed and scale of the changes that had occurred as a result of the process of industrialization. When Carlyle in "Signs of the Times" sought to characterize the age in which he wrote, he referred to it as the "Mechanical Age". (65) The revolutionary changes in production and communication, resulting from mechanization and the application of steam power, might be seen as a blessing or a curse, but none doubted the problem of accommodating them within existing society. W. Johnston in his survey, England As It is, wrote in 1851: "So far as general literature goes, and so far as public debating and remonstrances in public journals may be relied upon as evidence of prevailing sentiment, there is no want of public consciousness of the great social evil of the time. I mean the separation between rich and poor - the dissympathy of classes, and that mutual disgust which appears to threaten some sort of violent revolution at no very distant period." (66)

The plight of the masses who pressed into the urban centres of population became increasingly visible to the wealthy classes at the same time as their demands were voiced more stridently. The "Condition of England Question" (67) was not, however, the case as presented by the masses, but the problem as seen by the possessing classes. They became increasingly aware of the poverty, squalor, disease and debauchery that dictated the lives of the poor. The social novels of the period by Dickens, Disraeli, Gaskell and Kingsley all testify to the fear of violence from below. (68) Disraeli in Sybil referred to "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws." (69) The popularity of those novels indicated social concern but they also indicated the narrow range of contemporary solutions. Personal regeneration, social harmony based on paternalistic principles, or emigration were the only suggestions proffered.

What was unthinkable was that the poor should by collective action help themselves. The social novels were all agreed that the masses must desist from radical politics. Such action by the masses was invariably equated with violence. Democracy was seen as leading inevitably to anarchy and dictatorship. In real life, Chartists might insist that theirs was a political movement, but it was seen by the propertied classes as a challenge to the whole apparatus of society. The emphasis on man as an individual and not as a property owner appeared to strike at the very economic foundations of society, at the political and ideological buttresses that sustained it. T.B. Macaulay,

in the debate on the Chartist petition of 1842, put the point very clearly: "I believe that universal suffrage would be fatal to all purposes for which government exists, and for which aristocracies and all other things exist, and that it is incompatible with the very essence of civilisation. I conceive that civilisation rests on the security of property." (70) Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine reiterated the argument in the same year: "What is meant, under any mystification of the words we need not say, is - one universal partition, amongst the nineteen millions in this island, of the existing property, be its nature what it may, and under whatsoever tenure." (71)

Even more threatening to the propertied classes was Socialism. Chartism at least expressed itself in the traditional rhetoric of radicalism but by the 1840s a more frightening language had appeared. Socialism appears to have been first mentioned in The Times on December 14, 1839, when the paper protested at the introduction at court of Robert Owen "which cannot fail to magnify his abominable doctrines in the eyes of his deluded followers". The Quarterly Review took up the point and urged that a young and female sovereign be protected from such impurity. It delivered its own judgement on doctrines "which are not only incompatible with our political constitution, moral obligations and religious duties, but we will boldly assert, wholly irreconcilable with any system whatsoever of human society." (72) Clergymen too rushed into print and 1839 saw the publication of warning tracts: "The Progress and Tendencies of Socialism; a Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge" and "Socialism as a Religious Theory irrational and absurd". (73)



These fears were aggravated during the 1840s by increasing awareness of the doctrines of Saint-Simon and especially Fourier. Fourier's ideas had been circulating in the 1820s though it was not till 1840 that a Fourierist journal and organization were established. (74) The reaction against Socialism was in general a good deal more powerful than the support for it. The doctrines were regarded as being wholly inimical to property, the family, Christianity and civilisation. W.M. O'Hanlon in his prize essay to the "operative classes" warned them of the system "Equally distinguished for its false philosophy and its daring impiety" which "would undermine reason, subvert humanity and dethrone God". (75) Few had any accurate knowledge of the doctrines advocated or their specific rejection of violence as a means to their end. Some semantic confusion existed even among supporters. P. McDouall wrote of Chartists in 1843 who had already adopted "the principles of Socialism or Communism...after a general discussion with Robert Owen and other Communists". (76) Such vagueness only served to heighten fears and facilitate the association of Socialism with revolution.

Bertrand Russell recorded that his grandfather, lying on his deathbed in 1869, "heard a loud noise in the street and thought it was the revolution breaking out." (77) Casting a long shadow over the 1830s and 1840s was the French Revolution. Its complex history afforded examples of all that haunted the possessing classes. The overthrow of the crown, aristocracy and church had been accompanied by attacks on property and property rights. Democracy had first resulted in the nightmare of the Red Republic and then ultimately led to military dictatorship, while overall there appeared to be mindless violence, blind terror and unabated bloodshed. The warnings, first sounded in Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France in 1790, still echoed



in the social novels of mid-century. These fears were utilized and thereby reinforced by those who sought to change society. The Chartist leaders J.B. O'Brien and G.J. Harney consciously modelled themselves on French radicals during the Revolution and Harney attended Chartist meetings wearing a tricolour sash and red cap. Similar caps of liberty appeared on poles at Chartist meetings, the institutions of the new Poor Law were referred to as 'Bastilles', while counter-propaganda stressed the baneful effects of the Revolution of 1789 on French workers. (78) Carlyle's essay on "Chartism" revealed the way that contemporaries tended to see any attempt at radical change as being part of that fundamental malaise in society which had first manifested itself in the Revolution of 1789 but which now threatened the whole of Europe: "Since 1789, there is now half a century complete; and a French Revolution not complete! Whosoever will look at that enormous Phenomenon may find many meanings in it, but this meaning as the ground of all. That it was a revolt of the oppressed lower classes against the oppressing or neglecting classes: not a French revolt only; no a European one; full of stern admonition to all countries of Europe. These Chartisms, Radicalisms, Reform Bill, Title Bill, and infinite other discrepancy and acrid argument and jargon that there is yet to be are our French Revolution". (79)

What added further to the fears of revolution was the knowledge that its most striking manifestation had occurred in France. Four hundred years of unremitting rivalry, punctuated with sporadic outbursts of war, had characterized relations between Britain and France. On France as our nearest and most natural rival fell the incubus of being foreign, catholic, potentially revolutionary and invariably aggressive. The affairs of France therefore loomed large in British newspapers, especially when Parliament was not sitting. On

occasions public fears of invasion rose to such crescendoes that Governments were obliged to abandon the orthodoxies of retrenchment in order to make elaborate military preparations. R. Cobden in his analysis of three such panics of the 1840s and 1850s claimed that "The alarm was constantly stimulated by startling paragraphs in the newspapers". (80)

Whilst the French were the aliens across the Channel, the Irish were seen as the aliens within British society. F. Engels referred in 1845 to contemporary estimates that a million Irish had already migrated to Britain and fifty thousand more came each year. In London there were 120,000 Irish poor, 40,000 in Manchester and 34,000 in Liverpool. (81) Concentrated in such large numbers in the worst centres of urban squalor they appeared to threaten the livelihood of native labour and to jeopardize public order and decency. Engels revealed the contemporary stereotype of the Irishman as dirty, uncouth, improvident and addicted to drink. "The Irish have....brought with them filth and intemperance. Dirty habits, which have also become second nature to the Irish, do no great harm in the countryside where the population is scattered. On the other hand, the dangerous situation which develops when such habits are practised among the crowded population of big cities, must arouse feelings of apprehension and disgust." (82) The stereotype is faithfully reflected in the pages of Punch. As M.H. Spielman points out in The History of "Punch", "a jest's prosperity lies in the ear that hears it" and Punch having consolidated its market position by the late 1840s had also moderated its earlier radical posture and "aimed at representing the sentiments of the better part of the country". (83) There is, as a result, little sympathy in the pages of Punch for the plight of the Irish. Instead they are ruthlessly caricatured and pilloried with a humour which is almost invariably bitter and cruel. (84)

Beset by so many fears it is not surprising that the possessing classes should have clung so tenaciously to the belief in absolute certainties. Ultimate truths were thought to lie at the basis of politics, economics, morals, history, art and education. Arnold, Carlyle, Kingsley, Macaulay, Newman and a host of minor prophets thundered eternal truths in ex cathedra tones from the pulpits of the church or the press. The long tradition of natural law in both philosophy and theology had been reinforced by the scientific thought of the seventeenth century and the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The importance of knowledge in a society changing so rapidly, the necessity to change old attitudes and reinforce the new, further reinforced the tendency to cling to apparent certainties. As W.E. Houghton has reminded, "a little knowledge is a dogmatical thing". (85) Macaulay could write in "The People's Charter" of the gap between rich and poor and lament that the workingmen did not know "the reasons which irrefragably prove this inequality to be necessary to the well-being of all classes". (86)

All the possessing classes were agreed on the hierarchical nature of the society which stretched beneath them. Where they differed was in the perception of their own roles within society. The upper classes, fortified by all the advantages that inherited wealth, careful upbringing and expensive education brought, saw themselves at the head of an unchanging caste system buttressed by institutions, hereditary rights and privileges, social prestige and habits of deference. The world of Charles Greville, of the "high bred and high born" who lived "in the best and most refined society" (87) was a narrow enclave that others might enter but within which they never really belonged. The middle classes, on the other hand, tended to espouse a rather different view of society, a view which H. Perkin has called the "entrepreneurial

ideal". (88) This vision of society sought a more flexible, open society with competition doing for capital what patronage had done for landed property, and securing for it positions of power, wealth and social prestige. Between these two views of society the upper middle classes found themselves somewhat uncomfortably wedged. Mixing on what they considered to be equal terms with the social élite, they tended to model themselves and their values on their superiors by laying emphasis on liberal education and gentility, whilst, at the same time, they sought to distance themselves from the middle classes by emphasising professional status and selection on the basis of a talent that few possessed.

What all the possessing classes agreed upon, however, was the absolute primacy of property. Property was the keystone of mid-century society. It was what enabled a man to become an individual by permitting independence, education and self-development. John Locke had provided self-interest with a philosophical justification which rooted property in man's nature and made it a strictly private sphere of activity which was prior to the state. It was also, in the eyes of contemporaries, indissolubly linked to the survival and well-being of the family, Christianity and civilisation itself. Macaulay in 1842 stated a commonplace: "on the institution of property the well-being of society depends". (89) Palmerston warned of the dire consequences of any interference with landlord rights: "If the Principle of the Right of Property which is the foundation of the social order were to be lightly.....departed from, we should find ourselves at sea in many other Respects and without any fixed rule to steer by." (90)

Property was defined by the possessing classes in a variety of different ways. To the upper classes property was primarily landed property which brought with it a whole variety of powers, privileges

and responsibilities. D. Roberts has argued that "In early Victorian England, no social outlook had deeper roots and wider appeal than that which twentieth-century historians call paternalism". (91) It was based on four main assumptions about society - that it was organic, pluralist, authoritarian and hierarchical. On the other hand, Roberts has to admit that paternalism consisted of no "set of definite, logical, and clearly defined axioms", merely "varying attitudes and beliefs" (92) and the evidence within his work suggest that paternalism had no real solution for the problems of the age and in the last resort was more concerned with paternal discipline than with paternal responsibility.

Rather more strident and self-confident was the doctrine of political economy which interpreted property in a wider sense of wealth in general and saw in its free and unimpeded development the progression of man himself. Existing under a variety of names, of which liberalism, individualism and laissez-faire were the most common, the ideas of political economy were popularized through a variety of publicists and coloured every aspect of mid-century life. The ending of regulations affecting factories, labour supply, wages and the poor rate, and the establishment of free trade as the governing principle in all things, was the gospel of progress according to the middle classes. The principles of political economy were, however, frequently tempered by expediency and few would have disagreed with J.R. McCulloch, the economist, who wrote in 1848: "The principle of laissez-faire may be safely trusted in some things but in many more it is wholly inapplicable; and to appeal to it on all occasions savours more of the policy of a parrot than of a statesman or a philosopher". (93)



For the upper middle classes neither paternalism nor political economy constituted a relevant set of ideas and drawing upon both they clung to an intellectual mix which was articulated in professional status and assumed in the concept of gentility. Gentlemen by both education and profession the upper middle classes sought to impress those whom they saw positioned both above and beneath them. Professional expertise, rather than landed property or capital, should determine social status. Carlyle protested in Past and Present against both "the Gospel of Dilettantism, producing a Governing class who do not govern" and "the Gospel of Mammonism" that substitutes the cash-nexus for social relations, and he argued in favour of an aristocracy of talent. (94) Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine complained that "the Philosophers....are setting up what they are pleased to call a New Aristocracy - an Aristocracy of Science". (95)

Whilst there was considerable doubt about the future, the past seemed to afford some consolation. The possessing classes consciously sought continuity with the past. They wanted to be assured of the soundness of British institutions and to be convinced that the past provided guide-lines which would guarantee a beneficial future. The men of letters, in the persons of Hallam, Palgrave and Macaulay satisfied the need. Macaulay published in 1848 the first two volumes of his History of England and sold 13,000 copies in four months. In these volumes he reassured contemporaries by taking their hopes and aspirations and weaving them into the fabric of the past. Britain therefore appeared as a providentially favoured island which, by virtue of the spirit of its people, their institutions and history was to serve as a model and inspiration for the rest of Europe and was ultimately destined to spread its blessings even further afield. The didactic purpose of history was openly admitted: "the general effect of



this chequered narrative will be to excite thankfulness in all religious minds, and hope in the breasts of all patriots. For the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, or moral, and of intellectual improvement." (96) Macaulay, however, was well aware of the anxieties of the 1830s and 1840s and the national myth that he enshrined in his works was born more of fear than of arrogance. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in reviewing Macaulay's work in April 1849 noted: "What was now required was something which would minister to the cravings of an excited and enthusiastic age...which should bring the experience of the past to bear on the visions of the present and tell men, from the recorded events of history, what they had to hope, and what to fear."

By the 1840s the national myths which were being articulated were increasingly assuming racist form. R. Horsman has argued that during that decade there was a dramatic growth in racial Anglo-Saxonism. (97) Ideas of Anglo-Saxon freedom, which had permeated English thought since the sixteenth century, were being welded by philologists and ethnologists into a doctrine of English superiority, which was fed by the apparent triumph of the English language, English institutions and above all English economic power. Carlyle did much to popularize these ideas and was the first important writer to equate English achievements with racial superiority. (98) Throughout Western Europe in the 1840s nationalist doctrines spread among the middle classes and Britain was no exception. The essential difference, however, was that whereas on the continent nationalism was associated with radical causes, in Britain the articulators of nationalism consciously used the doctrines to reinforce the existing order of which they felt themselves to be part.

Though the past therefore afforded some hope for the future, religion appeared to be the moral force which alone could guarantee it. Religion provided the only comprehensive system of thought, the only philosophy, system of ethics, and cosmology of which most people were aware. Religion or religiosity coloured every aspect of life in mid-century. Public debate was heavily charged with religious content while religious language, imagery and symbolism were constantly invoked at all levels in society. Martin Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy, which went through ten editions in the 1840s and eventually sold between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  million copies, illustrated the popularity amongst the purchasing public of moralising platitudes expressed in religious form. (99) For the possessing classes religion, fortified by the evangelical movement, had a strong social purpose. They also practised what they preached. The Census Report of 1851 - 1853 on Religious Worship concluded: "The middle classes have augmented rather than diminished that devotional sentiment and strictness of attention to religious services by which for several centuries, they have so eminently been distinguished. With the upper classes, too, the subject of religion has occupied of late a marked degree of notice, and a regular church attendance is now ranked among the recognized properties of life." (100) Though doubts about the literal truth of the bible were being expressed and secularism had already established itself as a movement, the ethical standards of unbelievers and doubters among the propertied classes were no less than those of believers. What caused greatest concern was the apparent lack of any standards at all among large numbers of the masses. As the census report made clear: "The myriads of our labouring population, really as ignorant of Christianity as were the heathen Saxon at Augustine's landing, are as much in need of missionary enterprise to bring them into practical acquaintance with its doctrines." (101)

In the attempt to create a cohesive society, the possessing classes articulated a whole series of wider values which were designed to buttress society against the dangers which threatened it. Respectability, which usually implied some degree of formal Christianity, was a wider concept which applied to every level in society. In the last resort it meant the adoption of a style of living which conformed to conventional morals and morality. As such it was the equivalent for the lower classes of gentility for the upper middle classes; it sought to commit the masses to the social standards of their superiors without diminishing in any significant way the barriers that still existed between them. The prerequisite of respectability was independence and in this way economics was joined to divinity in defending the established order. Hard work, thrift, self-help, punctuality, habits of orderliness, were all strongly reiterated themes which pointed in the same direction. The possessing classes interpreted their own success in the light of these qualities and sought to inculcate them in the rest of society. A whole variety of agencies, religious and philanthropic, was established with the aim of effecting that mental and moral improvement that was considered so necessary for the well-being of society.

The greatest stimulus to improvement was social mobility and no concept was more pervasive in mid-century than this. W. Bagehot argued in 1854 that British society was based on the system of "removable inequalities, where many people are inferior to and worse off than others, but in which each may in theory hope to be on a level with the highest in the land and in which each may reasonably hope to gain one step in social elevation". (102) In reality the upper middle and middle classes had stamped society with the mark of their own aspirations. The argument was developed further, however, and ambition

was turned into a moral obligation. As J. Ruskin wrote in 1851, "Now that a man may make money, and rise in the world... it becomes a veritable shame for him to remain in the state he was born in, and everybody thinks it his duty to try to be a 'gentleman'." (103) As well as an inducement to improvement social mobility could also be used to reconcile people to the status quo. The mechanism of mobility was almost invariably depicted as working in an upwards direction and what might not be attained in one generation could be achieved in the next. Palmerston demonstrated the utility of the argument in 1850: "We have shown the example of a nation in which every class of society accepts with cheerfulness the lot which Providence has assigned to it; while at the same time each individual of each class is constantly trying to raise himself in the social scale, not by violence and illegality - but by persevering good conduct and by the steady and energetic exertion of the moral and intellectual faculties with which his creator has endowed him." (104)

In the last resort, despite the apparent stability of British society and the relative cohesion of the wealthy classes, based on the common denominator of property, there still lurked the menacing spectre of revolution from below. Punch caught the mood in its caricature of John Bull. The enviably solid frame, ruddy complexion, broad grin and well-filled stomach proclaimed that all was well. The fierce bulldog in one hand and the stout stick in the other indicated that it might not always remain so. (105)

Notes for Chapter 4

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- 4) G. Best, Mid-Victorian Britain 1851 - 1875 (1871), p.xv.
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- 6) E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English" in The Poverty of Theory and other essays (1978), p.85.
- 7) E.P. Thompson, The Making of The English Working Class (1963), p.10.  
Idem., "The Peculiarities of the English", in The Poverty of Theory and other essays (1978) p.85.
- 8) R.S. Neale, Class in English History 1680 - 1850 (Oxford, 1981), p.132.
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- 10) Ibid., pp.28-29 and p.112.
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- 13) Burn, op.cit., pp.305-309.

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- 18) F.A. Dreyer, "The Russell Administration 1846-1852", St. Andrew's Ph. D. thesis (1962), DA 564, R8, D8.  
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- 19) Quoted in H. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society 1780 - 1880 (1969), p.314.
- 20) See chapter 7.
- 21) Clar. dep. Irish (Bodleian Library, Oxford), box 82, Clarendon to Duke of Bedford, Oct.29, 1848.
- 22) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.409, March 3, 1853.  
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- 24) W. Bagehot, The English Constitution (1867; 1872 edn.), Introduction to the Second Edition.
- 25) Quoted in J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden, 2 vols. (1881) vol.II, p.482.
- 26) Greville, op.cit., vol.7, p.225, April 3, 1856.



- 27) Thompson, op.cit., p.135.
- 28) Quoted in N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846 (1958; 1968 edn.), p.30.
- 29) Neale, op.cit., p.133.
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- 31) K. Marx and F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.91.
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## CHAPTER 5

### "The mind of the nation:": "The Times" and Continental Revolution

John Thadeus Delane, who by 1848 had established his authority as Editor of The Times, was typical of those within the upper middle classes who sought to combine aristocratic tastes with the harsh reality of earning a living. The Delanes, who had a residence in Berkshire conveniently close to the Walters, had originated in Ireland but overcame that disadvantage by becoming Protestant and dropping the 'y' at the end of their name. Educated at private schools and Magdalen College, Oxford, Delane developed a passion for field sports and the aristocratic connections that were associated with them. It was the cost of stabling which obliged him, while still an undergraduate, to work as a journalist.

As Editor of The Times Delane was able to combine his professional duties with his social ambitions. He was drawn to London society by inclination and necessity. The technical aspects of production necessitated his attendance at Printing House Square from late evening to dawn. This enabled him to participate in what he called "Swelling". (1) His diary suggests that he dined out every night during the London season and he was in frequent attendance at fashionable clubs, salons and social gatherings. (2) This brought him into contact with that narrow, close-knit London society which was a remarkable feature of the 1840s . Clarendon and Greville knew well the social aspirations of both Delane and his senior leader-writer, Henry Reeve. They also appreciated how vulnerable this made them. Greville, in a moment of irritation, burst forth to Clarendon: "there is an impertinence as well as an injustice in the conduct of these two fellows, wh. provokes me beyond expression, and all the more when I

think of the large part I have had in establishing their social positions. I now think the best way of bringing them to their senses (is) by depriving them of those advantages & not asking them to dinners, parties, etc, & I really think John Russell's friends ought to mark their sense of the tone of The Times in such a way." (3) The threat could never be carried out. London society and The Times needed each other. Members of the former wanted the earliest, most accurate intelligence and to know the views of the best informed men of the day. To that end they purchased The Times and sought the company of its powerful Editor. Delane, on the other hand, needed to know the opinions of those who purchased the newspaper. Cobden no doubt had The Times in mind when he wrote in 1850: "the daily press is written for its customers - the aristocracy, the millionaires, and the clubs and news-rooms. The great public cannot have its organs of the daily press because it cannot afford to pay for them." (4)

Delane was flattered by the attention of London society but this social acceptance was enormously important to him as Editor of The Times since it kept him in touch with the political and social world, its information, its gossip and its rumours. More importantly it kept him in touch with his readership. For the aristocratic élite Delane privately expressed some contempt. As he wrote to one of his leader-writers in 1854, "I have had the bad taste not to greatly admire the society of Dukes and Duchesses, and a nearer acquaintance with the stuff out of which "great men" are made certainly does not raise one's opinion either of their honesty or capacity." (5) What mattered to him was "our own dear public" or the "goodies", (6) and it was their opinion that Delane sought to identify and to reflect in the columns of The Times.

This was the elusive element which The Times identified as public opinion. A leading article of May 31, 1848, pointed out that public opinion was "formed by the independent, the educated, and the honest members of the community". For the possessing classes, however, independence, education and integrity were all based on the common denominator of property. The article went on to make this clear: public opinion was the product of "that large and influential body of men who are engaged in the trade, the commerce, the professions, and the literature of the country - this it is which permeates our legislative assemblies, giving impulse to their movement, and vitality to their action." Here were the readers of The Times and through the network of London clubs and society Delane felt he could identify the opinion he sought. With that confidence behind him, he felt he was beyond the blandishments of politicians and the concupiscence of commerce. As a member of the metropolitan intellectual élite who lived by the pen, Delane, like Carlyle and Macaulay, would deliver from on high his solemn portentous judgements. All three found to their delight and profit that there were many only too willing to accept them.

Delane believed that between the aristocratic and democratic extremes there was a middle opinion which governed the country in the last resort. Political parties were not masters of this opinion but were the instruments of it. As The Times made clear in its leading article of July 4, 1846, "In fact this country will govern itself...Measures spring forth, no one knows how, in the mind of the nation, at first rudely but truly conceived, then gradually taking solidity and form, and lastly forcing themselves into legislative being. This progressive movement triumphantly rides over parties". Of this governing opinion The Times appointed itself to be the organ. All who knew Delane testified to his ability to identify public opinion as

he defined it. As Clarendon wrote to Greville in 1853, "I can see in The Times of this morning its own impression of the current of opinion, and I dare say this impression is correct". (7) If The Times was the mirror of its public, it was because Delane, who moulded the paper from day to day, acted in that role himself.

The leader-writers were well aware of the dominant influence of Delane over the columns of The Times. The archives of The Times provide abundant evidence of the endless stream of written instructions from Delane about subjects for leading articles and the approaches to be adopted. In March 1848 H.A. Woodham wrote to Delane about a proposed article on French Republicanism. He concluded: "I am certain I could make a deuced good thing of it; but whether it would take, you know a precious deal best...I know nothing about the British public, or of the particular requirements of The Times". (8) A leader-writer, who had been given no subject for several days and who had the temerity to offer one at the behest of a person of high distinction, brought down on himself a sharp rejoinder: "it is, I assure you, essential that whatever is to appear in The Times should proceed from the initiative of whoever holds my place, and not from that of any other person however highly esteemed. The effect of any divergence from this principle would be to deprive your contributions of any value, and to prevent their being accepted as embodying the opinions of The Times, which must, believe me, be those of no other than, yours faithfully, John T. Delane." (9)

The basic opinions of Delane were likely to be shared in any case by the others with a major involvement in the production of The Times. John Walter III, who was roughly the same age as Delane, had a similar educational background but chose to express his gentility through his country property and a seat in Parliament rather than through London

society. The supervisory role, which he constantly exercised, resulted in much advice and comment but the correspondence in the archives of The Times does not reveal any fundamental difference of opinion on basic issues. Walter shared his Nottingham seat with Feargus O'Connor, the Chartist leader, but his perception of his own constituents in 1848 seems to have been very similar to Delane's view of the Paris masses: "I have been lurking here very quietly in my den since I have been here, having pretty much the same sort of apprehension of the Nottinghamites that I have of the Parisians, so that I never turn out without expecting to encounter a mob on every corner". (10)

G.W. Dasent, the Assistant Editor, was the son of a West Indian plantation owner. He was educated with Delane at King's College and Oxford, became a firm friend and in 1846 married Delane's sister. Dasent assumed full responsibility for the paper whenever Delane was absent. Greville's comment to Reeve that Dasent seemed "a very puny and inadequate representative of the thundering journal" (11) seems not to have been shared by Delane who worked so closely with him and who made strenuous efforts through Clarendon and Sir Charles Wood to have him made Regius Professor of Modern History and Modern Languages at Oxford in 1848. (12) The Reverend Thomas Mozley, the most versatile of the leader-writers, was the great favourite of Walter who displayed in appointments what the History of The Times called "a notable loyalty to his University". (13) Henry Annesley Woodham, another key leader-writer, belonged to Cambridge rather than Oxford and thanks to the Eastern Counties Railway combined a fellowship at Jesus with his journalistic activities. His instructions from Delane came by early morning train and his article in response would be put on the 4.30 p.m. from Cambridge. The work of all three was moulded by Delane himself, but as highly educated members of the professions, all were likely to be in agreement on fundamental issues.



Henry Reeve, the most senior leader-writer, had been educated on the continent where he had acquired a large number of important literary and political contacts. His appointment as Clerk of Appeals to the Privy Council provided him with an inside knowledge of the affairs of government at home. His superior, Charles Greville, introduced him to Barnes in 1840 and used him as a means of influencing The Times. Corresponding with the Earl of Clarendon and accepted, like Delane, in the highest social circles, Reeve, who was nicknamed Il Pomposo by his colleagues, revelled in his social status. Greville saw his acceptance rather differently and confided in his diary: "when I think who and what Reeve is, his humble position, his obscurity, his apparent nothingness, and see what effects he can create by being the hidden but moving Agent of a mighty piece of machinery, I do think it most surprising and curious, and when hereafter revealed must and will appear so". (14) Reeve's views overall fitted well with those of his colleagues and his comment to Clarendon on the French revolution of 1848 encapsulated most of what The Times had to say at much greater length: "We now see the question as it is - civilization, property & rational liberty on the one hand - barbarism, communism & the despotism of a mob on the other." (15)

The actual reports that issued from the continent in 1848 came from a variety of sources. Foreign newspapers were the staple of news but they were supplemented by reports and letters which were specially commissioned. Andrew O'Reilly was The Times correspondent in Paris, who kept not only his employer informed but also Clarendon and Palmerston. During the upheavals of 1848 his reports failed to give satisfaction and he was dismissed at the end of the year. Mowbray Morris's letter of dismissal reveals both the high standards and the corporative mystique of the newspaper: the Directors of The Times "are unanimously of

opinion that your compositions have for some time been greatly deficient in vigour and ability, and that these defects have shown themselves so conspicuously since the 23rd of February - a period of extraordinary interest and of equally extraordinary opportunities - that the reputation of The Times has been in some measure damaged thereby". (16) Other sources of information included Mrs. Sarah Austin, who was the aunt of Reeve and the wife of John Austin, the celebrated jurist, and Henry Southern, a literary figure and diplomat who had been Clarendon's private secretary in Spain. They both, according to Greville, "have each been writing letters the last two or three days in the 'Times', which are excellent descriptions of the state of affairs in France". (17) J. Palgrave Simpson, another literary figure, who happened to be in Paris and was also an old friend of Reeve, was additionally recruited to provide a series of letters on the dramatic events. Political contacts like Greville and Sir Denis Le Marchant also forwarded such information as came their way. (18)

The main emphasis of The Times, however, was always on the leading articles. As Reeve wrote to Clarendon in 1849, "The general plan of the T. is to let their correspondents say what they please, for their opinions have seldom any weight." (19) It was the leading article that embodied the authority of The Times. It was there that dramatic disclosures were revealed, that significant events were highlighted. It was there that foreknowledge masqueraded as omniscience. It was above all there that The Times sought to be at one with its readers.

The public in 1848 was avid for news. A. Andrews declared in his History of British Journalism (1859) that as a result of the outbreak of revolution in France the circulation of The Times rose from its average of 29,000 to 43,000 on February 29. (20) The stamp returns

confirm that statement since they show an average circulation in 1847 of 29,504 rising to an average of 35,338 in 1848 and then ~~35,338~~ at 36,218 in 1849. (21) News came from the presses of the London morning dailies which were virtually the sole source of early intelligence. The Mayor of Nottingham reported to the Home Office meetings of between three and four hundred people listening to extracts from The Times read out by a working man standing on a chair. (22) The rest of the newspaper press produced long extracts from the London morning dailies, though the Northern Star did warn its readers of bias in reporting. (23) Punch commented on the number of Second Editions and Extraordinary Expresses in an article entitled "Making the Most of It" and referred to members of London clubs pouncing on news-boys and robbing them of their papers. (24)

The revolution in France dominated the columns of The Times in the spring and summer of 1848. Hardly a day went by without at least one article on the subject. Paris dominated the reports from correspondents and Sunday February 27 even witnessed an Extraordinary Issue which was issued free. (25) By all criteria the revolution was high in news value. The events were dramatic, they concerned Britain's greatest and nearest rival and they could be depicted in a personalised way with Lamartine as a heroic figure, Louis Blanc as the villain and British workmen as helpless victims. The revolution in its temporal structure also lent itself to the daily production of news and daily bulletins from Paris, arriving by telegraph or express train, gave readers an awareness of the French revolution which stale and spasmodic accounts of events in the rest of Europe could never equal. Above all, though, the revolution encapsulated the fears of the 1840s. France was the screen on which was depicted the fears that haunted the possessing classes and The Times was the powerful mechanism that projected the

images. John Stuart Mill fulminated bitterly against the misrepresentation of events in France but recognized the nature of the process which brought this about. "That the transactions and the men of the late French Revolution should find small favour in the eyes of the vulgar and selfish part of the upper and middle classes, can surprise no one: and that the newspaper press, which is the echo, or, as far as it is able, the anticipation of the opinions and prejudices of those classes, should endeavour to recommend itself by malicious disparagement of that great event, is but the natural order of things". (26)

Even before the revolution took place, The Times was expressing the commonplace of the period that a revolutionary movement, which had first manifested itself in France in 1789, threatened the whole of European society. "It cannot be repeated too often that the French Revolution, or rather the revolution in the affairs of Europe produced mainly by the dissemination of French principles, is not an event terminated, concluded and accomplished, but that it is still and continually in progress." (27) The lower orders were seen as waiting merely for an opportune moment to overthrow Government, while "a new Jacobin Club" and "modern Montagnards" stood ready. (28)

The emphasis on continuity with the French Revolution of 1789 was almost inevitable given the potency of the images that still survived from the period. Marx had the revolutionaries in mind when he wrote: "The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living....and the revolution of 1848 knew no better than to parody at some points 1789 and at others the revolutionary traditions of 1793-5." (29) Those who observed events from a distance were equally shackled by the past. The leading article of March 1 proclaimed: "The past is all the surety we are allowed for the future.

The oracle sends us back to history." From the beginning, therefore, the dramatic events were seen in the context of the earlier revolution. The first comment on the events of February 25 contained a reference to "the terrible energies of the French Revolution", while the leading article of February 29 made pointed references to "bloody despotism", "the guillotine" and "war against Europe". The outbreak of revolution magnified the fears of French aggression that characterized the late 1840s and war in Italy and the Netherlands was gloomily anticipated as the revolution appeared to pursue its inexorable course. "Show us a populace, and we will show you an army. Set up a ROBESPIERRE, and before long his place will be occupied by a BONAPARTE. The one follows the other like a shadow." (30)

The conviction that the revolution was bound to become more radical resulted from assumptions again drawn from earlier experience. A leading article of March 27 declared: "The third revolution is treading so closely and so boldly in the steps of the first that it matters little whether the past or the present is the basis of our enquiries." Revolution was seen as a cycle which aggravated the circumstances which brought it about. This resulted in more and more radical demands being made while power passed to men more and more ruthless in their ambition for power and in its application. The June Days were therefore greeted with a grim satisfaction and frequent reference was made to "inevitable laws" and "this unnatural but inevitable carnage". (31)

The revolution of 1848 was not seen solely in the terms of 1789. The increased awareness in the 1840s of the plight of the urban masses had focussed upon the threat of collective violence from below and linked it to the imagery of the French Revolution. Carlyle's French Revolution (1837) and the social novels of the 1840s all drew upon a

common source of inspiration and fear. (32) The Times put the point very clearly on May 6: "The first French Revolution stands for the prototype and first ideal of all the social horrors ever suffered in this world". The seemingly precarious state of society was revealed in a leading article of February 28 which declared: "Once weaken the bands of order, and forthwith you find the ground beneath your feet mined and charged with anarchy and destruction." By the next day the worst fears were confirmed: "The mob has captured Paris.....It is an operative revolution." The demonstrations of March 16 and 17 only served to confirm the fact: "There is only one real and political unity in France and that is the populace of Paris. It is the true King of the French." (33) Until the crushing of insurrection in Paris in June The Times remained convinced that Paris was being dictated to by the masses in Paris.

The worst fears of the possessing classes had thus been realized, albeit at a distance. The Times gave voice to those fears when on March 1 it declared that the real significance of the revolution lay in the fact that it was not political but social. The revolution according to the paper had been caused in the last resort by the plight of 100,000 unemployed men in Paris, but these men had been infected by pernicious doctrines which aimed at the overthrow of society. The Times warned on March 1 that "there are no fictions so wild as those which are engendered by a paroxysm of popular enthusiasm; and none so fatal as those which extend their influence from the political rights of man to their social condition, and after having remodelled the constitution of the state seek to regenerate the whole fabric of society...These social opinions are more or less what are called Communist doctrines".



There was considerable semantic confusion about the nature of the evils which threatened French society. St. Simon, Fourier, Blanc, Blanqui, Cabet and Owen were all at various times named as being originators or propagators of Communism. (34) Socialism and Communism were interchangeable terms for the leader-writers of The Times who on March 17 used both at once in the same paragraph: "It is not Republicanism, but Socialism that has carried the day.....The thirty-six millions of France, proprietors of all sorts and sizes, tradesmen, merchants, bankers, doctors, lawyers and statesmen, are all absorbed and levelled in an enormous scheme of Communism." What both implied was an attempt to reconstitute society by destroying the basis of the old - property. The Times made the point very clear when it summarized Communist doctrines on March 1 as "nothing short of a metamorphosis of the world, and a total change of all the laws which experience and reflection have demonstrated to be the rules which govern human wealth and human labour, and consequently regulate the conditions of mankind." The point was put even more succinctly on March 17 when The Times declared that "Socialism, amongst us, stands for everything bad."

What added to the alarm of The Times was the belief that the Provisional Government in Paris had succumbed to these doctrines. Louis Blanc, who was said by the paper of March 1 to occupy "a most conspicuous position in the new Government" had been elevated by The Times of April 21 from his decorative impotency at the Luxembourg Commission to being Minister of Labour, a post in fact steadfastly denied him by his colleagues in the Provisional Government. The basic difference between the ideas of Blanc and Cabet were blurred by The Times into a difference over tactics: "The truth is that between the Socialism of M. LOUIS BLANC and the Communism of M. CABET there is no

difference of kind; the only modification applied by the Minister to the propositions of the agitator consists in the suggestion of a transition period between the old state of society and the new." The difference in means rather than ends was also emphasized in the same article by a chilling epithet all too familiar to readers, which referred to "physical force" Communists. (35)

By June 1848 Socialism had been virtually displaced in the vocabulary of the leader-writers of The Times by Communism with the "Red Republic" as its alter ego. The final verdict of the paper of July 7 on the June Days was that "the Communists have risen and been routed". Looked at from the perspective of June the whole revolution seemed to have been based on a single set of insidious ideas which had taken root in the plight of the unemployed: "Hence the rapid development of Communism in Paris last year. Hence the revolution effected by Communists. Hence its Communist chiefs." (36) Marx, good journalist that he was, correctly claimed in The Communist Manifesto that the spectre of Communism was haunting Europe. (37) He was only wrong in claiming it as a creature of his own.

So dominated was the perception of events in France by the idea of social revolution that The Times saw political change primarily in social terms. Universal male suffrage meant that property and the values associated with it would run the risk of being entirely unrepresented, while the masses would be influenced in their vote by unscrupulous or tyrannical influences and by flagrant corruption. The leading article of March 11 gave its verdict: "The theory of the French Republic is that a constitution is to be framed by the representatives of no property to govern the rights of property, and by the representatives of no education to govern the rights of intelligence." The great danger was that the extended suffrage by placing power in

the hands of those unable to exercise it properly, gave to those who plotted the overthrow of society the means of implementing their schemes. The election of a moderate National Assembly did little to reassure The Times, since in its very existence it embodied the principle of equality. Thus the occupation of the Assembly by insurgents on May 15 was an application "of the pure democratic creed" which held that "these very men who are at war with the first principles of society, are the political equals of the wisest citizens of France". (38) The behaviour of the assembly in subsequent weeks was seen as discrediting the principle on which it was based: "If France chooses to be so besotted, we must let her do the office of the drunken helot, and learn to eschew the sad example." (39)

Democracy not only exposed France to social disintegration but it was the means whereby the malaise was spread to the rest of Europe. The leading article of March 13 announced: "Scarce a day passes but the news of a new revolution arrives...The states of Europe are so many ninepins, and democracy is bowling at them. The master bowler is France". France by subversive agents, propaganda and example was seen as undermining Europe. The attention given to revolutions elsewhere in Europe was slight in comparison to that devoted to France. Some hope was at first held out for Germany "a cognate race" which seemed to be more intent on following British practice than French theory. (40) Democratic power and social insubordination were perceived in the last resort, however, as the same thing and by May 22 The Times noted that both Vienna and Berlin were in the hands of mobs headed by students and political adventurers. National aspirations were given little attention in the columns of The Times. When they were discussed on June 29 they were seen in essentially conspiratorial terms: "In truth this national cry has been raised principally to assist the schemes of the democratic

party; for men are more easily led astray by sympathies of race or language than by abstract theories of popular government." The nationalist movement in reality was "an appeal to some of the worst passions of human nature, and an injury to the cause of civilisation and the common interests of the world." In the eyes of The Times both nationalism and democracy led to social upheaval.

In France the social experiments seemed to lead onwards to inevitable disaster. What The Times repeatedly emphasized was that the levelling process that it detected behind the revolution worked in a downward direction only. Attempts by the state to interfere in the economic process would result in the ruin of all. "No delusions can be so enormous; the word is too good for them; they are frauds; and these frauds are put forward by men who know well enough that the effect of the present crisis already is, and will be much more hereafter, to plunge the very classes to whom these promises are made into the lowest depths of human suffering." (41) The depressed state of the French economy and the sad condition of Paris were repeatedly drawn to the attention of readers. The National Workshops, however, provided a focus for the argument. In reality they were intended to be chantiers de charité, a form of public relief for unemployment used at various times of distress in the past. (42) The Times of April 19 saw them rather differently: "The project is nothing more nor less than an attempt to subvert the revealed conditions of our being, to annihilate the instinctive motives of human nature and to remove all the inducements which have been hitherto known to the rugged and toilsome paths of elevated nature." They were seen as the brainchild of Louis Blanc and appeared to demonstrate the absurdity of his theories. They were "an organization of idleness", "not an organization of labour, but of folly and expense", "the haunt of the dissolute and idle" and a "monster absurdity". (43)

Whilst The Times thus interpreted events in France in the light of the fears of the possessing classes and elaborated these into a nightmare of dramatic proportions, it also articulated the positive values of those groups. As the social order throughout Europe appeared to be threatened from below, the tendency to believe in absolute certainties resulted in the existing values of society being sublimated into eternal truths. Thus the doctrines disseminated in France were "absolutely contrary to the laws of nature itself....those laws which cannot be set aside without producing far greater evils to mankind." (44) The National Workshops were therefore "a monstrous attack upon those natural universal privileges which no declamation can destroy" while the issue at stake in the June Days was between "the laws which render the social state of mankind possible and the violence which leads back to chaos." (45)

The natural order which The Times defended so stoutly on behalf of the possessing classes was, in the last resort, based on property. The alarm expressed on March 1 concerning the ideas of Louis Blanc was based on the fear that they might "shake the beneficial influences of property in the country." The discussion in The Times of March 8 made clear what some of those "beneficial influences" were and argued that only a franchise based on property would allow intelligence and virtue their proper role. Property in the columns of the paper was regarded as an absolute right by which an individual expressed his identity and might be measured by others. Louis Blanc's ideas, which seemed to lie behind the revolution, were totally alien to man's nature: "The truth is that the whole project is a monstrous attack upon those natural, universal privileges which no declamation can destroy - upon the privileges, not of wealth, or caste, or favour, but of capacity, industry and thrift." Property, for The Times was both the means and



incentive towards individual development and was therefore the very basis of society and civilisation itself. It made the priority of property and its implications clear on March 10 when it hoped that the Republic would be maintained "by the energetic support of all ranks interested in the defence of property, the restoration of order, and the supremacy of humanity and reason". The Times on July 19 summarized the recent events within France as "a war against all property, all law, all society." The threat that the revolution appeared to constitute was brought home to readers in personalized form by the plight of British workers in France. Popular pressures had led to the flight of British railroad labourers, textile workers and domestic servants and the measures of the Provisional Government prevented them from withdrawing more than 100 francs of their savings. The apparent exclusion of these people from their savings and their livelihood enabled The Times to combine both moral outrage and national pride in defence of property and the values associated with it.

Having articulated the doctrine of property according to the middle classes, The Times made them responsible for its defence. It was the refusal of the National Guard to support the Government which, in the first instance, had made the revolution possible and the leading article of February 28 wondered whether "this Praetorian Guard of shopkeepers, tradesmen, and respectable mechanics" this "armed middle class" would be able to stop the avalanche it had started. It was they who, according to The Times, were the real quarry that the revolution pursued and the point was emphasized in a piece of class analysis which would have delighted Marx: "The aristocracy was vanquished in the first revolution, legitimacy in the second; and the bourgeoisie in the third." (46) "The historical imbecility of the bourgeoisie" (47) was gradually transformed as a result of bitter experiences into a



gradual realization of their true interests and responsibilities and by April 19 The Times noted that "something resembling a more healthful vitality seems once more to pervade the middle classes, by whose active co-operation the freedom and tranquillity of France can alone be preserved." Mindful of its own role between 1830 and 1832 The Times of June 1 went on to define their responsibilities: "the middle class, which may be the ally of the populace to obtain freedom, must side with the Government in order to preserve it. But it must be prepared to take part in a twofold conflict - first, that of the people against the old form of government, and secondly that of the new form of government against a fresh class of popular enemies." "As the vortex widens...the 200,000 intelligent bayonets" of the National Guard were seen as holding the key to the peace of the capital and the stability of France. (48)

Between February and June 1848 The Times produced an analysis of class conflict which bore a striking resemblance to the thesis of The Communist Manifesto. (49) The leading article of The Times on March 20 saw social conflict within France in its traditional form: "It was the old quarrel between those who have money and those who have none". It then proceeded in the same article to elaborate the struggle in embryonic class terms as being "between capital and bare hands; between the owners of houses, shops, manufactories, machines, material, credit, position, education, and mastery, on the one hand, and the possessors of strength and manual skill on the other." Property, in the sense used by The Times, had become equated with capital. Three days later the argument was further refined: "Capital, as a whole, is pronounced to be a conspiracy against labour, and mulcted for its crimes." Delane and the leader-writers of The Times were not indebted

to The Communist Manifesto. They, like Marx and Engels, had recognized the nature of the fears that haunted the possessing classes in the 1840s.

The conflict of the June Days saw the analysis presented in its clearest form. What was at issue was "the outbreak of intense and irreconcilable fear and hostility between the two great classes of society, the bourgeoisie and the people". (50) On one side stood property, law and order, the family, Christianity and civilization. The other side drove the leader-writers to the limits of hyperbole: "An utter dissolution of social order and a desperate resistance to every species of authority - a hurly-burly of wild desires, impudent frauds, frantic delusions, sanguinary passions, imperious and insatiable wants - the opening of all the phials of wrath - the saturnalia of a lawless, foodless, Godless multitude." (51) The conflict long expected by The Times had finally come about; property and its alter ego capital were locked in a cataclysmic struggle with the masses. Marx argued in The Class Struggles in France: 1848 - 1850 that by June the insurrectionary party had matured into a real party of revolution and that the conflict in Paris was "the first great battle...fought between the two great classes which divide modern society. It was a fight for the preservation or destruction of the bourgeois order." (52) The leader-writers of The Times would have agreed with him.

The reports from correspondents, which were published in The Times, tended to reflect the opinions of the leader-writers. This was not surprising since all of them shared the same social background and Delane insisted on an overall unity within the paper. On the other hand, the reports did distinguish between Socialists, Communists and ultra-Republicans and avoided that semantic confusion and crude reductionism that was found in the leading articles. (53) In

general, though, the reports provided colourful confirmation of the stance taken in the leaders. During the June Days the insurgents were described as "monsters" who "in many instances butcher their prisoners with the atrocity of savages". They had treacherously shot the Archbishop of Paris, poisoned wine and brandy served to soldiers and "poured vitriol on the brave fellows who contended with them frankly and with good faith". "I wish" wrote one correspondent "that the enemy contended with by the brave fellows whose praise cannot be too loudly sung had been worthy of their bravery and devotion, but such was not the fact." (54)

In calmer moments the leader-writers of The Times leaned heavily upon ridicule to assuage their own fears and those of their readers. It was not till March 31, however, that levity first appeared on the subject of revolution when an article asked: "When will the holyday be over, and the schoolboys return to their lessons?" The planting of trees of liberty afforded ample scope for bitter humour and The Times of April 5 elaborated on this "ludicrous revelry" but ended by reminding readers of the serious purpose of the humour: "If ever there was an occasion on which ridicule and sarcasm are justifiable, it is now at Paris." By early May even Louis Blanc could be treated more lightly and his aspirations could be referred to as "gorgeous illusions" which were the product of "easy chairs" and the sumptuous surroundings of the Luxembourg Palace. (55) The disturbances of May 15 brought back the fears and the leading article of May 19 abused both his stature and his ideas when it referred to "The tricky little charlatan whom the Communist conspirators carried on a tray round the hall of the National Assembly last Monday".

Of greater comfort to readers was the assumption that what was happening in France could not occur here. In the spring of 1848 the flood-tide of revolution seemed to be sweeping irresistibly across the whole of Europe. The leading article of March 10 proclaimed: "The foundations of the great political deep seem now breaking up. The whole earth is shaken." Britain alone seemed to have survived but "is on her trial before men and angels. The opinion of the world, the annals of futurity, the destiny of all races centre round this one single point - the present bearing and fortune of England. If she fall, who shall stand?" (56) In such a crisis the possessing classes found solace in the images of society which had taken shape during the 1830s and 1840s. These images incorporated the values of contemporary society, its interpretation of the past and its hopes for the future. They needed, however, to be given conviction by constant affirmation. The Times was eager to oblige.

The first reaction of The Times to the revolution in France was, therefore, to see it as a form of flattery and an attempt to achieve the freedom Britain already enjoyed. (57) By March 25 the whole of Europe seemed bent on paying us the same compliment: "This country may justly feel proud at finding all the nations of Europe almost simultaneously reconstructing their governments on our old insular model." Repeatedly the paper lauded British freedom as illustrated in constitutional monarchy, religious toleration, open courts of law, hatred of monopolies and most of all in an independent Peerage and a representative Commons. The reforms in the seventeen previous years had removed abuses and illustrated how well the British system functioned. As the leading article of May 27 proudly proclaimed, "The history of England is the most practical example which the world has yet supplied of institutions adapted to the expanding necessities of society and the

diversified capacities of epochs." The constant reiteration of this image of society was in part a reflection of that belief in the innate superiority of British institutions which was so powerfully articulated in the 1840s but it was also a way of warding off the fears which also haunted that period.

In identifying the inhabitants of this country, the leading articles used both the terms 'British' and 'English'. 'British' was consistently associated with Empire, institutions and freedom. 'English' was related to the particular characteristics and history of the people who had brought about those achievements (58) Each celebration of British freedoms therefore exalted the English way of achieving them. The leading article of February 26 referred to "our own safe way". With an arboreal reference which would have delighted Burke The Times of March 3 stressed that "it is the pride of our country that our liberties have grown under the ancient shadow of the constitution without having recourse to sudden or violent remedies." History from the laws of Ine onwards was carefully aligned to demonstrate the moderate and practical approach of the English. (59) It was this which distinguished them from their neighbours: "The Frenchman may grimace, the German may romance, the Italian walk on stilts, but the Englishman will continue that safe and steady pace which has ever kept him continually ahead of them all." (60) Having paraded the virtues of British institutions as founded by the English, the important point for The Times and its readers was to convince themselves and others, that gradual reform from above and not violence from below was the only way forward. English pragmatism was preferable to foreign revolution. The leading article of June 23 which paraded the English past, national characteristics and contemporary material success combined the Whig version of history with myths of nationalism into an exaltation of the

English character. It concluded: "This is our history in epitome:- Progression animated and sustained by the spirit of conservatism. But violent, precipitate innovation - innovation without reflection, purpose or prudence - innovation for a name, a shadow, a phantasy, a sentiment, or a lie - has been ignored by all who have fought the battle and pleaded the cause of our constitution."

The fear that lurked behind the rhetoric was the basic fear of the possessing classes, the fear of social change from below. That fear was given shape in The Times of 1848 by being associated with Socialism and Communism. Having perceived in France a revolution which appeared to be dominated by such ideas, The Times sought to convince itself and its readers that such a cataclysm could not occur here. Hence the assertion on March 17: "There is scarcely a crime in morals, in politics, or belief, which a respectable Englishman would not rather be suspected of than to be described as a Socialist." By April 23 the terminology had changed but the message was the same: "Talk with the workmen - ask them separately what they think of the scheme of Communism - the majority will, despite Mr. OWEN and M. BLANQUI reply, that the partnership scheme is a humbug, and division of property a robbery."

More than assertion was needed to ward off the menace that appeared to threaten from below and frequent recourse was had to what the possessing classes regarded as the antidote to social division - that most powerful and appealing of myths, social mobility. The process might take some considerable time but the outcome was assured: "Every young man in this metropolis if he will only attend to his business, whatever it is, and keep out of scrapes, is a rising man, and has all the prizes and honours of the nation before him, if not for himself or his children, at least for his children's children." (61) Leading



articles drew upon the apocryphal tales of the rise and fall of Hobbs, Dobbs, and Fubbs, while Dick Whittington and assorted personalities such as Chatham, Clive, Canning, Wilberforce, Peel and Gladstone were all recruited to add weight to the argument. (62) In this country, declared The Times of April 22 "the members of different classes are in a continual state of reciprocal oscillation" and "the grades of our society, like the finest shot silk, glide so imperceptibly from one shade into another, that it is almost impossible to note where one begins and another ends."

Despite the attractiveness of an image of society which was based on the self-regulating mechanism of social mobility, The Times recognized that something needed to be done for the casualties of society. As befitted its social location it sought to steer a careful course between the paternalism of the upper classes and the political economy of the middle classes. The application of laissez-faire to all circumstances it dismissed on June 13 as "impracticable and absurd" and legislative interference in factories and public health was justified provided there was no infringement of the basic principles on which society was based. Since the basic principle was the absolute right to property, there was little scope in fact for further legislative enactments and The Times was forced by the logic of its position to rely for a solution upon property itself. The result was the articulation of a form of urban paternalism which sought to make new wealth aware of the responsibilities of the old. "Wealth should lead the way", urged The Times of May 19, and employers should lead by kindness courtesy and deeds. The provision of houses, public baths, libraries and general works of charity were put forward for their consideration. It was appropriate that while the language of classes was used to give expression to social conflict in France, paternalistic

ideas at home and the social vision they embodied were expressed in an older rhetoric. A leading article of April 28 referred to poverty conciliated and discontent appeased "by the gentle influence of unpretending good offices, which permeates one rank after another, consolidating all into harmony unity, and mutual independence." The basic purpose was made clear on May 2 in a leading article which referred to workers: "Trained in the little platoon of their own small society, they will be enabled to play their parts in a larger sphere, and whatever changes may come, they will always be ranged on the side of peace and public tranquillity."

One obligation property already accepted in the form of poor relief. Leading articles of March 17 and 21 laid particular emphasis upon the laws and institutions of charity and their importance in preventing the spread of Communist ideas. By June 30 The Times had fused together the trilogy of French demons and this enabled the point to be put more clearly: "We possess in the native institutions of this country a powerful antidote to the poisonous doctrines of Communism. Republicanism and Socialism have in vain attacked a constitution under which the poor man has hitherto had a title to work or relief...France has been laid open to the delusions of Communism through this defect in her institutions. She had no poor law."

In a period of severe distress such as the spring and summer of 1848 the poor law was unable to cope and The Times of April 29 referred to "masses of destitution beyond all local remedy." Against the background of continental revolutions this problem assumed particularly menacing proportions. The Times had from the beginning identified hunger as the basic cause of the revolution in France and on February 29 it delivered its verdict in the words of Napoleon: "Ce n'est que le ventre qui gouverne le monde." Leading articles

consistently warned of the disaffection and tumult which fed upon such grievances and claimed that the cities of Britain could find themselves in the situation which now confronted Paris. (63) In its discussions of the problem The Times voiced the alarm of the possessing classes at the urban menace which increasingly confronted them. On June 8 the leading article warned of "barbarism on the confines of the richest civilisation", "heathenism on the frontier-land of metropolitan Christianity", "ignorance within the circle of refinement, of knowledge, and of learning" and concluded by referring to "an evil, which, if we fail to destroy it, will destroy us". The problem was not one of definition but of finding a remedy and in this respect The Times reflected the dilemma of the possessing classes who were increasingly alarmed about a situation which their ideology and self-interest prevented them from tackling.

The Times of April 29 had argued that the middle classes were being overwhelmed by the burden of the poor rate. Indeed it had gone further and argued that the lowest sections of the middle classes were worst hit by the crisis since "the sufferings of the better sort become more affecting, because more unusual, than those of the class below." Nor could the state assume the burden which the local area could not sustain since this was the precise folly which the French Provisional Government had committed, and which The Times had been so quick to denounce. The attempt of Russell's cabinet to raise taxation for the purpose of national defence had been greeted with massive protest by the middle classes and The Times had rammmed home the point of March 1: "This is not a time to increase the taxation of the country...Economy - parsimony, if you will, should be the order of the day".

A way out of the impasse seemed, however, to be provided by emigration. Emigration was increasingly seen during the 1840s as the solution to otherwise intractable problems. Carlyle had urged it in his essay on Chartism, (64) and it was a favourite device of the social novelists of the 1840s for solving the dilemma of their central characters. (65) With awareness of social problems raised to new heights as a result of what was happening in France and against a background of severe urban unemployment (66) the possessing classes seized upon emigration as a solution. The Times, ever ready to reflect and reinforce the opinion of its readers, was quick to sense the direction of opinion and to put itself at its head. On May 30 the paper declared that its correspondence was dominated by the subject and assured its readers: "The public are roused to the vital importance of the subject. We promise our utmost assistance". By June 16 it boasted of its prescience: "We said that emigration is the question of the day. Everything we see and hear proves it. Newspapers, pamphlets, public meetings, associations, prospectuses, and letters, crowd upon our notice in a confused and confounding multitude."

Between April and July 1848 fifteen leading articles were devoted to the subject. (67) The basis of the social problem was the Malthusian nightmare of population outrunning the means of subsistence. Britain was not like France, cribbed and cramped within the confines of its boundaries and Australia, Canada, the Cape, and New Zealand all cried out for migrants. In that new environment industry would receive its proper reward and labour would grow into power and poverty into wealth. Room would also be found for what The Times regarded as the most dangerous element in society - men of education and ability who were frustrated in their ambitions and who would seek to manipulate the hungry masses. "No country, not even England, is safe

from the machinations of disappointed cleverness and disaffected education. The power of knowledge is great, that of union greater; but when the spirit of union animates and cements the power of ignorance and knowledge, what hope is there for comfortable respectability and virtuous mediocrity?" (68) By July 12 emigration loomed so large as a priority that The Times could pose the issue in dramatic terms: "Colonization or Revolution - a peaceful increase of the empire or its colonies, or an overthrow of authority and order at home."

The emigration issue demonstrated the limitations of contemporary thinking on social problems. Even though it appeared at first sight to offer an instant solution, closer analysis revealed the contradictions that lay behind it. A leading article on July 20 protested that "we never have proposed to ourselves or our readers the execution of anything like a shipment of mere paupers to our colonies", which would thereby be reduced to being nothing but "a social cesspool". Labourers would have to be selected. This, together with the problem of payment of passage, obliged The Times to demand action by government and it called upon it to "exercise a controlling, a restraining, and, in truth, a parental power." (69) Conscious of its self-appointed role as the organ of public opinion, the paper could dictate to Ministers. On May 30 it declared: "A British Minister really up to his position, and not a pet of party. ...would set to work and bring out a good way of doing that which everybody wants to see done." Since The Times was hoist between paternalism on the one hand and the orthodoxies of political economy on the other, the role of government could only be slight. The responsibility remained with the parish and voluntary organizations. The only practical proposal put forward by The Times was that costs should be shared by the parish authorities, the colonists who wanted labour, and the migrants themselves who would pay a special



tax. (70) The role of government was to encourage self-help, not to stifle it. To this end government could be safely urged to give to the colonies liberal institutions of self-government. Only then, argued the paper on July 27, would the colonies attract "English gentlemen, whose accession would be a blessing and a treasure to our colonial settlements".

The stance from which The Times delivered its pronouncements was very different from the one it had adopted during the Reform agitation between 1830 and 1832. During that period the paper had claimed to speak on behalf of the people as a whole: "it is to the people - to the people - that we appeal." (71) What it really meant by that term was the possessing classes and a leading article of March 15, 1831 referred to meetings attended by large numbers but also by "wealth, intelligence, high reputation, and consequent moral power". By 1848 the focus had narrowed. The commercial interests of the paper, the institutional myths that surrounded it, and the personal predilections of Delane all served to narrow the viewpoint and to link it more closely to that of the metropolitan upper middle classes. The Times of May 23, 1848 claimed that "opinion is becoming the sovereign of the world" but Delane's concept of it was a good deal narrower than that of Barnes.

The Times still reflected the broad values of the possessing classes as a whole, but those values were now refracted through the narrow band of the upper middle classes. Delane and the leading figures involved in the production of The Times belonged to what K. Burgess has called "the urban gentry of professional intellectuals". (72) It was from this perspective that The Times delivered its judgements on the responsibilities of the French middle classes during the revolution of 1848. It was from this same perspective that it lectured the British



middle classes. What the French middle classes had been forced to do by means of armed force, the British middle classes might, if rallied, do by more peaceful means, and The Times claimed to act as mentor to both. The British middle classes appeared to the paper to be in particular need of instruction from above: "It is impossible to go into middle-class society without hearing the strangest falsehoods propounded as facts, and the most absurd inferences drawn from them, whenever the conversation turned upon politics." (73) The Times could be relied upon to give them the proper information.

Hume's proposal for a further reform of Parliament enabled The Times to display its loyalty to the institutions of the country, among which it now numbered itself: "For our part, we wish to identify ourselves with the integrity, the independence, and honour of our old institutions." (74) Reform of the existing system, the paper considered to be necessary, but on this occasion, unlike 1832, it was to be brought about by gradual reform from within and not by popular pressure from without. The purpose of reform, however, should not be to widen the definition of property and the political power it represented but to ensure that the property franchise remained narrowly constrained, or as a leading article on June 3 put it: to ensure that the suffrage was "improved in the quality, as well as augmented in the number of those who exercise it." Thus the current system of £10 household suffrage meant that the larger boroughs were "virtually swamped by the noisy, the blustering, the corrupt, and the uneducated." (75) "The small streets and lanes of Paddington and St. Pancras swamp the Temple and the high-rent lodgers of the West-end." "This is absurd and wrong." (76) The solution of The Times was that the franchise should be related to payment of income-tax, rates and rent. The purpose was to ensure that property and political power were brought closer together and that The Times remained faithful to the interests of its readers.

Throughout the traumatic months of the spring and summer of 1848 The Times had reflected two priorities, the general interests of the possessing classes and the particular ones of its readers. Revolution across the channel and the threat of it nearer home forced contemporaries to define clearly the precise nature of the society they wished to defend. The Times, as the self-appointed oracle of the possessing classes, made it very clear that society was based in the last resort on property. With property were associated the other buttresses of society, intelligence, independence, virtue, the family, Christianity and civilisation. Property, however, was the key to all of them. It was property in the widest sense which facilitated education, permitted independence, raised the individual beyond normal temptations and made possible decent family life. It was property which was both God's and nature's stimulus to self-development and improvement. The French revolution had therefore been perceived and analysed within the framework of values The Times shared with its readers. It had served not only to define those values, but, by its negative example to reinforce them.

Against a background of revolution which seemed to The Times to pose an ever-increasing threat to European society and its values, the paper was driven to pursue its analysis of social confrontation to its logical extremes. All challenges to a society based on property were seen as challenges to property itself. Thus the conflict of interests within France was seen as a conflict between haves and have-nots and their representatives in the form of the middle classes and the Socialists/Communists. De Tocqueville spoke on behalf of the possessing classes in France when he declared: "I saw society split in two; those who possessed nothing united in a common greed, those who possessed

something in a common fear." (77) A cartoon in Punch showing the detail of the Republican medal put the point very clearly. On one side was the radiant female figure of the Republic surrounded by the watchwords Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité. On the reverse was an armed, brutal, male figure surrounded by the words Socialism, Communism and Atheism, while trampled under his feet were Property and Religion. (78)

This social analysis which The Times articulated was shared by the possessing classes on both sides of the channel. In the last resort it was the result, not of a new socialist consciousness among the masses which threatened the fabric of society, but of the fears and anxieties within the possessing classes themselves. Having proclaimed in both Britain and France a society based on the absolute right of property they must be ever vigilant against the masses whose very numbers and poverty seemed to threaten it. The possessing classes were being haunted by the spectres of their own creation. The emphasis placed by historians on the consciousness of the working classes has, however, tended to obscure the essential unity of the possessing classes and the extent to which it could find vigorous expression when their fundamental interests were threatened. In 1848 these fears seemed to be real enough and it was these fears which paved the way for the election of Louis Napoleon as President of the Republic in December. It was those same fears which paved the way for his coup d'etat in December 1851. Within Britain they had a similar potency and politicians in Britain were no less adept at playing upon them.

Notes for Chapter 5

- 1) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.5.
- 2) A.I. Dasent, John Thadeus Delane 1817-1879: His Life and Correspondence, 2 vols. (1908), vol.2, pp.316-9.
- 3) MSS. Clar. dep. (Bodleian Library, Oxford) c.520, Greville to Clarendon, Jan. 4 , 1853.
- 4) Quoted in J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (1881; 1910 edn.), p.885.
- 5) Quoted in History of the Times, vol.2, (1939), p.56.
- 6) Ibid., p.59..
- 7) MSS. Clar. dep. c.520, Clarendon to Greville, Sept. 27, 1853.
- 8) Archives of The Times (New Printing House Square), Delane Correspondence, vol.3 f.22 Woodham to Delane, March 10, 1848.
- 9) Quoted in Sir E. Cook, Delane of The Times (1915), p.192.
- 10) Archives of The Times (New Printing House Square), Delane Correspondence, vol.23 f.9 Walter to Delane, Nov. 2, 1848.
- 11) Greville correspondence (British Library), Add. MS.41,184, f.91, Greville to Reeve, Sept. 9 1846.
- 12) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon, Sept. 11 (1848). Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7c, f.399, Delane to Wood, Aug. 28, 1848.
- 13) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.42.
- 14) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey and R. Fulford (8 vols. 1938), vol.5, p.345, Aug.23, 1846.

- 15) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, March 22, 1848.
- 16) Archives of The Times, Walter papers, vol.9, f.332, Morris to O'Reilly, Dec. 16, 1848. The archives contain a brief note dated Jan. 20, 1849 to the effect that "one of the most magnificent banquets ever given at a celebrated restaurant took place last Monday" in honour of the "first English correspondent established in Paris." Lord Brougham was to have taken the chair, but was unavoidably prevented from doing so.
- 17) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.35 March 10, 1848.
- 18) Archives of The Times, Delane correspondence, vol.3, f.19, Greville to Delane, Feb. 27, 1848.  
Ibid., f.32 Sir D. Le Marchant to Delance [May 1848].
- 19) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, Oct. 31, 1849.
- 20) A. Andrews, The History of British Journalism 2 vols (1859), vol.2, p.329.
- 21) "Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", Parliamentary Papers, xvii (1851) Appendix 4.
- 22) HO 45, (Public Record Office) 2410C, Mayor of Nottingham to Sir, G. Grey, June 7, 1948.
- 23) Northern Star, July 1, 1848.  
"We warn our readers that the following account of the working men's insurrection in Paris is, for the most part, taken from the daily journals, the bitter enemies of working men in all countries."
- 24) Punch, March 4 and 11, 1848. vol.14, pp.94-95.
- 25) This was the fourth extraordinary issue. The other three had occurred at crucial moments during the Napoleonic wars. The fifth such issue took place on Sunday, August 2, 1914.

- 26) J.S. Mill "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848. In reply to Lord Brougham and Others", (April, 1849), in Dissertations and Discussions, 3 vols, (1867), vol.2, p.335.
- 27) The Times, February 7, 1848.
- 28) Ibid., February 14, 16 and 24, 1848.
- 29) K. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Surveys from Exile: Political Writings vol.2, ed. D. Fernbach, (1973)), pp.146-7.
- 30) The Times, March 27, 1848.
- 31) Ibid., June 26 and 27, 1848.
- 32) See chapter 4, pp.100-2.
- 33) The Times, March 23, 1848.
- 34) Ibid., April 21 and 28, 1848.
- 35) Ibid., April 21, 1848.
- 36) Ibid., June, 27, 1848.
- 37) K. Marx and F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (Harmondsworth, 1967edn.) p.78.
- 38) The Times, May 18, 1848.
- 39) Ibid., June 22, 1848.
- 40) Ibid., March 17, 1848.
- 41) Ibid., April 14, 1848.
- 42) See D. McKay, The National Workshops (Cambridge Mass. 1933).



- 43) The Times, May 2, June 2 and July 5, 1848.
- 44) Ibid., March 1, 1848.
- 45) Ibid., April 19 and June 26, 1848.
- 46) Ibid., March 23, 1848.
- 47) Ibid., May 1, 1848.
- 48) Ibid., May 20, 1848.
- 49) Marx and Engels, op.cit..
- 50) The Times, June 27, 1848.
- 51) Ibid., June 28, 1848.
- 52) K. Marx, "The Class Struggles in France: 1848-50" (1850) in Surveys from Exile: Political Writings vol.2, ed. D. Fernbach, (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp.58-9.
- 53) Note the contrast between the report and the leading article.  
 "It would seem that the Socialists, Communists and other ultra-Republicans are not idle, for several arrests of persons said to be connected with these parties respectively take place daily"  
 "The State of the Continent", The Times, June 21, 1848, p.6.  
 "We possess in the native institutions of this country a powerful antidote to the doctrines of Communism. Republicanism and Socialism have in vain attacked a constitution under which the poor man has hitherto had title to work or relief."  
 Leading article in The Times, June 30, 1848.
- 54) "The French Republic", The Times, June 28, p.5.  
 "The French Republic", The Times, June 29, p.5.
- 55) The Times, May 5, 1848.
- 56) Ibid., April 3, 1848.

- 57) Ibid., February 26, 1848.
- 58) Ibid., February, 26, March 21, and 25, April 15, May 1, 27 and 31 1848.
- 59) Ibid., May 27, 1848.
- 60) Ibid., July 18, 1848.
- 61) Ibid., March 28, 1848.
- 62) Ibid., April 22 and June 23, 1848.
- 63) Ibid., July 12.
- 64) T. Carlyle, "Chartism" in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 7 vols. vol.4, p.203.
- 65) E. Gaskell, Mary Barton: a tale of Manchester life (1848: Harmondsworth, 1970 edn.).  
C. Kingsley, Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet, An Autobiography (1850; 1947 edn.).
- 66) Reeve's diary for 1847 ended: "Remarkable depression in the last months of this year in society; general illness; great mortality; innumerable failures; funds down to 76; want of money; no society at all." He added later: "A curious presage of the impending storm!" J.K. Laughton, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, 2 vols (1898), vol.1, p.190.
- 67) The Times, April 27, 29, May 12, 17, 22, 23, June 5, 8, 16, 20, July 3, 12, 20, 27, 29, 1848.
- 68) Ibid., May 17, 1848.
- 69) Ibid., June, 16, 1848.
- 70) Ibid., June 20, 1848.
- 71) Ibid., March 24, 1831.

- 72) K. Burgess, The Challenge of Labour (1890), p.19.
- 73) The Times, May 2, 1848.
- 74) Ibid., July 8, 1848.
- 75) Ibid. May 31, 1848.
- 76) Ibid., June 9, 1848.
- 77) A. de Tocqueville, Souvenirs, quoted in R. Price, The French Republic: A Social History (1972), p.129.
- 78) Punch, Dec. 2, 1848, vol.15, p.236. See appendix II (b).

## CHAPTER 6

### "The arcana of that great machine": Politicians and "The Times"

In 1822 Canning, when speaking of the components of the British constitution, stressed that in addition to the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the Crown, there existed another vital element, "that mighty power of Public Opinion, embodied in a Free Press, which pervades, and checks, and, perhaps, nearly governs the whole". (1) The Westminster Review of 1826 noted the same point but laid particular emphasis upon the wide base of that opinion: "in former times, governments made and fashioned the opinions of their people nearly as much as they made their laws; at present the people throughout Europe, form opinion to a great degree for themselves, and are every day allowing government less and less of a share in settling what they think on any subject." (2) The fundamental changes taking place in British society had broadened the political spectrum. In particular, the middle classes, growing in numbers, wealth and self-confidence, demanded a political voice in order to give expression to their interests and self-esteem. The development of communications and the enlargement of the printed medium stimulated political awareness and provided necessary knowledge. These changes, in a reciprocal sense, enabled the newly developed political consciousness to be given definition and focus.

Existing institutions and the network of relationships, interests and pressure groups which overlay them, appeared increasingly to be incapable of reflecting the interests of the new society being forged in the cauldron of industrialization. Peel in 1820 voiced the anxiety of those sensitive politicians who became increasingly aware of the problem: "It seems to me a curious crisis, when public opinion never

had such influence on public measures and yet never was so dissatisfied with the share it possessed. It is growing too large for the channels that it has been accustomed to run through." (3) Of vital importance to this development was the newspaper press. It was the medium which reported speeches, supplied information and comment and co-ordinated political activity and debate. It was this medium which was regarded by contemporaries as both the mould and measure of public opinion. As Grey wrote to Princess Lieven in 1830, "if you wish for proofs of the state of the public opinion, look at all the speeches at the late elections, and at the comments of all the newspapers, beginning with the The Times". (4)

Public opinion, despite the increasing lip-service paid to it, was incapable of precise definition. It was neither uniform, nor consistent, nor homogeneous and, in the formal and public sense, it largely existed in the organs which sought to give it expression. Disraeli had Sidonia tell Coningsby that "God made man in his own image, but the Public is made by Newspapers". (5) It was here that the newspapers attempted to identify themselves with their readership and to carve for themselves a niche in the expanding market. The Times led the way in this respect. Having freed itself from government control and influence, the newspaper demonstrated by its advocacy of the popular cause on Peterloo and the Queen Caroline affair, that independence brought its own rewards. The rest of the press gradually followed its example. The Quarterly Review of 1830 noted the consequence: "All over this country..... it may be truly said that, the newspapers are merely the organs or mouth-pieces of the general will, out of which no observant person can fail to deduce what is essentially the real state of public opinion." (6)

Politicians had long been aware of the potency of the newspaper press and A. Aspinall has analysed the attempts of successive governments to exercise direct control and influence over newspapers by means of repressive legislation, fiscal controls and subsidies in the form of cash or advertisements. (7) The public wanted independent newspapers and were prepared to pay for them. Against this commercial reality even government struggled in vain. After a suggestion in Parliament that if the Government succeeded in getting control of the principal newspapers, the speeches of Opposition members might not be reported, The Times commented in 1830 that "one single newspaper reporting, and being known to report the speeches faithfully and impartially, would soon have more sale than all the other papers so shamefully bought up; and thus would be better paid than ministers could afford to pay its tools." (8)

The gradual abandonment of the traditional methods of control and influence during the first half of the nineteenth century did not mean that the newspaper press became less important to politicians. Both Catholic Emancipation of 1829 and the Reform Act of 1832 could be seen as capitulations before outside pressures, while the Reform Act in particular could be seen as a gesture of deference to the growing force of public opinion. Public opinion, on this occasion, meant the interests of the middle classes, and Grey, in the midst of the struggle for the Reform Act, put the matter clearly when he referred to "the middle classes who form the real and efficient mass of public opinion and without whom the power of the gentry is nothing". (9) Though feeling bound to bend before public opinion in 1832, the ruling élite did not intend to assume a permanently deferential posture. The Reform Act proved not to be a decisive capitulation to the middle classes and the traditional holders of power continued to dominate political life



by manipulating the new system as effectively as they had manipulated the old. Since the newspaper press played such an important part in the political life of the nation, politicians had to redouble their efforts to manage it for their own purposes. If editors found independence more profitable than government subsidy then more subtle methods of influencing them would have to be developed.

Politicians and the newspaper press were indissolubly linked in a symbiotic relationship. Politicians needed newspapers to order to gather support for their own proposals, to confound those of their opponents and to test opinion on future policies. Newspapers needed information as their highest priority. Politics dominated the content of the daily press and politicians could provide information, comment and gossip. They could also, if connected with the Government of the day, provide foreknowledge, the most valuable of all commodities to newspapers, since it enabled them to parade before their readers their omniscience and omnipotence. Politicians also had access to the sources of patronage and could ease the progress of newspaper editors into the charmed circle of the ruling élite. Armed with such weapons, politicians were able to exert considerable pressure upon the newspaper press. In the last resort, however, the commercial press was loyal to its readers and the consensual values they shared. In the short term it was swayed by particular influences. Experienced newspaper observers like Clarendon and Greville were fascinated by the various influences discernible within the columns of newspapers. On occasions this could result in a newspaper appearing to be remarkably inconsistent. Greville noted one such occasion in The Times in 1840 and referred to "its apparent caprices and inconsistency" which have been "the consequence of the extraordinary variety of its connexions and the conflicting opinions which have been alternately, and sometimes almost, if not

quite, simultaneously, admitted to discharge themselves in its columns."(10)

The most important politicians, however, normally kept a distance between themselves and the newspaper press. The traditional landed élite looked with considerable suspicion upon the brash and ebullient newspaper press which represented an essentially urban constituency and sought to intrude into the inner sanctuaries of power. Earl Grey prided himself on the fact: "I... never have had, and never will have, any details with the newspapers".(11) Part of the reason was no doubt what appeared to be the fickle nature of newspapers which must, on occasions, demonstrate their independence of the Government of the day by vilification of it. Melbourne protested to Brougham in 1834 that "the Press had never shown any great deference to Prime Ministers, ..... and I have no doubt that you will have a very little time to wait before you will perceive that their sparing of me is but temporary". (12) Dealing with the newspapers was dirty business, however, since it frequently meant calculated leaks, breaches of confidence, subtle innuendo and contrived evasion. It also meant personal dealings with men of a lower social standing who sold their pen and themselves to their readership. The new political reality and the importance of public opinion as an expression of it obliged even Prime Ministers to deal with newspaper press, albeit indirectly. J.W. Croker noted in 1828 that in the post he had held for twenty years as Secretary of the Admiralty "I have heretofore conveyed to the public articles written by Prime and Cabinet Ministers, and sometimes have composed such articles under their eye - they supplied the fact , and I supplied the tact, and between us we used to produce a considerable effect."(13)

Traditionally responsible for the management of the press was the Secretary of the Treasury. He tended, however, to be fully occupied with departmental and Parliamentary duties and in practice relations with newspapers were handled by individual Ministers and their principal assistants. Not all of these had either the ability or the taste for handling press relations. Croker, after his considerable experience in this sphere, urged the Tories in 1828 to make a Cabinet Minister responsible for this area: "the time has gone by when statesmen might safely despise the journals, or only treat them as inferior engines, which might be left to themselves or be committed to the guidance of persons wholly unacquainted with the views of the Ministry .....The day is not far distant when you will not see, nor hear, but know that there is some one in the Cabinet entrusted with what will be thought one of the most important duties of the State, the regulation of public opinion."(14)

By 1848 public opinion as perceived by the politicians had become even more important. The Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 represented a further significant concession by a Parliament of landowners to outside pressures. Their abrogation resulted in long-lasting political divisions but made possible that cohesion of the possessing classes which was so discernible in 1848. Though the opinion that mattered was articulated across the whole spectrum of those classes, it increasingly assumed a particular focus. Fraser's Magazine in 1831 complained that "the whole nation is influenced by the taste of London" (15) and Bagehot, looking back from 1870, noted of the 1830s and 1840s the unique influence exerted over opinion by a limited group of people in London. (16) A variety of factors had contributed towards this. The demographic, economic and political dominance of London had been reinforced by transport developments which made London the nodal point

of national and international communications. News, and the opinion that went with it, came from London.

Crucial to the dominance of London opinion were the metropolitan morning dailies. Product of the intellectual élite which concentrated there, they flourished on the wealth of the London market and exploited the capital's monopoly of news. W. Johnston in his analysis of England As It Is (1851) pointed out that public opinion "practically means tyranny of the newspapers" (17) and Bagehot noted that period "when the London journals were the only papers which exercised any political power, which formed opinion". (18) Without serious competition from the provincial press they had a virtual monopoly of the provision of news and informed comment. They were therefore of particular concern to politicians.

Of greatest importance was The Times. Richard Cobden, who was no admirer, referred to it in the House of Commons as "the most powerful vehicle of public opinion in the world" (19) while Robert Owen sought its support as "the most powerful single engine for good or evil that has been brought into action by human creation". (20) Its towering position over its rivals and the particular ethos attached to it seemed to give it the right to stamp the orthodoxies of public opinion with its own imprimatur. The accuracy of its intelligence and its close connections with the Government of the day seemed to foreign observers to make it the oracle of national policy. Clarendon put the point very clearly in 1848: "I don't care a straw what any other paper thinks or says. They are all regarded on the Continent as representing persons or cliques, but the Times is considered to be the exponent of what English public opinion is or will be, & as it is thought that whatever public opinion determines with us the Government ultimately does, an extraordinary and universal importance attaches to the views of the Times". (21)

Lord John Russell's Administration which was formed in 1846 was in particular need of support which The Times could provide. The Government was obliged to preside over that political maelstrom which had resulted from Repeal of the Corn Laws. Even after the elections of 1847 it still depended for a working majority on the support of the Radicals and Peelites and the session of 1847-1848 saw a complete collapse of party discipline, not only among the Liberals, but among the Peelites and Protectionists. (22) Greville wrote in July 1848: "Nobody seems to have any command over the House, & business of every sort is obstructed by endless gabble leading to nothing .... The Government have unhappily no absolute majority; the Protectionists have no leader, no object, no opinions, don't wish to turn the Government out, but don't care how much they are weakened and impaired." (23) Against this background of party weakness the Government's need for moral approval was especially acute since outside pressure might achieve what was beyond party discipline.

Russell's inclination, like that of previous Prime Ministers was to keep the newspaper press at a distance. It was, however, too important to be ignored even from Russell's lofty Whig perspective and the diary of Sir John Hobhouse affords evidence of the presence of newspapers at Cabinet meetings. (24) Russell's views on the newspaper press were stated for public consumption in his Recollections and Suggestions published in 1875: "Government can exercise and does exercise a great influence over part of the press, by communicating from authority intelligence which has been received, and the decisions which have been arrived at by persons holding high office." (25) In practice the olympian detachment was belied by a much closer and more complex relationship. A memorandum by Prince Albert, dated July 6, 1848, referred to the way that Russell's Government "got the Times over



by giving it exclusive information", though it also noted the limitations of the arrangement and pointed out that "the wicked paper added immediately a furious attack upon Sir John Hobhouse".(26) Not surprisingly Sir John Easthope, the proprietor of the Whig Morning Chronicle protested bitterly at the flow of information to his great rival. According to Greville, Russell replied that "he did not wish to have any Government paper, but he could not repudiate the support of the 'Times'".(27) Delane could presume sufficiently on the arrangement to ask Russell, through Le Marchant, for specific guidance on matters of foreign policy.(28)

Information from politicians, no matter what their status, always came at a price. A memorandum, which began "Please to burn this", from Le Marchant, the Under Secretary for the Home Department, to Russell shows how the relationship worked in practice, Le Marchant had been sent by Russell to complain about the "tone" of recent articles in The Times. Delane, for his part, admitted that the articles were open to complaint and promised a more conciliatory one. On the other hand, Delane justified the line he had taken by pointing out that "The articles were written with no unkind motive, but from the desire to meet in some degree the tone of feeling abroad, and to prove that they were not unqualified supporters of the Government". (29) In the relations between Delane and politicians a third and more important party was always involved, namely public opinion as conceived and monitored by Delane himself.

Sir Denis Le Marchant, who was well described by Greville as "the organ of communication between John (Russell) and the 'Times'". (30) had had considerable experience in that role. As principal secretary to Henry Brougham between 1830 and 1834 he had soon discovered that "One of the most difficult and delicate tasks which the Chancellor imposed



upon me ..... was the management of the public press." (31) Brougham, who had recognized at an early stage the relationship that existed between the middle classes and newspapers, had become adept at harnessing the energies of both of them for his own political purposes. In this company Le Marchant learned quickly. By 1834 he could write confidently: "I can have no pleasure in being the channel of communication with a newspaper but I have on so many occasions been able to use my influence with Barnes so beneficially for that Government that I am loath to give the matter up. I am sure that with very little trouble we could lead the Times as we like". (32) Though Le Marchant appreciated the importance of his task, he, like many other politicians, regarded it with some disdain. The work was too important, however, to be entrusted to any but the skilled and devious. A succession of notes in the archives of The Times bear witness to the energy with which Le Marchant forwarded information, suggested articles and acknowledged favours received. (33)

Whilst Le Marchant acted as the main channel of communication between the Government and The Times, individual Ministers made their own arrangements. Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in frequent contact with Delane during the early years of Russell's Government and provided Delane with both information and justification of his financial policies. (34) Delane, for his part, felt able to solicit Wood's support at the end of 1848 for the candidature of his brother-in-law, Dasent, as Regius Professor of Modern History and Modern Languages at Oxford. (35) The blandishments of politicians might produce short-term advantages but they could not prevail in the long run against what Delane considered to be the verdict of public opinion. A leading article of March 10 infuriated the Whig Government: "Little is promised, but still less is done". Greville noted that Wood

had remonstrated with Delane but added: "The truth is the 'Times' thinks it has sniffed out that they cannot go on, and wants, according to its custom, to give them a shove ..... It is evident that the notion of weakness and incapacity of the Government is spreading far and wide". (36)

Viscount Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary in Russell's Cabinet, knew, according to a recent biographer, "probably more about press intrigues than most".(37) At a period when the ideal Government was generally thought of as interfering as little as possible in domestic affairs, foreign policy loomed large in political debate and therefore in the columns of newspapers. Since newspapers almost monopolized the supply of information and comment on these matters, Ministers responsible for foreign policy were obliged to deal with them in order to ensure that their policies received a favourable hearing. The Times, however, had been severely critical of Palmerston since 1835 when the paper abandoned the Whigs. Barnes felt a strong antipathy for both the man and his policies. The paper of December 8, 1836 commented that "There is no parallel furnished by the history of any minister to the fatal frivolities of our foolish Foreign Secretary." Despite the arrangement reached with the Russell Administration, Delane maintained a critical attitude to Palmerston and this was further reinforced by the pro-French attitude of Henry Reeve and the influence of Aberdeen who continued to influence the policy of The Times even after the fall of Peel's Government. Greville pointed out to Clarendon the irony of the attitude of The Times to Russell's Administration: "It was all for the F.O. & agt most others in the last - it is all agt the F.O. and for most others in this. Nor, I take it, will C. Wood and J.R. forego the advantage of its advocacy to please their unmanageable Colleague who will have his own way, & finds the 'Times' the most troublesome and

formidable antagonist he has to compete with."<sup>(38)</sup> What this makes very clear is the way that political influences rarely paralleled party groupings. Individuals not parties manipulated The Times. Hence the paper could proudly proclaim itself above party and Government whilst, in practice, it was seldom free from political influences of some sort.

So virulent were the attacks on Palmerston in early 1848 that the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Lord President of the Council, enquired of Greville if Reeve was the author of the most recent "bitter articles".

(39) Greville did his best to shield Reeve from his chief but Reeve was saved by Palmerston himself who, after the sale of the Morning Chronicle to the Peelites, sought at that same moment to establish some sort of relationship with Delane. Greville sent a long account of the meeting between the two to Clarendon. Palmerston "offered all sorts of information and suggested, if he was disposed to accept, that it would be better if he would put the gentleman who conducted his foreign business into immediate communication with him." Delane, who was very wary of too close a relationship with such a demanding taskmaster, replied that "he did not think such a connexion as had existed between Lord Palmerston and the Morning Chronicle would be either advantageous to him or the paper". Reeve, however, had been severely frightened and Delane was, for the time being, inclined to adopt a more moderate tone, Greville ended his account: "Here is a long story which I have scribbled down after dinner, but which will not be without interest to you, so I will not apologise for its length. It is curious on the whole , & it always amuses me to think what a machine this paper is, and how and by whom the strings of it are pulled."<sup>(40)</sup>

The member of Russell's Cabinet with most influence over The Times was George William Frederick Villiers, Fourth Earl of Clarendon. He had already acquired a reputation as an unscrupulous adventurer and

inveterate intriguer. Hobhouse recorded in his diary a conversation with Sir Charles Wood who "said in so many words - he is a villain ...W. at the same time admitted Clarendon's great capacity for business... but concluded that he cared for no one alive & no thing."(41) To such a politician newspapers were irresistible instruments of power. In a letter to Reeve in 1847 Clarendon wrote that "moral persuasion always waylays physical force and beats it within an inch of its life", (42) and for Clarendon newspapers were the key to such persuasion. In September 1830 he and his lifelong friend, Greville, had planned to set up a newspaper "to arrest the torrent of innovation and revolutions that is bursting in on every side." The editor selected by Clarendon was Theodore Edward Hook who, Greville conceded, was "a rogue and a blackguard" but who, in spite of this, or because of it, had "talents so admirably adapted for such a performance." (43) Clarendon had recognised at an early stage the new political reality. As he wrote to Lord Normanby in 1843, "To produce any great and useful effect in or out of Parliament, in Ireland or in England, you must carry with you that weight of public opinion, which has its source in the middle classes and the thinking majority of the people of England". (44)

Clarendon's links with The Times began in October 1839 when he accepted Cabinet office as Lord Privy Seal. Greville was more than willing to act as channel of communication and "had constant information from Clarendon of all the sayings and doings of our rickety Cabinet".(45) On the formation of Russell's Administration in 1846 it was Clarendon who was instrumental in establishing the arrangement with The Times. (46) Not all Clarendon's colleagues appreciated his close contacts with The Times. Russell, in particular was sensitive about Cabinet colleagues who sought to influence policy

by making unofficial disclosures to the press and J. Prest in his study of Russell suggests that Clarendon's appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland would have had the twofold advantage of removing Delane's main source of information and securing favourable treatment in The Times of the Government's Irish policy.(47)

Clarendon's first contact with The Times and its writers came in 1842 when Henry Reeve was introduced to him by Greville. A regular and detailed correspondence soon began and in 1844 Reeve received his first invitation to Clarendon's residence. Reeve found in Clarendon an extremely important source of information while Clarendon was able to dictate the tone and content of Reeve's articles. A letter to Reeve in July 1846 throws light upon the nature of the relationship: "Nothing can be better than the spirit and intention of the art. today, but I am a good deal annoyed at the minuteness of some parts of it... I suppose I was not explicit enough on this point, but we must be more careful another time."(48) Clarendon's letters to Reeve are liberally larded with complimentary remarks about The Times and Reeve himself, but nevertheless they contain on occasions very clear and specific guidelines about what should or should not be written: "I think therefore if the advice administered by The Times were repeated on Monday... it might have good effect." (49) Reeve's letters to Clarendon indicate a great willingness to oblige: "I do most sincerely believe and hope that I never wrote a line or expressed an opinion which is at variance with the principles of those who like yourself and Lord Lansdowne are the great and constant supporters of temperate authority and moderate freedom."(50)

By 1847 Clarendon was in direct contact with Delane. Delane's letters suggest an almost obsequious deference even after allowing for mid-century conventions: "I only hope Your Excellency has recognised



your own views in this printed shape", "I hope the amends I made to Lord Minto upon your suggestion did not escape your observation". "Pray allow me to accept the thanks you are good enough to bestow on my very slight services".<sup>(51)</sup> The Lord Lieutenant throughout 1848 virtually dictated to Delane the content, tone and timing of leading articles upon Ireland. In the last resort, however, Delane served an even more imperious master and he allowed himself to be used in this way because he recognised the popularity of the articles with his readers. In May 1848 he pointed out to Clarendon that "The success of these articles as estimated by the number and character of the letters we receive was immense. Every day's post brought a score or two from steady, respectable gentlemen."<sup>(52)</sup> Clarendon, for his part, acknowledged his indebtedness to Delane in July 1848: "You have done me right good service here and I am obliged to you".<sup>(53)</sup> Delane's dependence on Clarendon was limited essentially to Irish affairs. On other matters he leaned elsewhere. This could lead to embarrassment. As he wrote to Clarendon in January 1849, "It is rather hard that you should complain of my Emigration articles for I only undertook them at the express solicitation of the Colonial Office and very much against my own opinion."<sup>(54)</sup>

The most recent history of The Times by O. Woods and J. Bishop (1983) refers somewhat euphemistically to the tendency of Editors of the paper "to acquire advisors on whom they rely for ideas".<sup>(55)</sup> The Earl of Aberdeen throughout the 1840s fulfilled this role and did a good deal more besides for the newly appointed Editor. Delane recognised that daily newspapers were particularly dependent upon Government sources for both information and policy detail in the sphere of foreign affairs. The relationship with the Foreign Secretary in Peel's Government was therefore particularly valuable and served to



reaffirm the anti-Palmerston stance adopted by Reeve who was in contact with Aberdeen's friends Guizot and Princess Lieven. Throughout 1845 and 1846 Aberdeen and Delane were in almost daily contact, (56) and it was as a result of this relationship that Delane secured his first great journalistic triumph when he announced in The Times of December 4, 1845 that Peel's Cabinet had decided to repeal the Corn Laws. Delane's announcement, though in fact premature, served ultimately to enhance further the status of both the newspaper and the new Editor. There was much contemporary speculation about the source of the information though Aberdeen's son confirmed later that his father had been the source.(57)

Aberdeen exacted the usual price for the information he supplied. Aberdeen's suggestions were sometimes incorporated verbatim into the columns of The Times (58) and subjects were clearly defined: "You will oblige me by not originating at present any paragraph connected with the subject of the Right of Search." (59) Despite the change of Government in 1846 Aberdeen's influence was maintained since the arrangement with Russell's Administration did not include any obligation to support Palmerston. Delane was able to re-assure Aberdeen on this point in November 1846: "I hope that after the article of Saturday last it will be indisputably clear that we have formed no connexion with Lord Palmerston and that there is no chance of forsaking the friend to whose counsels we are so much indebted." (60) Delane in September 1848 was therefore able to add Aberdeen to the list of politicians whose support was solicited for Dasent's candidature at Oxford: "it has occurred to me that the mere mention of Mr. Dasent's name by Your Lordship during the Prince's residence in your neighbourhood might be of service."(61)

Aberdeen's influence did not, however, prevent Delane from opposing the Government's domestic policies. Delane's dependence on individuals was calculated to leave him independent of Government. Peel complained bitterly of these attacks and suggested to Aberdeen that "the transference of the existing Relation with that paper to some others - would do more to keep The Times in order than showing it any favour." (62) Even Aberdeen found that there were limits to his influence. After the fall of Metternich in March 1848 The Times devoted a leading article to his career. An advance draft sent to Aberdeen drew from him an unequivocal response: "A more unjust and prejudiced statement I have seldom seen; - and this is sent to an old friend, for correction." (63) The article appeared the next day with only a minor adjustment. As always Delane took his final cue from his readers. In March 1850 Delane, after a campaign against Palmerston's policy over the Don Pacifico affair urged Aberdeen to raise the matter in the House of Lords: "The press... is already wearying of a course which leaves it without any public support to bear the odium of a factious and personal opposition. We have indeed a good cause and plenty of private approbation but the general public looks to the Debates for confirmation of leading articles". (64)

The most long-standing political contact of The Times was with Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville. Excluded from direct participation in politics as a result of his office as Clerk of the Privy Council, Greville, nevertheless, was usually at the centre of political affairs as a result of his post, his aristocratic connections and his particular talent for gossip and intrigue. He described himself as being "intimate with so many persons of all parties and descriptions, and being so much in the confidence of all". (65) His diaries and correspondence with a variety of contacts from the Duke of Bedford to

Henry Reeve reveal the narrowness of the ruling élite and the social barriers which hedged it about. Greville nevertheless recognized the reality of the enlarged political arena and the important role of newspapers within this. The potency of newspapers fascinated him. As he wrote in his diary in 1833 concerning The Times, "It is no small homage to the power of the press to see that an article like this makes as much noise as the declaration of a powerful Minister or a Leader of Opposition could do in either H. of Parliament." (66) Barred from the conventional routes to a political power, Greville found an alternative access via newspapers. They provided a suitable outlet for his ambitions and his talents. He wrote to Reeve in 1841: "It is irresistibly tempting to exercise power and influence through the medium of the Press." (67) His efforts were not always appreciated as an anonymous poem in the Morning Herald made clear:

Greville's freaks invite my song,  
 Greville ever in the wrong:  
 Ever plotting, ever peddling,  
 Master of all modes of meddling.  
 .....  
 Is the coalition tumbling;  
 Are the daily papers grumbling;  
 Is a hint to be conveyed  
 Without bustle and parade  
 To the Times, the Czar or Devil -  
 Ring the bell! and send for Greville. (68)

Greville's contact with The Times appears to have dated from 1829 and to have originally taken place through his friend Henry de Ros. It was through de Ros that Greville set up the discussions between Peel's incoming Administration of 1834 and The Times and his diary recorded

his satisfaction at "the very essential service I rendered Peel and his Government, by obtaining the support of the 'Times' and concluding the arrangement which was made between these high contracting parties". (69) His direct contact with Barnes did not begin, however, till 1838 and this was reinforced in 1840 when Greville introduced to Barnes his subordinate, Henry Reeve. Greville's immediate purpose was to reinforce The Times in its opposition to Palmerston though he also appreciated the additional influence over the paper that this afforded him. The death of Barnes in 1841 appeared to jeopardize this relationship and Greville lamented his own loss: "It is a very serious privation to lose the faculty of getting anything I please inserted at any time in the columns of the 'Times', and to do this (as I have) without committing myself in any way". A footnote added later by Greville went on to record the new relationship: "Barnes was succeeded by Delane who had been his Assistant; and I became before long more intimate with him and had more constant communication with him than his predecessor." (70)

It was Greville who introduced Delane to that London society which Delane enjoyed so much and from which he gleaned so much useful information. Greville in this respect performed for Delane the same service he provided for Reeve and attempted to extract the same advantage. (71) Greville saw The Times as a political mechanism, "that great engine", "a mighty piece of machinery" which at home played a vitally important role in the creation of opinion and on the continent was regarded as reflecting British policy. (72) It was the manipulation of this mechanism which fascinated Greville: "It is amusing and agreeable enough to hold as I do in my hands a considerable amount of influence over this machinery". (73) Greville was well aware, however, of the other influences that worked upon Delane, not

least of which was the public he sought to represent. When the protest of the middle classes against the proposal to raise income tax reached its crescendo in February 1848, Greville wrote in despair to Clarendon: "The 'Times' is going ding dong agt the budget and I can't stop it." (74) Delane carefully maintained about The Times an impenetrable facade which, in the last resort, enabled him to chose between the variety of political pressures upon him or to ignore them all. Greville after a frustrating two hours with Delane and Reeve conceded to Clarendon: "I do not know whether what I said will produce any effect .... I can not penetrate the arcana of that great machine sufficiently to ascertain what the influences are and how they work."(75)

A wide spectrum of political contacts was always essential to Delane if he was to maintain the reputation of the paper for the promptitude and accuracy of its political intelligence. During the course of 1848 Delane was in communication with C.E. Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury (76) and B. Hawes, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. After an article on emigration in December 1848 Hawes thanked Delane for working "his rough ore into such pure metal". (77) Louis Napoleon also forwarded to The Times during 1848 confidential information which he had obtained from his network in France and which was useful to his cause. (78) Early in 1848 Sir John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Trade, was also introduced to Delane by Le Marchant. After an exchange of information Delane assured him of the support of public opinion. Hobhouse noted in his diary: "I knew what he meant by public opinion."(79)

What Hobhouse clearly had in mind was that The Times in the last resort sought to speak on behalf of its readership. Both Reeve and Delane, who together acted as the political antennae of the paper never forgot their real constituency. It was this that prevented their

obsequious behaviour before politicians from becoming total dependency. This was particularly important in the case of Henry Reeve who, without that saving qualification, would appear to have fallen totally under the influence of Clarendon and Greville. Greville in 1847 referred to Reeve as being "puffed up with vanity" and Reeve certainly rejoiced in the elevated company he kept. In a letter to his mother in 1839 he showed his delight: "I am sure, in writing to you, I may be pardoned for noticing my own position with les personages: but it is strange that as twenty-six I should find myself on terms of acquaintance with the whole Cabinet, except Lord Melbourne and Baring."<sup>(80)</sup> As Clerk of Appeals to the Privy Council Reeve was at the very hub of politics and, thanks to aristocratic connections like his patron Lord Lansdowne and Greville and Clarendon, he was able to participate in the highest society. Greville, however, never forgot Reeve's "humble position, his obscurity, his apparent nothingness" and confided to Clarendon that "R would tomber de son haut" if he knew what was being written about him by those whose company he so valued. <sup>(81)</sup> Il Pomposo, as he was known to his colleagues at The Times fell a willing victim to those in high places who wished to exert an influence upon the newspaper. Both Greville and Clarendon flattered him and used him. Greville was in constant personal contact through their mutual responsibilities in the Privy Council but supplemented this by letters whenever he was abroad or indulging in his enduring passion for race meetings. Clarendon corresponded with Reeve mainly through letter, though the relationship was cemented with occasional visits by Reeve to the Viceregal Lodge in Ireland. The correspondence with both men had a common element in the interest which all three shared over matters of foreign policy but there was also running through the letters the constant theme of the content and tone of The Times and the role that



Reeve played in influencing both. Fairly typical was the letter from Greville to Reeve in January 1847: "I beg you will tell Delane if you see him, that the article in Tuesday's 'Times' commands my full concurrence. (82) A note from Clarendon on the same day was rather more peremptory: "I hear that a Treaty of Utrecht Pamphlet which has just appeared is attributed by you to Wm. Hervey. Whether it be his or not, pray have the goodness to take care that no allusion to him is made in The Times." (83) That Reeve was able to carry out the instructions resulted from his seniority among the leader-writers and the close relationship that he enjoyed with Delane.

With Reeve there were limits beyond which he could not be pushed. Greville had discovered this in 1847 and expressed his exasperation: "As I told you before, I greatly regret the line you have recently taken; in my opinion it is inconsistent with the course previously pursued by the 'Times':... I am not sure that I understand what you mean by 'the duty of a journalist lying apart from that of members and agents of the Govt.'" (84) Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, met with similar resistance in 1852 when he tried to moderate Reeve's bitter criticisms of Louis Napoleon. Reeve's reply made clear his priorities: "To find out the true state of facts, to report them with fidelity, to apply to them strict and fixed principles of justice, humanity, and law, to inform, as far as possible, the very conscience of nations and to call down the judgement of the world on what is false, or base, or tyrannical, appear to me to be the first duties of those who write. Those upon whom the greater part of political action devolves are necessarily governed by other rules." Reeve put the point again rather more prosaically later on: "It will not perhaps be forgotten by France, when her press recovers its voice, and her real leaders their power, that the opinion of England protested

with indignation against violence done to her neighbour." (85) This concept of public opinion was his ultimate defence. Individual politicians were governed by expediency while journalists performed the higher role of representing opinion as a whole.

Reeve's beliefs found fullest expression in the article in the Edinburgh Review of 1855 when he elevated them into the concept of the newspaper press as the Fourth Estate: "Journalism, therefore, is not the instrument by which the various divisions of the ruling class express themselves it is rather the instrument by means of which aggregate intelligence of the nation criticises and controls them all. It is indeed the 'Fourth Estate' of the Realm". (86) The newspaper press, he argued, informs and reflects public opinion, acts as public watchdog and performs the function of intermediary between government and people. What he meant by the people was "the great mass of the educated classes", or by inference the readers of newspapers, but when acting in what he regarded as their cause he was impervious to political influences. "It would be as impossible to buy a journalist as to buy a member of Parliament.... You might as well offer a bribe to a minister of state as to the editor of a leading paper." (87) Even Reeve at his most pontifical seems to have been aware of the considerable gap that existed between theory and practice. No doubt mindful of his own experience he wrote: "The real cause for wonder is, that - considering who newspaper writers are, how well they are received by most politicians, how important it is to those in high places to influence their opinions and supply their inspiration, and how freely many of them mingle in political society, - they should still retain so much independence and individuality of thought." (88)

Reeve no doubt had Delane in mind when he referred to newspaper writers who mingled in political society, for it was Reeve who first introduced Delane to his own political contacts and the heady delights

of London Society. Delane throughout his career revelled in his status as Editor of The Times and the social recognition it appeared to bring with it. The result was that whereas Delane's predecessor, Barnes, had waited for politicians to come to him, as they often did, Delane consciously sought their company. Everyone knew to whom Disraeli referred when he declared in 1858 that "the once stern guardians of popular rights simper in the enervating atmosphere of gilded saloons." (89) Cobden went even further in a letter to Delane: "They who associate in the higher political circles of the metropolis know that the chief editor and manager of the Times, while still maintaining a strict incognito towards the public, drops the mask with very sufficient reason in the presence of those powerful classes who are at once the dispensers of social distinction and (on which I might have something to say) of the patronage of the Government." (90) Delane did not publish Cobden's letter. Indeed his actions certainly lay him open to charges of nepotism. Between 1842 and 1852 he sought the support of his political contacts on behalf of two of his brothers, his father, his brother-in-law, Dasent, and his colleague Dr. Woodham. (91) When Dr. Woodham's candidature for the Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge failed in 1849, Reeve pointed out to Clarendon the consequences: "Delane has expressed himself to C. Wood and Le Marchant in the strongest terms", "I think I can already perceive the effect of it in the tone of the paper". (92) Even the History of the Times admits in Delane "This lack of perception in certain affairs of taste". (93) Delane himself seems to have regarded favours he received for his relatives and friends as being no different from the favours he received from politicians in the form of information. In this at least he was right.

Delane himself was always impervious to the charge that he was dependent on politicians. He was convinced that in order to obtain exclusive and prior intelligence and the informed political comment which his readers expected, he must personally have contacts with a wide variety of politicians. He was not so naive to believe that such information came without obligations. He recognised that he must perform favours in return by supporting his contacts and their policies and reproducing their lines of argument. In the last resort, however, he remained convinced that he retained his independence. He failed to see that politicians could purchase the newspaper press without money changing hands, that by releasing information at particular moments, that by adopting certain lines of argument he became dependent on them and that the newspaper had been bought by political interests. Delane justified himself by arguing that his support of politicians was never a binding commitment and that it was based on his own judgement. A leading article in The Times of November 25, 1846 spelled out Delane's argument: "we are unwilling to have it supposed that opinions formed in the free exercise of our judgement and expressed with whatever power such freedom may give our pen, can be swayed by the convenience of a Minister", and it referred to the support which "On these independent terms....we may lend to a statesman when we think his policy national and wise." Delane sent out a copy of this article to Aberdeen who had suspected that Delane's arrangement with the Russell Administration included a relationship with Palmerston.<sup>(94)</sup> A letter from Delane to in 1847 made the actual links between politicians and Delane a good deal clearer: "I did not write the article of which Your Lordship complains.....I think it will not be difficult to remedy any mischief such an article may have done and will take up the subject myself either today or tomorrow in accordance with Your Lordship's suggestions." (95)

Delane's dependence on politicians was never total. His vital contacts were always on an individual basis and therefore did not commit him to support any party or Government. The variety of influences upon him gave him some degree of freedom as to which of them he should reflect. This could on occasion lead to confusion as in 1853 when the different policies of Aberdeen and Clarendon both found expression in particular issues at the same time. (96) Delane's ultimate defence lay on a higher plane than political machinations. His justification was that he was serving public opinion as he defined it, by providing it with all necessary information and comment. This same opinion would then take shape on particular issues and The Times would faithfully reflect those views. In this way Delane came to the concept of the newspaper press as the Fourth Estate. The Times representing a wider constituency than any politicians and dealing with objective truths played an institutional role between government and people. The argument was fully articulated in The Times of February 6 and 7, 1852: "The first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time and, by disclosing them, to make them the property of the nation". It hammered its point home: "If we do not represent the opinion of the country we are nothing. No family influence, no aristocratic connection, no balance of parties, can preserve to us our influence one moment after we have lost the esteem and approbation of the public. We assert that the opinion of this country, against which all else is powerless, claims and demands to be freely exercised". Delane's correspondence illustrates the serious way in which he interpreted his duties. His standard defence against Clarendon on the rare occasions he resisted his pressure was "we have but repeated what everybody has said....I think the public has acquiesced in our view".(97) It was at such moments that Greville and Clarendon contemplated withdrawing their patronage.(98)



Only rarely did political influences and the opinion which The Times sought to represent come into direct confrontation. Part of the reason for this was that politicians had increasingly become aware of the potency of that opinion and therefore were reluctant to run headlong against it. Greville reported to Clarendon in 1850 that Palmerston "dreads that paper more than 20 Houses of Lords and Commons".(99) Russell, who more than most suffered at the hands of the paper, referred to "this vile tyranny of The Times",(100) while Brougham, who had long experience of manipulating the paper, is reported to have said that "The Apostles would have had no chance against the The Times."(101) Such comments were made in moments of exasperation when politicians and The Times were locked in confrontation. The more usual strategy was for politicians to seek to manipulate the paper, and the opinion it sought to represent, for their own interest. They in the last resort had the superior weaponry in the form of political power, social status and the information which was the very lifeblood of the newspaper. Reeve admitted to Clarendon that "an attack in a newspaper is a flea-bite by itself" but he went on to add "it is the sting of a rattlesnake when public opinion envenoms the wound."(102)

Politicians and public opinion, as they saw it, were generally in harmony and the differences that existed between politicians were usually confined within the consensual values of the day. This was essentially the result of the narrowness of the ruling classes and the primacy of the values they shared. This essential unity was reinforced in the 1840s by the role that the metropolis played as both the source of news and comment and the focal point of opinion. Here was located The Times and within the parameters of contemporary orthodoxies it played out its ideological role of reflecting and reinforcing the



opinion of its readers. Walewski, the French ambassador, put the point very clearly in the penetrating analysis of The Times he sent to Louis Napoleon: "it is an axiom among the founders of this paper that to retain a great number of readers one must anticipate public opinion, keep it alive, animate it, but never break a lance against it and give way every time it declares itself in any direction and even when it changes its attitude to change with it."(103) Despite the institutional facade with which it surrounded itself, The Times functioned like any other paper. It sought to be at one with its readers or, if possible, to be a step ahead of them in the direction in which their opinion was moving. It scrambled with its rivals for exclusive and prior intelligence, for political gossip and the tit-bits that fell from politicians' tables. It revelled in the sensational as far as the taste of its readers allowed. Delane wrote to Dasent in November 1849 concerning the execution of the Mannings: "Pray see MacDonald....make him give a good account of the execution....It will be a great feature in the second edition and will sell as well as Rush's did."(104)

Like all newspapers The Times aspired as its ultimate objective to put itself at the head of some great issue, to whip-up a campaign which would spiral into a self-generating vortex of opinion. The effect of this would be to oblige readers to look to The Times for information and guidance and enable it to enhance its prestige and its sales. The Queen Caroline Affair of 1820 and the Reform crisis of 1830-32 were classic examples of the way that The Times successfully identified itself, to its own very great advantage, with what were seen as the great issues of the day. Opportunities on such a scale were rare, though the paper, faithful to both its nature and its history, continually sought to identify and exploit an issue which would harness

its readers to the yoke of the leading articles. Politicians were well aware of the potency of the newspapers in this respect. This was not surprising since they, given the opportunity, were inclined to adopt similar tactics. Greville commented acidly on the roles of both the Prime Minister and The Times during the anti-Catholic outcry of 1850: "Some affect to be very angry and make a great noise because they think it answers an end. Johnny is something in this way, for I don't believe he really cares much; the 'Times' newspaper does the same and blows up the coals for the sake of popularity". (105) A letter from Delane to Clarendon on this issue confirms Greville's suspicions about the paper: "I have been quite pleased with the way in which the matter has been taken up here. It is always a safe speculation to start a 'No Popery' cry if one wishes to please any numbers". (106)

Nobody knew better than Clarendon how newspapers functioned and he was always anxious to use them, first on his own behalf and then in the interest of his colleagues. In April 1847 he wrote to Reeve: "I had some talk with Lord John about the expediency of rousing public opinion and informing the people of England that they are not the powerless, effete community which Foreign Powers delight in thinking them. I told him that this, although difficult, might be possible if the Government and the press acted together; but that the latter would become ridiculous, and perhaps mischievous, if it blew up a great fire and the former had nothing to cook. He quite agreed, and was very glad to hear I thought the 'Times' would assist in this national work; but he wished it to be postponed for a while, and until its absolute necessity was demonstrated." (107) One year later that moment arrived.

Notes for Chapter 6

- 1) G. Canning, Liverpool Speeches (1825), quoted in H.W.V. Temperley, The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827 (1925; 1966 edn.), p.306.
- 2) "State of the Nation", The Westminster Review, vol.6, no.XII (July 1826), p.266.
- 3) Peel to Croker, March 23, 1820, The Croker Papers, quoted in H. Jephson, The Platform: Its rise and progress, 2 vols. (1892), vol.1, pp.545-6.
- 4) G. Le Strange (ed.). The Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Earl Grey, 2 vols (1890), vol.2, p.61. Grey to Lieven Aug.22, 1830.
- 5) B. Disraeli, Coningsby (1844), quoted in A.J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press 1855 - 1914 (1976), p.25.
- 6) "Political Conditions and Prospects of France", Quarterly Review, vol. XLIII, no. LXXXV (May 1830), p.232.
- 7) A. Aspinall, Politics and the Press c. 1780 - 1850 (1949; Brighton, 1973 edn.).
- 8) The Times, July 3, 1830.
- 9) Earl Grey, October, 1831, quoted in N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel (1953), p.15.
- 10) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey and R. Fulford, 8 vols. (1938) vol.4, pp.374-5, May 8, 1841.
- 11) Grey to Lansdowne, Jan. 18, 1832, quoted in Aspinall op.cit., p.198.
- 12) Melbourne to Brougham, Aug.23, 1834, quoted in Aspinall, op.cit., p.246.

- 13) J.W. Croker to J. Planta, Aug. 21, 1829, Correspondence and Diaries, ed. L.J. Jennings, 3 vols. (1884), vol.2, p.22.
- 14) *Ibid.*, p.23.
- 15) "Influence of the Newspapers", Fraser's Magazine, vol.iv, no.xx (Sept.1831), p.133.
- 16) See chapter 4, p.93.
- 17) W.Johnston , England As It Is: Political Social and Industrial in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, 2 vols., (1851; Dublin 1973 edn.), vol.1, p.223.
- 18) W.Bagehot, "The position of the Metropolitan Press ", Economist, May 14, 1870 in N.St.John-Stevas(ed.), The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, vol.vii (1974), p.297.
- 19 R.Cobden, June 17, 1851, in J.Bright and J.E. Thorold Rogers (eds.), Speeches on Questions of Public Policy by Richard Cobden M.P. (1870;1903 edn.), p.268.
- 20) Archives of The Times (New Printing House Square), Delane Correspondence, vol.2, f 31, Robert Owen to the Proprietors and Editors of the 'Times', Aug.6, 1846. The letter went on to refer to the newspaper as "the journal of the civilised world & may be so directed as to emancipate from ignorance & poverty....the entire of the human race".
- 21) MSS. Clar. dep (Bodleian Library, Oxford) c.534, Clarendon to Reeve, June 18, 1848. (There are no folio numbers for the bulk of the Clarendon papers in the Bodleian. They are to be found in the main in bundles deposited in cardboard boxes. Many of the letters are out of chronological sequence and they are in very great need of being edited.)
- 22) F.A. Dreyer, "The Russell Administration 1846-1852", Ph.D. thesis, St. Andrews (1962) DA 564, R8, D8.

- 23) MSS. Clar. dep. c.521, Greville to Clarendon, July 10, 1848, quoted in Dreyer, op.cit., p.100
- 24) Broughton Diary (British Museum), Add. MS., 43,751, vol.viii, f.136, March 18, 1848.
- 25) John Earl Russell, Recollections and Suggestions 1813-1873 (1875), p. 355.
- 26) A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher (eds.), The Letters of Queen Victoria 3 vols. (1907) vol.2, p.102, Memorandum by the Prince Albert, July 6, 1846.
- 27) Greville op.cit. vol.5, p.333, July 14, 1846.
- 28) MSS. Clar. dep. c.521, Greville to Clarendon, Aug.27 and Sept.3, 1847.
- 29) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 6E, ff.20-21, The memorandum is undated but can be related to August 1847 since Delane gave his estimate of party groupings in the new House of Commons.
- 30) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.11, Jan. 27, 1848.
- 31) Archives of The Times, Extract from the Journal of Sir Denis Le Marchant. Copy supplied to R. Walter by H.C. Le Marchant 1933, box no.12, file no.4.
- 32) Archives of The Times, box no.12, file no.8, Le Marchant to T. Drummond (copy), June 1834.
- 33) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vols.2 and 3. See in particular vol.3, f.32.
- 34) Ibid. See in particular vol.3, f.52.
- 35) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7C, f.399, Delane to Sir C. Wood.

- 36) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.38, March 12, 1848.
- 37) K. Bourne, Palmerston: The Early Years 1784-1841 (1982), p.475.
- 38) MSS. Clar. dep. c. 521, Greville to Clarendon, Jan.26, 1848.
- 39) Ibid., Greville to Clarendon, Feb.24, 1848.
- 40) Ibid..
- 41) Broughton Diary, Add. MS., 43,755, vol.xii, f.40, Dec. 12, 1850.
- 42) MSS. Clar. dep. c.534, Clarendon to Reeve, July 19, 1847.
- 43) Greville, op.cit., vol.2, pp.94-5, Sept.19 and Dec.20, 1830.
- 44) Sir H. Maxwell, Life and Letters of George William Frederick, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, 2 vols. (1913), vol.1, p.252, Clarendon to Normanby, Dec.22, 1843.
- 45) Greville, op.cit., vol.4, p.323, Nov.5, 1840.
- 46) Clar. dep. Irish (Bodleian Library, Oxford), box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, March 13, 1849.
- 47) J. Prest, Lord John Russell (1972), p.253.
- 48) MSS. Clar .dep. c.534, Clarendon to Reeve, July 3, 1846. See also July 4, 1846, May 10 and June 5, 1847.
- 49) Ibid., Clarendon to Reeve, Jan.30, 1847.
- 50) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, March 13, 1849. The Marquis of Lansdowne, as Lord President of the Council was Reeve's chief.



- 51) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon Feb.8, 1848.  
Ibid., Delane to Clarendon Jan.24, 1849.  
Ibid., Delane to Clarendon Feb.22, (Can be dated to 1850 because of the reference to Clarendon's return to London, and defence of his policy in the House of Lords.)
- 52) Ibid., Delane to Clarendon May 9, (Can be dated to 1848 because of the reference to disturbances in Limerick).
- 53) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.46, Clarendon to Delane July 27, 1848. Delane was quick to turn the indebtedness to advantage and sought Clarendon's assistance, in addition to that of Wood and Le Marchant, for the candidature of Dasent as Regius Professor in History and Modern Languages at Oxford.
- 54) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon, Jan.5, 1849.
- 55) O. Woods and J. Bishop, The Story of the Times (1983), p.51.
- 56) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence vol.2.  
History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.13.
- 57) Lord Stanmore, Sidney Herbert Lord Herbert of Lea: A Memoir, 2 vols. (1906), vol.1, p.62. This was corroborated by Henry Reeve in a footnote to his edition of Greville's diary. See Greville, op.cit., vol.5, p.249.
- 58) History of the Times, vol.2 (1939), pp.93-4.
- 59) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence vol.2, f.74, Aberdeen to Delane Dec.31, 1844.
- 60) Aberdeen Papers, (British Library) Add. MS., 43,246, f.279, Delane to Aberdeen, Nov.3, 1846.

- 61) Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS., 43,247, f.12, Delane to Aberdeen Sept.6, 1848. Aberdeen had already been pressed by Delane in 1842 into seeking Peel's assistance in securing an office in the Customs for Delane's brother. Aberdeen drew a frosty reply from Peel: "I cannot call to mind a single instance in which, however pressed by my political friends, I have interfered with the privilege of the Board of Customs". Peel Papers Add. MS., 40,453, f.317, Peel to Aberdeen, Dec.28, 1842.
- 62) Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS., 43,063, f.275, Peel to Aberdeen, July 6, 1844. Quoted in History of The Times, vol.2 (1939) p.551.
- 63) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence vol.3, f.26 Aberdeen to Delane, March 20, 1848.
- 64) Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS., 43,247, f.181, Delane to Aberdeen, March 12, 1850.
- 65) Greville, op.cit. vol.6, p.362, March 16, 1848.
- 66) Ibid., vol.2, p.362, Feb.27, 1833.
- 67) Correspondence of C.C.F. Greville and H. Reeve, (British Library), Add. MS., 41,184, f.32, Greville to Reeve, July 1, 1841.
- 68) Greville, op.cit., vol.7, footnote p.7.
- 69) Ibid., vol.3, p.215, June 30, 1835.
- 70) Ibid., vol.4, pp.374-5, May 8, 1841.
- 71) MSS. Clar. dep. c.520, Greville to Clarendon, Jan. 4, 1853. Writing of Delane and Reeve, Greville referred to "the large part I have had in establishing their social positions".
- 72) Greville, op.cit., vol.4, p.281, Sept. 1840 and vol.v, pp.345-6, Aug.23, 1846.

- 73) Greville, op.cit., vol.5, pp.345-6, Aug.23, 1846.
- 74) MSS. Clar. dep. c.521, Greville to Clarendon, Feb.21, 1848.
- 75) MSS. Clar. dep. c.522, Greville to Clarendon, March 11, 1851.
- 76) Trevelyan sent Delane material on Ireland with precise instructions on how it was to be incorporated in a leading article. Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol. 3, f.8, Trevelyan to Delane, Feb. 7, 1848.
- 77) History of The Times, vol. 2 (1939), p.54. It was the articles on this subject which Clarendon, ignorant of the source of them, complained about to Delane. See p.174.
- 78) Add, MS., 22,723, ff.31-2 quoted in F.A. Simpson, The Rise of Louis Napoleon (1909; 1950 edn.) pp.264 and 276.
- 79) Broughton Diary, Add. MS., 43,753, f.116, March 4, 1849.
- 80) Reeve to his mother, Dec. 16, 1839, quoted in J.K. Laughton, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (1898), vol.1, p.109.
- 81) Greville, op.cit., vol.5, pp.345-6, Aug.23, 1846. Not surprisingly The Greville Memoirs edited by Reeve omitted this particular passage. The Greville Memoirs ed. H. Reeve, 8 vols. (1888), vol.5, pp.422-23, Aug. 23, 1846.  
MSS. Clar. dep. c.520, Greville to Clarendon. Undated. Can be dated to 1847 because of references to old Walter and tension between him and W.F.A. Delane.
- 82) Correspondence of C.C.F. Greville and H. Reeve, Add. MS., 41,185, f.111, Jan.28, 1847. Writing many years later Reeve saw the relationship rather differently and in his edited version of Greville's memoirs he referred to "those who assisted the staff of the paper by information and counsel, derived from the best and highest sources both at home and abroad, and amongst these the

author of these Diaries played an active and important part". The Greville Memoirs, ed. H. Reeve, 8 vols. (1888) vol.5, p.3, footnote.

- 83) Clarendon to Reeve Jan.28, 1847, quoted in History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), footnote, p.220.
- 84) Correspondence of C.C.F. Greville and H. Reeve, Add. MS., 41,185, f.108, Greville to Reeve, Jan.22, 1847.
- 85) Reeve to Lord Granville, Jan.18, 1852, quoted in J.K. Laughton, op.cit., vol.1, p.251.
- 86) "The Fourth Estate", Edinburgh Review, vol.102, no. CCVIII, Oct. 1855, Article VII, p.487.
- 87) Ibid., p.485.
- 88) Ibid., p.486.
- 89) Disraeli speaking at Slough May, 1858, quoted in R. Blake, Disraeli (1966), p.381.
- 90) Cobden to Delane, Dec.4, 1863, quoted in J. Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden (1881; 1910 edn.) pp.887-8.
- 91) a) Peel Papers, (British Museum) Add. MS., 40,453, f.402, Delane to Aberdeen Dec.28, 1842.  
b) Archives of The Times, Delane letters, ff.166, Delane to Clarendon April 27, dated to 1857 since Delane refers to the ten years of their relationship).  
c) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, Jan.28, 1851.  
d) Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS., 43,247, ff.11-12, Delane to Aberdeen, Sept.6, 1848.  
e) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, July 28, 1849.
- 92) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, July 28, 1849.

- 93) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.56.
- 94) Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS., 43,246, f.285, Delane to Aberdeen  
Nov.25, 1846.
- 95) Ibid., f.310 Delane to Aberdeen, March 9. Suggested date of 1847.
- 96) Greville, op.cit., vol 6, p.433, July 12, 1853.
- 97) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon, Oct.1. Can be dated  
to 1850 by reference to the involvement to the Duke of Cambridge,  
See The Times Sept.20, 1850.
- 98) See Chapter 5, p.122.
- 99) MSS. Clar. dep. c.520. Greville to Clarendon (incomplete letter  
which can be dated to 1850 because of the reference to the Don  
Pacifico affair).
- 100) History of The Times, vol.2 (1939), p.192.
- 101) R. Monckton Milnes to C.J. MacCarthy, March 6, 1849, The Life,  
Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, ed. T. Wemyss  
Reid, (1890), p.433.
- 102) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, Jan.26, 1848.
- 103) Walewski to Louis Napoleon, Jan.30, 1852 quoted in History of The  
Times vol.2 (1939), p.151.
- 104) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.99, Delane  
to Dasent, Nov.12, 1849.
- 105) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p 259, Nov.10, 1848.
- 106) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon Oct.31. This letter  
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Titles issues.
- 107) MSS. Clar. dep. c 534, Clarendon to Reeve, April 1, 1847.

## CHAPTER 7

### "TITUS OATES of the plot": "The Times" and the Orchestration of the Crisis of April 10, 1848

Throughout much of Europe the year 1848 witnessed a series of revolutionary movements which focussed upon urban centres where the problems of society were most apparent and the practical means of effecting change most accessible. Britain shared much of the common background which lay behind the continental revolutions. Her economic development had led to the same social dislocation as elsewhere and made her vulnerable to the same acute economic depressions. Artisanal protest which provided the initial momentum of the continental revolutions had powerful echoes in the Chartist movement while London contained the same explosive mixture of problems as Paris. (1) The vital difference, however, was that timely concessions by the dominant élite and a more rapid rate of economic growth had given the middle classes of Britain a vested interest in the maintenance of the existing order.

Within the broad bands of the middle classes the most important role in the European revolutions of 1848 was played by the professional classes. Lawyers, government officials, academics and journalists fretted in societies which denied them outlets for their abilities and ambitions and due recompense for their expensive education and training. It was they who articulated the grievances of the middle classes as a whole and as the most politically active group, it was they who sought to bring about changes in society. Within the revolutionary context their contribution complemented that of the artisanal groups by providing leadership and organizational skills. In an age so addicted to print, when newspapers had such importance,



journalists in particular were conscious of the restrictions which appeared to frustrate their talents and deny them status. (2) When the revolutions broke out they played an important part in directing them. In Paris the editorial boards of Le National and La Réforme helped decide the composition of the Provisional Government and their two editors-in-chief became members of it. (3) The abolition of security bonds and the stamp tax released the pent-up flood of newspaper demand and about 200 new newspapers sprang up in France between February and June 1848. (4)

The British newspaper press, however, was governed by commercial rather than political imperatives and it reflected and reinforced the broad allegiance of the middle classes to the existing order. The Times led the way and its commercial success and status, and the apparent ready acceptance of Walter, Deane and Reeve into the inner sanctuaries of the traditional elite seemed to symbolize the merging of the upper and middle classes through the mediation of the upper middle classes. The Times was therefore well placed to play an important role within the existing consensus by defining and defending those values in the wide perspective. Through its ability to transform events into news it was also able to reinforce the consensus in the short term.

Allegiance to the existing order did not mean slavish dependence on the Government of the day and the invasion panic of early 1848 showed how the daily newspaper press could amplify contemporary fears and prejudices and focus them on a specific issue with such intensity that Government was obliged to pay heed. The panic was caused by the appearance in the London newspaper press of a confidential letter from the Duke of Wellington expressing his anxieties about the state of British coastal defences. (5) The result was a panic which had its only reality in print. Cobden referred to this as "the first occasion on which the attempt had been made to terrify the public with the idea

of a sudden invasion from France" and noted the particular role of the London daily newspapers. They were able to draw upon the latent fears of France and all that it represented and to whip them up into a frenzied campaign of patriotic xenophobia. The attitude of The Times, which was counselled by Aberdeen and Reeve, was restrained and it referred on January 11 to "such an extraordinary panic", though it printed a large number of letters on the subject. It also commissioned a Mr. Rafferty to travel incongnito along the French coast and to make a secret report on the French steam navy. (6) The public pressure largely exerted through the daily newspapers was sufficient, however, to make the Government act.

Russell's Administration had been concerned about national defence since it first took office in 1846 and memoranda urging various proposals had been put forward by various members of the Cabinet during March and April 1848. (7) The pressure of opinion made manifest in the newspapers now rendered the matter urgent and Russell circulated his own proposals on January 10, prefaced by the statement that "The question of national defence is now likely to obtain that public attention which two years ago it seemed so likely to command." (8) On the other hand the general recession in business coupled with recent expenditure on the Caffre War in Cape Colony and famine relief in Ireland made it very difficult for the Government to find additional sums for military expenditure. Public opinion as reflected in the newspapers was insistent and the Cabinet ultimately agreed to a dramatic proposal not only to renew income tax for a further five years but to raise the rate from seven pence to twelve pence in the pound. To the possessing classes the chance of invasion seemed preferable to the certainty of taxation and they now united to resist an even greater threat to their interests. Against this background The Times found itself with a clearer and more familiar role to play.

The outbreak of revolution in Europe has tended to obscure the importance of the campaign against Russell's income tax proposal of February 18, 1848. Sir John Hobhouse noted in his diary of February 27 that more was said at Brooks and the Reform Club about the tax than was said about the events in France. (9) Here was an issue of vital concern to the readers of The Times and it was quick to represent their interests. On February 20 it asked "whether the mercantile and professional classes of this country will suffer a galling chain to be double-weighted, and close rivetted to the limbs of industry, capital and skill, without a struggle to prevent it." In a re-enactment of its role during the Reform agitation between 1830 and 1832 the newspaper sought to stimulate, mobilize and direct opinion in opposition to the tax. On February 23 it declared "Professional men are, however, powerful out of doors, and if they are not disposed to submit to this barefaced extortion, it is time they should make their presence felt." Meetings and petitions were organized throughout the country and were reported in detail in the paper. Daily leading articles sought to maintain the momentum of the campaign and the sectional interests that the paper represented were elevated in its columns into the voice of the nation. (10) Politicians were reminded that "The tactics of the House and the march of opinion are two different things." (11)

The political influences on The Times counted for little when the paper felt itself at one with its readers. Greville pointed out to Clarendon that "The 'Times', which supports Wood, will go dead agst the income tax" (12) and concluded on February 26 that the Government would have to give way: "it will be far better to yield with good grace to the strong manifestations of public opinion". (13) Against this background the Government found its difficulties in the House of Commons made worse. The Protectionists denounced income tax as a

device for lowering import duties still further while the Radicals condemned it as a measure which encouraged extravagance, waste and foreign adventures on the part of Government. Within the Cabinet Clarendon urged that they "should yield to public opinion" (14) and though Viscount Morpeth referred to the change as "rather an eating of dirt", (15) his colleagues gave way. Ten days after Russell had introduced the first budget, Wood introduced a second which proposed to maintain income tax for three years only and to levy it at existing levels. The Times on February 29 claimed the Government's change of mind as a victory for itself and the interests it represented: "They have attended to the universal entreaty of the professional classes, of the bankers, merchants and tradesmen of Great Britain."

Those same interests seemed to be threatened in early March by a threat from a different quarter. Chartism which had been showing increased activity during the winter of 1847-8 was revitalized as a result of the dramatic events taking place in France. Well-attended, vigorous meetings were held throughout the country while in London in particular Chartism organization and support experienced a sudden resurgence. (16) Firmly rooted within a long-standing radical tradition the Chartist movement combined a variety of objectives which had in common the determination to effect changes for the benefit of working people through political means. Despite frequent insistence to the contrary, Chartism appeared to many of the possessing classes as a threat to their most vital interests and The Times in its treatment of the movement in its peak years of 1839 and 1842 emphasized the apparent threat to property and the very essence of society. (17) Chartism in 1839, however, was used by The Times for political purposes, in order to pursue Barnes's war with the Whigs. (18) It is the treatment of Chartism in 1842 by The Times under Delane which affords a

most striking parallel to what occurred against a more dramatic background in 1848. In August and September 1842, against a background of economic depression and widespread strikes, The Times sought to rally the possessing classes in an unspecified counter-organization against what was depicted as an alien threat to English society and its values. (19) The newspaper consistently minimized support for the movement, ridiculed its adherents, and ultimately subjected it to a precipitate and derisory dismissal. (20) The initial reaction of the London newspaper press in early 1848, however, was to ignore Chartist activities and Feargus O'Connor, who was himself a newspaper owner, protested bitterly at their priorities: "If a paltry meeting is got up by the middle classes to oppose the Income Tax.....every word of every fool is reported in their Press, whereas scores of enthusiastic, bold and splendid meetings have been held in the metropolis to congratulate the French upon their emancipation from despotism, and yet not a line has been reported." (21)

The selection of news reflects certain values held by those who report and publish it. The selection, however, also affects the way that the issue is presented. It was ominous for the fate of Chartism in 1848 that its programme and popular support were ignored by the newspaper, while the first attention to it was in reports of riots and attacks on property. On March 6 a meeting to protest against income tax was called by Charles Cochrane in Trafalgar Square. Despite being banned by the Commissioners of Police and abandoned by its organizer, it was taken over by G.W.M. Reynolds who, though having taken no previous part in Chartist affairs, spoke on behalf of the movement. After the meeting had ended a brawl developed later which led to police intervention and to two days of rioting in surrounding streets. Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary, reported to Russell that "the number of people is not large and I am told they are chiefly lads". (22)



Despite its own report of March 8 which referred to "a mob of idle rascals and swarms of vagabond boys.....actuated by a love of mischief than by any decided and dangerous spirit", a leading article of The Times on March 9 referred to the riots around Trafalgar Square as the work of "The Chartist rabble".

The identification of Chartism with a threat to person and property was reinforced by the reporting in The Times of disturbances in Glasgow. Two days of serious rioting occurred in Glasgow on March 6 and 7. Several lives were lost and there were attacks on gunsmiths and food shops. Despite the fact that official reports to the Home Office made no mention of Chartists at all, (23) the first report of the disturbances in The Times of March 7 began with the sentence "A Chartist mob is at this moment creating serious disturbances in our city". It went on in the traditional language of riot to refer to seizure of arms, attacks on the authorities and the plundering of shops. Additional colour was added by mention of "madmen", "drunkards" and shouts of "Down with the Queen".

The selection of the news is only part of the process by which events are given meaning and significance. They do not remain in isolation but are contextualised within a particular framework which adds to their intelligibility. The framework within which Chartism was given meaning to the readers of The Times was that of the French revolution, the coverage of which so dominated its pages. In the spring of 1848 riot and revolution seemed to many to be not very far apart and The Times had consistently stressed that the French revolution had begun with riots, which the middle classes had done nothing to suppress. The report on March 7 which made Chartists responsible for the Glasgow riots was on the same page as a leading article which asked, in the context of France, "whether it is possible for mere



popular will manifested by numerical power to prevail without a struggle over the prejudices, the interests, and the convictions of the upper and middle classes of society." The leading article of March 9 set out to ridicule the activities of the London mob but continued the association of events in Britain with revolution in France. It began with the statement "We beg to assure our neighbours on the banks of the Seine, that they need not attach too much importance to any rumours of the approaching revolution which may happen to reach them from the British metropolis." The serious purpose of the article was indicated by the final paragraph which urged shopkeepers and tradesmen to be sworn in as special constables.

T. Rothstein in his polemical work on Chartism published in 1929 argued that the London riots were the result of a Government conspiracy which let loose crowds of hooligans so that newspapers would produce alarmist reports urging the Government to take action. (24) To see the role of The Times in such conspiratorial terms is to oversimplify the way that it functioned in society. What in essence was being expressed was the most basic fear of the possessing classes. The French revolution encapsulated all the nightmares which had haunted the possessing classes throughout the 1840s, since it appeared to be a violent revolution from below which threatened property and all that it represented. The Chartists themselves recognized the potency of those fears and sought to turn them to their own advantage, by using the French revolution of 1848 to frighten the Government in the way that the French revolution of 1830 had been used during the Reform agitation. The slogan repeated on placards and given great prominence in the Northern Star said it all: "France has a Republic, England must have the Charter". (25) The revitalization of Chartism in 1848 was the result of events in France and the Chartist meetings held

throughout the country had the dual aim of congratulating the French and signing the Chartist petition. A Chartist deputation went to Paris and the colourful rhetoric and regalia of the French Revolution of 1789, which had traditionally been used by Radical groups, achieved a greater popularity. Tricolours, caps of liberty and spirited cries of "Vive la République" were much in evidence and many a Chartist meeting ended with three cheers for the Republic and three cheers for the Charter. (26)

Small wonder then that the possessing classes should have been alarmed. The report from the Glasgow correspondent of The Times, published on March 8, indicated the nature of the fears: "The alarm flew over the city like wildfire, and coupled with the late events in Paris, gave rise to a general dread of some political disturbance". Punch devoted nearly three pages of its edition of March 18 to "The Trafalgar Square Revolution" which in parody of events in France it subtitled "Three Glorious Days". (27) The Home Secretary urged Clarendon to read the article in Punch and used it to prove the existence of "a strong loyal feeling which would show itself to a very great extent if any real danger was apprehended." (28) In the House of Lords on March 9 Lord Stanley stated that the effect of the recent disturbances had been to call forth what he called a "manifestation of public feeling". (29) The Times as always, was quick to perceive the nature and intensity of the fears of its readers and it was these fears which were reflected in its columns. These fears could, however, be reinforced, directed and focussed. Just as the paper by pursuing the inexorable logic of those fears had transformed a Republican revolution in Paris into a Communist attempt to overthrow society, so could Chartism be transformed in the summation of those same fears.

Collective fear breeds the demand for collective action. The calling of another meeting by Reynolds to be held on Kennington Common on March 13 acted as a focus for the strong feelings which were being roused. The Times had been quick to sense these and as early as March 9 had urged its readers to enrol as special constables. On March 10 it reinforced its argument by warning that "It is not impossible that after the Chartist meeting at Kennington-common on Monday next some new attempt may be made upon the quiet of the metropolis". On the same page a leading article pointed to the conflict between Republicanism and Communism in France and hoped sincerely for "the energetic support of all ranks interested in the defence of property, the restoration of order, and the supremacy of reason" The advice proffered to the middle classes of France was likely to be well taken by the readers of The Times.

The result was a flood of volunteers to serve as special constables. Punch on March 25 could indulge in one of its celebrated puns: "So many folks are so hungry to be sworn in, that they must evidently mistake the staff of the constable for the staff of life". (30) Viscount Morpeth recorded in his diary that "all the young men of London were made special constables, including my brothers Charles and Henry", (31) while the Duke of Buckingham placed his Corps of Yeomanry at Russell's disposal, (32) and William Gladstone heeded the call of duty and was duly sworn in. (33) The Government too was anxious after its disastrous budget experience to demonstrate its ability to act positively and Greville noted in his diary that the Government had been sadly vexed by an article in The Times of March 10 which accused them of lack of energy. (34) Accordingly the military were made ready, nearly 4,000 police were mobilized, (35) and road works in the West End were suspended in order to deprive rioters of potential missiles. (36) The outcome was anticlimactic.

The significance of these events, however, was that they provided a rehearsal, a preliminary orchestration, for what was to take place in April. The point was noted by the Annual Register which had the benefit of hindsight: "The nuisance had, however, one favourable effect in rousing the inhabitants of London to meet the more formidable dangers of the 10th of April." (37) The fusing of the images of the Chartist rioter and the French revolutionary had resulted in an apparent threat to property itself. Clarendon noted the point in a letter to Grey: "The finales of the different rows. ....have been very useful to us and I can hardly regret their having happened as they put the people who have something on their mettle against those who have nothing." (38) Henry Reeve could feel satisfied with the role of both The Times and its readers and he wrote to Clarendon: "I am highly gratified & very proud to see the state of public opinion & feelings of this country....The attempted Chartist demonstrations have been ...failures & the mobs of gamins & pick pockets have just done enough to put honest men on their guard." (39)

Clarendon well knew the potency of The Times and was adept at using it for his own purposes. The outbreak of revolution in France had revitalized Irish nationalism as it had British Chartism. On February 28 he wrote to Grey: "The terrible events at Paris are creating considerable excitement here & will I am afraid give fresh life & vigor to disaffection." (40) By the end of March he was convinced that a rebellion was about to break out at any moment and he wrote to Russell that he was virtually a prisoner in Dublin castle and that he feared a breakdown of his health. (41) What Clarendon demanded from his Cabinet colleagues was a measure of relief to deal with the basic problem of impoverishment and stronger powers to deal with the threatened violence. These demands were bound to cause severe problems for Russell's Administration. The protest against income tax had

revealed strong feelings against further financial assistance for Ireland while it remained exempt from the tax and, as Hobhouse noted in his diary, "Ld. Clarendon.....forgets the embarrassments of the English exchequer". (42) Coercion, too, would be made difficult by the Government's weakness in the Commons and the fact that it was on such a proposal that the Whigs had brought down Peel's Ministry in 1846. Russell, nevertheless, tried to do his best for his beleaguered colleague and proposed to the Cabinet emergency legislation to control ejectments, to provide £1m. for relief work and to suspend Habeas Corpus. (43) All three proposals met with strong opposition. (44) It was at this juncture that Clarendon sought to bring outside pressure to bear by means of The Times.

In early February 1848 Delane wrote to Clarendon to ask him which line he should take on those responsible for the publication of the United Irishman: "It may, however, be desirable to prepare the world for a new series of State Trials if you should determine upon bringing these fanatics to justice, or to treat them with ridicule if you should think it best to leave them unnoticed. I will hold myself free to take either line". (45) Once assured of the popularity of Clarendon's Administration with the readers of The Times, Delane allowed Clarendon to dictate the timing, tone and content of leading articles upon Ireland. (46) The result was a series of leading articles which emphasized the same arguments that Clarendon was putting forward to his colleagues and which were timed to coincide with Russell's memorandum on the subject. An article on March 27 stressed how inadequate was existing law to deal with civil crime and social evils and ended by urging extra powers for the Lord Lieutenant: "Happy indeed would be his reign if he could bring a stronger force than law to bear". The argument was repeated on March 29 and 31, while on March 30 the House



of Commons as a whole was berated for its lethargy: "To sit for sitting's sake is the merit of a hen at the period of incubation, and even then she does something - she hatches eggs." As Clarendon confided to Greville later in the year, "It is not pleasant to have to poke a Cabinet into a sense of duty.....However, that has been my task."

(47) The Times acted as willing accomplice.

Despite these efforts, Clarendon was not able immediately to obtain the powers he sought and he was obliged to cope with his problems as best he could. Convinced as he was that rebellion was about to occur, his strategy in Ireland was to bring together the possessing classes, regardless of religious divisions, into a loyal union supporting the existing order. In this he was helped by the fact that among the Irish nationalists there existed a group led by John Mitchel which advocated as a solution to Ireland's problems, not only insurrection and the end of British rule, but also a fundamental restructuring of the landholding system. Clarendon made his policy very clear to Russell at the end of March 1848: "it will be desirable that all who have anything to lose should hold themselves in readiness to resist a set of desperate men who openly avow their hostility to our institutions and to property that if civil war does break out it will be a contest between those who have and those who have not". (48) An essential element in Clarendon's strategy was the use of events in France to reinforce the fears of the possessing classes. As early as February 28 he had written to Grey concerning France: "I hope the proletaires may attack the bourgeoisie who would then be compelled to defend their shops and houses & might be disposed to consent to some form of government". (49) He now proceeded to apply the same tactics to Ireland in the hope of preventing insurrection. On March 11 he urged Grey to send him information about the number of Irishmen and their



families who had been expelled from France in the exodus of foreign workers. His motives and his timing were equally cynical: "I mean to turn it to account with the sympathisers here before the 17th." (50) Moderate nationalists like Smith O'Brien saw clearly what was happening and he noted later in his memoirs that "those who had something to lose.....now began to regard the agitation for Repeal as synonymous with a confiscation of property." (51) Even Clarendon seemed to have been reassured momentarily by the success of his policy: "a great deal of loyal feeling has been elicited and stout determination not to submit to domestic sans culottes or foreign sympathisers". (52)

Clarendon's strategy in Ireland was precisely the one which had been adopted by The Times against the Chartists. Since Ireland now became the focus of public attention, (53) the newspaper was able to reinforce the Lord Lieutenant's efforts. Where Ireland was concerned The Times felt it had no need for subtlety and what was done in the case of the Chartists by implication was overtly and crudely stated in the Irish context. A leading article of April 6 addressed its Irish public: "Gentlemen of Ireland - landlords of Ireland - merchants and barristers of Ireland - think ere it be too late.....a Repeal of the Union would be nothing more nor less than a Republic of the wildest and most violent kind - a Republic of rapparees and bogtrotters - a Republic which would travestie all LEDRU ROLLIN'S maxims of political interference and all LOUIS BLANC'S doctrines touching property and wages.....Gentlemen, look to your acres". The warning was repeated on April 8: "it will not be for gentlemen and shopkeepers that the Irish revolution will be made." In its articles The Times made a distinction between its Irish readers, whom it assumed to be Saxons and gentlemen, and the Celtic masses. In dealing with the latter the newspaper articulated the crude racist stereotype of the Irish which existed in

the 1840s and which can be found in the cartoons of Punch or the writings of Engels. (54) The Irish were seen as dirty, indolent, vicious, garrulous, whining spendthrifts and the reason why was simple: "The real difference at the bottom of the whole affair, is that the Celtic nature is not so energetic, so ambitious, so struggling, so persevering, so patient, so mechanical and orderly as the Saxon." (55) Lady Carlisle recognized the provocative nature of these articles. She wrote to her son, Viscount Morpeth: "the 'Times' with all its cleverness, and utility also, will never do for Ireland - it is too contemptuous - it does not feel for them - it will irritate and provoke instead". (56)

On April 5 the same Lady Carlisle had written: "I feel a little less frightened for Ireland, and more for London next Monday." (57) The cause of the alarm was the decision of the Chartist Executive to call a meeting at Kennington Common on April 10 for the purpose of accompanying the National Petition to the House of Commons. The number envisaged grew from a quarter of a million on March 13 to half a million by the end of the month. (58) The myths which have obscured the events of April 10 (59) have tended to play down the nature and extent of contemporary fears in order to stress the degree of social harmony and the superiority of British institutions and thereby to distance Britain from the experience of the continent. Contemporary diarists, however, noted the very real fears of those weeks, (60) and the Home Office was inundated with offers of help and suggestions for dealing with what appeared to be such a menacing problem. (61) The Annual Register concluded at the end of the year: "A very painful feeling had for some time past pervaded the metropolis, and the greatest anxiety was felt in every part of the country." (62) Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was even more to the point: "Revolution walked our streets". (63)

By April 1848 three powerful images had become familiar to the possessing classes - the Chartist rioter, the French revolutionary and the Irish rebel. Each appeared to present its own particular threat and together they represented a composite whole which was capable of stirring the deepest fears of the possessing classes. The Chartist rioter threatened person and property in a literal sense, the French revolutionary endangered liberty and property in a more fundamental sense, while the Irish rebel seemed intent on the overthrow of the Irish landowning system and the destruction of society. The images relating to France and Ireland were given additional potency by the crude racial Anglo-Saxonism which was becoming increasingly strident during the 1840s. (64) They also seemed to be integrally connected since they were both bound by their "Gaelic blood". (65) The Economist in April 1848 reflected the same assumption: "A Frenchman is a civilised Celt, an Irishman is a Gallic Barbarian.....Thank God we are Saxons!". (66) In the context of April 1848 all three images began to coalesce and to produce a self-amplifying sequence which culminated in the panic of April 10.

The Chartists themselves unwittingly contributed to the creation of the panic. The recent rapprochement with the Irish was welcomed by the Chartists since it gave them additional numbers and added powerfully to the threat of physical force if peaceful methods failed. (67) Particular emphasis was given to the example of France since this was likely to raise morale and also implied that mass pressure, if continually frustrated, could result in revolution. The National Convention of Chartists which met in London on April 4 consciously sought to exploit these factors. C. McCarthy who was attending the meetings as the representative of the 'Irish Democratic Confederation' declared that the Irish Confederates residing in England "were to a man

Chartist.....the rejection of that will's expression was a declaration of war which he and his constituents were prepared to accept." (68) The convention itself, with its very name so redolent of the French Revolution of 1789, determined, if the petition was rejected, to set up a National Assembly in conscious imitation of the French revolution of 1848. In order to ensure maximum publicity for its discussions the Convention reserved the organ gallery at the John Street Institute for the press. The tactics of the Chartists had greater impact than they had anticipated, for they had not recognized the potency of the fears they had raised, nor the way that these could be concentrated and directed against them. Historians have recognized that this happened but have tended to see this development from rather a narrow angle. J. Saville noted in 1953 the way that the Chartists were identified with the French, (69) and more recently H. Weisser has stressed the importance of the background of continental revolutions in 1848. (70) J. Belchem, on the other hand, has emphasized the importance of the Irish dimension though he admits that the Irish alliance far from strengthening the Chartist cause probably had the reverse effect. (71) In the context of 1848 the associations complemented each other and produced a composite image which was to prove disastrous for Chartism. The Times contributed powerfully to this process.

Public opinion, even when concentrated on a specific issue cannot be precisely identified. It is not a single, quantifiable product but a social process of communication which takes place at various levels through a number of formal and informal channels. The opinion, which The Times sought to articulate and which it elevated as public opinion, could be identified with some accuracy since it was equated with a small, cohesive group of people, located in the metropolis and expressing their views through a relatively limited number of channels and networks. Within that social grouping and within the broader band

of its readers the paper played a powerful role since in expressing that opinion it gave it a particular shape and focus. The newspaper also imparted to it a particular authority because of the commercial dominance of The Times and the ethos attached to it. Delane, assiduous as ever in his social role, began to recognize very early the ground swell of opinion on the issue of the Chartist demonstration. Alarmist letters which demanded firm action had been printed in the paper since April 1 and they, and the reaction they provoked, enabled Delane to test opinion further and to prepare the way for the launching of a campaign. On April 6 The Times devoted the leading article of the day to the menace of the Chartist demonstration and thereby gave weight to the growing fears.

The Cabinet also treated the problem very seriously. In his Recollections and Suggestions written in 1875, Russell played down the threat of April 10 and claimed that his first reaction was to allow the procession to cross Westminster Bridge and to present the petition at the doors of Parliament. However, in the preface Russell admitted that his memory was not as lively as it had been and his conclusion on the events suggests that time had done much to change his perspective and assuage the anxiety he felt at the time: "I saw in these proceedings a fresh proof that the people of England were satisfied with the government under which they has the happiness to live". (72) Nevertheless this source and the rather limited evidence in the Russell Papers have been used by historians to prove the quiet confidence of the Government and its almost complacent response to the crisis. (73) The Clarendon Papers, which have not been used by historians concerned with Chartism, are, nevertheless, the best available source of evidence of the Government's attitude. (74) They indicate that the Prime Minister was under considerable strain as a result of the threatened



insurrection in Ireland. Irish support had increased the danger of domestic disturbances, and threatened to make the Irish situation worse by tying down in Britain military resources which might be needed in Ireland. On April 6 Russell confided to Clarendon: "These are anxious times & neither you nor I have frames of iron - But we must go thr. this ordeal as well as we can". (75) On April 7 he wrote "it is a dreadful state of things", (76) and even after April 10 he commented: "We live from day to day but our hopes improve & our fears diminish." (77)

Clarendon, for his part, emphasized that the Irish insurrection he had been foretelling was merely "suspended" until events in London were decided. (78) Reports to the Home Office from Liverpool, Manchester, Leicester, Bradford and Merthyr contained reports of large meetings, inflammatory speeches and armed preparations and stressed the crucial importance of what happened in the metropolis, since serious disturbances there would be the signal for similar events throughout the depressed urban centres of the North of England and Wales. (79) Grey never doubted his ability to maintain order in the capital in the last resort, but, as he wrote to Clarendon on April 9, he had "more fears for some parts of the country than for London." (80) His precautionary measures were not taken in response to public fears but had been decided upon as early as March 31. (81) One of those measures, the taking over of the Electric Telegraph Company for a week, illustrates the importance Grey attached to what was reported to the rest of the country (82) The real menace of April 10 lay not in any prospect of revolution in London but in the likelihood that protracted disturbances and loss of life there would lead to more serious problems elsewhere. These would be deeply divisive within society itself and would shatter that carefully fostered, comforting illusion of the



superiority of British institutions and society. With the attention of Europe concentrated upon London the significance of April 10 was further reinforced. Cavour referred on April 17 to the many writers and journalists on the continent who saw April 10 as "the prelude of a terrible civil war between the workers and other classes of society", (83) while Prince Albert reminded Russell on the day itself of "that confidence which the whole of Europe reposes in our stability at this moment". (84)

The anxiety of Russell and Grey was shared by other members of the Cabinet. Palmerston referred after the event to "the Tiger who has missed his first spring" and it was at his insistence that a warship needed for Ireland was stationed in the Solent to protect the Queen who had been moved to the safety of the Isle of Wight. (85) Hobhouse, Morpeth, Campbell and Auckland were all apprehensive and expected violence and some loss of life. (86) The preparations adopted by the Cabinet were related to the nature of the challenge posed. Since the Chartist demonstration was intended, in the first instance, to overawe by a massive display of numbers, with the threat of violence to follow in the event of failure to achieve concessions, so it was to be confronted by a counter-demonstration of the forces of order which could be supported, if necessary, by a massive force of police and military. The tactics of rallying the possessing classes which had been used so successfully during the disturbances of March in England and which had been adopted by Clarendon in Ireland were now to be utilised against the Chartist demonstration. Wood had advised Russell on March 7: "We cannot do better than to enlist the shopkeepers on the side of order". (87) On April 4 C.E. Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, produced a long memorandum for Russell in which he argued that "It should be shown that as the disaffected are banded &

organized, so are the well-affected. The National Guards - the middle class - can keep the upper hand, if proper arrangements are made". (88) The point had already been taken and Grey had written to Clarendon on April 2: "there is a good spirit of self-protection among the mass of the shopkeepers.....which will give us a very large force of special constables in addition to the Police". (89) Clarendon for once showed some optimism: "such mighty interests at stake, the circumstances of Europe are so grave, the future is so menacing that I feel sure you will not appeal in vain to the "Haves" in England against the "Have nots"."(90)

Clarendon, Wood and Trevelyan were all in direct contact with Delane while Le Marchant provided a link with the Home Office and the Prime Minister. Clarendon had, a year earlier, discussed with Russell the possibility of using The Times to rouse public opinion (91) and no doubt political influence reinforced what the pressure of its public and its own self-interest demanded. Chartism was overtly a challenge to the political compromise reached in the 1830s and 1840s but it also posed a fundamental threat to the consensus which was being shaped among the possessing classes at that period. A franchise which gave the vote to a man as an individual and not as a property owner struck at the very basic principle of a society which stressed the absolute primacy of property. In the context of early April 1848 that threat seemed to take on an even more insidious shape since the resurgence of metropolitan Chartism took place against a background of revolution in many of the urban centres of Europe. The Times had earlier rehearsed the tactic of equating Chartism with riot and revolution and was currently employing the same tactic in the Irish context.

The leading article of April 6 made the paper's perception of Chartism very clear. Discussion of the Chartist programme was to be postponed to a later date. What was at issue was whether an organized mob of 200,000 men armed with stout bludgeons should be allowed to march on Westminster. It pointed out that Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Rome, Naples, Palermo, Turin, Milan, Venice, Munich and many lesser capitals were already in the hands of mobs and asked very pointedly: "Is London so secure from that utter depth of misery and ruin into which six short weeks have plunged the neighbouring metropolis?" Speaking in its most imperious tones on behalf of its readers and the qualities they appeared to represent the article called on the Government to act: "in the name of all commerce and trade, all the substance, respectability, peaceableness, loyalty, and commonsense of this city and nation, we put it to HER MAJESTY'S Government - Will they allow things to come to this pass, or near it?" The Times was now assuming its campaigning role and overtly seeking to orchestrate opinion and direct it to action. The article ended on that clear note: "defence should be prompt, energetic, and decisive". The accusation of Government inactivity was reinforced by a second leading article which stressed the need to give the Lord Lieutenant the means to crush sedition in Ireland.

The article on the Chartist demonstration made a great impact and Henry Greville noted in his diary on April 6 the impact of the article in The Times: "Great disgust was beginning to prevail, and even alarm at the inactivity of the Government, which was increased by an article in today's 'Times', calling upon them to arrest if possible the dangerous spirit abroad." (92) The rest of the daily press seem at this point to have become aware of the strong movement of opinion which The Times had recognized and they followed where it had led, with the result that all the other five morning papers on April 7 supported the

call for Government action, though none of them denounced the Chartist threat in such strident tones. The Daily News went so far as to argue that the panic was being orchestrated by The Times at the behest of the Government: "The Times, like a rampant war-horse scents battle from afar.....But it would be doing the Times too much honour to impute to it even the blame of its yesterday's article, advocating the prevention of the Chartist demonstration of Monday next. The Times is in general the accredited organ of the government; shows frequently that it possesses its confidence and can reveal its secrets. It is obvious that on the present occasion the government, wanting courage, has employed the Times to lash up this quality in cities and in parliament.....We had not heard of bludgeons but of white wands. And probably the very first idea of converting a peaceable procession into a riot prepense will be caught from the columns of the Times." (93) It may not have been far from the mark. Government preparations were in the main completed and all that remained was to decide whether the procession to the House of Commons should be allowed or not. The Cabinet meeting of April 4 had discussed the matter but had not come to any final decision. (94) The article in The Times was nicely calculated to add weight to that debate. Not for the first time in its history the paper would appear to have been given advance knowledge of an imminent Government decision and, by giving publicity to it, have hastened its announcement and prepared the way for it.

Not surprisingly the Cabinet meeting on April 6 now finally decided to prohibit the procession and published notices to that effect. (95) It was also decided at the same meeting that Grey should give notice in the House of Commons of the Government's intention to bring forward the Crown and Government Security Bill. The proposal introduced the new charge of felonious sedition which extended to 'open

and advised speaking'. Its main aim was to enable Clarendon to prosecute and secure convictions against the Irish Confederates who published their defiance in newspapers like the United Irishman. (96) Grey as late as April 3 had stressed to Clarendon that "any step we take should be taken with the greatest caution and that we should carry with us the greatest amount of public opinion." (97) No doubt the article in The Times of April 6 had helped convince Grey that the moment was now suitable. The Times was able to pride itself on April 7 on having apparently galvanized the Government into action. The leading article began: "Government has done what a Government should do". It also felt able to rejoice in the new legislative proposal and to announce that the proposal had "received the important approval of the cautious and moderate nobleman now at the head of the Irish Government." In the light of Delane's relations with Clarendon and the efforts the paper had made on his behalf, The Times was well placed to know.

Having recognized the success of the article of April 6, the leader-writers of The Times warmed to their theme and proceeded to whip up the panic still further. The nightmare scenario of the masses rising from below, which had haunted the possessing classes throughout the 1830s and 1840s was now described as a distinct possibility. The leading article of April 7 depicted society threatened by "a set of agitators. .openly and ostentatiously arranging the most efficacious and summary means of cutting our throats, blowing our brains out, impaling us on pikes, and establishing themselves on the overthrow of the constitution and the murder of its loyal supporters." The same article also added weight to the argument by transforming the two hundred thousand men armed with bludgeons, who had featured in the article of April 6, into an army equipped with pikes and guns, and



instead of riot now talked of war. The effect that this article was likely to have on opinion was recognized by the National Convention of Chartists who interrupted their proceedings in order to deal with this urgent matter. G.J. Harney read out the article from The Times and a proclamation was issued denying the allegations and stressing that what was intended was "an unarmed, moral demonstration". (98) A deputation was sent to the Home Office where they were received by Le Marchant since Grey was attending a Cabinet meeting which was discussing reports that the Chartists would be armed. Once again the concurrence of Cabinet discussions and leading articles in The Times suggest a degree of collusion between the paper and some of the politicians involved.

Between April 7 and 10 The Times continued to orchestrate the panic of its readers by drawing upon the deepest of contemporary fears and combining them together. On April 8 the term 'Socialist' which the paper had on March 17 declared "amongst us stands for everything bad" was used in conjunction with Chartism when the leading article hinted darkly that "whatever the purity of Chartist or Socialist patriotism, there are in London not a few of that class.....to whom a street row is not wholly unproductive." Recourse was also had to the separate images of the Chartist rioter, the French revolutionary and the Irish rebel in order to concentrate on London the menace which The Times had described so vividly in Paris and Dublin and to colour it with the crude nationalist sentiments of the 1840s. These images were now made to converge and the result added to the menace of each and multiplied the effect of the whole.

Leading articles of April 7 and 8 had noted the prominent role of Irishmen in the Chartist movement and emphasized the martial nature of Irish Confederates. By April 10 The Times had transformed Chartism into an Irish agitation: "The Chartists, in fact, are but tools in the



hands of a gang of desperadoes. The true character of the Irish movement is a ramification of the Irish conspiracy. The Repealers wish to make as great a hell of this island as they have made of their own." The association of Chartism with French revolution had begun in March but the danger was brought closer to home by the paper's reference to the presence of foreign revolutionaries in London. On April 8 it declared: "Common sense also hears that there are foreign propagandists in the metropolis, ready to manufacture a casualty, if one will not come of itself." The problem of lack of evidence to substantiate what the paper in fact admitted was rumour was overcome by linking the assertion with what everyone was bound to accept - common sense. On April 10 the connection of events in London with those in Paris was given final emphasis by a leading article on the plight of France which ended: "In France ten persons are ruling a hundred; in England five persons would dictate to a thousand. Let the nine hundred and ninety-five just rise and speak."

The orchestration of the panic of April 10 had the practical aim of rallying the possessing classes for a counter-demonstration in favour of the status quo, thereby enabling The Times to play out its self-appointed role as guide and mentor of the possessing classes. To this end Chartism had been consistently represented as a threat to the most fundamental value of the possessing classes. Property in the narrow sense of windows, goods and commercial business was in danger. Property in the wider sense was threatened by revolution from below. The Times skillfully played upon both fears when it asserted on April 8 that "there is scarcely a shopkeeper in the whole line of streets menaced with the stream of this eruption who will not fear all Monday for his property and his windows, not to mention the still more remote and gloomy contingencies which the state of the continent will

naturally suggest". Mentioned the contingencies might not be, but the point had been effectively made. The Times on April 10 itself elaborated the argument further. Selected extracts from speeches made at the Chartist Convention were published in the leading article. They advocated the use of physical force, the setting up of a Republic and the redistribution of landed property. In order to demonstrate its impartiality the paper did point out that many delegates had spoken mildly and reasonably but it only quoted one such extract and noted that the speaker had been laughed at.

By such means was the spectre of revolution transferred from Paris via Dublin to the streets of the metropolis and the menace of a French socialist revolution combined with the threat of an Irish jacquerie. The presence in London of large numbers of Irish, (99) and foreigners who were temporarily boosted in number by the arrival of fugitives from continental revolution, served to reinforce the dramatic scenario. The rest of the daily press also stressed the physical threat to life and property represented by a minority of Chartists abetted by the Irish and foreigners, but all of them were more muted in their tones than The Times and none of them stressed April 10 as a revolutionary threat which might re-enact what had happened on the continent. (100) The Daily News of April 10 even felt confident enough to dismiss the whole idea of a successful revolution in London as "preposterous and impossible" and referred to a small number of Chartists "who have stricken horror into the Times". While The Times continued to weave the fears of its readers into a hysterical pattern, it had the satisfaction of reporting in its columns the large numbers enrolling as special constables. On April 10 it published in a column adjacent to its leading articles a letter from "A Ratepayer from St. Marylebone" who professed himself "Deeply grateful as every lover of

order must feel for the noble stand made by The Times". W. Johnston writing in 1851 noted the nature and extent of the fear which gripped the possessing classes: "In truth, all England, of the middle and upper classes - looking to what had so recently taken place on the Continent - was at that time in considerable alarm for the safety of person and property, if popular commotion was allowed to make head even for an hour, and hence the earnestness of preparation to meet the threatened outbreak of the 10th of April." (101)

Historians have noted the willingness to volunteer for duty as special constables which characterized April 1848 in contrast to earlier periods of Chartist disturbances. (102) There were queues of volunteers outside police stations throughout the country, (103) the Home Office received unsolicited offers of premises adjacent to the Kennington Common where troops could be accommodated, (104) and the Lord Mayor of London admitted on April 10 that his chief embarrassment was that he had too many special constables to control. (105) Contemporary estimates of the number of special constables in London varied between 130,000 and 250,000. (106) D. Goodway and D. Large both conclude that contemporary totals were exaggerated and Goodway suggests a total of 85,000, though he points out that this is still a very considerable number. (107) So widespread was the panic that social conformity reinforced recruitment. The young Richard Whiteing recorded afterwards that the specials included "everybody who had a character or a position to lose". (108) Greville also reflected that same social pressure when he wrote that "every gentleman in London is become a constable". (109) The fact that the upper classes hastened to be sworn in caused some surprise among contemporaries and R.W. Emerson on a visit to England noted how "It was remarked.... that the upper classes were for the first time actively interesting

themselves in their own defence". (110) Much attention was drawn to the enrolment of working men as specials in order to argue for the union of all classes against the Chartist threat. (111) There is evidence, however, of a considerable reluctance on their part, (112) and the Northern Star printed letters from workers who claimed to have been dismissed for refusing to be sworn. (113) What April 10 witnessed in the last resort was a rallying of the possessing classes against what was seen as a threat to their most vital interests.

The fears of contemporaries are well attested and bear a striking resemblance to the final image projected by The Times, which saw Chartism as violent, alien, revolutionary and socialist. Charles Kingsley, who had rushed to London on the morning of April 10 to witness events for himself, recorded his impression in Alton Locke. In that volume he related the intensity of the reaction to Chartism to its association with "the dread of general plunder and outrage by the savages of London, the national hatred of.....French and Irish interference" and its popular equation with Communism. (114) One former special constable recalled later: "I used to picture myself encountering a tall Irishman with long spear, ready to run me through". (115) Henry Drummond speaking in the Commons on April 10 specifically linked Chartism with the continental revolutions, (116) and Hobhouse noted how well received this was: "Mr. Henry Drummond was very well listened to. He showed that the Chartists were but imitators of the Socialists in France, and that their doctrines would end in their own ruin". (117) Letters to the Home Office stressed the same connections, (118) while W. Johnston summed up the day as "the culminating point of the revolutionary progress which, within a period of little more than two months, had shaken almost every throne of continental Europe". He went on to point out one feature which strongly

affected general feeling: "the impression that foreign disturbers were mainly concerned in it". (119)

The association of Chartism with foreigners proved to be particularly potent. In the context of 1848 it was not surprising that their presence should have served to remind people of the continental upheavals which were taking place, but by April 10 the association of Chartism and foreigners had been so developed that while Chartists were increasingly being regarded as alien, foreigners were reciprocally being regarded as revolutionaries. Henry Greville, Lady Guest and Lady Palmerston all commented on the danger from foreign revolutionary propagandists. (120) A Kennington shopkeeper writing to the Home Office warned that "the Metropolis and the provincial towns are swarming with French Revolutionary Propagandists" (121) while by an extension of the argument another writer declared that G.W.M. Reynolds, the recent convert to Chartism, was a naturalized Frenchman, had been in the Paris National Guard and was quite likely to be in the pay of some of the lowest Republican Clubs in Paris. (122) punch reflected the prevailing mood of its readers and produced a humorous article on "How to treat a foreign propagandist" and devoted a major cartoon to the subject of an irate John Bull booting a bearded, dishevelled and monkey-like Frenchman across the Channel. As he went he took with him "sedition", "treason", "disaffection" and "communism". (123) Against this shrill cacophony Brougham's was a rare dissentient voice when he rose in the House of Lords and declared that "with regard to the assertion that there were 50,000 Frenchmen ready to assist in an outbreak in this country that he believed it to be without the shadow of a foundation." (124)



Given the intensity of contemporary fears it was not surprising that the possessing classes should have rallied to defend against what they saw as a threat to their fundamental interests. Radical members of the middle classes who were strongly opposed to aristocratic government were nevertheless unable to support a movement which had apparently become so violent. (125) The Government therefore obtained the counter-demonstration it had sought. Clarendon wrote to Grey on April 9: "There is moral force in the immense number of special constables that have been enrolled but I hope they won't get in each other's way". (126) Wood's verdict on the day was "We had a splendid triumph here of quiet moral determination", (127) while Greville recorded that "everybody rejoices that the defensive demonstration was made, for it has given a great and memorable lesson". (128) The role of the middle classes was crucial to this strategy for they provided the great bulk of the special constables and it was the failure of their Parisian counterparts to support Louis Philippe which had been the occasion of the French revolution. April 10 confirmed the allegiance of the British middle classes to the existing order. Joseph Hume's verdict was that "We have seen the Middle Classes called out to put down the Working Class Chartists", (129) while Lady Palmerston concluded "I am sure it is very fortunate that the whole thing has occur'd as it has shewn the good spirit of our middle classes". (130) Clarendon could remind Grey later in April: "you have the advantage of a sound middle class, a powerful public opinion". (131)

D. Large has argued that the Government made a more realistic assessment of what was going to happen than either the newspaper press or its readers, but recognized the political capital to be made from slaying a paper tiger. (132) The evidence suggests, however, that by April 10 some members of the Government shared the fears which The Times articulated. The massive military preparations which involved



over 8,000 soldiers, 1,231 mobilized pensioners and 4,000 police<sup>(133)</sup> were doubtless in part necessary to maintain the morale of the special constables who were to front the counter-demonstration, but in themselves they indicate the very real fears of the Cabinet. The preparations were not the exaggerated precautions of an aged, alarmist Duke of Wellington. He actually offered his services on April 5 as a result of reading reports in the newspaper press and learning that the Government was already concentrating troops in London. <sup>(134)</sup> Nor was Wellington responsible for the plan to stop the procession from crossing the bridges over the river, for Hobhouse makes it clear in the diary that the proposals were put forward by Colonel Rowan, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. <sup>(135)</sup> The details of the military preparations shed light on the nature of the fears which occasioned them. The defence of all the major public buildings in London was not undertaken because of fears of riot and looting but to guard against insurrection on the Paris model. <sup>(136)</sup> The Standard commented on April 13 that attacks on Government offices were "a foreign taste".

Neither Russell nor Grey doubted their ability to cope with the Chartist threat as such. <sup>(137)</sup> When perceived against the background of continental revolution, however, Chartism inevitably took on a more menacing form and Russell reminded Clarendon on April 5 that "there are no doubt many who wish to turn it into a Paris & Berlin revolution". <sup>(138)</sup> In the week before April 10 the Cabinet met five times including Sunday, April 9, <sup>(139)</sup> and Grey's biographer has noted how exceptional it was for Grey to work on that particular day of the week. <sup>(140)</sup> The association of Chartism with foreign revolution seems to have dominated the fears of many responsible for dealing with the problem. Lord Campbell on April 9 reported to his brother the fears of

the Cabinet: "We are most afraid of disturbance after the procession is dispersed, and of the town being set fire to in the night. There are in London a number of foreigners of the most desperate character." (141) On the day itself the first hurried reports from Commissioner Mayne who was at Kennington Common stressed that there appeared to be only a few foreigners and none of them were taking an active part as leaders.(142) Behind the barricaded windows of the Foreign Office Palmerston awaited an attack and wrote to Normanby next day: "The foreigners did not show; but the constables, regular and special had sworn to make an example of any whiskered and bearded rioter whom they might meet with, and I am convinced would have mashed them to jelly." (143) Russell did report to Prince Albert that he had no doubt of the capacity of the military to cope with a London mob, (144) but this was meant to give assurance to a highly nervous Queen and Consort and the Royal Archives reveal the extent to which the royal entourage were convinced of the danger posed by foreigners intent on exploiting the disturbances. Fairly typical was Colonel Phipps who referred to this "Republican demonstration" and reported knots of foreigners who, when he stopped to look at them, shunned observation. (145) It was because of such fears that Russell recounted to the Prince the much repeated tale of the London butcher boy who knocked down the French agitator in Trafalgar Square. (146)

Following the logic of the prevailing fears the Government on April 1 introduced the Removal of Aliens Bill. On introducing the bill in the House of Lords, the Marquess of Lansdowne admitted that the Government was acting, not on the basis of hard evidence, but on popular hearsay. (147) The bill was passed and not subsequently used but its presence on the statute-book appeared to give credibility to the nationalist hysteria that lay behind it. It was left for Joseph

Hume in the later debates on the bill to put the matter in proper perspective. He dismissed the prospect of foreigners coming here to excite rebellion as about as likely as "a bevy of ourang-outangs [sic] should visit the country on a like mission" and he stated that the bill was based on "fear of some unintelligible phantom". (148)

The role of The Times in rallying the possessing classes was well appreciated by contemporaries. Speaking in the House of Commons on the evening of April 10, Sir. R.H. Inglis thanked The Times in particular and other papers in general for their support of the cause of order. (149) Other newspapers testified to the powerful role that The Times had played, though for the sake of their common status they tended to exaggerate that role and to envisage some sort of conspiracy. The Daily News commented on April 11: "Here have the government, the parliament, the authorities, and the population of this great city, gentle and simple, commercial, professional, industrious, all been frightened out of self-possession by a cock and bull story of revolution - a genuine French revolution, just imported from Paris, with pikes, cut-throats, barricades, plunderers and what not. The Times has been the great TITUS OATES of the plot. Government was the dupe." (150)

The Times itself was a victim of the fears it marketed. John Walter was very alarmed lest an attack be made on the offices of the paper and instructed Delane to seek military protection for Printing House Square. (151) Henry Reeve recorded in his journal that staff were all prepared to defend the office on April 10. (152) The single article on April 11 which lauded the triumph of order made it clear that it was not a triumph over Chartism as such, but over "a band of surreptitious delegates in league with sanguinary Dublin conspirators" who had aimed at an "émeute" which would have been welcome to the Republicans of Paris. Its verdict was consistent with the scenario it

had done so much to create: "We do not hesitate to say that the signal of unconstitutional menace, of violence, of insurrection, of revolution, was yesterday given in our streets".

Against the background of continental revolution, the threatened Irish insurrection and the resurgence of Chartism had taken on a menacing appearance. Functioning within the consensual values of the possessing classes, The Times had in its report and comment articulated those fears, given them substance by virtue of its own authority and added to them by developing the association of events in Paris, Dublin and London. The proposed meeting and procession of the Chartists on April 10 provided those fears with a point of focus. The Times was quick to perceive this, and encouraged and aided by its political connections, it orchestrated the fears, directed them into action and thereby emphasized its particular status and sold more papers. Chartism was thereby isolated within British society and the possessing classes, including the aristocracy and those members of the middle classes who opposed aristocratic government, rushed to proclaim their support for the existing order and the values which lay behind it.

### Notes for Chapter 7

- 1) D. Large, "London in the Year of Revolutions, 1848" in J. Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform, pp.202-3.
- 2) L. O'Boyle, "The Image of the Journalist in France, Germany and England, 1815-1848", Comparative Studies in Society, vol.x (1968) and "The Problem of an Excess of Educated Men in Western Europe, 1800-1850" Journal of Modern History, vol.42, Dec. 1970.
- 3) M. Marrast, editor-in-chief of Le National and F. Flocon, editor-in-chief of La Réforme
- 4) R. Price, The Second French Republic: A Social History (1972) p.112.
- 5) The letter had been sent in January 1847 to Sir John Burgoyne, the Inspector-General of Fortifications. Burgoyne, no doubt because of Wellington's very difficult handwriting, had the letter copied by his wife and daughters and it was this copy which was published in the London newspaper press on November 3, 1847. An anonymous and undated note offered the letter to The Times for a sum of £500. The newspaper did not avail itself of this offer. Archives of The Times (New Printing House Square), Walter Papers, vol.9, no.322 (copy).
- 6) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.7, Christopher Rafferty to Mr. Morris, Feb. 23, 1848.
- 7) The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell, ed. G.P.Gooch, 2 vols. (1925), vol.1, pp.244-54.
- 8) S. Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell, 2 vols. (1899), vol.2, p.19.
- 9) Broughton Diary (British Museum), Add. MS. 43,751, vol.viii, f.101, Feb. 27, 1848.
- 10) The Times, Feb. 19, 22 and 23, 1848.

- 11) Ibid., March 2, 1848.
- 12) MSS. Clar. dep. (Bodleian Library, Oxford), c.521, Greville to Clarendon, Feb. 19, 1848.
- 13) Ibid., Greville to Clarendon, Feb. 26, 1848.
- 14) Clar. dep. Irish (Bodleian Library, Oxford), Letterbook vol.2, f.135, Clarendon to Lansdowne, Feb. 27, 1848.
- 15) Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, February 26, 1848.
- 16) D. Goodway, London Chartism 1838-1848 (New York, 1982), pp.12-18.
- 17) "The affiliations of this criminal confederacy extend all over the kingdom, its declared objects being a violent overthrow of the laws, and an entire revolution of property by force of arms."  
The Times, Nov. 7, 1839.
- "It would be a ..... dreadful thing if the lives and properties of the peaceable men, and the honour of the peaceable women, and all the mighty interests involved in the fabric of society in England, were left exposed to the assaults of Chartist and Socialist mobs".  
The Times, Aug. 19, 1842.
- 18) "The insurrection of South Wales has been what is called a "jaw-breaker" to Lord MELBOURNE and his colleagues. It is palpably and notoriously their own work".  
The Times, Nov. 9, 1839. The style as well as the political animosity reflect the influence of Barnes who in his student years fancied himself as a pugilist.
- 19) "It may well be questioned whether the present uncertain and unsettled state of the country does not call on those interested in the preservation of peace and order to meet by counterorganization that organized aggression by which they are threatened."  
The Times, Aug. 23, 1842.



"a name (Chartism) which smacked somewhat of the political nomenclature in vogue amongst our Gallic neighbours.... There is a good deal in a name. Extension of the franchise is one thing; but Chartism is to English ears another and a distinct one."

The Times, Sept. 5, 1842.

- 20) "the bona fide Chartists, are in numbers and moral influence comparatively contemptible".

The Times, Aug. 22, 1842.

For the ridiculing of the Chartists see a leading article of September 16, 1842 which concludes "periturae parcere Chartae" and one of October 22 dealing with female Chartists.

- 21) Northern Star, March 4, 1848.

- 22) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7b, ff.44-5, Grey to Russell, Tuesday night (March 7).

- 23) HO 45,2410E Reports from the Chief Acting Magistrate in Glasgow, March 6 and 7, 1848.

The documents filed under HO 45,2410 are contained in five boxes which used to be numbered 1 to 5. The computer terminal had difficulty identifying them and during the course of my visits in 1982 the numbering 1 to 5 was changed to the lettering A to E.

- 24) T. Rothstein, From Chartism to Labourism: Historical Sketches of the English Working Class Movement (1929), p.331.

- 25) Northern Star, March 18, 1848.

- 26) J. Belchem, "1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform" in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working Class Radicalism and Culture 1830-60 (1982), pp.271-2.

- 27) Punch, March 18, 1848, vol.14, pp.112-6.

- 28) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, March 18, 1848.
- 29) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.97, col.334, Lord Stanley, March 9, 1848.
- 30) Punch, March 25, 1848, vol.14, p.121.
- 31) Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, March 13, 1848.
- 32) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7b, f.102, Palmerston to Russell, March 13, 1848.
- 33) The Gladstone Diaries, ed. M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew, vol.iv (1974), p.17, March 11, 1848.
- 34) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey and R. Fulford, 8 vols. (1938), vol.6, p.38, March 12, 1848.
- 35) Goodway, op.cit., p.115.
- 36) HO 45,2410A, f.135, John York, Clerk to the Paving Board to the Under Secretary of State, Home Department, March 9, 1848.
- 37) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.36.
- 38) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.158, Clarendon to Grey, March 14, 1848.
- 39) Clar. dep. Irish, box 23, Reeve to Clarendon, March 10, 1848.
- 40) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.137, Clarendon to Grey, Feb.28, 1848.
- 41) Clarendon to Russell, March 30, 1848 quoted in Sir H. Maxwell, The Life and Letters of George William Frederick, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, 2 vols. (1913), vol.1, p.289.  
Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook, vol.2, f.176, Clarendon to Russell, March 25, 1848.

- 42) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, vol.IX, f.2, March 25, 1848.
- 43) Russell Papers, PRO 31/22B, ff.158-161. Memorandum from Russell to the Cabinet, March 30, 1848.
- 44) F.A. Dreyer, "The Russell Administration 1846-1852", Ph.D. thesis, St. Andrews 1962, DA 564, R8, D8.
- 45) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon, Feb. 14 (1848). The year is indicated by the contents. The United Irishman, started early in 1848 by John Mitchel, advocated insurrection to be followed by a radical agrarian programme.
- 46) See chapter 6, p.174.  
 "I should sicken Your Excellency if I was to describe the praise of your administration which reached me from all quarters." Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Feb. 8, 1848.
- 47) Clarendon to Greville, August, 1848 in Maxwell, op.cit., p.290.
- 48) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.188, Clarendon to Russell, March 31, 1848.
- 49) Ibid., f.137, Clarendon to Grey, Feb. 28, 1848.
- 50) Ibid., f.155, Clarendon to Grey, March 11, 1848. March 17 was St. Patrick's Day when large Confederate meetings were expected.
- 51) Smith O'Brien Papers, vol.449, quoted in D.R. Gywnn, Young Ireland and 1848 (Cork, 1949), pp.165-6.
- 52) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.166, Clarendon to Russell, March 19, 1848..
- 53) Greville noted on April 6 that "Ireland now absorbs all other interests ."  
 Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.49, April 6, 1848.  
 On April 1 The Times claimed that "The agitation of Ireland..... now engages the attention of the world".

- 54) See chapter 4, p.104.
- 55) The Times, April 4, 1848.
- 56) Morpeth Letters, Castle Howard,, J 19/1/45/15, Lady Carlisle to Viscount Morpeth, April 8, 1848.
- 57) Ibid., J19/1/45/14, Lady Carlisle to Viscount Morpeth, April 5,, 1848.
- 58) Northern Star, March 18 and April 1, 1848.  
Goodway, op.cit., p.72.
- 59) See chapter 8, p.254.
- 60) a)"The alarm about the Chartists increases. Everybody expects that the attack will be serious."  
Earl of Malmesbury, Memoirs of an Ex-Minister: An Autobiography, 2 vols. (1884), vol.1, p.223, April 5, 1848.
- b)"I find everbody in great alarm about the proposed Chartist Meeting on Monday".  
Lady Charlotte Guest: Extracts from Her Journal 1833-1852, ed. Earl of Bessborough (1950), p.208, April 6, 1848.
- c)The 3% Consols which begun and ended the year at 86 reached their lowest point on April 7 when they fell to  $80\frac{3}{8}$   
Gentleman's Magazine, March and June 1848 and February 1849.
- 61) a)"I am continually addressed by people who say - only tell us what to do and we will do it."  
HO 45,2410E, folder 3, Note from Grey, "Special Constables", April 4, 1848.
- b)Ibid., folder 9, Petition from 41 householders and inhabitants residing in the Camberwell New Road, Kennington, April 5, 1848.
- c)Ibid., folder 1, Declaration from the inhabitants of Enfield, April 6, 1848 and the requests from the Bank of England and Prison Governors for military assistance, April 6 and 8, 1848.  
Mr. Atchison of Temple Chambers wrote twice concerning howitzers he had seen in Bishopsgate, April 6 and 8, 1848.

- 62) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.50.
- 63) Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol.LXIII, no.CCCXCII (June, 1848), p.654.
- 64) See R. Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850", Journal of the History of Ideas, vol.XXXVII, no.3 (July-Sept. 1976).
- 65) In reviewing Michelet's History of France in 1844 the Edinburgh Review noted the similarity in national character between the French and the Irish and ascribed this to "their Gaelic blood" Quoted in Horsman, op.cit., p.399.
- 66) Economist April 28, 1848, quoted in E. Halévy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, vol.4 (1962) p.244.
- 67) For the importance of the Irish contribution to Chartism see the following;
- a) J. Belchem, "English Working-Class Radicalism and the Irish 1815-1850" North West Labour History, Bulletin No.8, 1982-83, pp.5-18.
- b) R. O'Higgins, "Irish Influence in the Chartist Movement", Past and Present, no.20, Nov. 1961, pp.83-94.
- c) D. Thompson, "Ireland and the Irish in English Radicalism before 1850" in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860 (1982).
- d) J.H. Treble, "O'Connor, O'Connell and the Attitudes of Irish Immigrants towards Chartism in the North of England 1838-48" in J. Butt and I.F. Clarke (eds.), The Victorians and Social Protest (Newton Abbot, 1973).
- 68) Proceedings of the National Convention of Chartists which met at the Literary and Scientific Institution, John Street, London (1848), p.9, April 6.
- 69) J. Saville, "Chartism in the Year of the Revolution (1848)" in Modern Quarterly Review, new series vol.viii, winter, 1952-3, pp.23-33.

- 70) H. Weisser, April 10: Challenge and Response in England in 1848 (Lanham, 1983) p.182. Weisser does not however relate the perception of events on the continent to the consensual values of the possessing classes in Britain during the 1840s.
- 71) Belchem, "English Working-Class Radicalism and the Irish 1815-1850", op.cit. p.7. In a review of Weisser's recent work Belchem has pointed out that "Professor Weisser, with his continental European perspective, has far too little to say about either the challenge of or the response to the powerful Chartist-Irish alliance of 1848." History vol.69, no.226, June 1984, p.336.
- 72) John Earl Russell, Recollections and Suggestions 1813-1873 (1875), p.v, and pp.252-4.
- 73) a) "The Whig ministers were relatively slow in adopting counter measures".  
F. Mather "The Government and the Chartists" in A. Briggs (ed.), Chartist Studies (1965), p.395.  
b) The Government "remained calm. ... and it was not until April that it acted"  
Goodway, op.cit., p.72.
- 74) The Clarendon Papers contain letters concerning April 10 from Russell, Clarendon, Grey, Wood, Palmerston and Auckland. They also contain relevant comment from numerous other correspondents including Greville and the Duke of Bedford.
- 75) Clar. Dep. Irish, box 43, Russell to Clarendon, April 6, 1848.
- 76) Ibid., Russell to Clarendon, April 7, 1848.
- 77) Ibid., Russell to Clarendon, April 15, 1848.
- 78) "I hope you will be able to keep the Chartists quiet and make their meeting contemptible as our revolution seems to be suspended until we know what they do".  
Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.187, Clarendon to Grey, March 30, 1848.



- 79) HO 45, 2410 B, D and E. Fairly typical is the report forwarded by Arbuthnot, the military commander in the disturbed districts of the North: "Chartists and Repealers will in all probability immediately break out into acts of violence if anything of this kind occurs in London". HO 45, 2410D, April 10, 1848.
- 80) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, April 9, 1848.
- 81) "We have made our preparations..... with the regular Police, Special Constables and military".  
Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, March 31, 1848.
- 82) "I have taken possession for the week of the Electric Telegraph Co. to prevent any false information being sent."  
Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, April 9, 1848.
- 83) C. di Cavour, "The Chartist Revolution and the British Government", April 17, 1848 in E.K. Bramsted and K.J. Melhuish (eds.), Western Liberalism A history in documents from Locke to Croce (New York, 1978), p.57.
- 84) RA C56/11, Prince Albert to Russell, April 10, 1848. Made available at PRO 28/134.
- 85) MSS. Clar. dep. c.524, Palmerston to Clarendon, April 11, 1848.  
Russell Papers, PRO 30/22 7b, f.243, Palmerston to Russell, April 7, 1848.
- 86) a)"I sat down to office business, not expecting, but thinking it by no means improbable that I should hear discharges of musketry or cannon".  
Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, vol. ix, ff.31-35, April 10, 1848.
- b)"What will happen tomorrow? Some loss of life I think."  
Morpeth Diary, April 9, 1848.

c) "there may very likely be bloodshed."

Lord Campbell to his brother, April 9, 1848 in M.S. Hardcastle (ed.), Life of John, Lord, Campbell, 2 vols. (1881), vol.2., p.236.

d) "I had not expected so good an end of the violent defiance".  
Clar. dep. Irish, box 1,, Auckland to Clarendon, April 10, 1848.

87) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7b, f.41, Wood to Russell, March 7, 1848.

88) Ibid., ff.217-222, C.E. Trevelyan to Russell, April 4, 1848.

89) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, April 2, 1848.

90) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.202, Clarendon to Grey, April 7, 1848.

91) See chapter 6, p.188.

92) A.H.F. Enfield (ed.) Leaves from the Diary of Henry Greville (1883), p.254. April 6, 1848.

93) Daily News, April 7, 1848.

94) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, vol.ix, f.19, April 4, 1848.

95) Ibid., f.22, April 6, 1848.

96) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, vol.98, 3rd series, col.22, Sir G. Grey, April 7, 1848.

97) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, April 3, 1848.

98) Proceedings of the National Convention of Chartists which assembled at the Literary and Scientific Institution,, John Street, London. (1848), p.12, Friday April 7.

- 99) The 1841 Census recored 73,133 and the Census of 1851, 108,548 persons of Irish birth living in London. Quoted in Goodway, op.cit., p.63.
- 100) Daily News April, 7, 8 and 10, 1848.  
Morning Advertiser April, 7, 8 and 10, 1848.  
Morning Chronicle April, 7, 8 and 10, 1848.  
Morning Herald April, 7, 8 and 10, 1848.  
Morning Post April, 7, 8 and 10, 1848.
- 101) W. Johnston, England As It Is: Political, Social and Industrial in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century, 2 vols. (1851; Dublin 1971 edn.), vol.1, p.354.
- 102) F. Mather, "The Railways, the Electric telegraph and Public Order during the Chartist period 1837-1848" in History, new series, vol. xxxviii (1953), p.47.  
L. Radzinowicz, A History of English Criminal Law, vol.4: Grappling for control (1968), p.279.
- 103) F.B. Smith, "The View from Britain I: Tumults Abroad, stability at home" in ed. E. Kamenka and F.B. Smith, Intellectuals and Revolution: Socialism and the Experience of 1848 (1979), p.109.
- 104) HO 45, 2410E, folder 1, See for example notes from Mr. Woollett, April 7, 1848 and Messrs. Spicer April 9, 1848.
- 105) Ibid., Lord Mayor of London to Home Office, 4.30p.m. April 10, 1848.
- 106) The Times of April 11 gave the number as 150,000 while the Morning Chronicle of the same day estimated the number at 250,000. The Annual Register for 1848 gave the number as "at least 170,000", Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.52.
- 107) Goodway, op.cit., p.74 and pp.129-131.  
D. Large, "London in the Year of Revolutions, 1848" in J. Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform (Oxford 1977), p.188.

- 108) R. Whiteing, My Harvest (1915), p.14.
- 109) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.51, April 9, 1848.
- 110) R.W. Emerson on a visit to England noted how "It was remarked on the 10th of April, 1848 (the day of the Chartist demonstration) that the upper classes were for the first time actively interested in their own defence, and even man of rank were sworn special constables with the rest." R.W. Emerson, The Portable Emerson, ed. M. Van Doren (1946; New York 1977 edn), p.451.
- 111) The Times in its leading article on April 10 referred to the "most majestic union of all classes in defence of constitutional liberty and order."  
The Annual Register referred to the "almost unanimous determination of all classes". Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.53.
- 112) Report from Mr. Bingham that building workers employed at the Geological Museum and Lord Ellesmere's refused to be sworn in as special constables though they agreed to defend the buildings if they were attacked. HO 45, 2410A, f.42.  
Magistrates had been sent to large establishments to swear in workers as special constables. The Marquis of Salisbury reported to Grey: "They almost to a man refused to be sworn in except for the protection of their master's property. Some have refused to be sworn in at all and have avowed themselves to be Chartists. Under these circumstances and also from the reports I have received from one or two other localities it is my duty to inform you that in my opinion no reliance can be placed upon the cooperation of the artisans."  
HO 45, 2410E, Marquis of Salisbury to Grey, April 8, 1848.
- 113) Northern Star, April 22, 1848.
- 114) C. Kingsley, Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet. An Autobiography (1850; 1947 edn.), pp.238-41.

- 115) E. Marston in Notes and Queries, Feb.17, 1906, quoted in D. Thompson, op.cit., p.322.
- 116) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates 3rd Series, vol.98, cols.112-113, H. Drummond, April 10, 1848.
- 117) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, vol.ix, f.35, April 10, 1848.
- 118) HO 45, 2410E, Folder 3, See for example the letters of Revd. R. Boyle, April 14, 1848 and Mr. Paterson April 20, 1848
- 119) Johnston, op.cit., vol.1, pp.341 and 344.
- 120) a)"The town is full of ill-looking foreigners, who are coming over to incite the people to revolt, and to teach them Parisian fashions."  
A.H.F. Enfield (ed.), Leaves From the Diary of Henry Greville (1883), pp.255-6, April 9, 1848.
- b)"There are a number of foreigners in England doing their best to promote anarchy".  
Lady Charlotte Guest: Extracts from her Journal, ed. Earl of Bessborough (1950), p.209, April 18, 1848.
- c)"There certainly was great alarm in all quarters, the uncertainty of what numbers of disaffected might come in from manufacturing districts, and the very great number of foreigners in the country, French, Poles, and Germans and the daily arrival of many more, known to be revolutionists from Paris of the very worst character."  
The Letters of Lady Palmerston, ed. Tresham Lever (1957), p.300.
- 121) HO 40/59, f.300, copy of note from "A Kennington Shopkeeper" forwarded by the Editor of the St. James's Chronicle to Grey, April 5, 1848.
- 122) HO 45, 2410A, f.213, Mr. Weston to Grey, April 10, 1848.
- 123) Punch, vol.14 pp..179 and 182, April 29, 1848. See appendix II (c) and (d).
- 124) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.98, col.138, Lord Brougham, April 11, 1848.

- 125) D. Thompson, op.cit., p.321
- 126) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, ff.203-4, Clarendon to Grey, April 9, 1848.
- 127) Clar. dep. Irish, box 31, Wood to Clarendon, April 12, 1848.
- 128) C.C.F. Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.51, April 13, 1848.  
 "The special aid called into existence under the excitement previous to the 10th of April.... was a moral demonstration in the cause of order".  
 E.E. Antrobus, London, its danger and its safety: Suggestions for Its Present and Future Protection for the Consideration of all Classes of Its Inhabitants.
- 129) Russell Papers PRO 30/22, 7b, f.360. Copy of letter from J. Hume to J. Gibson, Provost of Arbroath, April 20, 1848.
- 130) Lady Palmerston to Mrs,. Huskisson (April 14, 1848), The Letters of Lady Palmerston ed. Tresham Lever (1957), p.300.
- 131) Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.221, Clarendon to Grey, April 22, 1848.
- 132) Large, op.cit., p.187.
- 133) WO 30/81, "Military Arrangements for 10th April, 1848".  
 Goodway, op.cit., pp.72-74.
- 134) WO 30/81, Package headed "Chartists Riots". Memorandum from the Duke of Wellington, April 5 1848.
- 135) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, vol.ix, f.27, April 8, 1848.  
 See also John Earl Russell, op.cit., p.243.
- 136) For correspondence dealing with the defence of the British Museum, the Bank of England and London prisons see HO 45, 2410E.  
 Sir E. Hertslet, Recollections of the Old Foreign Office (1901) gives a lively account of the defence of the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade (pp.69-70).



- 137) a) "I think the course we have decided to take is right and will lead to a quiet termination of this business".  
Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7b, f.247, Grey to Russell, April 9, 1848.
- b) "We are well prepared..... the peace will be kept".  
Clar. dep. Irish, box 43, Russell to Clarendon, April 10, 1848.
- 138) Clar. dep. Irish, box 43, Russell to Clarendon, April 5, 1848.
- 139) The Cabinet met on Tuesday April 4 and the following Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, April 8 and 9, 1848.
- 140) "On this and one other occasion did he transact public business on a Sunday. Unless prevented by illness, he regularly attended Church, morning and evening." M. Creighton, Memoir of Sir George Grey (Newcastle upon Tyne 1884), p.67.
- 141) Lord Campbell to Sir George Campbell, April 9, 1848 in Life of John Lord Campbell, ed. M.S. Hardcastle, 2 vols. (1881), vol.2, p.236.
- 142) HO 45, 2410A, ff.274 and 279. Reports from Mayne to Rowan, April 10, 1848.
- 143) Palmerston to Normanby, April 11, 1848 in E. Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, vol.1, pp.93-4.  
See also Hertslet, op.cit., p.69.
- 144) The first and last sentences indicated the real extent of his anxieties. "If however, the Chartists fire & draw their swords & use their daggers the military will be called out. I have no doubt of their easy triumph over a London mob. But loss of life will cause a deep and rankling resentment."  
RA C56/11, f.14, Russell to Prince Albert, April 9, 1848 (Made available at PRO 28/134).

- 145) RA C56/11, f.21, Col. Phipps to Prince Albert, April 10, 1848.  
(Made available at PRO 28/134).  
Similar comment was made by others:
- a)"The Frenchmen who came over for our row will think us a very slow set". Ibid., f.24, Lord Spencer to General Bowles, April 10, 1848.
- b)"I did fear that some of the many foreigners who have come from Paris might have created a disturbance". Ibid., f.32 Sir Benjamin Hall to Dr. Meyer, April 11, 1848.
- c)The reaction of the Queen to the events of March and April was that "she has grown many years older during the last six weeks". RA C8, f.11, Queen Victoria to Russell, April 12, 1848. (Made available at PRO 28/134).
- 146) "In Trafalgar Square a Frenchman was vociferating that the English do not know how to fight. "Don't they" said a butcher boy and knocked him down - This is English patriotism."  
RA C16, f.19, Russell to Prince Albert, April 11, 1848.  
(Made available at PRO 28/134)  
See also appendix II (c).
- 147) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.98, col.136, Marquess of Lansdowne, April 11, 1848. See also appendix II (d).
- 148) Ibid., Col. 582, J. Hume, May 1, 1848.
- 149) Ibid., cols.100-1, Sir R.H. Inglis, April 10, 1848.
- 150) The Northern Star of April 15 went even further and made The Times solely responsible for the whole panic and blamed the Government for acting as its dupe.
- 151) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.23, f.9, Walter to Delane, Sunday morning. The document can be dated April 9 by reference to its content.
- 152) J.K. Laughton, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (1898). vol., p.197.

## CHAPTER 8

### "The Puddledock bully": "The Times" and Its Treatment of Chartists and Irish Confederates April to September, 1848

On April 10 the vested interests in a society based on property had rushed to defend it. Chartism had been transformed into an alien aberration and its apparent defeat therefore provided the opportunity for a ritualistic celebration of that version of society which the possessing classes shared. The Times, as befitted its self-appointed role, led the way. The single leading article on April 11 set the theme in its first sentence: "The 10th of April, 1848, will long be remembered as a great field day of the British constitution". In its leading articles of April 11 and 12 The Times proclaimed that analysis of British society and its institutions which had been articulated as an antidote to the anxieties of the 1830s and 1840s and was at that moment finding clear expression in Macaulay's History of England which was published at the end of 1848. (1) The British constitution was hailed as being particularly proof against violence and menace and the safe model of freedom which the continent would do well to follow. British society enjoyed a degree of social harmony and a confidence in existing institutions which both distanced it from the recent continental experience and guaranteed its future. Such was the exaltation of the loyal demonstration that The Times attempted to justify its own role in creating the unwarranted panic by arguing that the lesson was needed: "Such is the new strength we have gained by that noble day's work, a strength which we could not easily have gained in any other way." (2)

Since Chartism had been presented as a social threat, the events of April 10 were depicted in The Times as above all else vindicating the social order. Particular emphasis was placed upon the role of the

working classes in putting down Chartism. The leading article of April 12 claimed that "the whole moral effect of the great demonstration of the lower classes against Chartism....was in fact a thing beyond price" since it showed that "the relations between employer and employed, between master and servant" still rested "on a generous feeling of mutual support". The Times proposed on the same day that this should find tangible expression in public dinners paid for by the wealthier classes for the benefit of "those worthy fellows" of the working classes who had served as special constables. Better proof was needed, however, and to that end the newspaper sought to make the point by stressing the huge numbers who had volunteered as specials and at the same time the small number of Chartists. Accordingly the 150,000 special constables of the metropolis, who were mentioned in the leading article of April 11, had by April 12 become 200,000 while the number of Chartists, which according to its own report on the demonstration "ought not probably to exceed 20,000", was given in the leading article of the same day, April 11, as 10,000. Feargus O'Connor claimed that "one of the most efficient short-hand writers, who is in the habit of attending public meetings" revealed to him that 200,000 had been present at Kennington Common and that the Commissioners of Police had circulated among the newspapers a letter requesting that they state that only 15,000 persons attended. (3) In fact the newspapers generally reported totals higher than 15,000. (4) The lowest total of all was given in The Times. On April 21 one leading article contrasted the 200,000 special constables with the 10,000 Chartists, while another proclaimed that "no service so great could be rendered to the cause of good order as to report with the utmost accuracy."

Now that the Chartist demonstration was seen as posing no serious threat at all to society, the preparations to deal with it seemed hugely out of proportion. Greville had noted in his diary on April 9 that the preparations being made were "either very sublime or ridiculous". (5) The Standard of April 11 reflected the same mood when it declared that "we have all been the dupes of a groundless anticipation". The Daily News of the same day admitted that "we loyal Londoners cut a very foolish figure yesterday evening" and went on to accuse The Times of whipping up the whole panic and playing the role of "Neptune of the tempest". Newspaper editors are well aware of the anticlimatic dénouement which follows the successful campaign and the The Times had already prepared its own defence. The leading article of April 10 which brought the campaign against the Chartists to its peak contained the saving sentence that "we fully expect a degree of ridicule will attach to the greatness of the preparations on the side of order" while the edition of April 12 ignored the paper's own role and pointed out that "the public mind, stunned and confounded by the events on the continent, had become, as the ancients would have expressed it, meteoric, unsteady, open to strange impressions".

Having transformed the Chartist demonstration into an attempt at revolution, The Times now proceeded to ridicule them for their failure and the leading article of April 11 proclaimed: "They fished for a revolution and have caught a snub". The disclosure by the Select Committee on Petitions that the Chartist petition contained not five million but fewer than 2 million signatures and that some of them were obvious forgeries, enabled the element of ridicule to be developed and also to be transferred from the special constables, who had rushed to deal with a non-existent emergency, to the Chartists themselves. The report was leaked to The Times and the substance of it was incorporated

in a leading article on April 13, the day on which the report was presented at a later hour to the House of Commons. (6) The Times was now able to redirect its energies and, as the Daily News of April 13 put it, "to exchange its military uniform for its clown's dress". The leading articles in The Times of April 13 and 14 placed great emphasis on the fictitious names such as "Pugnose", "Flatnose" and "VICTORIA REX" and made its own suggestions of "Robert Rifle" and "Peter Pike". The paper, as a result, was able to ignore the demands of the genuine signatures and to dismiss the whole petition as "the heap of rubbish dragged the other day on the floor of the House". (7)

By April 15 the focus of The Times had subtly changed and it was April 10, rather than the petition, which was now claimed to have rendered Chartism "ridiculous". The paper of that day had been stung by an article in the French Newspaper, Le National, which had argued that the alarm felt by the Government on April 10 proved the inevitability of a profound social reform. Once again The Times contrasted the condition of France with the stable, cohesive British society where necessary reforms were implemented from above on a gradual basis. In one revealing sentence the paper both made clear the interpretation of Chartism it had so powerfully projected and at the same time delivered its final verdict: "The result which tells on the heart of the country, which reassures every peaceful citizen, and renders "Chartism" ridiculous, is the fact of two hundred thousand peaceful men in the metropolis alone, besides a proportionate number in our great manufacturing towns, having turned out, with great inconvenience and some little risk, to maintain the institutions of their country against an insulting threat of revolutionary violence - against an insolent and outrageous minority, who had not even fought their own battle on its



own grounds, but had gone about to seek a treacherous alliance with a disaffected province on the one hand, and a foreign Republic on the other."

Despite the attempt to distance April 10 from the events on the continent, the events of that day were significant within the revolutionary context. Russell's sister, who was the wife of the British Minister at Turin, wrote on April 19: "All eyes were turned on London perhaps with apprehension greater than felt here and people seem to breathe more freely since they have seen that good sense & good feeling of the country still keep it safe." (8) From Paris Michel Chevalier, the French economist, and Robert Owen made the same point, (9) while the Rentes which had fallen on Saturday April 8 to 53 recovered to 61 after the news of the peaceful outcome was received. (10) In the eyes of Europe the counter-revolution began in London on April 10, and the rallying of the middle classes in Paris on April 16, when demonstrators were made to march between crowds who shouted "Down with the Communists", owed much to the London precedent. Until recently only Halévy, a Frenchman writing English history, had made the connection. (11)

It was the verdict of The Times which became the verdict of history and the 'ludicrous fiasco' of April 10 became one of the orthodoxies of British history, (12) serving to demonstrate the harmony of British society, the stability of its institutions and the essential difference between ourselves and our continental neighbours. The Annual Register in its conclusion on April 10 neatly encapsulated the whole treatment of it by The Times: "Thus ended, amidst scorn and ridicule, a demonstration which was calculated to overthrow all the existing institutions of the state, and reduce this country to the anarchy of the continental states." (13) Charles Kingsley's Alton

Locke perpetuated this same judgement in fictional form and both J. Saville and D. Goodway have emphasized the importance of this work in the transmission of the myth of April 10 into popular consciousness. (14) Ironically the first of the major histories of the nineteenth century, written by Spencer Walpole in 1890, adopted a critical approach to the verdict of contemporaries and noted that a few hundred forged signatures provided a welcome excuse for disregarding the voices of 1,900,000 people. (15) Later historians tended, however, to agree with H. Paul's verdict that April 10 was "an utter and even ludicrous failure". (16) Paul does not indicate the sources used in the treatment of the Chartist demonstration, but his analysis is strongly reminiscent of The Times and he used that paper's estimate of the numbers at Kennington Common. E. Halévy in his monumental work on English history was much indebted to The Times and his conclusion is redolent of that paper's influence: "It was quite clear that the nation would have nothing to do with a movement led by Irishmen to launch in England a revolution after the French pattern...On April 10 it foundered not in blood, but in ridicule." (17) Even historians of Chartism like Hovell, Cole and Slosson have accepted the traditional view of April 10, (18) and it is only in recent years that the verdict declared so powerfully by The Times has been reassessed. (19)

The tactic of transforming morbid fears into hysterical laughter which had been practised at Chartist expense was now employed against the Irish Confederates who had been an important element within the general panic. A Confederate meeting held in Limerick on April 19 ended in a scuffle between rival groups and some slight injury to Smith O'Brien. The Times, which announced this on May 3, instantly associated what it considered to be the débâcle of Irish rebellion with the humiliation of the London Chartists: "The Irish branch of the

Confederation has done even worse than the heroes of Kennington-common." Subsequent leading articles unleashed the full racist venom of the paper against the Irish Confederates and referred to "the Battle of the Frogs and Mice", to "ludicrous catastrophe" and "the purposeless prolixity of one long elaborate lie". (20) O'Brien, Meagher and Mitchel were taunted for their signal failure to rebel and The Times of May 9 likened Mitchel's behaviour to that of a monkey which "scrambles up the nearest tree and hangs pendulous, spitting and gibbering, from a bough above your head." The association of the Irish with apes was familiar to the readers of Punch and that journal paid The Times the compliment of devoting a large cartoon to the Limerick disturbance as described by The Times. The cartoon misspelt Mitchel's name as The Times always did and portrayed him as a monkey. (21) What enabled The Times to set on these events the seal of its own interpretation was the early intelligence which it received from Ireland. On May 3 in the House of Commons G.A. Hamilton sought confirmation from the Home Secretary of the account he had read in The Times and "which he could not help adding was most ably and amusingly commented upon in that newspaper". Grey replied that he had received a letter from the Lord Lieutenant which substantially confirmed the article. (22) Grey's confirmation was not surprising for it was Clarendon who had supplied the newspaper with the information in the first place and Delane subsequently wrote to the Lord Lieutenant to thank him for his description of the Limerick affair and hoped that he approved of the way the subject had been treated. (23)

The demise of the Repeal Movement and Chartism which was celebrated in The Times of May 13 and 15 proved precipitate, however. Part of the myth which surrounds April 10 is the belief that Chartism expired after the 'fiasco' of that date. Gammage's History of the

Chartist Movement 1837 - 1845 which was published in 1854 declared that the events of that day "inflicted a wound on Chartism from which it never recovered." (24) This judgement has been widely accepted. (25) No doubt this is because the original premise of 'ludicrous failure' would be significantly undermined by the admission that the Chartists themselves did not see it as such. In fact in London, against a background of severe economic depression, Chartist organization continued to grow, (26) while in Lancashire and the West Riding co-operation between Irish Confederates and Chartists resulted in large meetings and demonstrations, emotive addresses and open military drilling. (27) Sir Thomas Arbuthnot, the military commander of the disturbed areas, reported to the Home Office on May 28 that in the neighbourhood of Bradford and Halifax "the Chartist Movement is decidedly on the increase....drilling with arms is on the increase". (28) The conviction of John Mitchel under the new Crown and Government Security Act and his sentence to fourteen years' transportation welded the Irish and Chartists closer together and gave a new vigour and intensity to popular protest. London, however, remained the focal point of agitation in the spring and summer of 1848. Frequent well-attended meetings were held in the East End and on May 29, after some fiery speeches at Clerkenwell Green, several thousand marchers caused considerable alarm in the West End. (29) On Sunday June 4 separate meetings of Confederates and Chartists at Bishop Bonner's Fields resulted in violent clashes with special constables and subsequent allegations of police brutality. (30) The popular movement came to its climax with the meeting planned for Bishop Bonner's Fields on Whit Monday, June 12. Ernest Jones on June 4 had urged: "Show us your organization, and you will have a glorious opportunity on the 12th" (31) and the meeting was intended to be a specific refutation

of Russell's statement in the House of Commons that the English people did not want the Charter, (32) and also to constitute that great moral demonstration which had been planned for April 10.

In the context of 1848 even moral demonstrations were likely to be seen by the possessing classes as a threat to society. The Home Office began to receive anxious letters concerning groups of armed Chartists, (33) and mobs "whose menace and tumultuous pressure frightens the peaceable and well disposed", (34) while the Duke of Newcastle noted in his diary of June 1: "The Chartist meetings are becoming very troublesome....for they meet in Clerkenwell to the amount of some thousands....they require much watching both by police & soldiers." (35) The Times which had previously declared Chartism dead now proceeded to resurrect it. (36) As in April the relationship between Chartism and continental revolution was given great emphasis. On June 1 the leading article drew attention to the position of Paris, Berlin and other great cities which had been reduced to "a death-life of anarchy, distrust, insolvency and despair" and wondered whether London was beginning to experience the same process. The second leading article of that day reinforced the same argument when it claimed that the whole of Europe, including England, was threatened by a revolutionary party directed from Paris which threatened all government and all society. Salvation everywhere lay with the middle classes whose support was crucial for the survival of Governments. One June 2 The Times noted one essential difference between the middle classes of England and France; the French middle classes were "gross-épiciers and trimming négociants" but the English middle classes were "men of English pith and English pluck."



On this occasion, however, there was considerable resistance to the Government's call for the reswearing of special constables whose two month's warrants were about to expire. A letter from one special to the Home Office pointed out that "the tradesmen cannot constantly be taken from their business", (37) while Greville noted in his diary of June 3 that "The Government are now getting seriously uneasy about the Chartist manifestations in various parts of the country, especially in London. . many who on the 10th of April went out as Special Constables declare that they would not do so again if another manifestation required it. (38) The Times had already anticipated that it would not be possible to whip up a campaign twice on the same issue. Its laudatory article of April 11 had recognized that point and had concluded: "The present event is worth the cost, but we do not want another. If we are threatened with another, it will be time to think of some cheaper, less troublesome and more summary way of ~~expressing~~ expressing the nuisance." The first leading article dealing with the revival of Chartism made clear that firm and prompt Government action was to be the new solution: "Stop it at once. Nip it in the bud, or to use a more appropriate figure, crack the dragon in its shell." (39)

Having taken upon itself the responsibility of pushing the Government into action, The Times in order to sustain its argument, developed further the analysis of Chartism which it had projected in April. Whereas on occasions The Times in April had sought to distinguish between the Chartist programme and the means of achieving it, (40) Chartism in June was perceived as being increasingly divorced from society's norms and associated with criminal violence to both person and property. The leading article of June 1 referred to plans to launch from the East End of London hordes of men numbering one or two hundred thousand and armed with pikes and pistols. It also



offered a parallel which had strong nationalist overtones: "As sure as the northern tribes, the Gauls, the Huns, the Goths, and the Vandals bent their course for Rome, so instinct sends these swarms to Westminster and its palaces." Fussell's remarks about the assassination of recalcitrant rulers, which he was alleged to have made at the meeting of May 29, received considerable attention in The Times and enabled it to declaim against Chartism "which parades the streets with bludgeons, makes pikes, and preaches "private assassination"." (41) Metropolitan Chartism was further tainted by being associated with Irish as opposed to English behaviour and the paper claimed on June 2 that "Notwithstanding the vast infusion of Celtic blood amongst our labouring population, the old English feeling is still strong against the use of the knife, the dagger, and the poison bowl."

The articles in The Times reflected and reinforced a strong movement of opinion against the continued Chartist activities. In the House of Lords Brougham declared that "the most painful state of feeling was beginning to spring up, on the part of the citizens and of the police, towards those who were creating these disturbances." (42) Queen Victoria wrote to ask Russell: "Could nothing be done to take up some of these people?" (43) Punch caught the mood of the moment in the "Song of the Seditious" which combined the threat of pillage and assassination with an alien revolution which intended to destroy Britain's institutions and prosperity and bring her down to the level of foreign states:

"Let us shout, "Assassination!" whilst our FUSSELL recommends  
Our approval of the sentiment - and take the hint, my friends;  
Let us shriek aloud for pikes, and with the Patriot sympathise,  
Who suggested flinging vitriol into British soldiers' eyes.

.. .. .

Shan't we have our insurrections - shan't we have our barricades?  
Shan't we sing our Marseillaises? Yes, we will, my jolly blades.  
Down with all our institutions - let them crumble in the dust.  
Shan't we have a revolution? Yes, we shall, we will, we must.

What with trade though Wages perish? Plunder still we shall not  
lack;

Let Old England's power and greatness go to ruin and to wrack!

In our infamy we'll revel, we will glory in our shame;

Ape the foreigners, my hearties, and renounce the English name!

(44)

On June 5 The Times in a leading article urged the arrest and trial of the "sanguinary-spoken" Fustell under the recent act framed for such circumstances. On June 6 the paper went further and demanded that Ernest Jones be brought to trial. Its leading article included extracts from his speeches, quoted legal precedent and claimed that there would be no difficulty "in obtaining a verdict ...from a jury of London merchants and tradesmen." (45) What the leading article demanded was supported by readers' letters judiciously selected by Delane, which all made the point that if the Government was seeking the assistance of the special constables, it should itself act and arrest Fustell and Jones. (46) Speaking in its most authoritarian tones on behalf of its readers The Times of June 6 concluded: "We speak advisedly when we say it is the general feeling of the inhabitants of the metropolis that matters should be speedily brought to an issue

between the peaceable portion of the community and the rioters. In no way could this be so well brought about as by summoning the leaders to answer at the criminal bar for their violation of the law."

The Times could afford to be specific since it had foreknowledge of what the Government intended to do. Le Marchant, the Under Secretary for the Home Department, was in constant contact with Delane at this period, keeping him informed about Chartist activity and making suggestions for leading articles. (47) In this instance the problem facing the Government, as Russell and Grey pointed out to the Queen, was that in order to prosecute for seditious words a reporter expressly appointed for the purpose of recording the speech needed to be present at the meeting where the alleged offence took place. (48) The difficulty was eventually overcome by using the evidence of newspaper reporters as the basis of the prosecution's case. On June 2 the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police notified Delane that they were recommending proceedings against Fussell and asked if the individual concerned with the report of the meeting on May 29 would come forward as witness. A note was subsequently added to the letter to the effect that Delane had answered in the affirmative. (49) When therefore The Times demanded that action be taken against Fussell the paper either knew that such a decision had already been taken or felt confident that some extra pressure would bring the decision about. On June 7 The Times announced that Fussell had been arrested and gave the lofty approval of the paper to the action of the authorities.

In that same leading article of June 7 The Times also announced the arrest of Ernest Jones. In his study of Jones, J. Saville noted that The Times demanded the arrest of Jones on June 6 and argued that since Jones and other Chartists were not arrested till the evening of

that day "it is not perhaps fanciful to suggest that either The Times was aware that the arrests were to be made or that the Government acted with commendable promptness upon their advice." (50) The evidence points to foreknowledge, however, since Jones was not arrested till June 7. He had gone to Manchester to address a Chartist meeting and an inspector had ~~to~~sent from London with a warrant. He was arrested at 9 a.m. on June 7 and the leading article of The Times of that day was therefore somewhat premature in its announcement. (51) A brief but accurate account of the arrest, which was extracted from the Manchester Guardian was published in The Times of June 8 but no additional comment was made. (52) When Grey wrote to Clarendon to tell him of the arrests, he stressed that "Public opinion goes strongly with us now in the adoption of effectual measures for checking this constant agitation and disturbance." (53) In the shaping of what politicians regarded as public opinion, the role of The Times was very important and the leakage of information to the paper was not too high a price to pay. With massive condescension the paper could, on June 7, congratulate the Government on its wise decision and hope that in view of the intended meeting on June 12 it would continue to act firmly.

In the days before that meeting The Times made no attempt to repeat its tactics of April and to orchestrate a panic amongst its readers. Having so effectively derided and dismissed the Chartist demonstration and petition of April, it would have been difficult for the newspaper to repeat its role of two months earlier, without undermining its own credibility and conceding to Chartism that measure of organisation and support which The Times had hitherto denied. More importantly the opinion which the paper sought to measure and mould appears to have regarded the Chartist activities more with anger than fear. Greville noted on June 10 that "The townspeople....are growing

very angry.... Many people think that a severe chastisement of these mobs will alone put a stop to their proceedings, and that it will be better the Troops should be allowed to act and open fire on them."

(54) The irony, however, is that Government was more alarmed on this occasion than it was on April 10. (55) Troops might have to be sent from this country to Ireland at any moment and Clarendon regarded what happened in London as crucial for events in Ireland. (56) Reports of the arming and drilling of Chartists and Confederates were taken very seriously by the Government, (57) while the informer, George Davis, revealed plans to overthrow the Government and to take possession of London. (58)

Government precautions indicated the extent of their alarm. Military arrangements were on a scale commensurate with those of April 10 and 5,399 soldiers and 400 pensioners were made ready, 4,343 police placed on duty and public buildings were once again strongly defended. (59) The services of the Duke of Wellington were not called upon but on his own initiative he produced a memorandum in which he suggested placing troops in Westminster Hall and Astley's Riding Stables and the reconnoitring of the Strand in order to note houses with bow windows which would give a command of fire along the street. (60) Grey's comment to Clarendon was that "he is a great alarmist & believes all that people tell him of the supposed intention of the Chartists." (61) Nevertheless even Grey, on this occasion, suspected that there might be serious trouble. According to Hobhouse, Grey gave the Cabinet on June 9 an account of preparations made "against the expected rising of the Chartists & Irish Confederates announced for Monday the 12th." (62) All meetings in London were banned, the police were armed, not with staves as on April 10, but with cutlasses and the designated meeting area was occupied by the authorities who were clearly determined to prevent the meeting. (63)



The absence in The Times of leading articles on the intended demonstration suggests strongly that the alarm was mainly confined to the authorities. Nevertheless The Times on June 12 itself consciously repeated the tactics it had used on April 10, though Delane's instructions to Mozley suggest a rather less anxious approach to the issue. "If I don't come back tomorrow, I think you had better set Tom upon such another Anti Chartist article as he wrote on the 10th of April. There ought to be another article on the Navigation Laws but the Chartists have precedence." (64) Accordingly on June 12 the paper addressed its readers in its most authoritarian tones: "As champions of freedom..... we most decidedly protest against an armed resistance". Making its pretensions and its constituency clearer it proceeded: "Treading in the old path, marked by ten thousand patriots, and at this moment occupied by the whole middle class of this country, we protest against a faction in arms." As on April 10 a peaceful demonstration was transformed into an attempt at armed insurrection which intended to impose on Britain an alien revolution which threatened property in all its forms. Particular emphasis was placed on the union of Chartists with Irish Confederates who were "arming themselves, and practising themselves in the use of arms, with a view to early insurrection against the British Crown" and as on April 10, proof was provided by the quoting of selected extracts from Chartist speeches. (65) The only essential difference between the articles of April 10 and June 12 was the absence of the "mischievous foreigners" of April 10. The association with the European upheavals was made obliquely, however, since the only other leading article of June 12 dealt with the inevitability of a decisive struggle in France between "the friends of order and the anarchists". The article on the Chartist demonstration concluded "we never knew a demonstration of a more equivocal, or rather more decidedly dangerous character".



As on April 10 The Times was left with a hollow victory on its hands but once again it sought to transfer the ridicule from the authorities to the Chartists and Confederates. Drawing upon the fears of continental revolution and Irish insurrection the two groups were mocked for having failed to achieve "the British Champ de Mars". (66) In words almost identical to those used in April, The Times asked: "What had befallen the EMMET and the FITZGERALD Brigades, the crimson cap of liberty, the republican fascies and all the cheap furniture of sedition?" (67) McDouall's acceptance of the decision of the authorities, like O'Connor's on April 10 enabled the humour to be personalized while a shower of rain afforded the same scope for merriment that the fictitious names of the Chartist petition had provided. The demonstration, it pointed out, ended in rain not in smoke and Punch took up the point and transferred the humour to visual form. (68) The final verdict of The Times was delivered on June 13: "The "peaceful demonstration," unavoidably postponed from April 10 to June 12, stands adjourned sine die. It ended yesterday, not in smoke, but in rain. There is absolutely nothing to record". Posterity echoed this judgement and recollections of June 12 appear to have been excised from the national memory. (69) Till recently historians have concentrated their attentions, not on the real insurrectionary peak of June 1848, (70) but on the false alarm which had its chief substance in the pages of The Times.

The attention of the possessing classes in June 1848 seems to have been fixed, not on London, but on Paris, since it was there that the threat of social upheaval seemed to have reached its inevitable climax. The Times of June 27 drew the moral: "It is the ambition of France to be the world's guide, and her destiny to be the world's warning." The leading article of that day attempted to justify both

the emphasis on France and the use made of it to alert readers to domestic dangers: "this fresh demonstration of the nature of democratic power and the dangers of social insubordination seemed to be needed even amongst ourselves by a slender class of short-sighted and foolish enthusiasts to extinguish their preposterous and unnatural sympathy with the cause of revolution. That demonstration is now, we trust, complete." Greville made much the same point when he wrote to Clarendon on July 5: "they send a memorable lesson at last to all the world, & it may be hoped will not be lost on Revolutionists calling themselves reformers, Repealers, & above all workpeople who see in a few short weeks the magnificent promises of Louis Blanc, and the règne des ouvriers end in a strong military Government".(71) Against a background of what looked like social upheaval the possessing classes froze in rigid hostility to any movement which might release pressures from below. In a pamphlet intended for popular dissemination E.E. Antrobus put the argument at its most simplistic: "the spirit of evil has assumed the name of Chartism, and under that guise has commenced its work of destruction. What has it accomplished in France, in the once gay and brilliant city of Paris, under the sacred name of Liberty? - "Ruin." (72)

In 1848 Irish Repeal as well as Chartism seemed to many to be part of the same movement to overthrow society. Sir William Hervey stressed that particular point in a letter to Clarendon in September: "The great Socialist Movement which began at Paris in February has or will over-run all Europe - Chartism and Repeal are nearly connected with it". (73) Clarendon was able therefore to repeat the tactics he had earlier employed of using the example of France as a means of rallying support for his cause. As he wrote to the Duke of Bedford on July 8, "the French have for the first time in their history been of

use to mankind by offering themselves as a warning instead of an example & proving the ruin that awaits all attempts to effect social regeneration by violence. This may keep our middle classes strait".

(74) The Lord Lieutenant felt himself to be sorely in need of support. He was again convinced that an outbreak was expected at any moment and yet felt frustrated that the Cabinet would not grant him the extra powers he needed. (75) The Cabinet was divided over his request and Hobhouse noted in his diary that "Clarendon knows nothing whatever of the House of Commons and thinks Governments have only to ask and have a bill".(76) Clarendon may have lacked Parliamentary experience but he was adept at applying political pressure and was determined to "poke a Cabinet into a sense of duty". (77) A barrage of letters was reinforced by the threat to resign, (78) and the letters to the Duke of Bedford were no doubt calculated to exert pressure on Russell from within his family. (79) At this critical juncture Clarendon sought the support of The Times in order to apply additional pressure on the Cabinet and to rally support for his cause in Ireland.

The Times once again proved to be an enthusiastic ally. Delane wrote on July 19 to reassure him: "You may rely upon the most effective support we can afford you in the struggle into which you have been at last forced by the traitors you have to deal with."(80) The paper's support was always purchased with information and the letter went to seek introductions to the military and police for a reporter called MacDonald who would be sent to report impartially "the facts" and thereby "assist the future historians of Ireland". For its part The Times every day between July 19 and 29 published leading articles designed to assist the Lord Lieutenant. In almost hysterical tones the paper fulminated with all its considerable rhetorical powers against the Irish. The contemporary racist stereotype was consistently drawn up to denigrate them and to show that "Orangemen" were "as superior to

the Celts in personal courage and strength as they are in loyalty and intelligence". (81) The point was easily proven since the article noted that "Every Englishman who has had the opportunity of comparing the two classes is persuaded that these million and a half are more than a match for the six or seven millions who claim to monopolize the Irish title and soil." Clarendon was given fulsome praise for his "energy, calmness, and skill", (82) while demands were made for extra powers on his behalf. (83) The Times was able, no doubt with Clarendon's help, to be precise about the particular powers he sought. On July 20 Russell received an urgent request from the Lord Lieutenant and that Habeas Corpus be suspended. (84) The request was considered in the Cabinet meeting of July 21 (85) and the same specific demand was made in The Times published earlier that day.

The main aim of The Times during this period was to repeat the tactics it had used in April and thereby convince the possessing classes in Ireland that Repeal was to be equated with a revolutionary movement which threatened the foundations of a society based on property rights. The fears which the newspaper had earlier orchestrated on London's behalf, were now transposed to the Dublin setting. The tone became more strident, however, and the appeal more blatant. A leading article of July 19 referred to "a war against all property, all law, all society" and asked "Shall.... Dublin repeat the scenes of February and June and the whole island be turned over to the demons of pillage, massacre, and despair?" The point was given greater emphasis in the edition of the following day when the Repeal movement was identified with "the confiscation of property; the destruction of credit, of trade, of income, of social and political integrity: the suicidal struggles of fanatical communism, the jealous extinction of rank and wealth, the open war of classes", while the issue of July 25 summed up

the whole argument: "It is the same conspiracy now as then, in Ireland as in France, against all that human intelligence has marked as worthy of reverence and respect." After the panic was over Clarendon duly acknowledged his indebtedness to Delane and bore witness to the impact of the articles: "You have done us right good service here, and I am much obliged to you..... Even the Ulster Repealers had begun to understand the real object of the movement, and to see that the "three infamous days" of Paris were in store, not for Dublin only, but every city in Ireland, ending in a red Republic."(86)

The disaster which The Times saw looming in Ireland was at once an armed rebellion, a servile and civil war and a communist revolution. (87) This was despite the fact that by its own admission there was in Ireland an armed force of 45,000 men including 10,000 police. (88) The alarm was widely felt in England, however, and was shared by the Government. A false message to the morning newspapers on July 27 announced a rebel triumph and military disaffection. (89) According to Viscount Morpeth, the result was that "the town was in consternation all day at the most alarming accounts from Ireland". (90) Russell abandoned his child's christening party and rushed to London to hold an emergency Cabinet meeting. (91) One of those who attended, Lord Campbell, noted the deep dismay of his colleagues and recorded that the Duke of Wellington was sent for and orders were rushed out for reinforcements of infantry, cavalry, artillery and ships of war.(92) The reality in Ireland was very different from the impression which prevailed in England. The suspension of Habeas Corpus, did not prevent but precipitated the rising since O'Brien and the Confederate leaders, anticipating their arrest, fled from Dublin and sought to raise support in the provinces. (93) A brief skirmish at Boulagh Common on July 29 between O'Brien's supporters and a force



of police was not pressed home because of O'Brien's determination to endanger life and property as little as possible and his few supporters melted away. (94)

The first detailed accounts of the attempted insurrection were published in The Times of July 31 and the Home Secretary received confirmation by means of the telegraphic dispatch received by the newspaper which Delane forwarded to him. (95) The Annual Register recorded that public anxiety concerning the anticipated outbreak in Ireland was allayed by an announcement in The Times and it went on to quote the relevant extract from the paper. (96) Having thus established its credentials in the area of Irish intelligence, The Times stamped upon the events its own interpretation. Once more the hyperbole of fear found an outlet in ridicule. Leading articles between August 1 and 4 developed upon what its report had indicated. The "poor crazy rebel" despite having 5,000 armed supporters was put to ignominious flight by the combined efforts of fifty policemen and an old widow woman who had seen O'Brien crawling on all fours in her cabbage patch. (97) The conclusion of the newspaper was that "never did rebellion make itself so ridiculous" and that "It surpasses the famous 10th of April.". (98) The verdict of The Times was widely repeated by contemporaries. Punch provided an appropriate illustration of the paper's description and quoted The Times as the source of the text which accompanied it. (99) Hobhouse rejoiced in his diary at the good news in The Times and used its version to describe O'Brien as "the poor crazy creature.....crawling on all fours in a Cabbage Patch & seized by an old woman". (100) Historians too have accepted the verdict of The Times. J.W. Dodds refers to "the famous battle of Widow McCormack's Cabbage Patch", (101) while J. Prest in quoting Hobhouse's comment is unwittingly echoing the paper. (102) D. Thompson in her most recent work on Chartism notes the way that the



and all the nations are now fraternising upon that desiderandum, they might be perjured into doing their duty." Delane promptly forwarded the letter to Dasent with instructions that it should be the basis of a leading article. (108) The result on August 1 was an article which incorporated all the points Clarendon had suggested: "There are certain prisoners whose trials are to come on in Dublin next week...It is said the Dublin shopkeepers are threatened by their own shopmen with ruin, and even death, if they do their duty in the jury-box, and allow the prisoners to be convicted...Do the Dublin bourgeois wish, by yielding to their domination, to see their city turned into another Paris?...We assure the tradesmen of Dublin it is their interest to do their duty. If they do not see this, let them listen to a noble appeal. The eyes of the world are upon them. All Europe watches the course of events in this country, and is constrained to do homage to our tranquillity, and to the regular and efficacious working of our laws. Let it then not witness such a scandal as the submission of our boasted jury to the dictates of an angry rabble." (109)

Compliance on this issue came easily to Delane. Indeed he personally regretted the easy victory of the authorities for, as he wrote to Reeve on August 1, "if the rebels had plundered a town or two and been defeated in a pitched battle, the bourgeois would have been frightened into taking vengeance". (110) Nevertheless The Times did what it could in order to stiffen the resolution of juries and to direct them to a verdict. In the last issue before the trials began the paper drew once more upon the fears of the possessing classes. Ireland, it claimed, had been threatened by a "Communist rebellion" and the struggle was not a political one at all but "a war begun between those who have something and those who have nothing". (111) On this occasion the newspaper was able to presume that its readers were

sufficiently aware of the nature of the threat and it did not refer to France as proof and exemplar. The point was repeated more succinctly at intervals throughout the trials. A leading article of August 12 declared that "The Green would soon have become a Red revolution" while one of August 19 referred to "Celtic Communists". In addition extracts were quoted from Confederate speeches and newspapers and the accused were pronounced guilty in The Times before they were convicted in court. (112) Delane attended the trial of Smith O'Brien at Clonmel in person. From there he continued to dictate the content of the leading articles on the subject. (113) One such article on October 6 began coyly with the statement that "It is not much our habit to comment upon a trial in which the life or liberty of a fellow subject may be involved until the conclusion of the proceedings". It made an exception in this case, however, and illustrated its point rather dramatically: "Had a body of French troops succeeded in reaching Tilbury....they could not have been more substantially occupied than was Mr SMITH O'BRIEN during the latter days of July in levying war against the QUEEN."

The role which The Times played in the Irish State trials was in many ways a re-enactment of the one it had performed earlier in the trials of the Chartists. It was The Times which had so stridently demanded the arrest of Chartist agitators in early June and the Attorney-General admitted at the trial of Fussell that the Government's attention had been drawn to the offence by the newspaper press and admitted that the prosecution had been brought to assuage public anxiety. (114) On June 12, the day on which the Central Criminal Court Sessions opened and on which the Grand Jury met to decide whether to endorse the bill of indictment, (115) The Times published in a leading article extracts from speeches made by Ernest Jones as far back

as April 2. In the subsequent trials of Fussell, Vernon and Williams for their parts in the meeting at Clerkenwell Green on May 29, the principal witness for the prosecution was F.T. Fowler, whose report had been originally published in The Times. The status of the paper was used by the Attorney-General to give weight to the evidence of this dubious witness. (116)

Beginning on July 5 the trials took place shortly after the June Days in Paris which The Times had represented so powerfully as the apogee of the social revolution which threatened all property. The convergent images of Chartist rioter and French revolutionary therefore received a sharper and even more menacing focus. The Times could take the association of the two for granted. On July 7 it stated in a leading article that "Revolution and Chartism have equally gone out of favour" and noted that within the space of two weeks "the Communists have been routed in Paris and the Chartists have been tried". The Attorney General in the trials of Sharp and Jones was able to make use of the association and played upon the fears of the jury by references to Communism, Jacobinism and French terrorism. (117) In the case of Vernon much was made of the fact that he had been at Clerkenwell Green in the company of a person who wore a moustache and had the appearance of a foreigner. Vernon protested in vain at the tactics of the Attorney-General "in endeavouring to make it appear that a gentleman because he had a moustache must be a foreigner, and so associating him with communism." (118) While the convicted were awaiting sentence, The Times on July 8 devoted a leading article to the punishments it considered suitable. In it the paper also took pride in the role it had played in persuading the Executive to act and in the fact that it had been signalled out for special vituperation by the prisoners and Chartists in general. The apparent justification of the paper's actions

lay in its defence of existing society and the property interests it represented: "A great conspiracy was for a long time in process of organization. Its blow was levelled at existing institution and classes of society..... Every man's house and every man's pocket were alike in danger from the promiscuous multitudes".(119)

The special enmity of the paper was reserved for Ernest Jones. His offence was deemed all the greater, claimed the paper, because he was educated and a barrister, (120) though it was no doubt the betrayal of his class rather than his profession which concerned The Times. Jones well knew the potency of his enemy and wrote in the Northern Star of July 1 that his case was lost since it had been pre-judged by The Times. On the day his trial began The Times once again quoted selectively from his speeches and stressed the association with what had happened in France: "Words such as those, and the tom-foolery of the reform banquets in France, carried further than the authors intended, have cost thousands of lives and millions of treasure". (121) In court the Attorney-General developed the same connection and seized upon Jones's use of the phrase "bringing the rich man's nose to the grindstone" in order to elaborate upon the horrors of social egalitarianism. (122) The Chief Justice in his summing up dwelt upon the implications of the same phrase at even great length. (123) In its comment on the Chartist trials the Northern Star referred to men "indicted as Chartists, and convicted as Communists". (124)

By the summer of 1848 The Times had created a composite image which linked together Chartists, Irish nationalists and French revolutionaries and associated them all with violent, criminal behaviour, with revolutionary aspirations and with social egalitarianism . Underpinned by crude nationalist sentiments the image

effectively integrated the basic fears of the possessing classes. The potency of that image was well appreciated by politicians who both contributed to its formation and sought to make use of it for their own purposes. During the Chartist trials in September The Times recalled the structuring of its analysis when it pointed out that though the Chartist actions might be contemptible or ridiculous "the Trafalgar-square rioters, and the mob who were to have met on Kennington-common and carried London by storm on the 10th of April" were acting against the background of "a reported Red Republican rising at Paris" and "an insurrection in Ireland". (125) The same leading article also recapitulated the paper's role in April when it declared that "we know how soon a panic may be inspired into a vast city where two millions of persons are collected together".

The crisis of 1848 was now over but the image projected by The Times had further use in helping to obliterate the recollection of Chartism and its impact. The association of Chartism with French Revolution and Irish insurrection enabled the movement to be depicted as an alien, irrational, temporary aberration wholly divorced from British traditions. At the same time the failure of Chartism to achieve the objectives ascribed to it could be used to demonstrate the strength and uniqueness of British institutions and the cohesive nature of its society. This interpretation of Chartism could be seen emerging in the leading article in The Times of September 29: "The trials at the Old Bailey present a singular contrast to the 10,000 prisoners, the 12,000 files of correspondence, and the 1,000,000 interrogatories of the judicial proceedings upon the Paris insurgents. Considering that London is now squaring accounts with a whole year's treason, the show is very poor." In its treatment of the accused Chartists The Times followed the logic of its analysis even further and turned them into foreigners. It



the events of April 10 have been distorted, but then in referring to July 19 in Ireland concludes that "all that was enacted was a farce".(103)

Even before the leaders of the abortive insurrection were arrested The Times was concerning itself with the problem of securing verdicts from Irish juries. (104) In earlier prosecutions against O'Brien and Meagher the juries had been unable to agree on a verdict. (105) Clarendon complained to Russell that as a result of threats and intimidation "Highly respectable persons offer to pay fines not be put on the panels". (106) He also sought to use The Times in order to bring pressure to bear upon those from whom juries were selected. A letter from Clarendon to Delane on July 27 contained the inducement of the latest information on Irish affairs and the assurance that Macdonald (whom the paper had sent to report on events) had been introduced to the Under-Secretary, while the Lord Lieutenant himself declared "I shall at all times have great pleasure in being useful to him". (107) The letter also made very clear what Clarendon wanted in return: "I fear we have little chance of getting a bold jury to try Dillon and Co. on the 8th of next month....The most atrocious threats are now circulated against those likely to be on the next juries, and the shopmen who are members of clubs (and they all are) tell their masters the horrible fate in store for those who permit the prisoners to be convicted. I think you might with excellent effect give a little advice to these men, and tell them that they are in the position of the National Guard of Paris, who, if they had flinched would all have been égorgés. Some appeal to the courage they are destitute of, to the honesty they are deficient in, and to the sense of duty they laugh at, might make them act as if they were endowed with those qualities. If their vanity is flattered too, by the eyes of all honest men in Europe being turned upon them, as the cause of order is the same everywhere,



was for this reason that the paper elevated Cuffay from his relatively minor role into being "the very chief of the conspiracy". (126) The paper could then conclude on September 29: "The English are not conspirators... The nation abhors it. CUFFEY..... is half a "nigger". Some of the others are Irishmen. We doubt if there are half-a-dozen Englishmen in the whole lot." (127) Having served to unite the possessing classes against Chartism in 1848, the image projected by The Times could also be used to divorce the movement from the mainstream of British history.

Notes for Chapter 8

- 1) See Chapter 4, note 9.
- 2) The Times, April 12, 1848.
- 3) According to D. Goodway O'Connor's informant was F.T. Fowler, "free-lance reporter to The Times" (D. Goodway London Chartism 1838-1848 (New York, 1982), p.137. Fowler was not the most reliable of witnesses, could not take shorthand and was not employed by The Times (See note 116).
- 4) The Morning Post on April reported upwards of 20,000 Chartists on Kennington Common, the Morning Chronicle and the Morning Herald of the same date reported 25,000. See table 13 in Goodway, op.cit., p.137.
- 5) C.C.F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, ed. L. Strachey, and R. Fulford, 8 vols. (1938), vol.6, p.51, April, 9, 1848.
- 6) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.98, col.285, Mr. Thornely, April 13, 1848.
- 7) The Times, April 26, 1848. The Times had in similar vein sought to undermine the validity of the petition of May 1842. "What may be the real worth of that document, as a measure of popular opinion, we have no means of estimating. Signatures, unfortunately, are so very easily manufactured, that the evidence which they afford can scarcely be held very conclusive".  
The Times, May 4, 1842.
- 8) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22. 7B, f.316, Lady Abercromby to Russell, April 19, 1848.
- 9) a) "Si le désordre eut triomphé out qu'il eut balancé les chances, il n'y aurait pas eu de limite à l'anarchie sur le continent et surtout chez nous".  
Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7B, f.304, Michel Chevalier to G.R. Porter, April 16, 1848.

b) "All is quiet - confidence is gradually re-establishing itself among the capitalists & the funds are rising - & yesterday having passed off quietly in London will, it is said, give more confidence to the capitalists & advance them still more"

Owen to Allsopp, April 11, 1848 in C. Tsuzuki, "Robert Owen and Revolutionary Politics", ed. S. Pollard and J. Salt, Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor (1971), p.25.

10) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.61

11) E. Halévy, A history of the English People in the Nineteenth Century: vol.iv, Victorian Years (1946; 1962 edn.), p.246.

D. Goodway has noted the point and concluded: "Preoccupation with the peculiarities of their own society has prevented English historians from postulating a connection between the events of April 10 and the determined treatment by the Provisional Government of the workers' demonstration in Paris on 16 April." Goodway, op.cit, p.78.

12) a) "the last phase of Chartism ended in ludicrous failure".

E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford, 1938), p.138.

b) "So many of the alleged signatures were forged and the threatened monster procession to Parliament was such a fiasco that the whole movement petered out".

D. Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914 (Harmondsworth, 1950), p.86.

c) "And so Chartism broke up amid ridicule and roars of caustic laughter".

J.W. Dodds, The Age of Paradox: A Biography of England 1841-1851 (1953), p.331.

d)"But in England what some worried souls thought would prove to be the revolution turned out instead to be a complete fiasco."

R.K. Webb, Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present (1969), p.275.

13) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.53.

14) C. Kingsley, Alton Locke Tailor and Poet. An Autobiography (1850; 1947 edn.), p.238.

- J. Saville, "Some aspects of Chartism in decline", Society for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin No.20 (Spring 1970), p.17.  
Goodway, op.cit., p.78.
- 15) S. Walpole, History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815, 6 vols. (1890; 1905 edn.) vol.v, p.193.
- 16) H. Paul, A History of Modern England, 5 vols. (1904), p.111.
- 17) Halévy, op.cit., vol.iv., p.244, The Times is quoted authoritatively throughout with the occasional reference to "the great independent paper" (pp 86 and 141).
- 18) a) "Chartism never recovered from the tragic fiasco of April 10, 1848".  
M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1918; 1966 edn.) p.292.  
b) "the fiasco of 1848".  
G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941, 1965 edn.), p.348.  
c) "the fiasco of the tenth of April".  
P.W. Slosson, The Decline of the Chartist Movement (New York 1916; repr.London 1967) p.102.
- 19) See for example, Saville op.cit., p.17.  
Goodway, op.cit., p.78.
- 20) The Times, May 4 and 6, 1848.
- 21) Punch, May 13, 1848, vol.14, p.200. See appendix II (e). The cartoon gave the same incorrect spelling of Mitchel's name which The Times always used. A reader's letter in the Northern Star of July 1, referred to the way that Punch took The Times as his text book and "especially latterly, has truly acted the part of buffoon at the bully's court".
- 22) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.98, col.590, G.A. Hamilton and Sir G. Grey, May 3, 1848.

- 23) Clar. dep. Irish (Bodleian Library, Oxford), box 10, Delane to Clarendon, May 9. (No year is indicated but the content clearly relates to 1848.)
- 24) R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854 (1854; 1969 edn.), p.331.
- 25) See E.L. Woodward and D. Thomson, note 12 and M. Hovell note 18.
- 26) Goodway, op.cit. pp.227 and 14-15.
- 27) J. Belchem, "1848 Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform" in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture 1830-1880 (1982), pp.289-91.  
D. Thompson, The Chartists (1984), pp.327-8.
- 28) HO 45, 2410D, Sir Thomas Arbuthnot to Home Office, May 21, 1848. See also similar reports from Arbuthnot on May 17 and 28 and June 1, 6 and 11.
- 29) D. Large, "London in the Year of Revolutions, 1848" in J. Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform (Oxford 1977), p.197. Large suggests 15,000 to 16,000 marchers. Goodway (op.cit. pp.81-2.) quotes F.T. Fowler's estimate of 50,000 to 60,000. Fowler is not the most reliable of witnesses, however. See note 116. Grey put the number at between 4,000 and 5,000. Broughton Diary (British Museum), Add. MS. 43,752, f.83, May 29, 1848.
- 30) HO 45, 2410A. See for example f.362 Higgins to Grey, June 5, 1848: "the conduct of the police was the most brutal and barbarous ever beheld", and the petition signed by over 100 people demanding an inquiry into the "wanton, cruel, and brutal exercise of authority".
- 31) The speech is given in J. Saville, Ernest Jones: Chartist. Selections from the Writings and Speeches of Ernest Jones with Introduction and Notes (1952), pp.102-5.

- 32) Open Letter from the Executive Committee of the National Charter Association "To Lord John Russell" in Northern Star, June 10, 1848.
- 33) HO 45, 2410A, Mrs. Hunt to Home Secretary, June 9, 1848 and Mr. Palmer to Home Secretary, June 12, 1848.
- 34) HO 45, 2410E, Revd. R. Montgomery to Russell, June 3, 1848.
- 35) "1848: Extracts from the Diaries of the Fourth Duke of Newcastle", Archives Department of the University of Nottingham in The Revolutions of 1848, Open University, A321, Unit 3 (1976), p.109.
- 36) On May 12 The Times declared: "We have put down Chartism". On June 2 it admitted: "Chartism is neither dead nor sleeping. The snake was scotched not killed on the 10th of April."  
Palmerston had written in similar words to Clarendon on April 11: "the snake is scotched not killed". (MSS. Clar. dep. c.524, Palmerston to Clarendon, April 11, 1848.) It is tempting to assume that the phrase was transmitted to The Times via Clarendon.
- 37) HO 45, 2410E, Mr. Johnson to Home Secretary, June 7, 1848.
- 38) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.73, June 3, 1848. The exasperation of the special constables no doubt partly explains the violent confrontation at Bishop Bonner's Fields on June 4, 1848.
- 39) The Times, June 1, 1848.
- 40) The Times of April 11 had referred to the six points of the Charter as "honest and allowable doctrines". The Morning Herald of the same day noted this statement with the same surprise and wondered "why has our contemporary waited until now to say so, when a word or two in reason might possibly have saved us all the agitation and alarm through which the metropolis has passed".
- 41) The Times, June 2, 1848.
- 42) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol. 99, col.331, Lord Brougham June 5, 1848.



- 43) RA C8/18, Queen Victoria to Russell, May 31, 1848. (Made available at PRO 28/134).
- 44) Punch, June 10, 1848, vol.14, p.240. These verses may well parody a poem published in the Northern Star of September 3, 1842. which ended:  
"Justice demands and Liberty Proclaims we must and shall be free!"
- 45) The Northern Star commented on June 10: "The Times predicts that there will be no difficulty in the Government obtaining verdicts against the accused, and the Times speaks for those who can accomplish the fullfilment of its predictions.
- 46) Letters from "A Special Constable", "Six Special Constables" and "A barrister", The Times, June 6, 1848. The Northern Star of June 10 claimed that these letters were either written by editors themselves or by the Government so that they could point to them "as manifestations of public opinion".
- 47) "Our reports of affairs in London today are vy. satisfactory. Chartism is evidently fast on the decline here altho. a few men may talk big and violently .....I send you a paper which I wish you would forward to the writer of some article." Archives of The Times. Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.32, Le Marchant to Delane, Thursday, (Can be dated to May 18 by reference to the events in Paris on May 15, 1848).
- 48) RA C56/84, Russell to Queen Victoria, June 1, 1848. (Made available at PRO 28/134)  
RA C56/86, Grey to Queen Victoria, June 4, 1848. (Made available at PRO 28/134)
- 49) Archives of The Times, Walter Papers, vol.9, no.329, C. Yardley (Chief Clerk to the Metropolitan Police) to Delane, June 2, 1848.

- 50) J. Saville, Ernest Jones: Chartism: Selections from the Writings and Speeches of Ernest Jones with Introduction and Notes (1952), p.31 and footnote (3) on the same page. The author appears to have been misled by the report in The Times of June 8 which claimed that warrants were issued for the arrest of Jones, Fussell, Williams and Sharpe on Tuesday June 6 and that they were all taken into custody during the course of the day.
- 51) The details of Jones' arrest are to be found in the Northern Star, June 10 and the Daily News, June 8, 1848.
- 52) This extract from the Manchester Guardian appeared in the same edition of The Times which in its law report announced that the Chartists had all been arrested on the same day. See note 50.
- 53) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, June 7, 1848.
- 54) Greville, op.cit., vol.6, pp.75-6, June 10, 1848.
- 55) D. Goodway has argued that London Chartism reached its revolutionary peak in the summer of 1848 and he states that "The Chartist leadership would probably have welcomed the Bonner's Fields demonstration developing into a rising. (Goodway, op.cit., p.86). D. Large has suggested that "The most important difference, however, between the preparations for Whit Monday an 10 April..... was that there was genuine and not pretended alarm in the inner circles of authority about the outcome of 12 June. (D. Large, "London in the Year of Revolutions, 1848" in J. Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform (Oxford, 1977), p.200.
- 56) "Our braves will wait to see what is done in England" Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, f.301, Clarendon to Grey, June 12, 1848.
- 57) "The Confederates and Chartists seem to have the greatest confidence in their power; and a day is named, tho. known at present to but a few when they will rise armed en masse". HO45, 2410A, f.286, unsigned memo dated June 1, 1848. See also f.288 and f.289 for police assessments. Detailed enquiries were also made concerning the purchase of firearms from Brimingham manufacturers. HO 45, 2410B.

- 58) HO 45, 2410A, ff.312-7, reports from G. Davis.
- 59) WO 30/81 "Military Arrangements for Monday 12th June".  
Goodway. op.cit., pp.85-7.  
On April 10 over 8,000 soldiers, 1,231 pensioners and 4,000 police were involved.
- 60) WO 30/81, Memorandum from the Duke of Wellington, June 9, 1848.
- 61) Clar. dep. Irish, box 12, Grey to Clarendon, June 10 1848.
- 62) Broughton Diary (British Library) Add. MS. 43,752, vol.ix, f.95, June 11, 1848.
- 63) Goodway, op.cit., pp.85-7.
- 64) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f. 41.  
Saturday. The note can be dated to June 10 by its content. On that day a leading article had dealt with the Navigation Laws.
- 65) Extracts from the speech of Ernest Jones in the National Convention on April 4 were quoted in The Times of April 10 and June 12, 1848.
- 66) The Times, June 13, 1848.
- 67) "Forty thousand Irish labourers of the metropolis were invited to muster under EMMETT's name. The fascies of the Republic and the crimson cap of liberty, were displayed to attract their admirers. There was nothing exclusive in the procession, which by the variety in its ranks invited the accession of all. What was the result?"  
The Times, April 11, 1848.
- 68) The Times, June 13, 1848.  
Punch, June 24, 1848, vol.14, p.264. See appendix II (f).
- 69) D. Goodway has noted that "Remembrance by the upper and middle classes of the renewed alarm of June 1848 slipped away almost entirely." Goodway, op.cit., p.87.

- 70) "Definite arrangements..... were being made for an uprising which would probably have taken place during the weekend of 16-18 June" Goodway, op.cit., p.89.
- 71) MSS. Clar. dep. (Bodleian Library, Oxford) c.521, Greville to Clarendon, July 5, 1848.
- 72) E.E. Antrobus, London, Its Danger And Its Safety: Suggestions For Its Present and Future Protection, For The Consideration Of All Classes of Its Inhabitants (1848), p 5.
- 73) Clar. dep. Irish, box 16, Sir William Hervey to Clarendon, September 10, 1848.
- 74) Clar. dep. Irish, box 80, Clarendon to Bedford, July 8, 1848.
- 75) a) "My advice is not taken, every day lost is a year in revolution & yet the danger is so real & so pressing that I cannot resign as I wd wish to do."  
Clar. dep. Irish, box 80, Clarendon to Bedford, July 19, 1848.  
b) On July 26 Clarendon announced that he had sent his wife and children to London for safety as "they wd be a great additl. anxiety in the event of an outbreak".  
Ibid., Clarendon to Bedford, July 26, 1848.  
c) "Clarendon apprehends immediate outbreak. The Cabinet wish him to proclaim Dublin and other towns, but they do not see their way to any efficient legislation against the Clubs" Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, July 18, 1848.
- 76) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,753, f.12, Aug.7, 1848. According to Hobhouse the members of the Cabinet opposed to the granting of extra powers to the Lord Lieutenant included Lord Grey, Sir George Grey, Sir Charles Wood and himself. Ibid., Add. MS. 43.752, ff.130-133, July 19, 20 and 21, 1848.
- 77) "It is not pleasant to have to poke a Cabinet into a sense of duty, or to extract by threats, as if for a personal favour, that which should be readily acceded to when the public necessity for it was proved and manifest. However that has been my task."

Clarendon to Greville, August 1848 in Sir H. Maxwell, The Life and Letters of George William Frederick, Fourth Earl of Clarendon, 2 vols. (1913) vol.1, p.290.

78) Clar. Dep. Irish, Letterbook vol.2, letters to Russell and Grey, July 1848. "Against the clubs a law of some kind was necessary. No one could doubt that; and so I insisted making for the third time my remaining here conditional upon it."

Clarendon to Greville, August 1848, in Maxwell, op.cit., p.290.

79) Clarendon must have anticipated that the Duke of Bedford would make good use of his letters. On July 26 he confided to Bedford that "I never admitted to a human being that I had asked for increased powers." (Clar. dep. Irish box 80, Clarendon to Duke of Bedford, July 26, 1848) Clarendon's lifelong friend, Charles Greville, was subsequently shown the same letter by the Duke at the Goodwood race meeting.

Greville, op.cit., vol.6, p.95, July 31, 1848.

80) Clar. dep. Irish, box 10, Delane to Clarendon, July 19 (1848) The content makes it clear that the letter was written in 1848.

81) The Times, July 22, 1848. See also the editions of July 29, 21 and 29, 1848.

82) Ibid., July 21, 1848.

83) Ibid., July 20 and 21, 1848.

84) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, f.132, July 20, 1848.

85) Ibid., f.133, July 21, 1848.

86) Archives of The Times, Delane correspondence, vol.3, f.46, July 27, 1848.

The leading articles in The Times appear to have had a considerable impact on the Confederates themselves. Clarendon wrote to Reeve on June 18: "The arts. in The Times have been quite admirable - if

there was any criticism to make upon them it wd, be that they are rather too taunting about the cowardice of the wd. be rebels. I hear it has riled them awfully & that they say they must do something desperate in order to show they are not what they are supposed to be."

MSS. Clar. dep. c.534. Clarendon to Reeve, June 18, 1848.

87) The Times, July 20 and 22, 1848.

88) Ibid., July 22, 1848.

89) The Times printed the report in its late editions of July 27 but added a note of caution. It did this because, for very good reason, it felt it could rely upon its own sources of information to provide the earliest intelligence. (The Times of July 27 and 28, 1848).

The hoax was perpetrated on the directors of the Electric Telegraph Co. in Liverpool which would have been the source of information concerning events in Southern Ireland. The Cabinet concluded that the message had been sent in order to raise the Irish in London and the manufacturing districts. (Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,752, f.138, July 27, 1848).

The impact of the report makes clear why Grey took over the Electric Telegraph Co. in April. Life of John Lord Campbell, M.S. Hardcastle (ed.), 2 vols. (1881), vol.2, pp.242-3, July 28, 1848.

90) Morpeth Diary, Castle Howard, July 27, 1848.

91) S. Walpole, The Life of Lord John Russell, 2 vols. (1889), vol.1, p.73.

92) Life of John, Lord Campbell, M.S. Hardcastle (ed.), 2 vols. (1881), vol.2, p.243.

93) Spencer Walpole noted this important point in his work of 1890: "It is possible, indeed, that the abortive attempt at an uprising would not have occurred if ministers had not resolved on a fresh measure."



S. Walpole, A History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815, 6 vols. (1890; 1905 edn.), vol.v, p.192.

See also F.S. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (1971; 1973 edn.) p.110.

- 94) At Boulagh Common in County Tipperary O'Brien and a band of 500 peasants armed mainly with pikes confronted a small force of police who were occupying the farmhouse of Mrs. McCormack. Since five children were held hostage in the farmhouse by the police, O'Brien felt unable to attack it. (E. Norman, A History of Modern Ireland (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.135).  
F.S. Lyons notes that O'Brien "was adamant that as little damage as possible should be caused to property ." (Lyons, op.cit., p.110).
- 95) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,753, f.4, July 31, 1848.
- 96) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.95.
- 97) The Times, Aug. 1, 2, and 4.
- 98) Ibid., Aug. 1, 1848.
- 99) Punch, Aug. 12, 1848, vol. 15, p.69. See appendix II (g).
- 100) Broughton Diary, Add. MS. 43,753, f.4, July 31, 1848.
- 101) J.W. Dodds, The Age of Paradox: A Biography of England 1841-1851 (1953), p.333.
- 102) J. Prest, Lord John Russell (1972), p.287.
- 103) D. Thompson, The Chartists (1984), pp.316 and 324.
- 104) The Times, Aug. 1, 1848.
- 105) The Times did its best to secure a conviction by repeating the prosecutions's case and concluding "The jury must be very Irish which would not find Mr. W.S. O'Brien guilty of sedition." The Times, May 17, 1848.

- 106) Russell Papers, PRO 30/22, 7C, f.375, Clarendon to Russell, Aug. 21, 1848.
- 107) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.46, Clarendon to Delane, July 27, 1848. The letter is a reply to Delane's of July 19 which is referred to on page 267.
- 108) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.47, Delane to Dasent, Sunday (July, 30, 1848). The content enables this date to be identified.
- 109) Clarendon's letter also protested at the amount of assistance received by the Confederates from the United States: "the amount of assistance received from America appears to be considerable, and sympathisers with whole cargoes of arms and ammunition are said to be on their way - a pretty outcry there would have been in the United States if an Englishman had taken any part against their abominations in Mexico, which did not belong to them!"  
The Times duly incorporated these points in its leading article of August 1: "There are said to be several cargoes of sympathizers, with money and arms, on their way from the States..... we need not stop to ask what the Yankees would have said if we had given sympathy, money, arms and men to independent Mexico, when they were wantonly invading it."
- 110) Archives of The Times, Delane Letters, Delane to Reeve, August 1, 1848.
- 111) The Times, Aug. 5, 1848.
- 112) Ibid., Aug. 12 and 15, 1848.
- 113) Archives of The Times, Delane Correspondence, vol.3, f.63, Delane to Dasent, Sept., 1848.
- 114) Reports of State Trials, New Series, vol.vi, 1842-48, ed. J.E.P. Wallis (1894), Trial of J.J.I. Fussell, col.727, July 5, 1848.

- 115) The use of a Grand jury for this purpose ended in September 1933. Jowitt's Dictionary of English Law (1959; 1877 edn.), p.869.
- 116) F.T. Fowler was a former newspaper proprietor and bankrupt who, as defence counsel showed, had a rather shady background. His evidence secured the conviction of Fussell who denied uttering the assassination remark in the way it was reported. Fowler, on his own admission could not take short-hand and the only corroboration of his evidence came from H.J. Potter who worked with Fowler, shared the proceeds with him and lived in the same house. Reports of State Trials, New Series, vol.vi, 1842-48, ed. J.E.P. Wallis (1894) Trial of J.J.I. Fussell. cols. 734-40.
- 117) a)"Very cunningly he made sundry allusions to "Communism" and "French terrorism," well knowing that the Jury knew nothing of Communism but by evil report". Northern Star, July 15, 1848.  
b)Reports of State Trials, New Series, vol.vii, 1848-50, ed. J.E.P. Wallis (1896). The Queen against Dowling, col.390.
- 118) Reports of State Trials, New series, vol.vi, 1842-48, ed. J.E.P. Wallis (1894), The Queen against J. Williams and W.J. Vernon, col.822.
- 119) The Northern Star's reply on July 15 referred to The Times as the "Puddledock bully". Puddle dock was the name of that part of the Thames embankment nearest Printing House Square.
- 120) The Times, July 11, 1848.
- 121) Ibid..
- 122) Reports of State Trials, New Series, vol.vi, 1842-48, ed. J.E.P. Wallis. The Queen against Ernest Jones, col.786.
- 123) Ibid., cols.813-5.

124) Northern Star, July 15, 1848.

125) The Times, Sept.28, 1848.

126) Goodway points out that Cuffay was not in fact one of the leaders or originators of the Chartist conspiracy of 1848. Goodway, op.cit., p.94.

127) The Times, as with Mitchel, consistently misspelt Cuffay's name.

## Conclusion

The 1830s and 1840s were a traumatic period in British history when a new society was taking shape against a background of rapid economic and social change. Confronted by growing social protest in a variety of forms, the possessing classes closed ranks in order to protect their most vital interests. The Whig reforms of Parliament and the Municipalities, and the Conservative reforms culminating in the repeal of the Corn Laws indicated the extent to which the traditional élite was willing and able to effect changes which made significant concessions to the middle classes whilst nevertheless it was able to retain its own dominant position. These reforms also represented important ideological concessions since they assumed a more open, though hierarchical, society based on property in a wide interpretation of the term. Playing a key role in the emergence of that society were the upper middle classes who by their wealth and apparent social status blurred the raw edges of rivalry between the upper and middle classes and represented the new fusion of interests, while in their professional capacities they defined and articulated the nature of the new society.

Having added to its sales and stature by its representation of the interests of the middle classes in general, The Times had during the 1840s moved closer to the upper middle classes. The commercial success of the newspaper depended upon their purchasing power, its columns exhibited their literary talents, and its ideological content reflected their particular view of society. That view was especially significant in the 1840s because of the influence exerted by the metropolitan élite over the rest of the country. The Times as a result of its dominance over the newspaper press not only reflected but also

reinforced that influence. It also used it to enhance its own status and to project a potent and enduring image of itself.

The year 1848 put the new social order to the test since the French revolution appeared to encapsulate all the deepest fears of the possessing classes. The treatment of the revolution in The Times indicated the nature of those fears and the positive values which were proclaimed as a buttress against them. Functioning within the consensual values it shared with its readers, the newspaper played its ideological role of constructing reality within those values. The Times was also able to exert a direct influence upon events themselves as was indicated in 1848 when the continental crisis spread to Britain itself. Against the background of continental revolution, the threat of Irish insurrection and the resurgence of domestic Chartism appeared particularly menacing. The Times added considerably to those fears by structuring its news and comment within the framework of meaning it had already established for dealing with the French revolution. Thus both Irish nationalism and Chartism were seen by many of the possessing classes as constituting a revolutionary threat to the very foundations of British society. Powerful images of both movements were projected by The Times and they had a deep and powerful resonance within its readership.

April 10 acted as a focal point for the fears of its readers and demonstrated the ability of The Times to shape, amplify and focus opinion on a specific issue and to convert it into action. The panic of April 10 was largely inspired and orchestrated by The Times which recognized a strong movement of opinion amongst its readers and sought to put itself at its head, to lead and to direct it to particular objectives. In orchestrating this campaign The Times sought to repeat the role it had performed during the Reform agitation of the 1830s, to



live up to the image it had created for itself in the 1840s, and also to satisfy its commercial objectives by outselling its competitors. The mobilization of the special constables and the nature of the enemy they perceived were both unwitting testimonies to the potency of the paper.

That potency was well appreciated by politicians who had long experience of exploiting the newspaper's incessant need of news and informed comment in order to use it for their own purposes. They were assisted in this by the social predilections of Delane and Reeve and by the newspaper's projected image of itself which rendered it oblivious of the extent to which it was in fact being manipulated. Clarendon was therefore able in 1848 to use the newspaper to rally the possessing classes in Ireland while his colleagues in the Cabinet used it for similar purposes at home. The possessing classes were summoned as jurymen as well as special constables and The Times was equally potent in both respects.

While The Times sought to influence verdicts and sentences delivered in the courts, it also helped determine the judgement of contemporaries on the events themselves. The ridicule attached to the Chartists on April 10 and the Irish in May and August owed much to the conclusions of the paper while the dismissal of June 12 as a non-event testified to the same influence.

Historians, too, have tended to accept uncritically the judgements of The Times. The accessibility of the paper, the quality of its writing, the gravity of its tone, and the particular ethos attached to it, have made it an almost irresistible source for historians. All too often the paper has been selectively quoted as an objective and authoritative source of fact, or has been used as both proof and evidence of the existence of a single indentifiable public opinion.

Till very recently the judgements of The Times on the Chartists and the Irish in 1848 were the orthodoxies of history.

Study of The Times in 1848 reveals the paper as powerful agent functioning within the economic, political and ideological structures of contemporary society. That study also elucidates the events of 1848 as seen from the perspective of a most important element within that society. In this respect 1848 was a year of critical importance in the emergence of the new society of the 1830s and 1840s. The union of the possessing classes which underpinned the new social order appeared to be overtly challenged by the forces which had largely prompted the union in the first instance. The threat from below had finally materialized. The defeat of that threat finally proved the strength and viability of that new society. Both the upper and middle classes had acted promptly and decisively to defend their vital interests and in this sense Chartism was the anvil on which the union of the possessing classes was finally forged.

Historians have noted that, after the upheavals and traumas of the 1830s and 1840s, there followed two decades of relative stability. The title of W.L. Burn's work, The Age of Equipose, seems most appropriate for a period when the dangers which had threatened for so long seemed to have receded and when British institutions and the particular qualities of the English seemed to have guaranteed for these islands a providential role in mankind's future. (1) Such was the view of the possessing classes who rejoiced in the new surge of economic growth and the apparent removal of the threat from below. Many former Chartists appear to have acquiesced to some extent in these views. Chartism as a movement was discredited by the end of 1848 and there occurred a hiatus in the expression of radicalism which eventually re-emerged in a very different form from that which it had

adopted in the 1840s. (2) In these developments the events of 1848 were of great significance.

The Times of 1848 reveals the way that the shift in attitude was already taking place and throws light on the reasoning which lay behind this. The background of continental revolutions had given the Chartist and Irish disturbances of 1848 their apparent menace. The failure of those disturbances enabled the contrast between what had happened here and the events on the continent to be elevated into the proof positive of that assertion of the superiority of British institutions and the unique cohesion of British society, which had been so stridently proclaimed during the 1830s and 1840s. The particular interests of the possessing classes were now equated with the national history and the national destiny. The Annual Register put the point very clearly in its summary of the events of the year: "The security which under the protection of Providence this country derives from its free and popular constitution was never more signally exemplified than during the year....While almost every throne on the Continent was emptied or shaken by revolution, the English monarchy, strong in the loyal attachment of the people, not only stood firm in the tempest, but appeared even to derive increased stability from the events that convulsed foreign kingdoms." (3)

The importance of nationalism in the revolutions of 1848 has long been recognized. Throughout Western Europe nationalism was a radical creed which added significantly to the dilemmas of liberal revolutionaries. Everywhere it was the middle classes who both formulated and popularized the doctrines. In Britain, however, the middle classes had already been to a large extent integrated within the existing order and nationalism was therefore used, not to change society, but to stabilize it. The Times reveals the extent to which

crude national feelings could be aroused and used to divorce the Irish and the Chartists from British society, to rally its readers against a foreign threat and ultimately to reinforce the moral drawn from the events of 1848. Historians have recently shown how reactionary governments in the later decades of the nineteenth century became skilled in using nationalism as a means of achieving social cohesion.

(4) The evidence of The Times shows that Britain experienced a form of 'social imperialism' long before Bismarck is supposed to have begun the practice in Germany in the 1870s.

The Times therefore played an important role in mid-nineteenth-century British society. It functioned, however, not in the way it saw itself, as an independent part of the representative institutions of the country, but as an integral part and powerful buttress of the existing order. It did this, not because of the ideological commitment of its owner and staff, nor even because of the way it was manipulated by politicians. The Times, in the last resort, supported the status quo because of its nature as a newspaper. As a newspaper The Times sought to identify with its purchasers, to perceive reality through their eyes, to represent their opinions and on occasion to anticipate them and orchestrate them into a campaign. In this way The Times both defined and defended the values of a most powerful section of the existing order.

Notes for the conclusion

- 1) W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise (1964).  
See also G. Best, Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875 (1971), p.228,  
A. Briggs, Victorian People (Harmondsworth 1955), p.11.
  
- 2) J. Saville, "Some Aspects of Chartism in Decline", Society for the Study of Labour History, Bulletin no. 20, Spring 1970, pp.16-7.
  
- 3) Annual Register for 1848 (1849), p.124.  
Punch in its reflections at the end of the year made the same point. Punch, Dec.23 1848, vol.15, p267. See appendix II(h).
  
- 4) The classic statement of social imperialism was made by H.U. Wehler. "Bismarck's Imperialism 1862-1890", Past and Present, no.48, Aug.1970. For recent criticisms of the rigid way the concept has been applied see I.L.D. Forbes, "Social Imperialism and Wilhelmine Germany", Historical Journal, 22(2), 1979.

## Appendix I. Newspapers quoted or referred to in the text

### Daily News

Established in 1846 with Charles Dickens briefly as its first editor, the paper, selling in 1848 at 3d. as opposed to the 5d. of its competitors, had an average circulation of 11,316 and was second in its sales only to The Times. ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", Parliamentary Papers, vol.xvii (1851), Appendix 4) It regarded itself as the Liberal organ of the middle classes and strongly advocated the doctrines of Political Economy. Throughout 1848 it urged reform and not repression and placed particular emphasis upon reform of the tax system and an extension of the franchise to include skilled artisans. The leading articles of the paper were particularly critical of The Times which it saw as the reactionary organ of the aristocracy. (Daily News, June 24, 1848.) Between April 11 and April 15 the paper produced a most penetrating analysis of the role of The Times in generating the panic of April 10.

### Morning Advertiser

Established in 1793 the paper was the organ of the brewing interests. Popularly referred to as "The Tap-tub" (Northern Star, June 17, 1848) it had an average circulation in 1848 of 4,930 though its readership was considerably higher because of its availability in public houses. ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", op.cit. Appendix 4) Liberal in its principles it advocated free trade and an extension of the franchise. It consistently distinguished between Chartists and "the dangerous classes of London" and was very critical of the way The Times attempted to anticipate any movement of opinion amongst its readers: "The Times is consistent in one thing only: it is consistent in its inconsistency". (Morning Advertiser, June 1, 1848.)



### Morning Chronicle

Established in 1770 the paper had been the great rival of The Times in the 1830s when it was used by the Whigs to try to break the monopoly of that paper. In 1848 its circulation had dropped to an average of 3,687, ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", op. cit., Appendix 4) and in February of that year it was purchased by a group of Peelites. Throughout the period of Chartist disturbances the paper stressed that the need to eliminate disaffection and also to alleviate distress, which was to be achieved by reducing the burdens of the poor and the provision of cheap food through the ending of protection.

### Morning Herald

Established in 1781 the paper sold in 1848 an average of 4,279 copies. ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", op. cit., Appendix 4) Describing itself as "Monarchical and Conservative", (April 3, 1848) it was organ of the Protectionists and throughout 1848 it was locked in conflict with the Morning Chronicle which it referred to as "the motley PEEL - LINCOLN print". (February 26, 1848) Paternalistic in its approach to social problems it diagnosed the "let-alone" system as the principal cause of society's ills and advocated protection as the only solution. It was also critical of the shifts in the attitude of The Times and noted with some disdain that it "aspires to be the index of public opinion". (February 26)

### Morning Post

Established in 1722 its circulation in 1848 averaged 3,034. ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps. op. cit., Appendix 4) Tory, High Church and strongly Protectionist it claimed to be "the organ of the Aristocracy and the fashionable world". (C. Mitchell, The Newspaper Press Directory (1847) pp.66-7) Social paternalism, economic

protectionism and strict religious observance were its solutions to the domestic problems of 1848 which it claimed were caused by the greed of the middle classes who had beaten down the wages of working people. (April 4, 1848) It recognized the influence of The Times as "the organ of the great mercantile interest" (March 3, 1848) and put down that paper's tergiversations to its determination to follow blindly where the middle classes led. (April 13, 1848)

#### Northern Star

Established as a weekly stamped paper in 1837 by Feargus O'Connor the paper had an average circulation in 1848 of 12,048. ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", op. cit., Appendix 4) Though usually containing a front-page letter from O'Connor the paper set out to represent all aspects of Chartism. After G.J. Harney's appointment as editor in 1845 the paper became more internationalist in its perspective. Throughout 1848 it declaimed against "the Prostitute Press" and "the ruffianly Press-Gang" which had so effectively distorted events in France and Chartist activities at home. (See in particular the articles of June 10 and June 17 written by Harney under the pseudonym L'Ami du Peuple) Looking back on the year from December 23 it argued that there had been "a Press conspiracy against Labour and its rights all over Europe" which had resulted in hysteria among the upper and middle classes. The particular attention and venom of the paper was invariably reserved for "the truculent Times" or "the Puddledock bully" (June 10 and July 1) and this in its own way was an acknowledgement of the influence of that particular paper.

Standard

An evening paper with an average circulation in 1848 of 2,091 ("Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps", op. cit., Appendix 4) the paper's views were Conservative and Protectionist. Like other evening papers it drew heavily upon the news and comment of the morning papers and as befitted its politics it was particularly indebted to the Morning Herald. Like the Daily News the paper stressed the element of ridicule which attached to the massive preparations of April 10.



ALFRED THE SMALL,  
DISGUISED AS A LITTLE WARBLER, VISITING THE IRISH CAMP;  
BEING A GRAND HISTORICAL PARODY UPON ALF—D THE GR—AT VISITING THE DANISH DITTO;  
*And Intended for a Fresco in the New Houses of Parliament.*

Appendix II. Cartoons from Punch

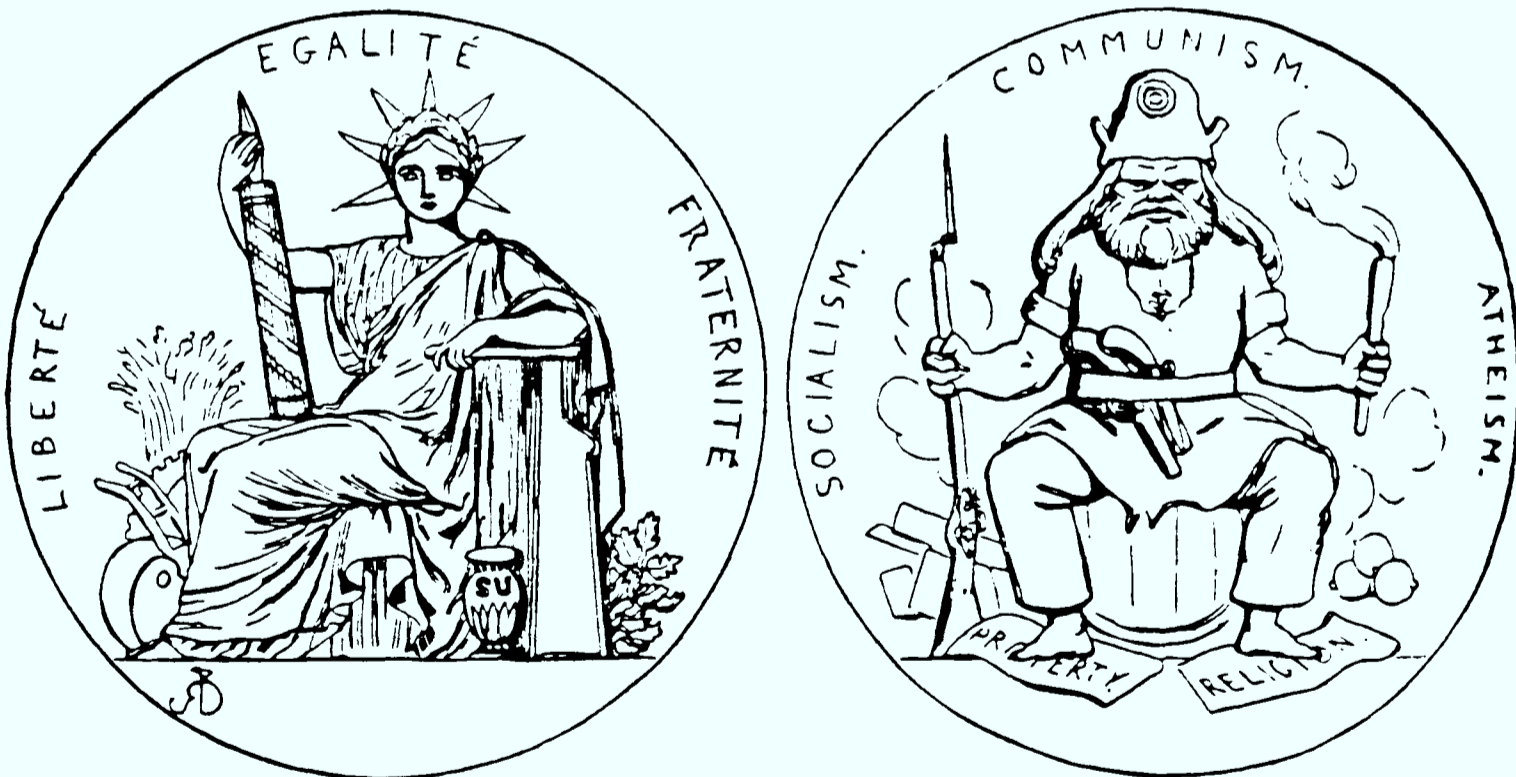
a) Sept. 16, 1848, vol. 15, p.121.

The cartoon relates to the visit of Lord John Russell to Ireland in September and is typical of the way that the Irish were treated in Punch at this time. They are depicted with ape-like features and sullen down-turned mouths. Clay pipes and drunkards' noses are recurring features, while their squalor is emphasized by their unkempt appearance and the presence of animals, particularly pigs. In this particular cartoon the Repeal Movement is associated with violence and French revolution. A careful distinction is also made between Celtic Irish and those of Saxon origin.



Property and religion are depicted as the bases of society which is threatened by a French Republic which conceals behind its bland promises the grim reality of violent social upheaval. A distinction is made between Socialism and Communism but both are part of the same fundamental threat to society.

The cartoon reveals the fears of the possessing classes of revolution from below and the danger posed by new social doctrines which would inevitably lead to the same disastrous end. France had suffered the fate which threatened all.



THE REPUBLICAN MEDAL,

AND

ITS REVERSE.



The image of the swarthy, bearded French agitator was common at the time. The Attorney-General felt able to draw upon it at the trial of the Vernon. (See Chapter 8, p.274) The menacing appearance of the Frenchman contrasts with that of the robust, cheerful English workingmen. The cartoon links foreign agitators with the disturbances in the capital and incorporates the much recounted tale of the Frenchman knocked down by the butcher boy.

#### HOW TO TREAT A FOREIGN PROPAGANDIST.

We are glad to find that the dirty long-bearded foreign Propagandists are coming in for the sort of treatment they deserve. Everybody knows the story of the French revolutionist lamenting the other day in Trafalgar Square the want of pluck of the British people, when a British butcher boy, taking off his coat, gave the *brave republicain* such a sound thrashing that its echo might have been heard half way down

Charing Cross. This treatment of a foreign Propagandist may have been a little too summary, perhaps; but at all events there can be no harm in our expressing a hope that the hint will be good-humouredly followed up; and should any foreigner of any description begin to prate his revolutionary stuff, or doubt English pluck, why—



WE TRUST NO ONE WOULD EVER THINK OF SUCH A THING AS PUTTING THE FRENCH AGITATOR INTO THE FOUNTAINS AT TRAFALGAR SQUARE



## JOHN BULL'S ALIEN ACT.

Bull. "I'LL 'PROPAGANDA' YOU, YOU MEDDLING FRENCH SCOUNDREL. TAKE THAT——"

d) April 29, 1848, Vol. 14, p.179.

The cartoon, which rejoices in the Aliens Act, reflects the contemporary hysteria concerning French propagandists who were thought to be bent on spreading to this country their own ills. Of these the most menacing appeared to be Communism. The monkey-like stereotype of the Frenchman contrasts with that of the irate John Bull who has behind him the defiant citadel and the might of the fleet.





e) May 13, 1848, vol. 14, p.200.

This cartoon reveals the close connection between the humour of Punch and the coverage of events by The Times. A leading article of May 9, which stressed the cowardice of the Irish Confederates during the Limerick disturbances, referred specifically to O'Brien's black-eye, to Meagher "of the Sword" and likened Mitchel to a monkey. Punch also follows The Times in misspelling Mitchel's name. The cartoon celebrates the apparent triumph of "moral force" but behind it stand serried ranks of soldiers.

The fears which the intended demonstration of June 12 aroused in the possessing classes were released, as they had been in April, by the ridiculing of the Chartists rather than those who had so over-reacted. The shower of rain served both The Times and Punch as the source for their humour.

## THE PRESERVER OF THE PUBLIC PEACE.







### THE IRISH BOBADIL.

*Bobadil (on this occasion)* . . . BY THE KING OF M—NST—R.

*The Gulls* . . . BY TWO NOTORIOUS FELONS ABOUT TOWN.

"The fact is this—that there are at present in occupation of our country some 40,000 armed men in the livery and service of England; and the question is—how best and soonest to kill and capture these 40,000 men."—*Vide "Times."*

g) Aug. 12, 1848, vol. 15, p.69.

Fear was once again turned to ridicule. The treatment of the abortive insurrection is treated by Punch in a manner strongly reminiscent of The Times. The newspaper frequently referred to Smith O'Brien as "King of Munster" and his appearance in the cartoon is based on details given in The Times of August 2. The text, which accompanies the cartoon, acknowledges the indebtedness of Punch to The Times.



JOHN BULL SHOWING THE FOREIGN POWERS HOW TO MAKE A CONSTITUTIONAL PLUM-PUDDING.

h) Dec. 23, 1848, vol. 15, p.267.

The ritual celebrations of the superiority of British institutions and society intensified as the panic of 1848 receded. This cartoon reflects the Whig interpretation of history and rejoices in the distinctive British attributes made manifest in their past. The commercial press was particularly inclined to rate liberty of the press as one of Britain's greatest blessings. The result of Britain's especially favoured lot was a plump and prosperous John Bull. An envious Europe looks on, while Louis Philippe bemoans the lot of the dispossessed rulers of 1848.

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