

By George Gerbner

Ideological Perspectives and Political Tendencies in News Reporting

A case study of "L'affair Amiel" shows that France's emerging commercial press does not escape from politics; its ideological perspectives lie between those of the Left Press and the Right, but closer to the latter.

► The basic editorial function is not performed through "editorials" but through the selection and treatment of all that is published. An earlier study on "Press Perspectives in World Communication"¹ indicated how this process of total selection and relative emphasis expresses and cultivates those aspects of national perspectives in world political communication which serve the industrial and social role of media in their own societies. The subject of the present inquiry is the related proposition that, in fact, all news are views; that all editorial choice patterns in what and what not to make public (and in what proportion, with what emphasis, etc.) have an ideological basis and a political dimension rooted in the structural characteristics of the medium; that such ideological perspectives and political tendencies will be expressed and cultivated through presumably non-political news as much as, or perhaps even more than, through overtly political reporting, and in the commercial press as well as in the "party press."

Our case study inquired into the cov-

erage of a criminal event in the French press. The French press is in the process of transformation from a "party press" to a commercially-sponsored press system. Both types of newspapers exist side-by-side. They differ mainly in their criteria of news selection and editing. The party press selects news and views according to standards relevant to its political clients' ideological perspectives. In a multi-party system, it creates and cultivates publics of different—and at times radically opposed—political tendencies. The commercial press selects material according to standards relevant to its clients—the advertisers'—need for broad mass appeal. It creates and cultivates a public perspective which may cut across party lines.

The event was the probably unintended (but not entirely accidental) fatal shooting of a student by a teacher. The underlying political dimension of the reporting of any event, and especially an event involving education in France, found expression in the news coverage. Before giving an account of the coverage itself and of the "ideological dialogue" our analysis attempted to isolate and reconstruct, we shall consider the context of relevant circumstances and the tense and critical nature of the times.

► The author is the dean of The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania. The material was collected in connection with a larger project inquiring into the portrayal of education in several countries. The author expresses his thanks for the assistance given him by Evelyne Sullerot and Marie-Claude Gardelle.

¹ George Gerbner, "Press Perspectives in World Communication: A Pilot Study," *JOURNALISM QUARTERLY*, 38:313-22 (Summer 1961).

People and Events

Perpignan is a provincial town of over 70,000 in the foothills of the Pyrenees, at the southwestern edge of the wine-growing region along France's Mediterranean coast.

Jean Amiel, 37, teaches English at the Arago lycée of his home town of Perpignan. His wife is also an English teacher at a local girls' school. They have a four-year-old daughter and lead a busy but quiet private life in their new house in the suburbs.

Alain Rolland, 16, is a good student at the Arago lycée. He has never had Amiel for a teacher. He divides his time between the Boy Scouts, his studies and his family. The Rollands are recent arrivals in Perpignan. Alain's father is director of a local branch of a bank, the Algerian Credit Society. Alain has a brother also at the Aragon lycée.

It is the night of St. Jean, June 23, 1958. Bonfires and dancing on the streets celebrate the longest day of the year in the tradition of Catalan youth. A group of boys, including Alain, heads toward the suburbs to engage in a familiar prank: lighting firecrackers in the mailboxes of the quiet and dignified residential district.

This is the third night the same prank (although not the same pranksters) plagues the Amiel house. Mme. Amiel does not feel well; the children cannot sleep. Jean Amiel has obtained a police permit for a gun to "scare off the vandals." Now he grabs the old revolver and fires three shots into the darkness.

Alain falls to the ground. "He's hurt, he's bleeding," a friend cries out. Amiel drives the wounded boy to the police station, then to the hospital. The intern pronounces him dead on arrival. "*Le coup du lapin*," he says; a fatal blow to the spine, suffered in the fall.

Amiel drives the dead boy to his parents. He says he is responsible. But, despite their sorrow, the Rollands insist that only fate is responsible; a bad fall, "*le coup du lapin*," Amiel says nothing about the shots.

He arrives home pale, drawn, and still silent. His wife does not question him. Soon it's morning. Amiel calls his high school principal, says he will not meet his classes that day. He waits for the police. They arrive. The coroner has repudiated the intern's diagnosis. There is a small bullethole in the back of Alain's neck.

Public emotion runs high in Perpignan. A crowd of 3,000 gathers around the Amiel house. The police delay the usual reconstruction of events at the scene of the crime to avoid a riot. For a while it seems that the trial itself has to be moved to another city.

Nearly a year goes by before the case comes to trial. The proceedings are held in Perpignan without incident. There is no denial of guilt. The defense pleads merely an accident, "*un cruel hasard*." The jury's verdict: two years in prison, two and a half million (old) francs damages.

Two years later the Amiels are gone, their house is sold, the crime is forgotten. A colleague is asked about the case, and about its political repercussions, if any, for purposes of this study. He says Amiel was a "moderate leftist," his wife "more outspoken and militant." Amiel's promotion, long delayed at the time of the crime (as noted in the press coverage, especially of the Left) had been going through channels at the Ministry and was announced while he was in prison (as pointed up by the indignant press of the Right). The right wing provincial daily *Midi Libre* has been feuding with the teaching corps. An ultra-conservative radio commentator on the national network has been attacking "criminal professors." Anonymous threatening letters have been sent to some teachers. But instruction at the lycée goes on as usual. The name of Jean Amiel is no longer mentioned in Perpignan.

The Times and the News

The events reported in the materials of this study took place at a time of national crisis marking the end of the Fourth Republic. It was a time of war

and revolt in Algeria, the establishment of rebellious Committees of Public Safety, rumors of impending paratroop landings in Paris. There were fears of right-wing dictatorship and civil war. A "legal coup d'état" brought De Gaulle to power in May 1958. Labor unions, Left parties, many other organizations demonstrated in protest. Teachers called a one-day strike throughout France on May 30. They continued to demonstrate (and suffer government sanctions) throughout the period. A new constitution reduced the power of the elected Deputies and changed the basis of representation to the detriment of the Left. The strife over Algeria erupted in shocking terrorism and deepened the national trauma.

The crime of Jean Amiel shared the spotlight in the daily press not only with news of these climactic political and military developments but also with reports of industrial and commercial strides made despite all the turmoil, and with other sensational "affairs." Headlines of Alain's murder competed for attention with those of "L'affair Jacoud" in which a famous Geneva lawyer killed the lover of his mistress; of

the kidnapping of actress Michele Morgan's son by her ex-husband; and of the Tour de France bicycle race. During Amiel's trial, there was continuing coverage of the much longer Guillaume-Lacaze and the "Ballets Roses" affairs, implicating former Ministers or other important personalities in corruption, extortion and prostitution.

It was in this general context of the times and the news that the crime and trial of Jean Amiel stirred a modest sensation in the French press.

The Press

We have noted that both "party" and commercial standards of news treatment operate side-by-side in the French press. Our analysis of the differential tendencies of news coverage included nine newspapers in three general groups: the Left press, the Right press, and the commercial press. Two Paris dailies and one provincial daily comprised each group. We did not include the unique "prestige paper" *Le Monde*, or the influential (and predominantly right-wing) Catholic press. Table 1 presents the available circulation and readership figures of all papers used in the analysis.

TABLE 1
Newspapers Studied and Space Devoted to l'Affair Amiel

	Circulation*	Readership†	Space devoted the Amiel affair (in square inches)			Number of stories on Amiel affair
			Total space (100%)	Percent on front page	Percent pictures	
<i>Commercial press</i>						
France Soir	1,350,000	2,124,000	772	12%	17%	10
Parisian Libéré	900,000	1,933,000	384	27%	19%	9
Indépendent	—	198,000	736	64%	29%	11
<i>Left press</i>						
Humanité	200,000	283,000	336	19%	4%	6
Libération	110,000	148,000	658	19%	5%	7
Provençal	205,000	690,000	520	43%	43%	7
<i>Right press</i>						
Aurore	472,000	870,000	1,036	7%	27%	9
Figaro	480,000	1,018,000	252	28%	—	8
Midi Libre	—	577,000	1,120	27%	14%	10

*Circulation figures listed are those included in John C. Merrill, *Handbook of the Foreign Press* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1959).

†Readership estimates were obtained from unpublished 1958 data at the National Institute of Statistics, Paris.

It also indicates the total amount of space devoted to the Amiel affair in each newspaper (during the study period discussed below), and the allocation of that space to pictures and front-page stories.

The "party press" of the Left and Right are not all political organs in the strict sense, although the Left press comes closest to a party-subsidized press. The Right press is subsidized primarily by the business community as is the commercial press. But the two differ in the nature and extent of the subsidy, in reader appeal, and in the nature of their service to clients. The press of the Right appeals primarily to the more consciously conservative or reactionary readers. The commercial press serves the business community more as a merchandising vehicle of mass appeal; its overt political line must, therefore, be somewhat blander, broader, and more flexible within the limits compatible with the basic interests of its clients.

Following are some general characteristics of the papers of each group (at the time of the events reported):

Left press. *L'Humanité* is the official Communist daily. About 40% of its circulation is outside of Paris. Its readers are primarily workers and lower middle class. Two-thirds are male, and three-quarters have not gone beyond primary school (which ends at age 14). *Libération* is a socialist daily with readership concentrated in the Paris region. Two-thirds of its readers—mostly workers, clerical employees, and middle class—are male; about the same number have a primary school education only. *Le Provençal* is a widely-read Marseilles daily. It is reported to have a readership about three times its circulation, mostly among workers of the southeast Mediterranean region. About 53% of its readers are male, and 71% have primary school education only.

Commercial press. *France Soir* is the largest French daily. Three-quarters of its circulation is concentrated in Paris. A little over half of its readers are

women. It attracts all classes of readers, but nearly half have gone beyond primary school. *Parisien Libéré* is the second largest French daily. Only 16% of its readers live outside Paris. More than half (53%) are male; 75% have primary schooling only. *L'Indépendant* is a provincial daily read by farmers and others in the southwest Mediterranean (Midi) region. Its readership is 53% female and 71% primary school educated.

Right press. *L'Aurore* "is the daily of the big businessman; it is conservative almost to the point of being reactionary."² With a circulation of about 472,000, it also attracts a large readership of middle class, clerical, and other employees. More than half of them are women; three-fourths of them live in Paris. About 53% of its readers have completed primary school only. *Le Figaro* is the largest right-wing daily. Its proportion of national circulation (37% outside of Paris) is second only to *L'Humanité's*. *Figaro's* readers are mostly business and professional; 57% are women, and more than half are secondary school or university educated. *Midi Libre* is a Toulouse daily read by farmers and other (51% women) in the Midi region. The educational level of its readers is slightly higher than that of the other provincial dailies: 41% have gone beyond primary school.

The Method of Analysis

A procedure we call "proposition analysis" was developed to provide a measure of the specific content composition of differential tendencies in the presentation of the same events by different sources. The procedure consists of the following steps:

Message samples produced by the different sources are screened sentence-by-sentence to develop a list containing all basic propositions advanced by each source. The form of a proposition may differ from the form of the statement

² John C. Merrill, *A Handbook of the Foreign Press* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 58.

advancing it in that the proposition incorporates the basic idea of the statement in a more general propositional form.

A master list of propositions includes all essentially different propositions advanced in all statements of each source. A code following each proposition records the source or sources which advanced it in one or more statements. (The number of times a proposition was advanced was not recorded in this study.) These propositions are sorted into "balanced" and "differential" categories, and further grouped into "balanced" and "differential" passages. The passages in which each source (or, in this case, press group) has about the same share of propositions are the "balanced" versions. Those in which some sources are represented more than others are the "differential" versions; they indicate the composition of differential tendencies in the message-production of the different sources.

The newspapers listed above were screened from June 25 through July 1, 1958, and from April 10 through April 23, 1959. The crime was reported during the first period, and the trial was held during the second.

The material analyzed included every news and feature story dealing with the crime, the trial, the major participants, and the public repercussions of the case. (There were no editorials.) Every newspaper used in the study carried at least seven relevant stories, and at least two in each period. Stories from both study periods were lumped together to compose the sample for each paper.

It should be noted that the size of each sample affects primarily the total number of propositions advanced but not necessarily the number of *different* types of propositions. In other words, a paper may print a great deal of what is essentially common ground among all papers, or less but of a somewhat different slant.

Propositions were drawn from any

and all kinds of statements in the relevant samples. They could be statements of the paper's own reporter, or they could be attributed to police, witnesses, lawyers, teachers—anyone the paper chose to cite. A large variety of potential news sources make a wide variety of statements; it is part of the editorial function of the press to select and compose from these some public representation of "the facts of the case" and of the views that shed light on the "facts."

A total of 642 separate propositions were listed as having been advanced in the statements of one or more of the newspapers studied. More than two-thirds of these propositions were "balanced" (advanced by papers of all three groups in about equal proportion), or were not strictly relevant to the events themselves, or both. (For example, there was much discussion about the general characteristics of modern youth in France and elsewhere.) About one-third of all propositions represented the differential aspects and versions. The passages were formed mainly from the differential propositions, or from 201 propositions out of a total of 642.

These propositions were grouped into 11 passages. Each passage dealt with a certain aspect or version of the events. The grouping of the propositions was done without reference to the stories themselves. The sequence of propositions does not necessarily represent any actual sequence of statements in the stories.

The passages represent sets of propositions abstracted from the total coverage. The focus and complexion of the account changes from passage to passage as the balance of representation shifts from one side of the political spectrum to the other.

The Findings

We shall now present each passage, and the measures indicating each newspaper's (and press group's) share of representation in the propositions of each passage. As the passages do not reconstruct any sequence of events or re-

ports in a chronological order, they can be ordered at will. We shall first attempt to reconstruct the "dialogue of ideological perspectives" inherent in the press coverage of events in a multi-party press system. Later we shall discuss the passages in the order of the shifting ideological perspectives.

The passages and measures are presented as follows: A title and brief comment highlighting certain characteristics of each passage is followed by the propositions themselves (in somewhat abbreviated form) on the left hand side of the page. The propositions are divided by brackets; the total number of propositions contained in each passage is given in parentheses at the end of the passage.

Good man, terrible accident. The first passage is a relatively balanced version, recounting the story of a terrible accident that kills an innocent boy and ruins the life of a good man. The Left press leads in the number of propositions, but the differences are not very great and the individual papers rank in almost random order.

Propositions:

A good man / stable / intelligent / hard working / generally pleasant and friendly / opposite of a madman or murderer / with a serene life / beyond reproach / past without blemish / able educator / devoted husband / blessed with daughters he loves / a good sense of humor / fires into the air without thinking / intending to scare the pranksters / overwhelmed when sees a boy fall / seized by panic / consumed by remorse / lives a horrible calvary / will never get over it / cannot believe what happened / beyond himself / loses the will to live / calm at the trial / restrained, soft-spoken / weary / tearful / refuses to acknowledge any extenuating circumstances / almost indifferent to the fate that has befallen him (Total :29)

Happy childhood, easy life. The second passage delves into Jean Amiel's past. Its propositions paint a picture of happy childhood and easy life. The Right press is followed by the Commercial press in advancing these propositions. They provide a "psychological" rather than "social" context for the crime; the Left press takes scant notice of these propositions.

The measures appear on the right hand side of the page, to the right of each passage. The first column of figures gives the number of different propositions each newspaper advanced out of the total number of propositions included in the passage. The second column is the percentage share of each paper (and each press group) in the total number of different propositions included in the passage and advanced by all papers.

The press group which has the largest share of representation in the passage is in capital letters like this: LEFT PRESS, etc. The reader can see at a glance which press group advanced the largest number of propositions in each passage.

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(37.6)
Humanité	22	16.5
Libération	17	12.8
Provençal	11	8.3
Commercial Press		(31.5)
France Soir	18	13.5
Parisien Libéré	14	10.5
Indépendant	10	7.5
Right Press		(30.8)
Aurore	13	9.8
Figaro	14	10.5
Midi Libre	14	10.5
Total	133	100.0

Propositions:

Comes from a family of civil servants / father held high government job / father was teacher / grandfather was also teacher / had happy childhood / no financial problems / student life without hardships / had only the normal money problems of all young couples / borrowed from parents / built beautiful villa (Total: 10)

Modest means, heavy burdens. The Left press leads in suggesting a very different context for the crime. The third passage points to the modest means and heavy financial burdens of the Amiel family. It notes the insufficiency of even two teachers' incomes to pay for the cost of a suburban home. The significance of the house for Jean Amiel, and his generosity and good humor amidst difficult circumstances receive emphasis in this version.

Propositions:

Comes from respectable family of modest means / father was customs inspector in small town / Jean wanted very much to own a nice home / his house cost more than he could afford / has been heavily indebted / even two teacher incomes in the family not sufficient / the house was his dream / his happiness / his success / the crowning point of his career / he decided to work double and triple time / still generous enough to give free English lessons to daughter of a colleague / looked to the future with optimism / and good humor (Total: 14)

A defective personality. The fourth passage depicts Jean Amiel as a defective personality: pedantic, irascible, vindictive, provoking the wrath and revenge of students. The *France Soir* and the rightist *Aurore* take the lead in presenting or citing these statements.

Propositions:

Often pedantic / inflexible / lacks warmth / takes refuge in rules / tried to gain respect through severity / lacks self-confidence / lacks real authority / tries to frighten students / rules by terror / beats students / brutal / loses temper in class / especially with younger students who offer less resistance / envies students for their youth and money / isolated from reality / worthless outside his field / students tried to take revenge / wanted to teach him a lesson (Total: 18)

Propositions made by:

	N	%
Left press		(10.0)
Humanité	1	5.0
Libération	—	—
Provençal	1	5.0
Commercial Press		(35.0)
France Soir	3	15.0
Parisien Libéré	3	15.0
Indépendant	1	5.0
RIGHT PRESS		(55.0)
Aurore	4	20.0
Figaro	4	20.0
Midi Libre	3	15.0
Total	20	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(57.5)
Humanité	13	27.7
Libération	10	21.3
Provençal	4	8.5
Commercial press		(27.6)
France soir	8	17.0
Parisien Libéré	4	8.5
Indépendant	1	2.1
Right press		(14.7)
Aurore	1	2.1
Figaro	3	6.4
Midi Libre	3	6.4
Total	47	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
Left press		(21.2)
Humanité	2	6.1
Libération	4	12.1
Provençal	1	3.0
COMMERCIAL PRESS		(45.3)
France Soir	7	21.2
Parisien Libéré	4	12.1
Indépendant	4	12.1
Right Press		(33.4)
Aurore	7	21.2
Figaro	2	6.1
Midi Libre	2	6.1
Total	33	100.0

A "knight with a sad face." The fifth passage paints yet another portrait: a pitiful, harassed young man in a state of near collapse from worry and overwork, yet inspiring respect (though not a deserved promotion); a kind of "chevalier a la triste figure"—knight with a sad face. The Left press leads with nearly a half of all statements advancing such propositions.

Propositions:

Still appears youthful / like a "knight with a sad face" / one of those "nice guys" with no strong personality / overworked / timid / sensitive about pranks and taunting / worried about financial problems / a plodder / students say he gave signs of fainting in class / used stimulants to keep him awake / sleeping pills to make him sleep / no complaints were reported to the Inspector / superiors generally commended his work / yet he was not promoted / gave private lessons to supplement his income / corrected papers of correspondence students / worked as interpreter at the airport / corrected baccalaureate exams at night / prepared the distribution of awards at the Lycée / drafted the scholastic reports / attended meetings of the disciplinary council / colleagues held him in high esteem / wrote him in prison to assure him of their sympathy / offered financial help to Mme. Amiel (Total: 24)

A contemptible wretch. The propositions brought together in the sixth passage counter the pathetic (and sympathetic) image of the "knight with the sad face" with a stark extension of the theme of defective personality: Amiel is a contemptible mental and physical wretch, a liar and a coward. He is indifferent to his (possibly intentional) crime, and is perhaps more concerned about bloodstains in his car than about the life of his innocent victim. The right wing *Aurore* is in the lead in citing these propositions, followed by *France Soir* and *Parisien Libéré*.

Propositions:

Weak / cowardly / introverted / suffering from a persecution complex / impulsive / heartless / lacking any sense of humor / having an exaggerated sense of pride / acting with unbelievable rashness / possibly even aimed his gun / grudgingly got his car to take the fallen boy / told the others not to let Alain's blood stain the seats / hid his act as long as possible / kept a cowardly silence / lied / became entangled in contradictions / a miserable physical specimen / ascetic features / tall and thin / long hands / prematurely aged / but does not appear particularly tormented (Total: 22)

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(49.6)
<i>Humanité</i>	23	20.4
<i>Libération</i>	18	15.9
<i>Provençal</i>	15	13.3
Commercial press		(28.3)
<i>France Soir</i>	15	13.3
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	7	6.2
<i>Indépendant</i>	10	8.8
Right press		(22.1)
<i>Aurore</i>	12	10.6
<i>Figaro</i>	4	3.5
<i>Midi Libre</i>	9	8.0
Total	113	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
Left press		(23.8)
<i>Humanité</i>	7	11.9
<i>Libération</i>	7	11.9
<i>Provençal</i>	—	—
Commercial press		(33.9)
<i>France Soir</i>	10	16.9
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	9	15.3
<i>Indépendant</i>	1	1.7
RIGHT PRESS		(42.4)
<i>Aurore</i>	17	28.8
<i>Figaro</i>	5	8.5
<i>Midi Libre</i>	3	5.1
Total	59	100.0

A heart-rending affair. Counterpointing that hostile version is a heart-rending story of despair, pathos, and family devotion, advanced mainly by the Left.

Propositions:

Amiel sobs when his parents enter the court / displays tender affection for his wife / dares not look at his mother during the trial / father dies, overcomes with shame and grief / does not attend funeral to save his mother from sight of her son between gendarmes / Mme. Amiel (the wife) is beautiful / amazing / resembles tragic Antigone / pathetic in her attempt to defend her husband (Total: 9)

A national disgrace. Another version, however, presents Mme. Amiel as a shrew, the family in discord, the trial unfair, Amiel's promotion while in prison a scandal. The whole affair is regarded as a national disgrace. The Right press reported nearly two-thirds of all such statements.

Propositions:

Mme. Amiel has a harsh and cold face / she goaded her husband into taking action against the pranksters / she is heartless / quarrelsome and nagging / treats her husband cruelly during the trial / teachers testifying at the trial were biased / they concealed Amiel's abnormalities / the verdict was too lenient / spectators protested the leniency of the jury / many readers wrote indignant letters / Amiel was promoted while in jail / a teacher cannot be a killer / it is a national disgrace / invitation to anarchy / Amiel must leave France (Total: 15)

Unjust conditions. The version favored by the Left press is very different. It dwells on conditions which frustrate the efforts and try the patience of teachers and other "intellectuals." No one, it is claimed, can judge or punish such a crime more than the teacher's own remorse. It is not the verdict that is seen as "disgraceful"; it is "the catastrophic situation in secondary education."

Propositions:

It is difficult to judge such an extraordinary crime / it doesn't make sense / teachers like children / Amiel was interested in his students / he made them work / he gained their respect / now he has lost this respect / brought unhappiness to his family / must leave his profession / his home / his own remorse is his greatest punishment / crime was unfortunate result of long exasperation / of taunting and pranks which followed him into his private life / he is to be pitied as are all intellectuals jeered at by nonentities / humiliated / working under great nervous strain / always watched, always supervised / underpaid / overworked / despite exacting preparation for their profession / forced to seek outside jobs / victims of unjust conditions / the trial failed to reveal the catastrophic situation in secondary education (Total: 23)

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(64.0)
<i>Humanité</i>	7	28.0
<i>Libération</i>	8	32.0
<i>Provençal</i>	1	4.0
Commercial press		(24.0)
<i>France Soir</i>	3	12.0
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	1	4.0
<i>Indépendant</i>	2	8.0
Right press		(12.0)
<i>Aurore</i>	1	4.0
<i>Figaro</i>	1	4.0
<i>Midi Libre</i>	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
Left press		(3.3)
<i>Humanité</i>	1	3.3
<i>Libération</i>	—	—
<i>Provençal</i>	—	—
Commercial press		(33.4)
<i>France Soir</i>	5	16.7
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	3	10.0
<i>Indépendant</i>	2	6.7
RIGHT PRESS		(63.3)
<i>Aurore</i>	8	26.7
<i>Figaro</i>	7	23.3
<i>Midi Libre</i>	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(58.3)
<i>Humanité</i>	15	19.0
<i>Libération</i>	19	24.1
<i>Provençal</i>	12	15.2
Commercial press		(26.7)
<i>France Soir</i>	7	8.9
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	7	8.9
<i>Indépendant</i>	7	8.9
Right press		(15.2)
<i>Aurore</i>	8	10.1
<i>Figaro</i>	3	3.8
<i>Midi Libre</i>	1	1.3
Total	79	100.0

Not a political case. All papers reported that the Amiels (like most teachers in France) had leftist political leanings. But only the press of the Right carried allegations that they really had no political convictions and did not take part, or at least not willingly, in the teachers' protest strike of May 30, 1958. Some of these propositions claim that neither politics nor conditions help explain the crime; others allege intimidation and class bias among teachers.

Propositions:

Political explanations are out of place / religious motives are not involved / it has been claimed that the prankster was a Jesuit college student out to get a leftist public school teacher, but that is not the case / overwork and nervousness are no explanation / true causes are unknown / Amiel has no political opinion / he was never much concerned with politics / he did not join the teachers' strike on May 30 / he joined the strike but he didn't know why / he merely followed the instructions of the union / he went out of a feeling of solidarity, not of conviction / the teaching profession smothers differences of opinion / yet such differences exist even at the same school / the Inspectors often have to arbitrate political quarrels / many teachers show hostility toward students from well-to-do families (Total: 15)

Politics has much to do with it. In contrast with "non-political" explanations, the socio-political background is most explicitly invoked, again, in the Left press. The propositions of this passage expose the bitter conflict which beset France during this period.

Propositions:

Political explanations are germane to this case / so are psychological explanations / Amiel was a man of the Left / his wife had leftist convictions / they were not sectarians or militants / took modest part in the activities of SFIO / (Socialist Party) / went on strike May 30 to defend republican liberties / teachers are united in that cause / rich students and their families often feel superior to teachers / many of these students are spoiled and corrupt / they set themselves up as critics of the political convictions of teachers / sons of Algerian colons who settled in Perpignan show no respect for decency or democracy / are partisans of paratroop General Hassu / formed a Committee of Public Safety imitating the Algerian rebellion against the Republic / once they beat up the *concierge* of the Lycée / threatened three teachers with death, including the secretary of the teachers union / wrote threatening letter to the local Communist weekly newspaper / instigated the formation of a "James Dean Club" of Perpignan / members were recruited from among the worst pranksters of the "rich kids" in town / inspired by the misdeeds of American youth / committed acts of vandalism in the school building to protest the teachers' strike of May 30 / made teachers with republican and anti-fascist ideas their major targets (Total: 22)

Propositions made by:

	N	%
Left press		(5.8)
<i>Humanité</i>	1	2.9
<i>Libération</i>	—	—
<i>Provençal</i>	1	2.9
Commercial press		(38.2)
<i>France Soir</i>	8	23.5
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	2	5.9
<i>Indépendant</i>	3	8.8
RIGHT PRESS		(55.8)
<i>Aurore</i>	6	17.6
<i>Figaro</i>	8	23.5
<i>Midi Libre</i>	5	14.7
Total	34	100.0

Propositions made by:

	N	%
LEFT PRESS		(68.3)
<i>Humanité</i>	21	35.0
<i>Libération</i>	14	23.3
<i>Provençal</i>	6	10.0
Commercial press		(20.0)
<i>France Soir</i>	7	11.7
<i>Parisien Libéré</i>	3	5.0
<i>Indépendant</i>	2	3.3
Right press		(11.7)
<i>Aurore</i>	3	5.0
<i>Figaro</i>	1	1.7
<i>Midi Libre</i>	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

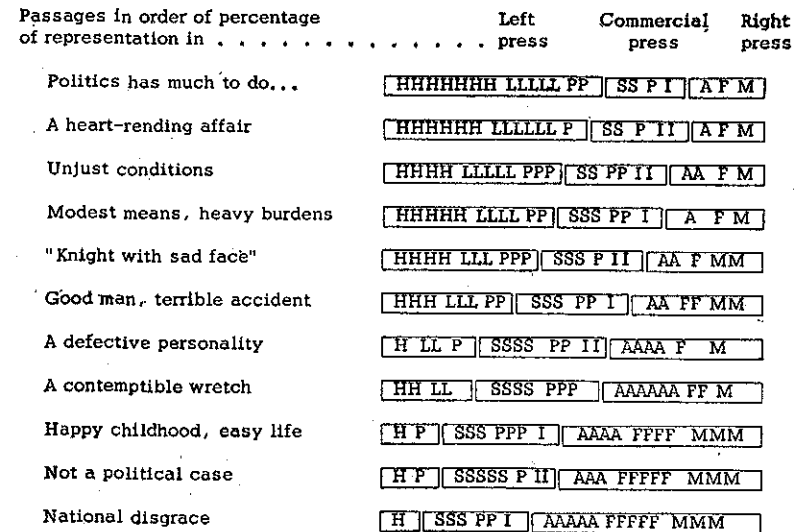
The Spectrum of Differences

Let us note again that this analysis was concerned with differences rather than with the considerable area of overlapping in the way the three press groups presented the events. The basic "facts" of the case were present in all accounts. The differential context of total propositions in which these "facts" were presented was the focus of this inquiry.

Figure 1 is an attempt to illustrate the order and magnitude of shifting perspectives from Left to Right. The boxed letters represent the newspapers of each press group. The number of letters and the size of the boxes indicate the approximate percentages advanced by each out of the total number of propositions

advanced by all papers in each passage. The Left press, as a whole, advances the most overtly "political" version of the case. It seizes the opportunity to make common cause with the left-leaning teachers of France in this "heart-rending affair." It views the crime and personality of Jean Amiel against the background of "unjust conditions." Education itself is seen as the victim of the greater crimes of reactionary subversion, harassment, neglect. Mme. Amiel becomes the "beautiful Antigone," victim of tyrants. Amiel himself is a victim; a modest man bearing heavy burdens, a "knight with a sad face," a symbol of the intellectual in a society ruled by wealth and privilege. Although the crime and the trial are fully reported,

FIGURE 1
The Shifting Ideological Perspective



KEY:

Left press	Commercial press	Right press
H L P	S P I	A F M
H-Humanité	S-France Soir	A-Aurore
L-Libération	P-Parisien Libere	F-Figaro
P-Provençal	I-Independant	M-Midi Libre

Each letter represents approximately 5% of all propositions. The box devoted to each press group represents the approximate total percentage of that group.

the differential accounts of the Left stress social injustice as the root of personal tragedy.

With the theme of "defective personality," the balance of perspectives shifts to the Right. Hints of "abnormalities" and unknown "true causes" counter suggestions of mitigating circumstance. The alleged leftist convictions of the Amiels—and of all teachers—are refuted. The accounts merely observe Amiel's "contemptible" character, his dastardly deeds, and his wife's "harsh and cold face." After a "happy childhood" and "easy life," the crime must be outside the scope of social causation, or even reason. The right-wing perspective limits the scope of public discussion to a carefully circumscribed area. The crime is a mental rather than social aberration. Politics has nothing to do with it. The threat is not to liberty, learning, or justice, but to law and order.

The political strength of the French Left lies in the arena of popular political struggle. The political opportunity of the Right is usually in limiting that arena and exercising power outside or

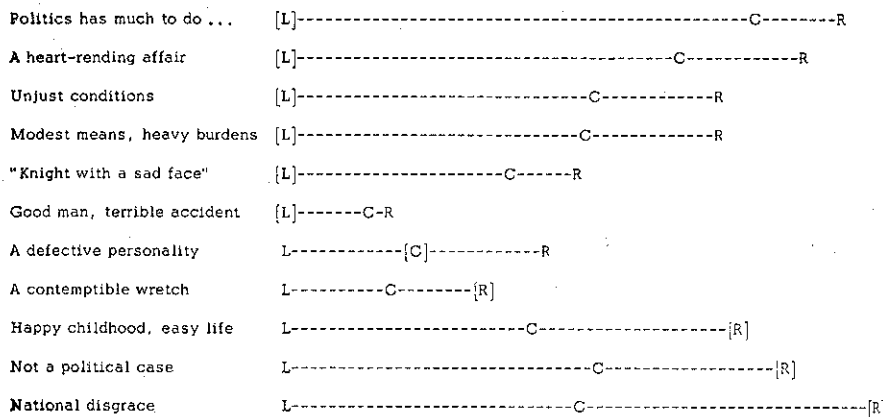
"above" politics. The differential aspects of news coverage in the "party press" reflected these political tendencies as parts of the respective ideological perspectives of reporting. The commercially dependent press occupied a position between the two groups of politically dependent newspapers, but, as we shall see, not in the middle.

The only passage in which the commercial press itself had the highest share of representation was the theme of the "defective personality." The order of representations of the commercial press, all following the lead of the Right, were in passages disclaiming political relevance, describing the Amiels' "easy life," observing their "contemptible" conduct, and protesting the leniency of the verdict.

The *distances* between the three press groups' percentage share of representation in each passage are indicated on Figure 2. The passages are again in order of representation from Left to Right. The letters L, C, and R represent the Left, commercial, and Right press groups. The bracketed letter marks the press group with the highest percentage

FIGURE 2

Relative Distances Between Left, Commercial, and Right Press Groups in Percentage Share of Representation in Each Passage



Each dash represents one percentage point difference. The boxed letter marks the press group with the highest percentage share of representation.

TABLE 2
Product Moment Correlations of Percents of Propositions Advanced by Each Newspaper Out of All Propositions in Each Passage

	Left press			Commercial press			Right press		
	Human- ité	Libér- ation	Pro- vençal	France Soir	Paris, Libéré	Indé- pendant	Aurore	Figaro	Midi Libre
<i>Left press</i>									
Humanité	.92	.74	.32	.11	.31	.00	-.54		.00
Libération		.69	.15	.08	.39	-.49	-.67		-.27
Provençal			.38	.29	.70	-.18	-.30		.18
<i>Commercial press</i>									
France Soir				.45	.40	.17	.29		.67
Parisien Libéré					.18	.53	.23		.38
Indépendant						.08	.00		.37
Aurore							.41		.27
Figaro									.73
Midi Libre									

NOTE: The two highest correlations for each newspaper are italicized.
 $p < .10 - r = + \text{ or } -.47$
 $p < .05 - r = + \text{ or } -.55$
 $p < .01 - r = + \text{ or } -.68$

of representation in each passage. The broken lines represent differences in percentage share of representation; each dash stands for one percentage point.

The commercial press shares more of the differential accounts of Left and Right than the two share of each others'. But the commercial press also shares more of the passages favored by the Right than it does of the versions advanced primarily on the Left. Furthermore, the greater the Left leadership in advancing the propositions of a passage, the closer the commercial press is to the Right press.

While the commercial press paves the way for certain types of propositions favored by the Right, and follows the lead of the Right in others, its most striking characteristic is a strong reaction *against* the perspective of the Left. In the passages advanced primarily on the Left, the commercial press is an average of 29 percentage points distant from the Left, and only an average of 9 percentage points away from the Right. If we take the passages advanced primarily on the Right, however, we find the commercial press more (but still not quite) centrally located: its average distance from the Left is 24, and from the Right 19 percentage points. Across all passages the commercial press

is an average of 26 percentage points distant from the Left, and 12 percentage points distant from the Right.

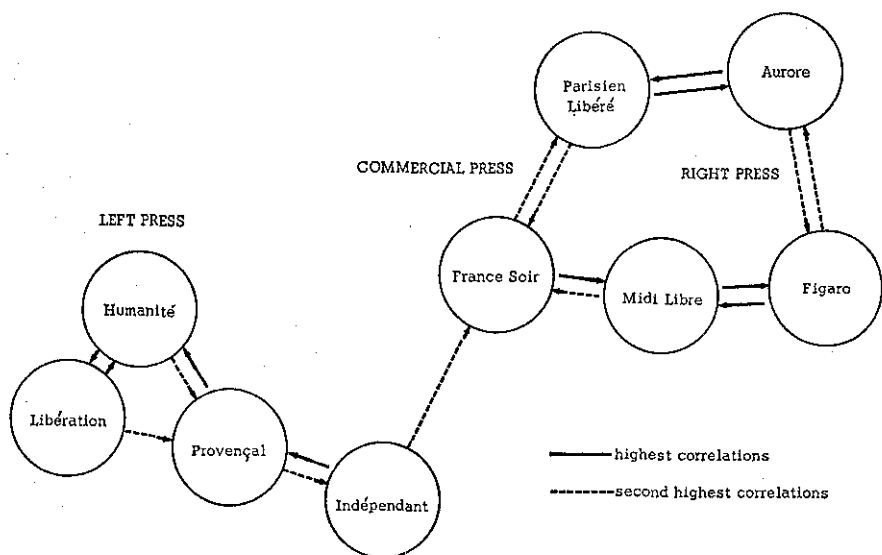
Correlations between Papers

The percent of different propositions each newspaper advanced out of all propositions contained in each passage was used to compute correlations between pairs of newspapers across all passages and thus determine the relative position of papers on the continuum of perspectives.

Table 2 presents the direction and magnitude of the correlations. The two highest correlations for each newspaper appear in italics. Figure 3 is a graphic representation based on the two highest correlations for each paper. The two highest positive correlations between each paper and two others are shown by lines leading from the former to the latter. The length of the lines represents the relative magnitudes of these correlations. It can be seen, for example, that the provincial *L'Indépendant* was the only commercial newspaper whose two highest correlations included one with an organ of the *Left*, the also provincial *Provençal*. It can also be noted that the provincial papers generally tended toward more central positions than their respective press groups, and that the

FIGURE 3

Corregram Showing Two Highest Correlations for Each Newspaper with Other Papers



commercial press interlocks with the press of the Right, while the Left press forms a fairly tight group of its own.

Conclusions: Choice of Perspectives

The analysis focused on the differential aspects of the message systems produced by the different sources. The major cleavage was found to be between the perspectives of the Left and those of the commercial and Right press groups. The message systems produced in the French press differ from those of the English and American press systems in that they create and cultivate (rather than only represent through hostile sources) a radically left-wing reading public.

Under these conditions, the versions and accounts of events reported in the Left press cannot be ignored in the commercial newspapers which make their appeal to the broadest range of publics. These perspectives indeed find an echo in the commercial press, even if only to be countered and refuted by a greater proportion of material seen from the perspective of the Right.

The analysis tends to support the proposition that there is no fundamentally non-ideological, apolitical, non-partisan news gathering and reporting system. It also suggests that (at least under conditions of ideological plurality) the commercial press selects the broadest range of propositions concerning events to be made public, but weights its accounts and presents its news from a perspective countering that of the political Left, and close to that of the Right.

This study did not indicate what ideological and political role the commercial press might play in a system which does not cultivate ideological plurality and sharp political differentiation on a mass scale. Of course, no national press system is totally isolated from the basic currents of thought abroad in the world. And there is little doubt that the commercial press everywhere reacts most sharply against perspectives which challenge the bases of its existence and support as an institution. But when the challenge is not represented by compet-

(Please turn to page 516)

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ister found his foremost exponent: Dorothy McKay, herself a minister's daughter. From the early 1930s on, first steadily in *Life*, and later in the *New Yorker* and *Esquire*, cartoonist McKay's two genial ministers, Wilbur and Thaddeus, took on the little vicissitudes of the big world. They bought tickets at a carnival, for a "TRIP THRU HEAVEN AND HELL." When, at a dance, a hatcheck girl offers to check their hats, they reply: "No thanks, just browsing around." On the cover of *Life's* Repeal Issue, Dorothy McKay's two cheerful clerics smile tolerantly at a red-nosed Santa Claus, and one comments: "I'm glad Brother Tucker's nose is legal again."²⁴

Here again, as in the case of the corner cop with the heart of gold, the *New Yorker's* focus on the predicaments of the "little man," in contrast to the issue-centered, more bitter and broadly social satire of *New Masses* and *Americana*, and the scatter-shot joke-a-second techniques of the older humor magazines, tended to triumph in magazine humor. Incongruities that formed the basis of humor brought a chuckle, not a snarl. By hindsight, this comes as no surprise.

Even when the policeman or clergyman was accused of "corruption" in magazine humor of the late 1920s and early 1930s, he was portrayed as victim quite as often as victimizer. Why not, after all, sympathize with the cop drinking his beer at the speakeasy or the pastor trying to lure his flock into church by the new methods of the times? They were people, too, their needs were like those of other people, and they were confronted by pressures familiar to everyone. In short, especially when the optimistic aura of the early New Deal began settling over the nation, the humorists found room for both the commercial impulse and an increasingly benign social tone. Of the magazines considered in this study, only *New Masses*, implacable foe of capitalism, was still in 1934 damning society's basic institutions, and still pointing an accusing finger at "villains." The caustic voice of Menckanism and the high-spirited flouting of moralistic authority had all but disappeared.

²⁴ Dorothy McKay cartoons, *Life*, October 1932, p. 15; *Esquire*, February 1934, p. 36; *Life*, December 1933, cover.

Ideological Perspectives and Political Tendencies in News Reporting

(Continued from page 508)

ing mass publications in the same press system, the commercial press may be "freer" to ignore that perspective altogether, or to present it not only as a hostile but also as an "outside," foreign, alien view of the news.

At any rate, we find no support for the assumption that the commercial press is free of inherent ideological controls and political tendencies. Its appearance of political "non-partisanship" (if any) may be the result of its tendency to limit the scope of public decision-making to carefully circumscribed and relatively marginal areas. Outside these areas, the terms "politics" and

"government interference" are used mostly as epithets. The basic ideological and political choices are inherent not in party-partisanship but in the total operation of "news values" and of standards of reporting. These choices are evident in press systems where ideological plurality is maintained through more than one source and method of press support. The choices are not so apparent, but they are made, nevertheless, without public debate, vote, and even often in the name of "freedom," where either the commercial press or a one-party press preempts the field of daily journalism.