



Conference Papers on the Web

**The American Impact on Western Europe:
Americanization and Westernization in Transatlantic Perspective**

*Conference at the German Historical Institute
Washington, D.C., March 25–27, 1999*

Gudrun Kruij
Restricted Support
The Role of the Axel Springer Verlag
in the Process of Westernization

Gudrun Kruip

Restricted Support

The Role of the Axel Springer Verlag in the Process of Westernization*

To look at the Axel Springer Verlag¹ under the concept of Westernization means to confront two contradicting scholarly beliefs that are usually neither combined nor questioned. First: After 1945 it was especially the German press which the Allies reorganized into a weapon of democracy, freedom and Western values by transforming it according to their own standards journalistic standards.² Second: The most successful German publishing house for newspapers and magazines after the Second World War, the Axel Springer Verlag, was firmly grounded on German beliefs and attitudes.³ Considering the enormous percentage of West Germans who have read the papers of the publishing house over the last fifty years, this second assumption leads to another inconsistency: The success of the publications seems to imply that neither the West German press nor the West Germans themselves have been especially responsive to Western ideas. Still, academics and public alike hardly doubt that a political, social and cultural assimilation commonly called Americanization has taken place in West Germany as well as in Western Europe. To resolve these contradictions one must consider to have a look into both parameters – the development of the press after 1945 and the general outlook of the Axel Springer Verlag as it was worked out during the first decades after World War II, became a dogma beginning in the early 1960s, and showed itself consistently in the dailies and periodicals of the publishing house.

Old Wine in New Skins: West-German Press After 1945

Besides the determination to penalize Germans responsible for war and crimes against humanity, Allied planning of a new world order after the end of the war was eventually based on the principle of founding new structures in Germany's public institutions. Schools and universities, mass media, political parties, the civil service, courts of justice or labor unions were all seen as potential multipliers able to carry on the process of democratizing once they had mastered it themselves.⁴ But the ambitious goal of the Western, especially the American and British Allies to transform Germany's public institutions into spearheads of democracy according to Anglo-Saxon traditions was almost impossible to accomplish – at least not within a short period of time. The plan did not sufficiently take into account that the organizations had to be run with the help of Germans, who were usually deeply rooted within German beliefs and customs in spite of an antinazi and – according to German traditions – democratic way of thinking.

Concerning the press, it was looked upon as one of the most important multipliers: Almost every adult read one paper or another, either daily or periodical. As a consequence it was especially the press that had to assume the function of reeducation. German press before 1933 was accused of having fostered militarism, submission to all kinds of authority and a general indifference to political affairs. Now, the Allies carefully chose editors and journalists according to the requirements of reeducation and tried to determine the shape of a new kind of journalism. No longer should anonymous articles just reflect opinions and divulgements of the government. Instead, the principle of news to inform the reader plus subjective commentaries of individual journalists to inspire the reader to a personal opinion was established. The Ameri-

can information officers even favored the editorial page to make a clear separation between news and commentary. Most of all, they wanted to make it possible for everyone to have easy access to general and reliable information about public affairs for everybody. A new kind of writing which was closer to the reader's interests and sphere of ideas was to replace the German moralistic reporting, investigative journalism should counterbalance acts of authorities, and a page reserved for letters to the editor should invite the reader to correspond with his paper and express his own point of view. Licence for the editors, general journalistic instructions and censorship were all meant to constitute a press opposite to the so-called uncritical journalism of the Weimar Republic accused by the Allies of having helped Hitler come to power. But at the same time they were a violation of the otherwise cherished principle of freedom of speech and writing, though only for a limited duration. The role of the press in the process of Germany's democratic reeducation was considered as so vital that the Allies were even willing to suspend this central Western value that they wanted the Germans to get accustomed to.

The intentional enforcement of new structures with the help of only handpicked Germans resulted in the general assumption of a completely new beginning in German journalism after 1945 still found today. However, this myth of a Stunde Null is only partly the truth. Allied information officers and Germans cooperating in the reconstruction of the print media shared a condemnation of the Weimar newspapers that concealed how far this press already had participated in a general Western journalistic development. In large parts Germany had been an industrialized country and on its way to becoming a mass society at least in the big cities before 1933. People generally had a better education and more leisure time on the one hand, but on the other had lost their traditional bond to family and village life because of migration. As a

result there was a growing need for an informative and entertaining press. Several dailies and magazines in these towns, especially Berlin, met this demand. Following the examples of Anglo-American journalism, where the necessities of a mass culture were known and experienced earlier, articles in German newspapers became shorter and more entertaining even though they did not abandon their moralistic and instructing manner. Still, they paid more attention to the interests of readers who wanted to relax after work and combine information with entertainment. Americanized press became almost a synonym for a journalistic mixture of local, domestic and international easy-to-read facts as well as of comics, quizzes and human interest stories which the common people might be interested in.⁵ While after 1945 only the harmful effects of the Hugenberg press on the German mind were conjured, popular papers belonging to the large Berlin publishing houses Mosse, Ullstein, and Scherl had been good students of Anglo-American tabloids since the nineteenth century: On-the-spot reports replaced articles which were written at the desk without interviewing the people involved. Lively descriptions and typography became common as well as other features of British and especially American popular journalism. This does not say that German press in general showed these features. Small local papers, in Germany more prevalent than in other Western countries, were mainly a mouthpiece of government and authorities, and serious dailies still favored a rather tedious style looked upon as particularly sophisticated.

It is largely owing to the Allies that small papers could not be published again after the end of the war. In a clear break from the Weimar press none of these papers were licensed. After the licence requirement was lifted some of the local papers tried a comeback, but hardly any had the financial background to survive the competition with the licensed press, which had been successfully accepted by the public at that time. Consequently the journalistic style

promoted by the Allies after 1945 spread even into distant villages. As in other spheres of reeducation the goal of democratizing could be achieved only in so far as the Germans were willing to accept it.⁶

Because of the fact that German journalism had already shown Americanized features before 1945, the carefully planned reorganization of the press along American principles has been particularly successful – especially when compared to other fields of reeducation like universities, economy or civil service.⁷ But a bunch of features favored by the Allies was not accepted. Among these is the main Anglo-Saxon dogma of separating news and comments. Here, the German tradition of a journalism giving its readers an orientation to the complex occurrences of the world by telling them what is supposedly wrong or right proved to be quite lasting. To understand the endurance of central German journalistic characteristics one has to look at the background of the Allied information officers responsible for the reorganization of the press and the licensing of editors and papers. Many of them were German refugees, and several had been journalists or editors in Germany before they emigrated during Hitler's dictatorship. In the USA, where most of the concrete planning concerning the reorganization of the German press was done, the preparations were coordinated by Hans Habe, himself an Austrian emigrant. In contradiction to American beliefs Habe never concealed that according to his point of view the separation of news and comments was equivalent to underestimating the reader.⁸ Like Habe, the emigrants reconstructing the German press were raised with German press traditions and personally and ideologically combined this tradition with the requirements of reeducation. To stress only the new features of the German press after 1945 means to adopt an unbalanced perspective.

Besides, in agreement with Western principles of private property combined with individual responsibility, the newly founded West German publishing houses became privately owned economic businesses again. Only the Soviets in the east of Germany organized the press as well as other institutions in accordance with their collective ideals of a planned economy. For the West German print media during the licensing era and thereafter the obligation to achieve financial success to survive meant that the papers had to take into account two things: on the one hand the reeducation requirements of a democratized and democratizing journalism which had to be fulfilled in order to receive a license to start off with, and on the other hand the German mind and background in order to find its readers and to be able to spread its message. In the first decade, at least until West German sovereignty in 1955, German press consequently had to be a mixture of Western and German journalistic and mental traditions which many of the remigrant journalists were well prepared to accomplish. With this merging the papers got their readers more and more accustomed to central Western beliefs without abandoning values more often associated with German traditions.

The general guidelines of the Axel Springer Verlag as they developed until the 1950s mastered this amalgamation, too. But then, as the general positions of this publishing house will show, it managed – still quite successfully – to fix the German ideological consensus concerning the status quo of the amalgamation as it was achieved by about the end of the occupation era in 1955 for the following decades and up until today. Most probably, it was not the end of the occupation era alone which caused a the widespread need for stability. After all, many Western countries struggled between a conservative outlook and the progressive demands of the young in the 1960s.⁹ But in West Germany it might still have mattered that in 1955 outward control almost ceased, and Germany was trusted to stand on its own feet. Forced to find

its own way it was perhaps easier for the Axel Springer Verlag to hold on to a consensus approved of by Allies and Germans alike so far, and which in combination with modern journalistic features also had sold well.

Implications of popular journalism in Germany

The Axel Springer Verlag was officially founded with the launch of the broadcasting journal “Nordwestdeutsche Hefte” in 1946 in the British occupation zone. Like most of the successful publishing houses in Germany in the 1950s and 60s it was a child of the licensing era and even seems to have profited most from the process of licensing and from the press concentration following this period: As a governmental commission examining the print media market in 1968 found, nearly 40% of the newspapers and about 20% of the magazines in Western Germany were printed by Axel Springer.¹⁰ His success based on a journalistic concept that took up outer elements of Anglo-American popular dailies and almost perfectly mastered the requirements of reeducation at a level that accommodate the mental background of his German addressees at the same time. Who then were his addressees, what kind of message did Springer tell them, and by what means?

Springer’s newspapers and magazines adopted earlier and more rigorously than any other German postwar paper principles of mass journalism. The special characteristics were developed mainly in the United States and Great Britain but were more and more applied in other Western industrialized societies like France, the Scandinavian countries or Germany, too. The editor always acknowledged his indebtedness to Western models of journalism:

“I had a look around [...] in England, Scandinavia, the United States and I realized that in the age of the masses publications for the main audience had also to be organized differently from previous decades.”¹¹

Though this quote referred to Springer's famous tabloid "Bild-Zeitung", which was founded in 1952, it characterized the general journalistic attitude of the publishing house from the very beginning. Translated into action it meant short articles, an entertaining way of writing, huge headlines to attract the reader's attention to the issue of the day, and a human touch aspect in possibly every story. Even though these features were not unknown to some of the Weimar papers, Springer applied them more consistently. By this, he got new sections of the population interested in reading a daily newspaper, especially women and members of the working class. People coming home from work and wanting to relax were those Springer wanted to address. His intention was not to satisfy intellectual needs or to encourage people to weigh up different positions and make up their own point of view, but instead to tell them what was the right opinion of any given event. As he was sure that Germans after the war and the age of nazism definitely did not want to think¹² he told them what to think. This kind of moralistic journalism did not correspond with the outspoken goals of reeducation of the print media. Nonetheless it was welcomed by the Allies even after the end of the licensing era in September 1949 for Axel Springer was seen as a supporter of the supreme goal of democratizing Germany and as a welcome aid in the fight against communism.¹³

Though printing moral newspapers, the journalism of the Axel Springer Verlag was based on a careful evaluation of the public opinion of the German nonintellectual majority. Populist ideas were picked up, sometimes sensationally styled, spread in an enormous amount of copies, and therefore confirmed by the readers. At the foundation of this kind of journalism were two basic beliefs: First, that views of the majority, especially the nonintellectual majority are basically good as they spring from emotions and common sense instead of the "subversive

intellect” of intellectuals, mainly favoring left of center politics.¹⁴ This first belief was rooted in a way of thinking rather popular in German conservative circles in the Weimar Republic, even though it was not unknown in the conservative tradition of other countries, too. It said that ordinary people feel and believe in the right way, but are easily misled. So, political leaders should listen carefully to the voice of the people, but simultaneously the same people had to be protected from demagogues. It goes without saying that in a conservative outlook demagogues were always from the left.¹⁵

The second belief at the foundation of Springer’s popular journalism refers to a democratic theory that did not include democratic disputing but promoted clear majorities and stable and harmonious conditions. The management of the Axel Springer Verlag was convinced of the fundamental democratic attitude of their publications, because the papers picked up what they assumed to be common and widespread values and beliefs in Germany. Democracy was defined as any kind of majority. These majority views had to be respected at all costs while minority opinions had to submit themselves as soon as the majority had been determined by some vote – even if there were good arguments in favor of the opposition or if the less dominant beliefs were essential for a given group. Groups like students or writers that consisted of several individuals but had no constitutional and organizational background were not judged as an interest group anyway. As more and more of these loose groupings appeared on the left side of the political spectrum in the 1960s¹⁶ their members were just seen as individuals disturbing the smooth everyday life of the German majority. The definition of democracy according to the Axel Springer Verlag was not only questionable because minority views were repressed and democratic disputes almost unknown. It was even more doubtful because sometimes the publishing house itself defined what was supposed to be a majority view. Axel

Springer and his management believed that they had sensed what the majority really thought as long as millions of readers bought the papers of the publishing house. If there was no official vote taken, there was still the “poll at the kiosk”¹⁷ to be respected. Because the “man in the street” had no way of making himself and his common sense heard by the public and by the politically influential, the publications of the Axel Springer Verlag, especially the tabloid “Bild”, had to be his mouthpiece. The numbers of copies sold each day were a proof of how well the publishing house fulfilled this duty. As the Axel Springer Verlag was the most successful German press enterprise in terms of the sales numbers of its main newspapers and journals, the opinions expressed in these papers were seen as shared by the German majority. Therefore, Axel Springer claimed that the views of the publishing house had to influence German politics and society.

For the first time in German journalism, Springer designed his papers especially for the large, more or less “uneducated” masses in Germany. Until quite far into the twentieth century dailies were considered less an entertainment than a serious preoccupation to inform oneself. As a consequence of pride in the high standard of German culture it was popular in Germany even until after the war to look down not only on civilizations presumably less cultured, but also on the own country’s common people who did not share the esteem of literature, theater or classical music. Earlier than other editors, Axel Springer recognized the sure development to an industrialized and literate mass society and its implications for modern journalism. In contrast to many of his colleagues he therefore neither planned to satisfy the guidelines of the information officers nor to take up too many features of German journalism from the pre-Nazi era. Instead, he wanted to reach the broad public, reinforce their general ideas and attitudes and by this gradually win them over to ideas and attitudes he himself believed to be essential. At

least in the beginning of his career after the Second World War he showed no condescendance toward the „simple“ man or woman, but took their intellectual and emotional needs seriously. First of all he wanted to satisfy these needs with his publications. But Springer was not only altruistic as his employees' early recollections seem to imply.¹⁸ He also had a message to tell that was genuinely conservative and orientated toward a harmonious living together of everybody who accepted the “general” principles of the Axel Springer Verlag. The model of his conception was an idealized picture of family life that was nonetheless widespread not only in Germany until the 1960s. For Springer's conservative ideals drew on German as well as on Western, especially British conservative traditions.¹⁹

That he never questioned but supported mass culture and fostered widespread beliefs was equally not only based on love for the common man as sometimes was conceived.²⁰ Springer was well aware that publications sold better and earned more money for their editor when they were attractive to a broad public. But besides this truism it is more interesting for the subject of westernization in the Federal Republic of Germany to consider the degree to which Springer's papers still contributed to a shift in values of their readers even though they picked up general ideas and values. For despite the fact that the German working populace – the main addressee of Springer's journalism – mostly voted in favor of left parties²¹ they also have to be seen as actually conservative concerning their everyday attitudes and beliefs. This became obvious in the 1960s and 70s, when the publications of the Springer Verlag were attacked by a left intellectual minority that could not understand why the majority of Germans read one or the other of Springer's papers. In fact, after 1945 – and even more after participating in the Wirtschaftswunder in the 1950s – a large quantity of the German workforce became representatives of conservative views and values²² as they wanted to secure personal material

achievements and Germany's newly gained reputation within the Western world. To find out the reasons for the success of Springer's papers one has not only to see the modern way of journalism his publications presented but also to make a distinction between the electoral behavior and the general outlook of most of his readers.

Springer's way of popular journalism successfully adapted Anglo-Saxon conceptions according to the necessities of the German masses. Especially in the 1940s and 50s when Springer laid the foundation of his kind of journalism as well as of his political and social ideas he recognized the need for an entertaining journalism which respected privacy and the common rejection of yet another political or social education. In general, new beliefs spread slowly within the populace. To reach the broader public with some of his own or the occupying powers' ideas Springer saw the necessity to reassure his readers in their general lifestyle. While British and American tabloids and newspapers designed for the broad public were in general orientated to the left, Springer's journalism consequently depended on conservative guidelines in agreement with the widespread outlook of his readership. In central issues therefore the papers rather reflected popular attitudes instead of influencing public opinion. According to the journalistic credo of the Axel Springer Verlag this was the only way to get the readers accustomed to new ideas one after the other.

General Positions of the Axel Springer Verlag

Springer had not been an editor before 1945, but was well acquainted with the business as he worked for his father's local paper in Altona, a Hamburg suburb. When he applied for licences to run a newspaper and his father's publishing house, the British were pleased by his selfconfident but unpretentious manner, one that positively contrasted with the submissive and diffi-

dent conduct of other Germans.²³ The young editor-to-be also made sure he was of an anti-Nazi, pro-British and democratic way of thinking. Obviously, the information officers in charge trusted Springer in spite of his youth – he was only thirtythree at the end of the war – to be the right man to participate in the reconstruction of a democratic and free press. Even though they did not permit Springer to publish a daily newspaper, they otherwise overwhelmed him with licences: While other editors had to share only one periodical he was granted to print four different publications,²⁴ participate in three different publishing houses²⁵ and continue with the production of books he had started with during the war. That he could not publish a daily as long as the British were in charge had to do with different journalistic concepts of Springer and the British occupying power. Licenses were granted only to dailies close to a certain political conviction, while Springer favored the American principle of balanced information and stressed the importance of impartial newspapers for the reader's personal formation of opinion.

Friends and foes of Axel Springer agree that he was an excellent businessman with an exceptional knowledge of human nature even when he was young. That he kept firmly to his idea of an impartial paper although he probably could have edited a daily with a political orientation long before²⁶ does not contradict this estimation. Even the British had to accept after a while that their way of licensing newspapers was rather a failure with the German public.²⁷ After twelve years of Nazi politics covering all aspects of life and after the complete breakdown of this system most Germans wanted to keep a distance to politics first of all. Springer adapted his journalistic concept to this fact by avoiding a definite political outlook without shunning to take clear positions on single situations. Though it was one of the specific goals of the publishing house since at least the early 1960s to vindicate intellectual conservatism in Germany

again, the general line of the Axel Springer Verlag was always called “independent”, “impartial” and, at the most, “national” or “German” with trying to shed the specific conservative connotations of the latter terms.²⁸

From the very outset the young editor pursued a policy of moral journalism. The messages of his papers were that both the reader and world policy as a whole were basically good as long as they observed christian beliefs and Western ideological principles like democracy and freedom. It can be subsumed that the direction of the publishing house in general followed the political and ideological consensus of the early Federal Republic of Germany as it was pointed out by the Western Allies and the government of Konrad Adenauer in common with a large percentage of the German public. To believe in one’s own good intentions and open oneself to basic political principles of the West seemed to be the best way to leave the nazi years behind and find Germany’s place in the Western alliance. Axel Springer never concealed the fact that he wanted his papers to spread this general message, and the information officers did approve this intention.

In all papers of the publishing house militarism in general was rejected, military actions only accepted in cooperation with the Western alliance, particularly under the leadership of the United States, and when directed against „Soviet imperialism“. Basic beliefs of Western societies like a reason of state and a constitution protecting the civilians from dictatorship, injustice and terror were just as much advocated as the right of private property, which offered a clear contrast to the communist collective ideals in the east of Europe while simultaneously serving as the basis of Springer’s publishing house and of his private wealth. The driving force of the Axel Springer Verlag to support these fundamental Western conceptions was a passionate anticommunism, likewise shared by the Western Allies. It was intensified by Ger-

many's division, which Axel Springer wanted to overcome at almost any cost except the loss of democracy and freedom. Until about the end of the 1950s he believed in the possibility to convince the Soviets to let go of East Germany if only the correct arguments were found. According to Springer these arguments had to be economical. For how could the communists with their ideal of everyone's welfare bear the rather low standard of living in the countries of the East in comparison to the fortune of the masses in the West?

But in 1958 Springer had to realize that the failure to achieve Germany's reunion was not the fault of West German politics. Together with his close friend, political adviser and chief editor of his daily „Die Welt“, Hans Zehrer, Springer got the chance to talk to Nikita Chruchtchev personally.²⁹ He stressed the advantages of the free market economy in its social orientation practiced in West Germany, praised its tutor Ludwig Erhard and offered Chruchtchev advertising in favor of the Soviets in all his papers if the Soviet secretary general only agreed to Germany's reunion.³⁰ As is well known Chruchtchev did not accept this offer. From this time on, the rather general political and ideological message spread by Springer's papers became vigorously anticommunist and followed clear political instructions. As a consequence they propagated even more than before an identification with the political foundation of West Germany and therefore West Germany itself without dropping the claim of Germany's unity. In fact, all political actions and social developments were judged with the goal of unity in mind. Because it was firmly believed that the aim could only be achieved with the help of the United States, critic of America's creeds or actions was banished from the pages. Ideological unity within the Western alliance as well as within West Germany on the basis of democracy and freedom should bring the political unity of Germany and maybe expel communism altogether.

Like West Germany in general, the Axel Springer Verlag searched for universal principles to guide its way back into the international community from which the country had excluded itself after 1933. The political and ideological direction of the publishing house was outlined in the 1950s and became fixed in the early 1960s in contrast to the simultaneous social changes. To counteract these changes and to fix major ideological opinions of the early postwar era, Springer formulated a kind of basic law for his publishing house. All papers and journalists were obliged

1. to advocate a peaceful reconstruction of a free Germany's unity;
2. to advocate the reconciliation between Jews and Germans and to back the state of Israel;
3. to reject every kind of political extremism;
4. to advocate the social market economy.³¹

Each one of these essentials can be read as a challenge to the German Democratic Republic, which was based on a system of political extremism connected with planned economy and did not accept any responsibility with regard to the holocaust. Besides, all of the essentials proved to be rather flexible. Almost any belief or political action could be condemned with the reproach that it imperils Germany's reunion or comes close to an extremist position. The political message the papers of the publishing house had to spread even justified a careful selection of news, an equally selected position in the paper and not only a certain way of commenting but also a biased way of writing the information itself. Superficially, the Anglo-American principle of separating news and comment was accepted, but in fact it was applied as often as not. In harmony with the German tradition of journalism, Axel Springer preferred his papers to show their readers the way and to tell them what to believe in. By this, he was sure to fulfill his duty as an editor and to counteract political and social mischief. Agreeing to

Allied convictions, he accused the so-called unpolitical newspapers of the Weimar Republic of having helped Hitler come to power. He did not assume the Federal Republic to be endangered by right wing extremism – which he restrictedly defined as nazism – but definitely by communism. Therefore, he stressed the responsibility of the West German press to fight left extremism and to prevent communist expansion. At its worst, even manipulating news and biased reporting were appropriate for this supreme goal.³²

Springer's way of journalism stood in sharp contrast and competition to another kind of reporting that also was rather new for German readers after 1945: investigative journalism. Not only because of competition between different kinds of print media did Springer and his advisers reject this kind of writing. According to one of the general positions of the Axel Springer Verlag, investigative journalism was seen to result from a basically wrong outlook on life that could only be an outflow of extremist positions.

“Fascists and communists like Wallraff just do not have a realistic conception of the world. [...] That is why fascists and communist journalists are always forced to reveal something. Incessantly they feel obliged to uncover some kind of wheelings and dealings.”³³

Springer, once called “the Cesar in the Empire of realist politics”,³⁴ was absolutely sure that his papers did promote such a realistic conception of the world. This was a fundamentally positive and optimistic outlook shunning the necessity to reveal something.

“Is it really true that all these pompous sentences like: politics is our destiny! or: economy is our destiny! or however they go are really important for [the man in the street]? Is it not true, that all of us lead a life working out nicely? [...] Don't we all live much more humanly, and don't we all treat each other so much more humanly – which means sometimes good and sometimes bad – than it is usually reported within papers trying to influence public opinion? [...] Do not I have the duty to write as humanly as it is about all aspects of life as it means most to the one who leads it? [...] What we all urgently need today is a certain happiness of living and confidence in the coming day. For this we need to get used to treating each other friendly and humanly and to give up to make each other's life difficult. [...] I know that good news doesn't come as often as bad news. But isn't it like this because we don't look for it and because it doesn't interest us as much?”³⁵

It was also a realistic conception meant to take up positions in the right balance between left and right. Even though it was obvious that the general convictions promoted by the publications of the publishing house were firmly rooted in conservative positions, Springer and his advisers always stressed their guidelines as perfectly holding the balance. By defining each kind of political opinion as a view of the middle as soon as the majority of the people – and consequently the publishing house – believed in it, the relations between conservative and progressive beliefs were shifted to the right. Again, this attitude suited his readers as it is a German tradition rather to position oneself into the political middle than to admit a personal standpoint.³⁶ And even though the Axel Springer Verlag explicitly wanted to spread conservative ideas in the 1960s and thereafter, it still respected the common wish within its German audience to define its positions as settled in the middle of the political spectrum. After 1945, conservative attitudes seemed to be more in charge for what had happened since 1933 than socialist positions.³⁷ Conservatism in general tends to a nationalistic outlook,³⁸ while socialists even when they do have a national outlook also stress the international dimension of their intentions. According to Allied convictions, it was the nationalistic rage and the strict limitation to German views and interests that had caused the crimes against humanity as well as the war. Consequently, there was an urgent need not to give up German conservative views, but to adjust them to Western conservative beliefs at least to a certain extent. As a result of the ensuing ideological uncertainty especially the common people avoided assigning themselves to a political conviction.

The direction of the Axel Springer publications firmly adhered to the Allied instructions of reeducation even after the end of the occupation era, transformed them into a synthesis of

conservative thoughts of German and Western origin, and sold this line as impartial and independent to the German public. The constitution taken in its literal meaning without further interpretations was together with the principles of democracy and freedom – both of them also narrowly defined – the tie for these only partly overlapping ways of thinking. Whenever the Axel Springer Verlag was criticized, especially in the 1960s and thereafter, as being on the far side of conservative thinking and even promoting dangerous reactionary beliefs, the founder of the publishing house defended himself and his journalism as being respectful of the German Basic Law and never questioning West Germany's basis of political and economical democracy and freedom. According to Springer these principles were Germany's highway to the Western ideological, political and military alliance against terrorism and totalitarianism. While right extremism had been definitely defeated by the West during the Second World War, left extremism still remained a challenge. Springer and his staff hardly ever differentiated between nazis and communists, but liked to quote Kurt Schumacher, first leader of West Germany's social democrats after the war, that communists were „nazis painted red“. ³⁹ Mainly with quotes from international socialist or communist sources, among them Herbert Wehner, Rosa Luxemburg, Nikita Chruschtshev or Lenin, Springer tried to demonstrate the legitimacy of his determination to fight totalitarianism, identical with communism after the end of nazism, as an endangerment to democracy, freedom and justice.

But to secure these principles it was necessary to limit their application. Democracy for instance was restricted to establishing stable relations mainly in the political sector by basing on the opinion of the majority. After the vote has taken place the elected government should not be criticized. Only at the next election could people express differing views again. Definitely democracy was not thought to be applied at any other subject than politics:

„A democratic formation of opinion is only supposed to take place in matters of state, not in matters of society. But in fact, democracy can not even be practiced in all matters of state.“⁴⁰

To fight communism and preserve the democratic foundations of state it might be necessary to restrict even these foundations. Actually, it could be expected from every reasonable person that he give up his democratic rights of his own accord if democracy and freedom were endangered by extremism. The state itself and the public weal were valued far above individual or group interests. By this, Springer took the Western term democracy, gave it a positive meaning, but filled it with German conservative beliefs of a supreme state to which everybody should subordinate freely. According to the general line in the papers of the Axel Springer Verlag democracy was not only a means to find out the wishes of the majority. In its last consequence, its goal was a harmonic living together in politics, too. Even though parties and their political functions were officially welcomed, Springer's papers had hoped for a big coalition since the early 1960s. In a union of the main parties, different interests would vanish and everybody – politicians and the public alike – would work together for the common weal.⁴¹ The publications of the Axel Springer Verlag did not take up conservative criticism of inter-party controversies as it was common in the Weimar Republic. In fact, members of the leading staff of the publishing house intensely disputed whether the big coalition was to be promoted. Especially editors in chief with an American background like Ernst J. Cramer stressed the importance of political opposition. Still, the tendency toward a harmonious politics with one leading personality finally took over. The importance of an individual political authority taking care of the public weal, fathering the Germans, and helping them to find their way into the international community and to get along with each other had already been stressed in several articles in the 1950s. With Konrad Adenauer, the ideal man to fulfill these tasks was in charge. After

the election of 1953, Hans Zehrer, editor in chief of the daily „Die Welt“, literally glorified him as a political leader by the Grace of God.⁴² If the process of „political Americanization“ can be defined as the abandoning of an „apotheosis of the state“⁴³ then the Axel Springer Verlag had not adjusted to it, at least until the end of the 1960s.⁴⁴ But nevertheless: By officially promoting the principles of democracy, parliamentary government and individuality – even though these terms often were defined in a restricted, conservative meaning – the publishing house filled the gap between German conservatism and Western beliefs and got its German readers step by step used to new political and social values.

The new ideas were further eased to the common people by an economic ideology that interpreted „prosperity for all“⁴⁵ as a „great process of democratizing“.⁴⁶ For the general line of the publishing house „freedom“ not only meant the possibility of free political elections, freedom of speech and writing or the freedom of traveling and choosing a profession according to one’s own preferences. The free market economy in its German style of social market economy was of equal importance. Rapid economic growth took place throughout Western Europe during the 1950s, but only in Germany, where material and ideological values simultaneously had been ruined, it became ideologically vitally important. Besides, the economic take-off allowed a system of social welfare that tried to relieve the material burdens of war and expulsion and allowed for the Germans to get accustomed to the new reason of state based on Western liberal principles after 1949. The consolidation of political democracy and social harmony soon after the end of the war was also owing to the economic success and the attempt to let everyone participate in it.⁴⁷ As Ludwig Erhard, in charge with the reconstruction of the German economy from the 1940s until the early 1960s, defined it, social market economy should „aim at a new, mature economic conduct through a moral and mental renewal.“⁴⁸ This attitude

fitted well with the moralistic goals of the Axel Springer Verlag and consequently the support of the social market economy was fixed in one of the four essentials of 1963. Springer saw himself as a child of the Wirtschaftswunder and transformed his personal experiences into a universal economic program. Just as the benefits provided to his employees were made possible by the profits of his publishing house, so the common weal was achieved by economic efficiency. In a kind of paternalistic attitude, economic success was seen as an individual acknowledgement of social obligation. Also, economic and social politics were inseparable:

„Social market economy means obligation for the common weal and for the neighbor. It means a system of order furthered by responsibility, market and competition with the aim of a human reality. Economy is the driving force to human happiness.“⁴⁹

In contrast to American beliefs that economic growth leads to a higher standard of living and by this to a consolidation of the political system, Axel Springer assumed that participation of the populace in the economic growth were in itself a democratic success. As West Germans could always see the economic failure of planned economy in the East of their country, they just had to support a constitution and a government which helped them to obtain personal prosperity. According to the universal line of the Springer publications, democratic structures should not be applied to the economy. Instead of codetermination by the workforce, the workers should trust in the personal responsibility of their employers and in laws to guarantee them their share.

Like in other directions of the publishing house, the attitudes concerning democracy and economy appeared in a rather authoritarian paternalistic style. The system of the Federal Republic of Germany was literally supported without question. To trust the personalities in charge, especially when they were elected or personally responsible for any kind of enterprise, was assumed to be the best way to adjust Germany to the Western world. Criticism of this

kind of policy just endangered freedom, democracy, harmony and order – the supreme objectives of the publishing house – and supported communist undermining.

Production, Critic, and Support of the Conception

Even though Axel Springer was the driving force behind the general line of his publishing house, he did not develop it alone. From the very beginning in 1945/46 it was clear that he wanted to produce print media for the German masses promoting a happy and harmonious everyday life on the basis of a democratic and free constitutional state. But besides this, he wanted his papers to be impartial and even unpolitical. From Springer's point of view, the Germans were fed up with politics after nazi propaganda had infiltrated every aspect of public and private life. Concerning his early personnel policy, he preferred not to ask about the past of his employees as long as they were willing to write their articles in this manner.⁵⁰ Still, he not only got fatherly journalistic advice during his youth. During the war and especially when he became an editor himself, Springer gathered editors in chief, friends and journalists around him with whom he developed the general line of his publishing house. This line was guarded by himself and the conceptional crew, but also by a gremium called "editorial advisory board" (Redaktioneller Beirat), specifically founded in 1963 to take care of the papers' direction.

Members of the board were mainly the editors in chief of the dailies and journals, but also Springer's chief representative, attorneys and even scientists participated sometimes.

Significantly enough, German and Anglo-American traditions of journalism were combined in Springer's advisory crew. Springer's main help was Hans Zehrer, born in 1899, who was quite successful during the Weimar Republic as a conservative journalist. Beginning in 1929 he edited the monthly „Die Tat“ („Action“), an influential journal among young intellectuals in

the early 1930s.⁵¹ Concerning the general line of the Axel Springer Verlag it was especially Zehrer who promoted the importance of authority and order at almost any cost. Even though conservative thoughts of the prewar era officially had a hard time after 1945, Zehrer succeeded in preserving his world of ideas and promoting it in Springer's papers. He brought it into the ideological directions of the publishing house indirectly by being Springer's mentor,⁵² directly by being editor in chief of the serious daily „Die Welt“ once Springer bought it from the British in 1953, and by writing weekly columns in the tabloid „Bild“, which reached millions of readers. The German conservative thoughts Zehrer stood for also were supported by some of his former colleagues of „Die Tat“, whom he engaged for „Die Welt“, journalists such as the economist Ferdinand Fried.

On the other side there were journalists working in the Springer publishing house with a specific American journalistic background. Ernst J. Cramer and Hans Wallenberg for instance, Hans Zehrer's successors as editor in chief of „Die Welt“, both emigrated to the United States during the Nazi years and worked on the reconstruction of the German press after 1945 under Hans Habe. Christian Kracht, who worked for the Axel Springer Verlag 1948-1970 as well as 1980-1983 and was Springer's personal assistant since the 1950s and his chief representative 1963-1968, participated in the American exchange programs for young professionals. He spent two years in the United States, the first studying journalism at college and the second working for the „San Francisco Chronicle“. And Peter Boenisch, 1962-1971 editor in chief of „Bild“, described himself as an „American foster child concerning his profession“,⁵³ though he also has to be seen as a link to the German national tradition within the publishing house as he wanted „Bild“ to promote a specific „German“ attitude.⁵⁴ Most of these journalists supported conservative views, and in the general line of the publishing house Zehrer's ideological

influence predominated even after his personal influence on Axel Springer diminished in the aftermath of their joint interview with Chruchtchev in 1958. But there was an openmindedness regarding conservative traditions in other Western countries, and corresponding beliefs were always carefully pointed out. The different conservative values merged in the positions of the Axel Springer Verlag and an amalgamation of German and Western convictions was promoted that was generally approved of by the occupation powers during the licensing era and at least until 1955.⁵⁵

While the political, social and moral lesson the publishing house wanted to teach its readers was more and more criticized in Germany – in spite of the multitude of Germans, imper-turbed, keeping to their reading – British and American sources usually evaluate Axel Springer’s message positively. The criticism in Germany was mainly expressed by left intel-lectuals who wanted politics and society in the Federal Republic to be more progressive than it had been in the 1950s. That the market for print media was dominated by one publishing house with a specific, especially conservative message reminded them of the press empire of Alfred Hugenberg in the Weimar Republic, a monopoly on opinion helping Hitler to come to power. Also, Springer’s critics accused him of not writing according to the interests of the rank and file for which most of his papers were designed. It was assumed that the workers had to be interested in progressive and socialist causes and concepts, not in the capitalist outlook of the establishment that was purveyed by “Bild” or the other publications of the Axel Springer Verlag. Even though millions of people bought Springer’s productions and almost every German during the 1950s and 1960s read one of his papers, this success was supposed to be rooted in a wrong attitude among the workforce that had to be corrected, not to be con-firmed. During the 1960s the conflict between the Axel Springer Verlag and left intellectuals,

mainly students and authors, became more and more violent. The infamous climax occurred during Easter 1968, when cars were burnt, and two people died in Munich. The increasingly violent conflict must be seen as a battlefield for the ideological future of Germany: Were conservative values and the consensus of the 1950s to be furthered as intended by the publishing house or were the political essentials of democracy and freedom to be transferred into every day's life like the students demanded? To discredit each other's position, the Springer Verlag was accused of furthering German centered, reactionary and even fascist views, while the publishing house insinuated that all its critics were communists. When the German student's revolt petered out in the early 1970s, the public discussions about the positions of the publishing house slowly ceased, too. Still, the belief that the publications of the Axel Springer Verlag not only spread generally conservative, but most of all specific German views and values lasts until today.

This conviction was noted but not shared among Western observers of the Axel Springer Verlag. Even though the occupation powers wanted to prevent a new monopoly on the press after 1945, they did have a different attitude toward large publishing houses as they were used to them in their own countries. First of all these firms were seen as successful economic enterprises, not as an endangerment to public opinion. Especially in England and the United States mass journalism with its implementation of sensationally styled news and yellow journalism was well known long before Axel Springer adopted its features for his German readership.

But not only the journalistic features of Springer's papers were accepted more easily than among German intellectuals. The ideological foundation of the publishing house was generally approved as well. Because of what he wanted to tell his readers Springer got several licences from the British, and in 1953 they even sold him their zonal newspaper "Die Welt", designed

to be a model of modern journalism and reeducation like “Die Neue Zeitung” had been for the American occupation zone. At least until 1955 the British carefully observed Springer’s actions in the print market – his new foundings like the daily “Hamburger Abendblatt” or the tabloid “Bild” as well as the development of the publishing house’s editorial stance. Though they did not applaud each step he undertook, they did approve of his general line. His support of Konrad Adenauer was as appreciated as was his promotion of democracy, freedom and christian principles. It never occurred to them that he might further German principles only, but to the contrary they pointed out how well his attitudes matched British ones.⁵⁶

The positive evaluation was also shared by American authorities. American approval was so obvious that again and again rumors were spread about a CIA-financing of the Axel Springer Verlag at least in its early years.⁵⁷ There is no confirmed evidence that such a financing ever did take place. Possibly, Springer just got financial support from the European Recovery Program or the GARIOA (Government and Relief in Occupied Areas). But in their orientation against political extremes and in promoting the military and ideological aspects of the Western alliance, Springer’s papers certainly took a line worthy of CIA-sponsorship. Also, when Springer planned to visit England and the United States in 1955, both governments wanted to treat him with a “high level official hospitality”⁵⁸ because of his importance within the German print media at that time as well as to acknowledge Springer of their confidence in his direction of his newspapers.⁵⁹

Conclusion

In general Axel Springer accepted western political and journalistic ideals and spread them with his newspapers partly because they overlapped with his personal creeds, partly because

of contemporary political necessities. However, concerning social relations he spread a message rather uncommon to Anglo-Saxon traditions. Here, literally everybody was supposed to be committed to harmonious living and working together. For Springer this meant securing democracy, peace and freedom, the best possible security for the Federal Republic and happiness for everybody.

With regard to the process of westernization in the Federal Republic of Germany the publications of the Axel Springer Verlag closed the gap between German values and views of the prewar era and the ideological requirements of reeducation. This was done by simultaneously applying positions ranging from a definite confession to the West, over an amalgamation of different attitudes to the preservation of mainly German dispositions. The increasing anticommunism of the publishing house and, consequently, the dissociation from the socialist regimes in eastern Europe were the basis of a strong support of the Federal Republic and its political and ideological foundation of Western origin. Concerning the attitudes toward abstract terms like democracy, freedom, the state or the economy, Western principles were accepted, but not adopted without alteration. Instead, they were transformed according to what Springer believed to be German needs and characteristics. For this reason especially authoritarian and paternalistic features were added to the democratic lesson of reeducation. As for social beliefs, the German background was in general reestablished. Social consensus and the consciousness of living in a community whose common weal was a matter of everybody's concern were promoted by Springer's publications. But this quite German attitude was no longer combined with a dissociation from the organization of Western societies as was common during the first half of the twentieth century. Therefore, even with regard to positions supporting rather German values, the publishing house did not openly put itself in conflict with Western beliefs. In

those aspects, too, it did not actively block the process of Westernization although it did not promote it either.

With this threefold policy between Western and German values the publications of the publishing house especially reached German conservatives and facilitated their acceptance of the ideological foundation of the Federal Republic. Unlike the widespread refusal of Western ideology and way of life before and during the Weimar Republic among conservatives, they had to adjust themselves to the main objectives of reeducation after 1945 and to accept the attitudes of the occupation powers. By accepting these main objectives without questioning, but adding German connotations to a certain extent, the publications of the Axel Springer Verlag found a basis which was approved by German conservatives and Western Allies alike. Besides, a special feature of the publishing house was that it did not exclude the German populace from its striving for a consensus between German and Western values. The cultural predilections of the common man, his favorite way of spending his leisure time or his preferred kind of lecture were all welcomed within the dailies and journals of the publishing house in a way that also sold well.

To sum up, for the Axel Springer Verlag the enigmatic term “westernization” can be described as follows: Firstly, it meant mainly democratizing on a closely defined political scale. Concerning the ideological range the publications promoted “Anglization” rather than “Americanization”, as British conservative views are closer to German conservatism.⁶⁰ British democratic and parliamentary history was in spite of its hierarchical and monarchical tradition never questioned – a combination the Axel Springer Verlag surely was in favor of. This feature combined not only German and Western values but was probably also an inheritance of the start of Axel Springer’s publishing house under British licensing. Secondly, “Westernization” meant

“Americanization” with respect to support of the military protector of the “free West”, whose goodwill was essential for the survival of the Federal Republic. The United States was also a model concerning modernization, as the country was seen as far advanced on the general Western way into modern industrialized societies. For this reason both, England and the United States, set examples of modern mass journalism which the publishing house intended to emulate. Thirdly, the Axel Springer Verlag performed the function of a popularizer. The ideas spread by the publishing house were neither originally its own nor especially progressive, but they showed the German conservative populace the way to accept and support the new state of West Germany. After this duty was fulfilled in the 1950s the publishing house failed to develop its basic ideas any further. Instead, the general line became more and more established. Consequently, the publications were highly resented in the 1960s when young intellectuals promoted new values. Since then, the dailies and journals of the Axel Springer Verlag no longer play a major role in ideological or political discussions.

The article points out central aspects of the author’s book Das “Welt”-“Bild” des Axel Springer Verlags. Journalismus zwischen westlichen Werten und deutschen Denktraditionen (München 1999).

¹ Until 1970 a conglomeration of variously named publishing firms belonged to Axel Springer. In this article no distinction is made between these firms, as all their publications followed the same general ideological guidelines. Therefore, the various publishing houses are subsumed under „Axel Springer Verlag“. As this is the name of the publishing house, the German term „Verlag“ is withheld when the complete name is cited.

² This is a virtually uniform fact of almost every study of the licensing era in the Western occupation zones. F.ex. Peter J Humphreys, Media and Media Policy in Germany. The Press and Broadcasting since 1945 (Oxford – Providence)

²1994, Harold Hurwitz, Die Stunde Null der deutschen Presse. Die amerikanische Pressepolitik in Deutschland 1945–1949 (Köln) 1972. Less so Kurt Koszyk, Pressepolitik für Deutsche 1945–1949 (Berlin) 1986.

-
- ³ Biographies of Axel Springer even refer in their subtitles to his specific Germanity: Henno Lohmeyer, Springer. Ein deutsches Imperium. Geschichte und Geschichten, (Berlin 1992); Michael Jürigs, Der Fall Axel Springer. Eine deutsche Biographie, (München – Leipzig 1995). Springer firmly insisted on personally guiding his papers journalistically and ideologically, therefore, the history of the publishing house is closely interwoven with the biography of its founder.
- ⁴ The institutional reorganization was backed by individual education, for example lessons for prisoners of war and later on exchange programs for students, unionists or professionals.
- ⁵ Kurt Koszyk, Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg (Düsseldorf 1968), 81.
- ⁶ Kurt Koszyk, “The Press in the British Zone of Germany” in Nicholas Pronay, Keith Wilson, ed., The Political Re-education of Germany and her Allies after World War II (London – Sydney 1985), 101; Hermann-Josef Rupieper, Die Wurzeln der westdeutschen Nachkriegsdemokratie. Der amerikanische Beitrag 1945-1952 (Opladen 1993), 421; Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, “Dimensionen von Amerikanisierung in der deutschen Gesellschaft” in Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 35 (1995), 1.
- ⁷ Bernd Greiner, „’Test the West’. Über die Amerikanisierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland” in Mittelweg, Oct./Nov. 1997, 8-9.
- ⁸ Hans Habe, “Wunder, Segen und Fluch der deutschen Presse” in Helmut Hammerschmidt, ed., Zwanzig Jahre danach. Eine deutsche Bilanz 1945-1965 (München et al. 1965), 346. Hans Habe was born in Budapest, but was of Germanspeaking origin. In the 1930s he wrote for several Austrian papers. His preparations for a new German press after the end of the war are outlined in his book: Hans Habe, Im Jahre Null (München 1977). Habes opinion is of some importance concerning German features of the press after the war as he has to be seen as one of the multipliers in the democratic reorganization of the German press. He schooled refugees to be information officers in Germany, reorganized the press according to the necessities of reeducation, and he himself was the first editor of the „Neue Zeitung“, the American newspaper of the U.S. occupation zone.
- ⁹ Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ed., 1968 – Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft (Göttingen 1998); Arthur Marwick, The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States 1958-1974 (Oxford 1998).
- ¹⁰ The results of the Günther Commission are treated in Hermann Meyn, Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Berlin) 1990, 86-88.
- ¹¹ „Ich sah mich um [...] in England, Skandinavien, in Amerika, und ich erkannte, daß im Zeitalter der Massen auch die Publikationsmittel für das große Publikum anders gestaltet werden müssen als in früheren Jahrzehnten.“ Axel

-
- Springer, quoted in Peter de Mendelssohn, Zeitungsstadt Berlin. Menschen und Mächte in der Geschichte der deutschen Presse (revised edition), (Frankfurt/Main et al.)²1982, 561-2.
- ¹² Springer was „convinced since the end of the war that the German reader definitely did not want to do one thing: to reflect. And that was what I designed my papers for.“ („Ich war mir seit Kriegsende darüber klar, daß der deutsche Leser eines auf keinen Fall wollte, nämlich nachdenken. Und darauf habe ich meine Zeitungen eingestellt.“) The quote was published in the article of Joachim Stave, „Zur Grammatik einer Zeitungssprache. ‘Bild’ sagt, wie es ist“ in Sonntagsblatt, 5.7.1959. It is significant, that Springer confessed this opinion originally to an American interviewer.
- ¹³ Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, British High Commissioner, to F.K. Roberts of the Foreign Office; Public Record Office, FO 1056/394, probably Mai 1953.
- ¹⁴ Several examples of this reproach are listed in Friedrich J. Bröder, Presse und Politik. Demokratie und Gesellschaft im Spiegel politischer Kommentare der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“, der „Welt“ und der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“, (Erlangen) 1976, 195-6. The expression „zersetzender Intellekt“ was used in spite of the well known nazi tradition of this term, Dolf Sternberger, „Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschens: Intellekt“ in Die Wandlung, Oktober 1946, 898-901.
- ¹⁵ Springers advisor Hans Zehrer has been a strong advocate of these beliefs during the Weimar Republic and most probably influenced Springer accordingly. Jürgs, Der Fall Axel Springer, 62, Hans Dieter Müller, Der Springer-Konzern. Eine kritische Studie, (München) 1968, 188.
- ¹⁶ The foundation of the coalition between CDU and SPD in 1966 left people who were orientated to the political left without opposition to the conservative government. As a result they organized themselves outside parliament's regulations to express their protest to political and social developments in the 1960s.
- ¹⁷ The „Abstimmung am Kiosk“ through the buyers of his publications was one of Springer favorite justifications for his way of journalism. It is mentioned among plenty of other occasions in his speech to the Hamburg Oversea Club, held on 26.10.1967, manuscript in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag.
- ¹⁸ F.ex. Rudolf Michael, 1949-53 writing for the „Hamburger Abendblatt“, 1952-58 editor in chief of „Bild“, in an address to a meeting of wholesalers on 8.–9.5.1958, manuscript of the address in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag.
- ¹⁹ Sabine Pfeffer, Politischer Konservatismus in England und in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nach 1945. Ein Vergleich konservativer Prinzipien, (Münster) 1989.
- ²⁰ In 1957 Erich Kuby, once employed in the Axel Springer Verlag but leaving the company only a year afterwards in 1958, was convinced that Springer did not fight for the simple man but love him. Erich Kuby, Das ist des Deutschen Vaterland. 70 Millionen in zwei Waresälen, (Stuttgart) 1957, 264. Most probably he would not have repeated this statement in the 1960s or afterwards.

-
- ²¹ Until the early 1960s more than 50% of the German workforce worked in blue collar jobs (1950: 56,8%; 1961: 51,1%). Gerhard A. Ritter, Merith Niehuss, Wahlen in Deutschland 1946-1991. Ein Handbuch (München 1991), 113. In 1961 the SPD was elected by about 30% of the white collar workers but by 54% of blue collar workers, especially those over 40 years old. Josef Mooser, "Arbeiter, Angestellte und Frauen in der 'nivellierten Mittelstandsgesellschaft'. Thesen" in Axel Schildt, Arnold Sywottek, eds., Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre (Bonn 1992), 376; Ritter, Niehuss, Wahlen in Deutschland, 252-3.
- ²² Wilhelm Ribhegge, "Konservatismus. Versuch zu einer kritisch-historischen Theorie" in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte B 30/70, 30; Mooser, "Arbeiter, Angestellte und Frauen", 370.
- ²³ An enthusiastic description of the impression that the British had from Axel Springer is given by the Austrian emigrant and British information officer George Clare, „Die Hosen des Oberst K.“ in Friede Springer, Axel Springer. Die Freunde dem Freund, [Berlin 1986], 21–23.
- ²⁴ „Besinnung. Ewige Worte der Menschlichkeit. Ein Kalender für das Jahr 1946“, „Nordwestdeutsche Hefte“, „Hör zu!“ and „Constanze“.
- ²⁵ Hammerich & Lesser Verlag (together with his father), Axel Springer Verlag and Constanze Verlag GmbH (together with John Jahr).
- ²⁶ The first mayor of Hamburg after the war was the socialdemocrat Max Brauer, a close friend of Springer's parents and well acquainted with him, too. Brauer promoted Springer's ambitions to edit a newspaper at the British as well as at the German authorities, when they took charge. Therefore, there are reasons to believe that Springer would have had the chance to edit a newspaper with a socialdemocratic outlook.
- ²⁷ More than 75 % of Germans rejected partial newspapers, 80 % did not believe that the papers licensed by the British represented German public opinion, Koszyk, Pressepolitik für Deutsche, 164.
- ²⁸ From 3.1.1966 onward a specific „national line“ was declared for „Die Welt“, followed by a personnel policy fitting that course. For „Bild“ the line was rather defined as „German“, „Märchen-Magazin“ in „Bild“, 25.6.1965.
- ²⁹ They were accompanied at their voyage by Springer's wife, Rosemarie Springer, and Christian Kracht, another adviser of Axel Springer. The two of them did not participate in the interview with Chruchtchev, though.
- ³⁰ The interview was printed in „Die Welt“ of 7.2.1958 and was also covered by an article and the editorial of this edition. The translation of the originally Russian manuscript of the interview itself is hold in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, „Niederschrift der vertraulichen Unterredung N.S. Chruschtschows mit den westdeutschen Pressevertretern A. Springer und H. Zehrer, 29.1.1958“, DY 30/J IV 2/202;75.
- ³¹ Axel Springer gave this definition of the message his newspapers had to spread in an address to the Hamburg Oversea Club, held on 26.10.1967.

-
- ³² Springer ordered f.ex., that the numbers of refugees from the East to the West of Germany had to be mentioned on the front page of his publications without mentioning the numbers of those going back. Confidential letter from Axel Springer to several editors in chief of his papers on 20.3.1958 in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag, Correspondence Axel Springer with „Bild“/“Bild am Sonntag“.
- ³³ „Faschisten und Kommunisten wie Wallraff haben nun freilich kein realistisches Weltbild. [...] Deshalb stehen faschistische und kommunistische Journalisten auch dauernd unter Enthüllungszwang. Ununterbrochen müssen sie irgendwelche ‚Machenschaften aufdecken‘.“ Editorial of „Die Welt“ in July 1977 commenting on the undercover research of Günter Wallraff concerning the „Bild“-Zeitung. After working for „Bild“ as a journalist for several months using a pseudonym Wallraff wrote a book condemning the journalistic methods of the tabloid. Günter Wallraff, Der Aufmacher. Der Mann, der bei „Bild“ Hans Esser war (Köln 1977), 227.
- ³⁴ Kurt Lenk, „Armin Mohler oder die Sinnggebung der Bundesrepublik“ in Kurt Lenk, Rechts, wo dieMitte ist. Studien zur Ideologie. Rechtsextremismus, Nationalsozialismus, Konservatismus (Baden-Baden 1994), 264.
- ³⁵ In his answer to an inquiry of the “Deutsche Sonntagszeitung” in 1953 Axel Springer defined his editorial credo like this. (“Ist es denn so, daß die hochtrabenden Sätze: die Politik ist das Schicksal! oder: die Wirtschaft ist das Schicksal!, oder wie sie auch immer lauten mögen, wirklich für [den “Mann auf der Straße”] zutreffen? Ist es nicht so, daß wir alle ein viel runderes Leben führen, in dem unzählige andere Dinge eine große Rolle spielen? Leben wir nicht alle viel menschlicher und gehen wir nicht viel menschlicher miteinander um, – im Guten wie im Bösen!, – als es in den Spalten mancher Zeitung, die sich als Meinungsblatt bezeichnet, zum Ausdruck kommt? [...] Und habe ich nun nicht die Aufgabe, von diesem runden Leben, das jedem das nächste ist, das er besitzt, so menschlich zu berichten, wie es ist? [...] Was wir alle heute notwendig brauchen, das ist eine gewisse Freude am Leben und eine Zuversicht für den kommenden Tag. Dazu gehört auch, daß wir uns daran gewöhnen, freundlich und menschlich miteinander umzugehen und uns das Leben nicht unnötig schwerer zu machen. [...] Ich weiß, daß die guten Nachrichten seltener sind als die schlechten. Aber liegt es nicht auch daran, daß wir sie weniger suchen und daß sie uns weniger reizen?”) Manuscript of the interview in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag; Correspondence between Axel Springer and Hans Zehrer.
- ³⁶ About 1975 this caution diminished at least among intellectual conservatives as the increase in conservative literature shows, but it is still rather common among the German public.
- ³⁷ Walter Dirks, „Rechts und links“ in Frankfurter Hefte, September 1946, 24-37.
- ³⁸ Karl Mannheim, Konservativismus. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Wissens, ed. by David Kettler, Volkr Meja and Nico Stehr, (Frankfurt/Main) 1984, 106-7.
- ³⁹ For example Springer mentions the term „rotlackierte Nazis“ in an interview with Gerhard Löwenthal, „Zeugen des Jahrhunderts“, ZDF, 2.5.1982, manuscript in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag, collection of Springer’s speeches.

-
- ⁴⁰ Axel Springer in an address to his leading staff in September 1971: „Es ist der Bereich des Staates, in dem die Willensbildung sich demokratisch vollziehen soll, nicht der Raum der Gesellschaft. Aber nicht einmal im Bereich des Staates ist Demokratie auf jeder Ebene durchführbar.“ Quoted according to Klaus Staeck, Die Leiden des Axel Cäsar Springer (Göttingen 1983). 89.
- ⁴¹ This opinion was likewise shared by a large percentage of the German public. In October 1961 28% of the Germans favored a government of all parties in addition to 23% favoring a big coalition of CDU and SPD. Institut für Demoskopie, Jahrbuch 1958-1964, (Allensbach) 1965, 443.
- ⁴² For the editor in chief of the „Welt“, Hans Zehrer, the result of the election showed that Konrad Adenauer „was called to his mission from above“ (the election let „glaubhaft den Auftrag von oben offenbar werden [...], von wo er gerufen und wo er verpflichtet wurde“), Hans Zehrer, „Der Kanzler“ in „Die Welt“, 10.10.1953.
- ⁴³ „Vergötzung des Staates“ usually is seen as a characteristic of negative German conservative beliefs. Greiner, „Test the West“, 34.
- ⁴⁴ My research concerning the positions of the publishing house did not extend to the 1970s or after.
- ⁴⁵ The title of the economic biography of Ludwig Erhard, Wohlstand für alle (Düsseldorf 1957) was often quoted by Springer and his advisers and was a guideline for the publications, too.
- ⁴⁶ Axel Springer in a speech held at the meeting of the Deutsche Bank advisory council on 14.11.1968, quoted according to the manuscript in the archive of the Axel Springer Verlag.
- ⁴⁷ Bernhard Schäfers, Sozialstruktur und Wandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ein Studienbuch zu ihrer Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte (Stuttgart 1976), Rüdiger Altmann, Dieter Erb, „Soziale Marktwirtschaft als gesellschaftliche Ordnungspolitik“ in Ludwig Erhard und seine Politik (Stuttgart – New York 1985), 11-26. Martin Greiffenhagen points out that economic success usually pays off as a political success, too. Still, people who had been socialised before 1933 were often willing to accept a loss of their democratic rights in order to secure the economic success. Martin Greiffenhagen, „Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945–1990. Reformen und Defizite politischer Kultur“ in Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (B 1-2/1991), 16 and 20.
- ⁴⁸ Ludwig Erhard, „Demokratie heißt Freiheit, Recht und Ordnung“ in Ludwig Erhard, Kurt Brüss, Bernhard Hagemeyer, Grenzen der Demokratie? Probleme und Konsequenzen der Demokratisierung von Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (Düsseldorf – Wien 1973), 31: „[...] über eine moralische und geistige Erneuerung zu einem veränderten, einem reiferen wirtschaftspolitischen Verhalten hinführen.“
- ⁴⁹ „Soziale Marktwirtschaft, das ist der Dienst am Wohl des Ganzen und des Nächsten, das heißt Ordnungssystem für eine humane Wirklichkeit, bei dem Verantwortung, Markt und Wettbewerb die Triebfedern sind. Die Wirtschaft als Triebfeder zum menschlichen Glück [...].“ Axel Springer in a birthday letter to Ludwig Erhard on 4.2.1977. The letter was

-
- published in „Die Welt“ on 3.2.1977. It is quoted here according to Axel Springer, „Sie haben den Weg geebnet“ in Axel Springer, Aus Sorge um Deutschland. Zeugnisse eines engagierten Berliners (Stuttgart 1980), 104.
- ⁵⁰ When Springer asked his future employee Ernst Naumann in his application interview in 1948 if he were member of a political party, Naumann answered in the negative for the present as well as for the time before 1945. Springer replied, he was not at all interested in what Naumann did during the nazi years, but he did not want any politics in his papers. Jürigs, Der Fall Axel Springer, 171.
- ⁵¹ There are several studies about Hans Zehrer and his circle around the journal „Die Tat“, f.ex.: Walter Struve, “Hans Zehrer as a Neoconservative Elite Theorist” in American Historical Review 70 (1965), 1035; Ebbo Demant, Von Schleicher zu Springer. Hans Zehrer als politischer Publizist (Mainz 1971); Walter Struve, “Hans Zehrer and the „Tat“. Circle: The Révolution Manquée of the Intelligentsia” in Walter Struve, Elites Against Democracy. Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933 (Princeton, N.J. 1973), 353–376; Klaus Fritzsche, Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution. Fluchtwege in der Krise der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Das Beispiel des „Tat“-Kreises, (Frankfurt/Main 1976); Axel Schildt, “Deutschlands Platz in einem ‘christlichen Abendland’. Konservative Publizisten aus dem Tat-Kreis in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit” in Thomas Koebner; Gert Sautermeister; Sigrid Schneider, eds., Deutschland nach Hitler. Zukunftspläne im Exil und aus der Besatzungszeit 1939–1949, (Opladen 1987), 344–369; Edith Hauke; Gangolf Hübinger, “Von der ‘Tat’-Gemeinde zum ‘Tat’-Kreis. Die Entwicklung einer Kulturzeitschrift” in Gangolf Hübinger (ed.), Versammlungsort Moderner Geister. Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag. Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme (München 1996), 299–334.
- ⁵² In his obituary notice for Zehrer on 29.8.1966 Axel Springer wrote: “He was a friend of mine and my mentor. Without him my life would have been different. Without him, my publishing house would not be what it is today.” („Er war mein Freund und mein Mentor. Ohne ihn wäre mein Leben anders verlaufen. Ohne ihn wäre mein Haus nicht das geworden, was es ist“) Quoted according to Axel Springer, “Hans Zehrer’s Vermächtnis” in Axel Springer, Von Berlin aus gesehen. Zeugnisse eines engagierten Deutschen (Stuttgart 1971), 287.
- ⁵³ Boenisch were „beruflich ein Ziehkind der Amerikaner“, Kaspar Maase, Bravo Amerika, Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren (Hamburg 1992), 77.
- ⁵⁴ „Bild“, 25.6.1965.
- ⁵⁵ Due to the end of the occupation era, no more statements concerning German print media are reported after this date.
- ⁵⁶ Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, British High Commissioner, to F.K. Roberts of the Foreign Office; Public Record Office, FO 1056/394, probably Mai 1953 and Information Officer Michael M.A. Robb in a letter to the Foreign Office in the beginning of 1954, Public Record Office, FO 1056/398.

⁵⁷ „The Americanization of Herr Springer“ in „Ramparts“, 15.6.1968, 8 and 10, Murray Waas, „Covert Charge“ in „The Nation“, 19.6.1982, 738-9; Erich Schmidt-Eenboom: Under Cover. Der BND und die deutschen Journalisten, Köln 1998, 76-96.

⁵⁸ Letter from Information Officer Michael A.M. Robb to John H. Moore of the German Information Department, London on 5.11.1954, Public Record Office, FO 1056/399; also letter of Charles F. Blackman to William L. Clark on 23.3.1955, Federal Record Center, Suitland: USIA Rg 306 Lot 57 D 379, Box 34. As the British did not agree on the kind of hospitality they wanted Springer to treat with, and as he was finally seen as not cooperative enough, the British plans were cancelled shortly before Springer visited Great Britain. Letter of Rolland Chaput de Saintonge, chair of the German Information Department, to Robb on 16.3.1955, Public Record Office, FO 1056/399.

⁵⁹ Letter of Lance Pope to Colonel I.C. Edwards on 29.1.1954, Public Record Office, FO 1056/398.

⁶⁰ Pfeffer, Politischer Konservatismus.