



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*

Axel Schildt
Beyond the 60's - Finally Arrived in the West?
Notes on the Americanization of Culture
in West Germany

Axel Schildt

Beyond the 60's - Finally Arrived in the West? Notes on the Americanization of Culture in West Germany

The 60's were, especially in the Western World, a period of far-reaching social changes that are symbolized by the magical year of 1968.¹ However, we still only know very few details about the social and cultural processes that are a particular feature of this decade and consequently even less about the results of the transformation beyond the 60's. Contemporary historical research about the 60's in the Federal Republic of Germany has only just begun.² The time period beyond the 60's has been a "no-man's land" in current history until now, at least from a cultural historical perspective almost completely a terra incognita.

The blurring of time since the 70's in posthistoire, from which only the regained German reunification of 1990 stands out as a historical event, has really been a precondition for the mystification of the 60's and for their very general characterization as a prosperous time, as an "optimistic decade"³ in contrast to the "dull 70's" (Hauke Brunkhorst). It is well known that thinking in decades has a magical quality and that clean demarcations between historical processes only seldomly follow a smooth mathematical division. At least in considering West German social and cultural developments, another division of periods emerges. The rapid and enormously successful reconstruction of West Germany led to outlines of a new quality of mass consumption during the last third of the 50's, determined by the "affluent society" - in West Germany as well as in other Western countries. This new quality was carried out very quickly until the beginning of the 70's. To put it more precisely: economically the year 1973 marked the end of a rapid process of advancement. At the end of 1973 and once again at the beginning of 1974 the oil crisis led to a ban by the federal government of even driving a car on Sundays in order to save energy⁴ - an obvious symbol for the end of a historical period. The "short dream of perpetual prosperity" during

¹ See Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, Detlef Junker, eds., 1968: *The World Transformed* (New York 1998).

² See Karl Christian Lammers, Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Die 60er Jahre. Soziale Kultur und politische Ideen in den beiden deutschen Staaten* (Hamburg 1999).

³ Wolfgang Pehnt, "Anarchie nach Vorschrift. Die sechziger Jahre und das Prinzip der Vervielfältigung - Portraet einer optimistischen Dekade," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Frankfurt am Main, 3.8.1991).

⁴ See Jens Hohensee, *Der erste Oelpreisschock 1973/4. Die politischen und gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen der arabischen Erdölpolitik auf die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Westeuropa* (Stuttgart 1996).

the "boom" of the 50's and 60's had passed.⁵ The almost non-existent unemployment during this time period began to rise as well. This wasn't just an economic caesura since the cultural scene began to change drastically as well during this time period. When the 60's are referred to below, the phase from approximately 1957 to 1973 is meant; one might call them the "long 60's". Considering the almost non-existent research about this period, only a few propositions can be addressed here.

The initial question for my essay is a doubled one: How can the mass-cultural transformation process - here understood in the broadest sense - of the 60's be characterized best? And did during this period a push of cultural Americanization become apparent that let the FRG finally become a Western Nation? The separation of these two very closely related questions is merely of an analytical nature.

Radical social and cultural change in the 60's

The FRG went through far-reaching economic changes in the 60's. Not even a 12th of all employed persons were working in the farming sector at the end of this decade. Also, the amount of people working in industry (1970: 40.9%) and in the trades didn't rise, while the so-called "tertiary sector" (commercial trade and service) expanded immensely and became the leading production sector in the 70's. This combined with a rapid drop in the number of blue-collar workers, whose position as the largest group was taken over by employees and civil servants.⁶ Furthermore heavy physical work was done more and more by foreign blue-collar workers, who were recruited at the beginning of the 60's mostly from Southern Europe, and in turn made West Germany a multi-cultural society within a decade. In 1961 less than 700,000 foreigners lived in West Germany compared to 3.4 million in 1971.⁷

⁵ Burkart Lutz, *Der kurze Traum immerwährender Prosperität. Eine Neuinterpretation der industriell-kapitalistischen Entwicklung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1984); see also Hartmut Kaelble, ed., *Der Boom 1948-1973. Gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Folgen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa* (Opladen 1992).

⁶ Bernhard Schaefer, *Gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland. Ein Studienbuch zur Sozialstruktur und Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart 1995), 183, 192.

⁷ Ralf Rytlewski and Manfred Opp de Hipt, eds., *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Zahlen 1945/1949-1980. Ein sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch* (München 1987), 47; for further details see Annette Treibel, *Migration in modernen Gesellschaften. Soziale Folgen von Einwanderung und Gastarbeit* (Weinheim/München 1990).

The "transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society" (Daniel Bell)⁸, which took place in the 60's, went hand in hand with a historically never-before seen raise in salaries and wages, which had already been almost doubled in the 50's.⁹ The prosperity that spread as a result helped completely new consumer patterns to emerge. While the predominant part of income still went towards food, rent, clothing and other essential goods in the meagre 50's, wishes, which used to be considered a luxury, could be increasingly fulfilled in the 60's. A refrigerator, for instance, was found in every fifth household in 1958, but in 1962 in every second, and in 1969 in three out of every four households. This was similar to the distribution of washing machines and other appliances.¹⁰

The cultural dimensions of the new "consumer society"¹¹ were not at all to be overestimated. As a result of the changed material conditions, the central existential problem was no longer seen in survival but rather in experiencing life. The sociologist Gerhard Schulze speaks therefore of a society whose main concern is experiencing life to its fullest ("Erlebnisgesellschaft") which established itself in the 60's as a new stage of the modern age in a heated cultural conflict.¹² With this conceptualization fundamental characteristics of the new consumption and lifestyle of the 60's can be understood.¹³

Just to mention a few key words: increased amount of leisure time, mass-motorization and radical changes in the mass media. In the middle of the 50's the average work week for blue and white-collar workers in the industrial sector still amounted to approximately 50 hours; in the other

⁸ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Deutsche Zeitgeschichte nach 1945," in *Vierteljahreshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte* 41 (1993), 1-29.

⁹ The index of the average gross weekly salaries of industrial workers amounted to (1985 = 100): 1950 = 29,4; 1960 = 47,9; 1970 = 82,0; Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Datenreport 1992* (Bonn 1992), 369.

¹⁰ DIVO-Institut, ed., *Der westdeutsche Markt in Zahlen. Ein Handbuch fuer Forschung, Werbung und Verkauf* (Frankfurt am Main 1958), 105; see also Werner Polster, "Wandlungen der Lebensweise im Spiegel der Konsumententwicklung - Vom Dienstleistungskonsum zum demokratischen Warenkonsum," in Klaus Voy, Werner Polster, Claus Thomasberger, eds., *Gesellschaftliche Transformationsprozesse und materielle Lebensweise. Beitrage zur Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949-1989)*, Vol. 2 (Marburg 1991): 193-262 (224 ff.); Michael Wildt, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelersahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fuenfziger Jahren* (Hamburg 1994).

¹¹ See the recently published important volume by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, Matthias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending. European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1998).

¹² Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1992, ⁶1996), pp. 531).

¹³ According to the perspective held, there are several possibilities to term the most recent contemporary history, as pointed out by Stefan Immerfall, "Gesellschaftsmodelle und Gesellschaftsanalyse," in Bernhard Schaefer and Wolfgang Zapf, eds., *Handwoerterbuch zur Gesellschaft Deutschlands* (Opladen 1998): 253-262; zu den Anfaengen einer "Erlebnisgesellschaft" in den 60er Jahren see Axel Schildt, *Ankunft im Westen. Ein Essay zur Erfolgsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main 1999), 80-86.

economic sectors it was even more.¹⁴ The shortening of the weekly working hours which started then didn't only lead to a week shortened to 44 hours at the beginning of the 60's, but ultimately to a general 40 hour work week, that became wide-spread during the 70's. Simultaneously the so-called "long weekend" (two days) became a general rule. This had a large impact on leisure time and in general on an ever increasing part of the population. At the same time, there was also the largest building boom ever in German history, especially on the outskirts of the city and in the so-called "Schlafstädte" (dormitory towns) or satellite towns near the cities. Large housing developments with apartments were built as well as the more and more desired own home out in the "country." Quite often these houses were built as bungalows, which were considered a sign of western modernity. One's own car, owned by one fourth of all households at the beginning of the 60's and by three out of every four households already in the 70's, was particularly regarded as an integral part of the entire ensemble of the new lifestyle - West Germany had become a motorized society; during the 70's West Germany was at the top of the European motorization rankings. Suburban living, leisure time spent in one's own home and one's own car, which not only raised one's mobility in every day life but also made mobile vacation more possible, were fundamental elements of the new modern lifestyle.¹⁵

At the center of this was the mass media, which became so important in the 60's that one could speak of a "revolution in the media". The last social gaps in terms of providing with mass media were filled in during this time so that in 1970 only 2% of the population didn't read a daily newspaper or own a television set; three fourths of the population was reached by at least one of these media every day.¹⁶ New offers of mass media, an increased amount of leisure time and the gradually increasing level of education combined to create the rising significance of mass media. More and better consumption of media became an obvious and integral element of modern lifestyles.

¹⁴ Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten. Freizeit, Massenmedien und Zeitgeist in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre* (Hamburg 1995), pp. 79.

¹⁵ Axel Schildt, "Freizeit, Konsum und Häuslichkeit in der "Wiederaufbau"-Gesellschaft. Zur Modernisierung von Lebensstilen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den 1950er Jahren," in Hannes Siegrist, Hartmut Kaelble, Juergen Kocka, eds., *Europäische Konsumgeschichte. Zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1997), 327-348; Axel Schildt, "Die kostbarsten Wochen des Jahres. Urlaubstourismus der Westdeutschen (1945-1970)," in Hasso Spode, ed., *Goldstrand und Teutonengrill. Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Tourismus in Deutschland 1945 bis 1989* (Berlin 1996): 69-86.

¹⁶ Marie Luise Kiefer, "Massenkommunikation 1964-1970-1974. Daten zur Nutzung und zur Beurteilung der Medien Fernsehen, Hörfunk und Tageszeitung," in Klaus Berg, Marie Luise Kiefer, eds., *Massenkommunikation. Eine Langzeitstudie zur Mediennutzung und Medienbewertung* (Mainz 1978), 41-321 (here 67).

To be mentioned here is, first and foremost, the spreading of television, which became a part of the mass media during the last third of the 50's. At the beginning of the 60's a television set could be found in one fourth and at the end of the decade already in three fourths of all households.¹⁷ Crime movies shown in several parts (for example by Francis Durbridge) reached a level of more than 90% in viewing figures in 1962. If one wanted to be a part of the daily discussions at work, at school or while shopping one had to have followed the events on television. Since 1963 there have been two television stations (as public institutions), which were joined by a third a short time later. And color television has existed since 1967. Broadcasting times had been continually increasing, so that one could have spent his/her time in front of the television from midday until late in the evening on workdays; on weekends the stations even started broadcasting in the morning. The leisure time of the majority of the population was determined for the most part by television and lead not least to the decline of movie theaters. The Soccer Bundesliga has existed since 1963, and their games were broadcast regularly on television. They were the first league in West Germany, which was only comprised of professional athletes. The consumption of television as an acquisition of second hand symbolic culture didn't only shape the pattern of perception of adults but also that of children and teenagers. The young generation of the 60's was the first in West Germany, which grew up with the new audio-visual media.¹⁸ Parallel to the triumphal march of the television though, people were also reading more and more. The number of the reported first and new editions of books doubled in the 60's, the circulation of the daily newspapers increased at least by one third, and the circulation of magazines rose by approximately 40% in the second half of the decade alone.¹⁹ Since the beginning and not just at the end of the 60's, a critical public that was unfamiliar for those in government had been developing²⁰ - it first became noticeable during the protests against the confiscation of the news magazine "Der Spiegel" and the arrest of some of its journalists because of alleged treason in 1962. The operation had a boomerang effect: one secretary had to resign and the days of the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer were numbered from there

¹⁷ Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*, pp. 262; Knut Hackett (in cooperation with Peter Hoff), *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens* (Stuttgart, Weimar 1998), pp. 203.

¹⁸ Hans-Guenter Rolf, "Massenkonsum, Massenmedien und Massenkultur - ueber den Wandel kindlicher Aneignungsweisen," in Ulf Preuss-Lausitz et al., *Kriegskinder, Konsumkinder, Krisenkinder. Zur Sozialisationsgeschichte seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Weinheim, Basel 1983), 153-167.

¹⁹ On the culture of illustrated papers in the 60's see Jost Hermand, *Die Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1965-85* (Muenchen 1988), pp. 196.

²⁰ Hermann Rudolph, "Mehr als Stagnation und Revolte. Zur politischen Kultur der sechziger Jahre," in Martin Broszat, ed., *Zaesuren nach 1945. Essays zur Periodisierung der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Muenchen 1990).

on.²¹ The population's interest in politics strongly began to rise in the first half of the 60's,²² even though people everywhere complained about the too dilapidated "catch-all" large political parties, which lacked any distinct party image, and publicists talked much about "the end of ideology".²³ This was promoted not least by new critical programs on television. The development of affluence, the spreading of the mass media and education of a liberal public melted together to form an interrelation of effects that have hardly at all been researched until now. These synergies took hold expressively of the younger generation. The 60's were a decade of general respect for the juvenile created by mass media, as exemplified by the then popular slogan: "Don't trust anyone over 30!" Never before was the public debate so directed towards the opposites of young and old, in which young was associated with such terms as "emancipation" and "democratization" and old with such terms as "authoritarian" and "fascist". The success of a civil disposition (which was then held as "modern") over the existing educational authorities (parents, teachers, clergy), who acted according to the traditional rules of morals and decency, could be seen in intense discussions about clothing, hair length and above all the wide spread rock music of the "swinging 60's." These symbolic struggles especially on an aesthetic level marked deep inter-generational gaps.

In this context the student and youth rebellion of 1968, which in retrospect became a myth,²⁴ should be seen as both a political and a cultural phenomenon. Fragments of social and extremely liberal ideas, early Critical Theory (New Left), protests against the Vietnam War, against the manipulative power of the press and against the hierarchies at university, which were only found to be ridiculous, joined forces with the general feeling of the cultural youth's new direction. Characteristic for the anti-authoritarian revolts were a provocative behaviour, the contempt of obscure phrases of the educated classes and of the practice of a "non-serious discourse" (Karl-Heinz Bohrer), which could all successfully count on mass media attention. It wasn't by chance, that the 60's saw the heyday of satirical magazines. The circulation of the monthly "Pardon", which for example made fun of the then German President Heinrich Lübke's signs of old age, rose from 50,000 (1961) to 360,000 (1969).

²¹ See the comprehensive documentation by Juergen Seifert, ed., *Die Spiegel-Affäre*, 2 vol. (Olten, Freiburg im Breisgau 1966).

²² Dieter Grosser, Stephan Bierling and Beate Neuss, eds., *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung*, vol. 11: *Bundesrepublik und DDR-1969-1990* (Stuttgart 1996), 97.

²³ Axel Schildt, "Ende der Ideologien? Politisch-ideologische Strömungen in den 50er Jahren," in Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek, eds., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* (Bonn 1993, 2¹⁹⁹⁸), 627-635.

²⁴ See the recent, detailed literary references by Franz-Werner Kersting, "Entzauberung des Mythos? Ausgangsbedingungen und Tendenzen einer gesellschaftsgeschichtlichen Standortbestimmung der westdeutschen „68er“-Bewegung," in *Westfälische Forschungen* 48 (1998), 1-19.

The rebellion of '68, whatever its ideological face might have been, contributed by and large to the obtaining of a modern character by West-German society. Particularly noticeable here were certainly the enormous expansion of higher and academic education, which first started began to boom in the 70's,²⁵ the starting of the women's movement and of women's emancipation, which was hardly on the cutting edge of the protest movement, as well as the loosening of rigid sexual norms. However, the 70's and not the 60's were, in this respect, the decisive years in West-Germany.²⁶

Americanization during the radical change in the 60's

The above description of mass-cultural processes of the 60's deliberately avoided the term "Americanization". This is also valid for the sociological observations of German society.²⁷ On the one hand, this is connected to the distinguishing of ideological terms, in which "Americanization" is either identified generally with modernization or only with the negative results of modernization, which in turn represents a persisting tradition of the educated classes.²⁸ On the other hand, the historical-empirical scrutiny corrected exaggerated ideas of an early cultural wave of Americanization, which maintained that the mould of US-products and their coupled spirit flooded West-German society already during the first decade after the Second World War and were modeled after the American way of life.²⁹ The USA were at the birth of the West-German economic and social order and the FRG was, in principle, inclined towards the West. However, during this time of uncertain orientation, maintaining German traditions in everyday life was much more characteristic than taking on models felt to be American. The politicians often spoke about a

²⁵ The number of students at West-German universities and other colleges rose from 291,000 (1960) and 510,000 (1970) to 1,044,000 million (1980).

²⁶ See Uwe Koch, "Gelockerte Bindungen. Neue Kultur und neue Beweglichkeit," in Gabriele Dietz, Maruta Schmidt, Kristine von Soden, Eds., *Wild und zahm. Die siebziger Jahre* (Berlin 1997), 6-17; Ute Frevert, "Umbruch der Geschlechterverhältnisse," in Lammers et.al., *Die 60er Jahre*.

²⁷ For example the before-mentioned voluminous *Handwoerterbuch zur Gesellschaft Deutschlands* (1998), which does not list the term "Amerikanisierung" on almost 800 pages.

²⁸ Dan Diner, *Verkehrte Welten. Antiamerikanismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main 1993); Alf Luedtke, Inge Marssolek, Adelheid von Saldern, eds., *Amerikanisierung. Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart 1996), 7-33 (Introduction).

²⁹ See Arnold Sywottek, „The Americanization of Everyday Life? Early Trends in Consumer and Leisure-Time Behavior," in Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945-1955* (Providence and Oxford 1993), 132-152; Axel Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*, 398-423; Axel Schildt, "Amerikanisierung," in Detlef Junker, ed., *Deutschland und die USA im Zeitalter des Kalten Krieges, 1945-1990. Ein Handbuch, Vol. 1* (New York 1999).

Christian West ("Christliches Abendland") and little of Western democracy.³⁰ In many areas there was a reduction of American influence in the early 50's compared to the time of occupation after the war, for example in the educational system and in the politics for young people³¹ and in "higher culture", which was supplied by information centers ("Amerikahaeuser").³² The extensive programs for visits to the USA by West German representatives also eased off at the beginning of the 50's. In addition, and this is often forgotten, only one part of the South of what was to become West Germany, was exposed to American influences during the period of occupation from 1945 to 1949.³³

However, this doesn't allow us to ignore the necessity of analyzing the depth of penetration of American influence during the time after World War II. In this context a demythologized term of "Americanization" is quite useful, if one is aware of the limitations associated with such terminology.³⁴ In this respect, it can be assumed, that through the economic and social developments in the first decade after the war, the possibilities for a multi-cultural transfer of culture from across the Atlantic matured only gradually. In this sense it has been pointed out from a standpoint which represents the history of ideas, that the 50's were an incubation period for the then following wide-spread acceptance of liberal Western or American values and models.³⁵ Furthermore it should be stressed that the cultural transfer was an active acquisition and adaptation of American elements in the realm of German traditions and was therefore a new "mixed culture," which became more and more Western.³⁶ Many elements came together to bring about the cultural push towards Americanization during the 60's:

Firstly the lifestyle aspects in the budding of an affluent society, described above, could be found approximately two decades earlier in the "white middle classes" in the USA: family life in one's

³⁰ Axel Schildt, *Zwischen Abendland und Amerika. Studien zur westdeutschen Ideenlandschaft der 50er Jahre* (Muenchen 1999).

³¹ Karl-Heinz Fuessl, *Die Umerziehung der Deutschen. Jugend und Schule unter den Siegermaechten des Zweiten Weltkrieges 1945-1955* (Paderborn 1994).

³² Maritta Hein-Kremer, *Die amerikanische Kulturoffensive. Gruendung und Entwicklung der amerikanischen Information Centers in Westdeutschland und West-Berlin 1945-1955* (Koeln, Weimar, Wien 1996).

³³ Umfassend Klaus-Dietmar Henke, *Die amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands* (Muenchen 1995).

³⁴ Bernd Greiner, "'Test the West'. Ueber die ‚Amerikanisierung‘ der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in *Mittelweg* 36 6 (Oktober, November 1997): 4-40 (with extensive references).

³⁵ The complex transfer of ideas from the USA to Western Europe and the FRG (which had started as a one-way traffic) is being analyzed under the keyword "westernization" in a long-term research project conducted by Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and published in the publication series *Ordnungssysteme. Studien zur Ideengeschichte der Neuzeit* (started Muenchen 1998); see Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Dimensionen von Amerikanisierung in der westdeutschen Gesellschaft," in *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte* 35 (1995): 1-34, 25 ff.

³⁶ Volker R. Berghahn, "Zur Bedeutung des wirtschafts- und sozialgeschichtlichen Zugriffs auf die deutsche Nachkriegsgeschichte," in Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, ed., *Adenauerzeit. Stand, Perspektiven und methodische Aufgaben der Zeitgeschichtsforschung (1945-1967)* (Bonn 1993), 97-109.

own suburban home, mass motorization, rationalization and technicanization of the household through refrigerators, electrical kitchen appliances, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, etc. The American society was the "forerunner of modern consumption"³⁷ and so the rapid catching up of modernization in West Germany had in this respect quite a number of American cultural traits, although one should distinguish between such indirect forms of American influence and direct US imports.

Secondly both German States developed more and more independently after the building of the Wall in 1961 and the political rejection of the goal of a national unity by the German Democratic Republic at the end of the 60's. The FRG became geopolitically and culturally even more Western through the increasing distance to the other German State. This occurred however, without the success of the opposite side in sovietizing the GDR.³⁸

Thirdly the spread of mass media and in particular television offered extended possibilities for the cultural transfer from the USA. Through the paramount influence of the West German mass media on the population of the GDR, East Germany was also partly included.³⁹

Lastly a particularly far-reaching generational change, as described above, occurred in the 60's. The youth were first to pick up the cultural practices connected with a civil disposition thought to be American, which in turn provoked the older generation. In the 50's there were only numerically small groups of "hooligans", who devoted themselves to Rock'n'roll and demonstrated "American coolness" expressively;⁴⁰ in the 60's this spread to the general youth's orientation on the USA.

The effects of this new consumer society, generational conflict and spread of mass media allowed different variations of "Americanism" in different combinations to flow into one another:⁴¹ the "egalitarian Americanism," which appeared through the higher valueing of mass culture instead of the "higher culture," the "hedonistic Americanism," which understood the American way of life to be a complete easing of daily life and luxury for everyone, and "distinctive Americanism," which used prevailing American goods or practices to gain an advantage in the battle of cultural

³⁷ Victoria de Grazia, "Amerikanisierung und wechselnde Leitbilder der Konsum-Moderne (consumer-modernity) in Europa," in Siegrist et al., *Europäische Konsumgeschichte*, 109-137, 113.

³⁸ Konrad Jarausch and Hannes Siegrist, eds., *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland 1945-1970* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1997), 11-46.

³⁹ Axel Schildt, "Zwei Staaten - eine Rundfunk- und Fernsehnation? Anmerkungen zur massenmedialen Beeinflussung beider deutscher Staaten im Kalten Krieg," in Arnd Bauerkaemper, Martin Sabrow, Bernd Stoeber, eds., *Doppelte Zeitgeschichte. Deutsch-deutsche Beziehungen 1945-1990* (Bonn 1998), 58-71.

⁴⁰ Kaspar Maase, *BRAVO Amerika. Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur in der Bundesrepublik in den fuenfziger Jahren* (Hamburg 1992).

⁴¹ See with regard to this terminology Kaspar Maase, "'Amerikanisierung der Gesellschaft'. Nationalisierende Deutung von Globalisierungsprozessen," in Jarausch and Siegrist, eds., *Amerikanisierung*, 219-241, 225.

acceptance. These forms of Americanism gradually took over the more conventional "technocratized Americanism," where everything that could help create a more effective economy should be accepted while, at the same time, cultural Americanization was to be prevented.⁴²

Although it hasn't been thoroughly researched, there are at least some indications which can be cited, where the receptiveness of American goods and leading ideas and a general liking for the USA had been increasing since the 50's. This can be seen for example in the "swing hammock" (German: "Hollywood-Schaukel") on the property of bungalow owners or in the "hula hoop" for fitness, just to name two leisure time products that were especially popular around 1960. The spread of self-service shops at the beginning of the 60's and camping, made possible through mass-motorization, should also be mentioned although these also date back to German traditions from the inter-war period. Large newspaper stories about, for example "Children - Clothing - Career: the very complicated life of the American woman",⁴³ accumulated around 1960 and in Hamburg the first "Western Shop" opened on the Reeperbahn in 1964 in the entertainment quarter, St. Pauli, in order to turn a profit on the enthusiasm for TV Westerns by selling cowboy boots and shirts, etc.⁴⁴ More important, however, were American tendencies in advertising, where turnover increased much quicker than in the entire economy.⁴⁵ This affected, on the one hand, the professionalization of the advertising industry and the transition to marketing, and on the other, the content and form with which it was advertised - now less German (serious and focused on the product) than American (amusing and focused on the product's reputation). At the same time, the American literature informing consumers about the tricks of commercial advertising also found a large audience. Vance Packard's "The Hidden Persuaders" saw four editions in 1958 alone.⁴⁶

The implantation of more and more American elements in the cultural and especially in the consumer practices of the population was executed first beginning in the last third of the 50's up to the mid 60's - during a time period when the reputation of the USA in general rose.⁴⁷ The campaigning for the Presidency of the USA was studied thoroughly and successfully by the

⁴² As to the real dimension of such an Americanization of the economy see following on Volker R. Berghahn, *Unternehmer und Politik in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main 1985) the contributions by Paul Erker and Harm G. Schroeter in Jarausch and Siegrist, *Amerikanisierung*, 137-145, 147-165.

⁴³ Series in the daily *Hamburger Abendblatt*, March 1960.

⁴⁴ Kurt Grobecker and Christian Mueller, *Die Stadt im Umbruch. Hamburg in den 60er Jahren* (Hamburg 1998), 47.

⁴⁵ Harm G. Schroeter, "Die Amerikanisierung der Werbung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in *Jahrbuch fuer Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1997/1), 93-115.

⁴⁶ Schildt, *Moderne Zeiten*, 105.

⁴⁷ Poll data in Hans-Peter Schwarz, "Die Westdeutschen, die westliche Demokratie und die Westbindung im Licht von Meinungsumfragen," in James A. Cooney, Gordon A. Craig, Hans-Peter Schwarz, Fritz Stern, eds., *Die Bundesrepublik*

German Social Democrats. Their candidate for the chancellorship, Willy Brandt, was stylized as a German John F. Kennedy. The transition to a more flexible NATO strategy (Harmel-Report 1967), suggested by the USA, inspired advocates of a "policy of détente" in West Germany. And in the debate about the German "educational catastrophe" (Georg Picht), American "comprehensive schools" were widely regarded as valuable models to base an educational reform on.

So much more was then the irritation that was created by the Vietnam War. The criticism of American policy was conveyed for the most part through photos and commentary on television - the Vietnam War was the first war ever to be televised. This had in so far an ironic touch as this new medium had just functioned as a gateway for cultural Americanization. However, in the analysis of television, one must differentiate very carefully between direct and indirect "Americanization"⁴⁸ in order not to distort the image of the 60's. Television entertainment in the USA, particularly the big game shows, were regarded as exemplary models from the very beginning. Many of their forms were adopted, although they were then filled for the most part with German contents. American television series (especially crime and western series) - run for the most part in the early evening and accompanied by commercials before and after - were shown only very occasionally. These shows became visibly more widespread in the 60's and 70's. In this context, one should remember that dealing with the national-socialistic past received a new quality through US imports on television. The television series "Holocaust" (1979) was classified in West Germany by some critics partially correctly as not contributing to historical enlightenment, but rather being more like a soap opera. However, never before were so many people dealing with the crimes against humanity, which occurred in the "Third Reich". The viewing figures for this show were over 30%.⁴⁹ A breach in the Americanization of television ensued, though, through the emergence of private TV stations (SAT 1, RTL) at the beginning of the 80's.⁵⁰

In the 60's young people sat less often and not as long in front of the television set as children and adults. They were more fascinated by the new beat music. As stated above, there were strong

Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Politische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Beziehungen im Wandel (Stuttgart 1985), 87-144 (101, 118, 128).

⁴⁸ Gerd Hallenberger, "Anmerkungen zur Amerikanisierung der Fernsehunterhaltung in der Bundesrepublik," in *Amerikanisierung der Alltagskultur? Zur Rezeption US-Amerikanischer Populärkultur in der Bundesrepublik und den Niederlanden* (Discussion paper 9-90, Hamburger Institut fuer Sozialforschung, 1990), 39-56.

⁴⁹ See Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, eds., *Holocaust zur Unterhaltung. Anatomie eines internationalen Bestsellers* (Berlin 1982); Yitzhak Ahren et al., eds., *Das Lehrstueck Holocaust. Zur Wirkungspsychologie eines Medienereignisses* (Opladen 1982).

⁵⁰ Irmela Schneider, *Amerikanische Einstellung. Deutsches Fernsehen und US-amerikanische Produktionen* (Heidelberg 1992); amusing memories of the first US serials in Bernd Muellender and Achim Noellenheid, eds., *Am Fuss der blauen Berge. Die Flimmerkiste in den 60er Jahren* (Essen 1994), 70, 96.

American influences in the 50's through Rock'n'roll. In the 60's however, this influence increased considerably. Here again one must differentiate between direct and indirect influences. Much of what was available by German labels on the record market, were products of international record companies financed by American capital (for example EMI).⁵¹ However, it was more British than American pop music which filled West German youth with enthusiasm during the first half of the 60's.⁵² In this regard, the monthly television show "Beat-Club," where the latest trends from "swinging London" were reported, became the central cult show of West German youth.⁵³ The show was, however, an exception to normally broadcast TV shows at this time.

In the second half of the 60's the direct American influence on pop music intensified especially through the then popular singers and groups from the West Coast - such as The Byrds, Jefferson Airplane, The Doors, Steppenwolf, and Janis Joplin, among others. Jimi Hendrix played his last open air concert before his death in West Germany, on the Baltic Sea island Fehmarn.⁵⁴ Jerry Garcia, who had many fans, performed for the first time in 1972 in West Germany with his group The Grateful Dead.⁵⁵

The rabble-rousing American music exerted, next to "both famous pills"⁵⁶ (LSD⁵⁷ and the contraceptive pill⁵⁸) that came from the US, the largest cultural influence on the revolt of young people in the late 60's. This has not been taken into consideration in much of the literature to date about 1968 because this influence revealed itself for the most part behind the backs of the political activists of the New Left. On the other hand, these activists were strongly influenced by the student movement in the USA, which preceded the European movements.⁵⁹ Furthermore, one of the most important intellectual mentors for the anti-authoritarian refusals and revolts, Herbert Marcuse, who

⁵¹ Hermand, *Kultur*, 104.

⁵² The Anglo-Saxon complex of British and American influences on the West German youth has not been subject to scrutiny yet.

⁵³ Detlef Siegfried, "Manipulation und Autonomie. Zur Politisierung der populären Jugendkultur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1960-1967," in Lammers et al., *Die 60er Jahre*.

⁵⁴ Thorsten Schmidt, ed., *Jimi Hendrix und der Sturm auf Fehmarn* (Bremen 1997).

⁵⁵ See the memories of the road manager Rock Scully, "Der groesste Kristall der Welt," in *die tageszeitung* (Berlin, 9.8.1996).

⁵⁶ Jakob Tanner, "'The Times They Are-A-Changin'". Zur subkulturellen Dynamik der 68er Bewegungen," in Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ed., *1968. Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Goettingen 1998), 207-223, 210.

⁵⁷ Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven. LSD and the American Dream* (London 1989).

⁵⁸ See Gisela Staupe and Lisa Vieth, *Die Pille. Von der Lust und von der Liebe* (Berlin 1996); Bernard Asbell, *Die Pille und wie sie die Welt veraenderte* (Muenchen 1996).

⁵⁹ See Hans R. Guggisberg, *Geschichte der USA II. Die Weltmacht* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Koeln, Mainz 1975), 286-292; Hermand, *Kultur*, 403-406; Rolf Uessler, *Die 68er: "Macht kaputt, was Euch kaputt macht!" APO, Marx und freie Liebe* (Muenchen 1998), 161-191; Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung. Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail*, 3 Bde. (1998); relevant contributions also in Gilcher-Holtey, ed., *1968*; Claus D. Krohn, "Die westdeutsche Studentenbewegung und das ,andere Deutschland'," in Lammers et al., *Die 60er Jahre*.

was driven out of Germany by the NS regime, taught in California. His philosophy was euphorically taken on in part superficially as an increase in the value of individual desire over social achievement and as the discovery of a hedonistic subjectivity with the motto "The personal is the political."⁶⁰ This reflects the background of the curious fusion of counterculture⁶¹ and political movement in the USA⁶² - a mixture that determined for many in West Germany the fascination of cultural transfer from the USA. However, the idea of a culture which began heroically and then later became commercially marketable would be false. Positive effects on modern consumption can be found not least in rock music, which conveyed the picture of a liberal America to West German youth.⁶³ Naturally in some documents one would be able to find ideological elements which might have an echo of conventional anti-Americanism pointed towards the US civilization. Such famous pamphlets pushed "Kommune I" 1967 and "Coca Cola and Hiroshima" into close connection with each other. It was said scornfully about the American soldiers, that "the poor bastards had to splatter their coca-cola blood in the Vietnam jungle."⁶⁴ But such voices weren't even representative of the radical New Left. As a rule it was generally differentiated between the culturally admired America and the politically hated US Government.⁶⁵ In the worldwide fight against the "establishment" - this vague term from the USA was often used - one aligned oneself with the movement on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Furthermore, the criticism of Western values or the wide divergence of moral standards and the reality of war had not been said any earlier anywhere else other than in the USA itself. It is symptomatic that the musical protest against the Vietnam war didn't really find a voice in German. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Frank Zappa or Country Joe wrote the most important songs also for the West German youth.

⁶⁰ Hermann Korte, *Eine Gesellschaft im Aufbruch. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den sechziger Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main 1987), 49-55; Gerhard Schweppenhaeuser, "Radikale Negativitaet. Herbert Marcuses Aesthetik der grossen Weigerung," in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Frankfurt am Main, 16.7.1988).

⁶¹ This term has been coined by J. Milton Yinger, "Counterculture and Social Change," in *American Sociological Review* 42 (1977): 833-853; see also the critical essay by Daniel Bell on the "Sensibilitaet der sechziger Jahre" in *Die kulturellen Widersprueche des Kapitalismus* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1991), 148-177.

⁶² See Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties. Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York 1989); Ronald Strehl, *'The Movement': Die Protestbewegungen in den USA und der 'Rolling Stone' in der zweiten Haelfte der sechziger Jahre* (M.A. thesis Hamburg University 1998).

⁶³ See Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train. Der Traum von Amerika in Liedern der Rockmusik* (Reinbek 1981); Wolfgang Kos, "Die imaginaeren Landschaftsraeume der Rockmusik. Ein Beitrag zur mentalen Topographie," in *Voyage. Jahrbuch fuer Reise- und Tourismusforschung* 2 (1998), 32-49.

⁶⁴ Leaflets of Commune I: *Warum brennst Du, Konsument?* (24.5.1967); *Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhaeuser* (24.5.1967).

⁶⁵ See Uessler, *Die 68er*, 127-152; Uwe Reimer, *Die Sechziger Jahre. Deutschland zwischen Protest und Erstarrung, 1962-1972* (Frankfurt am Main 1993), 115-127.

Beyond the 60's

At the same time as the political anti-Americanization of the protest movements of the 60's, the level of American mass-cultural influence reached a new quality on the threshold of the 70's. US products, that had served as instruments in the symbolic fight of the generations in the 60's, such as blue jeans and rock music, then became less a matter for the youth and more a natural part of consumption for a wide part of the population. In this regard an important demarcation can be made.⁶⁶ However, history didn't stop happening this way. On the one hand, new phenomena of cultural Americanization ensued - the extremely successful fast-food products (McDonald's wasn't yet represented in West Germany in the 60's) just to name one. On the other hand, the cultural differences between West Germany and the USA, which continued or became even stronger shouldn't be ignored. Traits of a non-American Modern Age are revealed in the enormously intensified reduction of religious practices in West Germany, which has been occurring since the end of the 60's,⁶⁷ whereas churches in the USA have been winning more and more influence not least because of their own mass media. Similar to this, the importance of expressed patriotism in the USA - from the flag to the national anthem - was met with little response by the younger generation in West Germany, in spite of some efforts in this direction in the early 80's.⁶⁸ Also differences in the degree of Americanization in other European countries⁶⁹ and the development of European, or at first West-European, cultural similarities⁷⁰ in the relationship to cultural Americanization should be set in the "global cultural fund."⁷¹ With this a wide cultural-historical research field emerges. To answer the original question of this essay: historians should naturally

⁶⁶ Kaspar Maase, *Grenzenloses Vergnügen. Der Aufstieg der Massenkultur 1850-1970* (Frankfurt am Main 1997), 235-237.

⁶⁷ Karl-Fritz Daiber, *Religion unter den Bedingungen der Moderne. Die Situation in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Marburg 1995); Karl Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien 1996); Franz Hoellinger, *Volksreligion und Herrschaftskirche. Die Wurzeln religiösen Verhaltens in westlichen Gesellschaften* (Opladen 1996).

⁶⁸ See the speech of Ralf Dahrendorf at the 25th German "Soziologentag" in Frankfurt am Main: "Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Ängste," in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Frankfurt am Main, 13.10.1990).

⁶⁹ Robert Kroes, R.W.Rydell and D.F.J. Boscher, eds., *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions. American Mass Culture in Europe* (Amsterdam 1993).

⁷⁰ See Axel Schildt, "Sozialkulturelle Aspekte der westeuropäischen Integration in den ersten beiden Nachkriegsjahrzehnten," in *Jahrbuch des Wissenschaftszentrums Nordrhein-Westfalen. Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut* (Essen 1994), 131-144; Alexander Schmidt-Gernig, "Gibt es eine ‚europäische Identität‘? Konzeptionelle Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang transnationaler Erfahrungsräume, kollektiver Identitäten und öffentlicher Diskurse in Westeuropa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Schiewer, eds., *Diskurse und Entwicklungspfade. Der Gesellschaftsvergleich in den Geschichts- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main and New York 1999), 163-216 (here pp. 195).

⁷¹ Maase, *Amerikanisierung*, 237.

always be careful with the word "final". However, the noticeable lack of success of the efforts of some German publicists, who interpreted the reunification of 1990 as a rejection of the West and as an end to the West German special path, which lasted 45 years, gives some clues. West Germany became very Western during the cultural transformation process and generation change during the 60's. Moreover, it is at least clear that elements of cultural Americanization made an important contribution to this transformation of West German society.