

Erratum

Horst Pöttker: *Comments on the German Tradition of News Journalism*, p. 139-145.

In English:

Due to an unfortunate confusion, a version of the manuscript has been printed that was still in the process of revision, and was outdated by ongoing research by now: The manuscript contains linguistic and theoretical ambiguities as well as factual mistakes.

Especially serious in this respect are the passages down at the bottom of p. 142, from "and last but not least Otto Groth..." up to "...Anglo-Saxon examples or independent developments.", and the following sentences about Max Weber on p. 143. Paradoxical appears the comment, Max Weber – who died in 1920 – cited Otto Groth, whose work "Die Zeitung" in four volumes was published not until 1928 to 1930. The assumption is wrong that Groth already developed his understanding – which resembles the Anglo-Saxon news paradigm – of journalism as a mediating profession in this work of the 1920s; Groth did so only after 1945 in his work "Die unerkannte Kulturmacht", which was published between 1960 and 1972, whereas he remained in the tradition of partisan journalism with the publication of "Die Zeitung". Correct statements about this topic can be found in the epilogue of the book on p. 270.

It is impossible to list and correct all the passages that remain unclear or are erroneous in the printed version of the text, thus with the approval of publisher Nordicom, the author Horst Pöttker provides the version of his text, which he had approved for publication, online on his homepage as full text for free download:

<http://www.ifj.fb15.uni-dortmund.de/html/personen/poettker/index.htm>

In the bibliography on the homepage click on the first document listed under essays ("Aufsätze"): *Comments on the German Tradition of News Journalism. In: Svensnik Høyer/Horst Pöttker (eds.): Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850– 2000. Göteborg: Nordicom 2005, S. 139-145.*

In German:

Aufgrund einer bedauerlichen Verwechslung ist eine durch laufende Forschungen überholte und durch den Redigierprozess entstellte Vorfassung des Manuskripts abgedruckt worden, die sprachliche und gedankliche Unklarheiten sowie sachliche Fehler enthält.

Besonders gravierend in dieser Hinsicht sind die Passage unten auf S. 142 von „and last but not least Otto Groth...“ bis „...Anglo-Saxon examples or independent developments.“ sowie die auf S. 143 folgenden Sätze über Max Weber. Paradox ist die im gedruckten Text en passant fallende Bemerkung, Max Weber, der bereits 1920 gestorben war, habe Otto Groth zitiert, dessen vierbändiges Werk „Die Zeitung“ erst zwischen 1928 und 1930 erschienen ist. Unzutreffend ist die These, Groth habe bereits in diesem in den 1920er Jahren entstandenen Werk sein an das angelsächsische Nachrichtenparadigma erinnerndes Selbstverständnis des Journalismus als Vermittlerberuf entwickelt; tatsächlich tat er das erst nach 1945 in seinem siebenbändigen Werk „Die unerkannte Kulturmacht“, das zwischen 1960 und 1972 erschienen ist, während er mit „Die Zeitung“ noch der Tradition des Gesinnungsjournalismus verhaftet geblieben war. Korrekte Aussagen dazu finden sich im im Epilog des Buches auf S. 270.

Da es nicht möglich ist, hier alle unklaren oder fehlerhaften Stellen des gedruckten Textes zu korrigieren, hält Autor Horst Pöttker den von ihm zur Publikation freigegebenen Beitrag auf seiner Homepage als Volltext bereit, von wo er mit Zustimmung des Verlags Nordicom gratis heruntergeladen werden kann:

<http://www.ifj.fb15.uni-dortmund.de/html/personen/poettker/index.htm>

Bitte dort im Literaturverzeichnis das erste Dokument unter der Rubrik „Aufsätze“ anklicken: *Comments on the German Tradition of News Journalism. In: Svensnik Høyer/Horst Pöttker (eds.): Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850– 2000. Göteborg: Nordicom 2005, S. 139-145.*

The Editors/Herausgeber

Comments on the German Tradition of News Journalism

Horst Pöttker

The first Bible was printed with moveable type 550 years ago and the first newspapers appeared 400 years ago. The places where that occurred – Mainz, Strasbourg and Wolfenbüttel – belonged at the time to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and as such the language in which the newspapers were written and read was High German. The cradle of the press, therefore, stood incontrovertibly in Germany.

It is, however, a mistake to think that the cradle of journalism must therefore have also been in Germany. The mistake is furthered by the fact that the terms 'media' and 'journalism' are often confused, especially in critical contexts. "The press lies!" "Television was caught napping again!" We are in the habit of complaining this way when journalists neglect their duties and fail in their tasks. At the same time, the newspaper and the television, and thus the media, are only necessary material prerequisites so that journalists can practice their profession.

Development of Journalism with an Anglo-Saxon Lead

Journalism as a profession, as a collection of knowledge and skills, duties and rights, behaviour-determining values and norms that serve the task of overcoming the spatial and social barriers of societal communication and creating public discourse does not have its origin in Germany. It lies in the old Western democracies, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries. In the first decade of the eighteenth century Daniel Defoe, the British author and the prototype of the journalist, was already fighting journalistically for a sober and independent war reportage and against legal restrictions on press freedom (see Pöttker 1998), which can be considered a characteristic of modern, professional journalism (see Pöttker 2004).

By this time there had already been magazines in Germany for several decades that went beyond the collection of highly disparate news correspond-

ence, which was common in the periodical press up to that time and that had come in from distant places. But significantly, it was a 'political sensibility' that differentiated these German periodicals from the informative correspondence collections that formed their basis (see Habermas 1962, 1989; Weber 1994: 148-153). The subjects of these reflections and opinions were social 'events' that should have been the subject of political, not journalistic, regulation. Some publishers, on the basis of bad experiences, even believed that it was necessary to stress that they did not want to interfere in the 'affairs of state' of the ministers or anticipate their business (Weber 1994: 143). Nevertheless, by the early 19th Century German publishers imagined themselves in the position of politicians instead of, as in the Western democracies, developing their own professional self-image. There it was important to provide the information so thoroughly, aptly, precisely and interestingly that the public could make its own judgments and take up its position as politically sovereign.

One phenomenon in which the disciple role of the German-speaking countries can be seen in the development of modern journalism, and recognizable from early in the process, is the emergence of standardized forms of presentation such as news, commentary, reportage, or the interview. This book is devoted to the news paradigm and follows the emergence and diffusion of the news form of representation in four regions of the world. The *interview*, therefore, has been chosen here as an illustrative example. As an investigatory technique, it is probably as old as journalism itself. On the other hand, where and when the interview began to be a sculpted, journalistic form of presentation and gained acceptance in professional practice was the subject of historical-empirical research whose results not only refute academic myths, but also make possible a comparison between the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon journalistic cultures (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1993, 1994).

It is curious that the authors of these revealing studies reach the conclusion "that the interview...gained currency as a method of investigation and as a genre at approximately the same time worldwide" (Grzella/Pfingsten 1994: 112). If their findings are viewed closely, there appears to be a clear lead in the North American development of journalism over the German and Austrian in the second half of the nineteenth century. The 'time lag' emerges from the titles of their papers. "The Interview: Genesis of a journalistic form of presentation in the USA from 1830-1872" is the title of one, whereas the other is entitled "Genesis of a Journalistic Form of Presentation: The interview in Vienna and Berlin between 1860 and 1900." The titles appropriately sum up the results of sifting through thousands of newspaper editions. The authors, concurring with other press historians on both continents, identify the first text that was clearly sculpted in question-and-answer format as occurring in the mid-1830s in American papers. James Gordon Bennett, publisher of the *New York Herald* permitted his questioning of a female witness to the murder of a prostitute to be printed word-for-word (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1993: 4f). By contrast they found the first interview published in a

Berlin or Viennese newspaper occurred in 1860, and then only as an acquisition from a correspondent of the London *Times* (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1994: 36ff). Furthermore, according to the results of this research, the interview reaches its peak in the American press in the 1860s and 70s (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1993: 48f.), whereas it first achieves its quantitative high point in German and especially in Austrian newspapers between 1891 and 1900 (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1994: 37ff.). Finally, as a further indication of the German delay in the development of this component of professional journalism, it can be observed that the English word 'interview' was adopted by the German language and was immediately employed as a professional journalistic term (see Grzella/Pfingsten 1994: 87ff).

The earlier emergence of the interview in the USA is consequently revealing because it is, from the beginning an integral element in the development of the 'penny papers', such as the *New York Herald* (founded in 1835), that considered the entire population to be customers and readers, irrespective of their political views and education. The 'penny press' exemplifies the emergence of a journalism that increasingly relies on facts, rather than on a party program, and on comprehensibility and other communicative qualities rather than on long-winded discourses. This emergent type of journalism, in disentangling itself from political interests is only driven by commercial and journalistic interests. It is this new journalism of the mass press that gives rise to the news paradigm. But so does the interview, which partly asserts itself parallel and complementary to the news as a form of presentation. Since communication is a universal element of human life that is ever able to cast new light on events and because the presentation of communication in the question-and-answer format makes the information easier for the public to digest, the interview thus presented a communicative quality.

Experts of the interview expressly attribute its genesis and acceptance in North America to the development of a modern journalism that was interesting to the whole public and independent of party politics: "The development of the mass press with its need for authentic and at the same time simply-woven human interest stories aligned with entertainment *and* the almost simultaneous emergence of a non-aligned political journalism independent of state power gave rise to the modern interview in the USA" (Haller 1991: 24). Also in the study of the German-language press, the function of the interview for a journalism freeing itself from politics becomes clear: "It [the interview] was increasingly used to look for new information and to verify data. Politicians especially found such critical considerations to be a threat and an imposition. With that the claim that politicians merely abused the interview for their own promotional goals is also refuted" (Grzella/Pfingsten 1994: 113). So it stands to reason that it is possible to interpret the 'time-lag' in using the *interview* as an indicator of the traditional connection of German journalism to party politics.

Germany: The Phenomenon of Journalism as Politics

In academic literature, there is no difference of opinion on the point that German journalism remained bound to "Weltanschauungen" and political intentions much longer than journalism in the Anglo-Saxon countries. While the opinion lead and party oriented press of the latter was gradually replaced in the 1830s "by a fact-oriented, largely neutral press that had almost completely given up its political postures by the end of the century" (Donsbach 1999: 491), this was not the case in Germany. There, journalists continued to be inclined "to contribute to the creation of public opinion with critical-advocatory articles on literary, philosophical, or political topics ... to fight for their ideas in newspapers and magazines" (Ibid.).

That the consensus on the continuing tradition of German partisan journalism only rests on the names of a few researchers from the same school of thought – chiefly Wolfgang Donsbach and Jürgen Wilke – does not reduce the plausibility of this thesis upon which our chapter on the diffusion of the news paradigm in Germany is also based. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the thesis is essentially supported by numerous studies of individual journalists from either the period before 1850 (see Wilke 1993) or by the results of surveys of journalists in the Federal Republic of Germany, post-1945 and after the occupying powers had asserted the Anglo-Saxon news model as the official pattern (see Donsbach 1999: 507ff.). While two of the essential human characteristics of surveys are that of an 'objective observer' or 'critical watchman' it was made clear that the Anglo-Saxon news paradigm of 'objective reporting' would exclude journalists from the 'critical watchman' role.

Rare by comparison, if one disregards media-historical data on the newspaper ownership of parties, unions, and churches, are journalistic-historical empirical investigations for the epoch of the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This seems to be an especially important period for the question of the German tradition of political partisan journalism in comparison to the West. The salient facts are potent. The authentic interview had also gained acceptance in Berlin and Viennese newspapers by the 1890s. Karl Bücher, the German press economist and historian had already formulated in 1914, in view of the war propaganda in the German newspapers, the ideal of a sober and distanced journalism that considers its task "to serve the truth and only the truth and to have a moderating effect on the enflamed popular passions" (Bücher 2001: 221); and last but not least Otto Groth, an editor with extensive professional experience in the German press, had during the Weimar Republic already sketched the beginnings of an almost strikingly Anglo-Saxon conception of journalism as a mediating profession and "auditorium" (see Groth 1928-30; 1960-72). All of them point to the urgency of viewing in a more differentiated manner, than previously undertaken, the tradition of political partisan journalism in Germany. In doing so it would be necessary to ask not only about the meaning of opposing tendencies, but also whether they can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon examples or independent developments.

On the other hand there are arguments in favour of the continuation of the tradition of political partisan journalism. Max Weber, who cites Groth and likewise had experiences with the German press at his disposal, expressly classified the journalist, in his famous 1919 lecture "Politics as a Profession", as a modern example of the 'demagogue' – working under the Western figure of the professional politician - the "party officer" in fact. Weber, in no way made this classification with a critical intent, but in an emphasized recognition of the journalistic, as opposed to the scientific, achievement (see Weber 2001). Such a description of journalism, in Anglo-Saxon social science, as a special case of politics would have been scarcely conceivable. At the same time, the conclusion of Weber's model analysis on the real German journalism of his time is certainly obvious, but naturally not incontrovertible.

Explanations for the German Tradition of Political Partisan Journalism

In order to characterize the tradition that differentiates journalism in Germany from the development in the Anglo-Saxon countries at least until the middle of the twentieth century, conventional explanations for the phenomenon of political partisan journalism were presented in the absence of empirical data, and finally, a few theoretical considerations of it were offered.

Donsbach names two reasons, namely the *Enlightenment* with its inclination toward philosophical, cultural and political admonishment as well as the *later-realized press freedom* in Germany (see Donsbach 1999: 490ff.). The tradition of tracing political partisan journalism back to the Enlightenment and illustrating it with exemplary journalistic personalities from this period such as Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin (1739-92) (see Wilke 1993) is not very convincing. This is primarily because there had also been a period of Enlightenment in the Anglo-Saxon countries and in France in which the humanistic missionary desire and political zeal were hardly weaker than in Germany.

It is more plausible to point to the different traditions of press freedom. The freedom of the press had already been achieved in England through the abolition of the Licensing Act (1644) and the subsequent passing of the Freedom of Press Act in the same year of 1695 and was anchored in the United States since 1791 by the First Amendment to the Constitution. By contrast, censorship in Germany only gradually subsided after the unsuccessful bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1848, though the protracted development of press freedom was interrupted by major setbacks until late in the twentieth century. It has only been recognized and anchored in all of Germany since 1990. Political partisan journalism, as far as that goes, may be explained by the fact that for much longer than in the Western democracies, censorship made it impossible for German journalists to express their "Weltanschauungen" and political opinions, which from the beginning has

been easily misunderstood as the impartial "quintessence" of journalism (see Wagner 1998). Since German journalists were only freed from the shackle of censorship comparatively very late, the desire to gain publicity for one's own convictions was set that much more intensively in motion. The German tradition of political partisan journalism since the mid-nineteenth century can, as a consequence, be interpreted entirely as an overdue and thus more intensive fulfilment of a long-obstructed need.

A more plausible explanation, which posits the delay of German society in the process of modernization in general (see Plessner 1959), seems even more efficient. Modernization is primarily a process of the progressive differentiation of institutions and professions. Systems theories speak of "partial systems" that are concentrated on a particular social task toward which they direct their activities with increasing endemic logic and autonomy.

If journalism is counted among these systems of action that gain autonomy in the process of modernization, the oft described 'other way' of Germany, the 'delay' of German societal development, must also mean a deficit of professionalism in journalism in contrast to that found in those societies which were most advanced in modernization. Journalism expressed in terms of systems theory, because of the general backlog in functional differentiation, cannot as a partial system have disentangled itself from other systems of action, such as politics, to the same extent. Viewed in this manner, the close connection of journalism to politics represents only one, but an especially important, sector of the comparatively limited autonomy of journalism in Germany. This connection is also manifest in journalism's traditionally stronger overlapping with other partial systems and their logic (economics, sports, literature, science, war, etc.). In many of these areas the journalism in societies that are late in modernising, Italy and Russia no more so than in Germany, come under reasonable suspicion of being less independent and of orienting less on its own qualities such as relevance or comprehensibility than, above all, journalism in the Anglo-Saxon culture.

The zenith of the political partisanship of German journalism was achieved under the Nazi regime. The fusion of the overburdened subjectivity of German journalism with political propaganda may be interpreted as the paradox at which the highpoint also revealed the dangerous characteristic that lowered it to criminal levels. It is only too clear that the Western occupying powers wanted to break this tradition after the total capitulation of Germany in the Second World War. Whether and to what extent they were successful is now, as it was then, an important question of journalism research.

A Desideratum: German Journalism Before and After 1945

The year 1945 also represents a radical caesura for the chapter of our book dealing with Germany. The diffusion of the news paradigm is the most im-

COMMENTS ON THE GERMAN TRADITION OF NEWS JOURNALISM

portant component of modern Anglo-Saxon style journalism and remains as an excellent indicator of its global diffusion. In this light there should, therefore, be a more conscious effort in the future to provide the answers to two uncertainties about the historical development of German journalism. First whether, to what extent, and for what reasons there had already been a journalism in Germany that was anchored on the ideal of objectivity and on factors of comprehensibility such as brevity prior to 1945; and secondly a more thorough investigation as to whether, to what extent, and for what reasons the old tradition of partisan journalism, at the least subliminally, persists.

In this section we must be more modest. Rudolf Stöber sketches the media background of German journalism development up to 1945, which is little-known internationally. Bernd Blöbaum asks how lasting the incision of 1945 has been. He is able to show that the Western Allies did succeed in imposing the news paradigm on German journalism, but that this is not completely anchored in the structures of editorial organization even today.

Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850-2000

Svennik Høyer and Horst Pöttker (eds.)

NORDICOM

Diffusion of the News Paradigm 1850-2000

Editors: Svennik Høyer and Horst Pöttker

Language editor: Marcus Denton

© Editorial matters and selections, the editors; articles, individual contributors; Nordicom (with one exception, see page 34)

ISBN 91-89471-30-X

Published by:
Nordicom
Göteborg University
Box 713
SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG
Sweden

Cover by: Roger Palmqvist

Printed by: Grafikerna Livréna i Kungälv AB, Sweden, 2005

Contents

Preface	7
<i>Svennik Høyer</i> The Idea of the Book. Introduction	9
The Anglo-American Background	
<i>Michael Schudson</i> The Emergence of the Objectivity Norm in American Journalism	19
<i>Harlan S. Stensaas</i> The Rise of the News Paradigm. A Review of the Scientific Literature	37
<i>Horst Pöttker</i> The News Pyramid and its Origin from the American Journalism in the 19 th Century. A Professional Approach and an Empirical Inquiry	51
<i>Svennik Høyer</i> Old and New Journalism in The London Press. The 1880s and 1890s	65
Scandinavia	
<i>Svennik Høyer</i> The Rise and Fall of The Scandinavian Party Press	75
<i>Jan Ekecrantz</i> News Paradigms, Political Power and Cultural Contexts in 20 th Century Sweden	93
<i>Søren Kolstrup</i> Telling the News. Danish Newspapers 1873-1941/2000	105
<i>Svennik Høyer & John Nonseid</i> The Half-hearted Modernisation of Norwegian Journalism 1908-1940	123
Germany	
<i>Horst Pöttker</i> Comments on the German Tradition of News Journalism	139
<i>Rudolf Stöber</i> Journalism Paradigms Before 1945	147
<i>Bernd Blöbaum</i> German Journalism after 1945. Reporting Instead of Influencing	157

Central and Eastern Europe	
<i>Epp Lauk</i>	
The Antithesis of the Anglo-American News Paradigm. News Practices in Soviet Journalism	169
<i>Halliki Harro-Lott</i>	
Historical Development of the News Format in Estonia 1920-1990	185
<i>Jukka Pietiläinen</i>	
From Participating to Informing. The Transition of Journalism in the Russian Regional Press	199
<i>Katharina Hadamik</i>	
Between East and West or Simply "Made in Poland"? The Many Different Styles of Today's Polish Journalism	211
Alternative Perspectives	
<i>Hanno Hardt</i>	
The Industrialization of News. The American Experience	227
<i>Kevin G. Barnhurst</i>	
News Ideology in The Twentieth Century	239
<i>Horst Pöttker</i>	
Epilogue. Perspectives on the Development of the News Paradigm. The Quest for Autonomy	263
Bibliography	273
Author index	293
Subject index	299
About the Authors	309