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INTERVENING IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: GERMAN GOVERNMENTS AND THE PRESS, 1815–1870

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ABSTRACT. *This article argues that the growth of a free press in nineteenth-century Germany went hand in hand with the growth of an official, government-sponsored, press. The collapse of pre-publication censorship in 1848 prompted the development of increasingly sophisticated (and relatively successful) press control strategies by German governments, in the shape of official newspapers, semi-official newspapers, and indirect government press influence. Government press policy was essentially reactive. Changes in press policy were usually prompted by political events. Furthermore, government press coverage was forced to reflect shifts in public opinion in order to maximize readership of official propaganda. Government press policy focused not just on the dissemination of pro-government opinion, but also on the dissemination of pro-government information, probably the most effective form of government press influence. News management was subtle, and targeted small circulation local newspapers, rather than high profile opposition newspapers. Consequently, historians have tended to overlook the scale of government news management.*

I

The history of the press in nineteenth-century Germany is normally seen primarily in terms of the decline of censorship and the triumph of press freedom. The classic accounts by Heinz-Dietrich Fischer and Kurt Koszyk both trace the faltering emergence of a free press in Germany during periods of political upheaval and the cumulative failure of repeated governmental attempts to clamp down on this development.[1] This version of events goes as follows: the Napoleonic era saw a brief loosening of traditional press restrictions, followed by the introduction of censorship throughout the German Confederation in 1819; the revolution of 1830 then prompted a short-lived renaissance of the free press, which finally emerged triumphant during the 1848 revolution, surviving subsequent repressive legislation largely unscathed. In

[1] See especially the general works: Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland 1480–1980, Synopse rechtlicher, struktureller und wirtschaftlicher Grundlagen der Tendenz-publizistik im Kommunikationsfeld* (Düsseldorf, 1981), especially pp. 47–67; Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert, Geschichte der deutschen Presse*, II (Berlin, 1966).

such accounts a free press and the liberal press are usually taken to be synonymous, since the liberal press so frequently opposed the various German governments.[2] There is much to be said for this account, but it certainly does not tell the whole story. In this article I will seek to refine the traditional interpretation of nineteenth-century press history in three key ways.

First, the rather triumphalist account of the emergence of a free press outlined above overlooks the fact that this process had its corollary in the development of more sophisticated press control strategies by German governments. In fact, the growth of press freedom marked neither the end nor the failure of government efforts to control the press – it simply prompted the transition from a negative (or repressive) press policy, intended to suppress dissent, to a more positive (or propagandistic) approach. In this sense, the free press did not triumph in Germany; rather, the free press and the official press grew hand in hand. Until recently, however, historians have remained preoccupied with the former, and interest in the latter has been largely non-existent. The nineteenth-century origins of government propaganda in Germany have attracted more attention of late, but this has simply tended to reverse the imbalance. The work of Richard Kohnen, Wolfgang Piereth, and others focuses primarily on the official press, and the complex process of cross-fertilization between free and official press remains unexplored.[3]

Second, current interpretations of press history reflect a preoccupation with the issue of freedom of opinion, which has led historians to neglect the equally important issue of freedom of information. This was not a mistake made at the time. Nineteenth-century liberals recognized that freedom of information was (just like freedom of opinion) a precondition of the rational discussion which, they believed, would enable a thinking public to reach informed conclusions about public affairs – in other words to formulate a public opinion that would influence state policy. For contemporaries, therefore, freedom of information played a key role in the emergent bourgeois public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*). Consequently, early uses of the word '*Öffentlichkeit*' referred to openness in public affairs as much as to the public sphere itself. As Heynatz noted in 1797, 'Now *Öffentlichkeit* is increasingly used to mean publicity (*Publicität*), that is bringing out into the open.'[4] Conversely, the lack of proper information was a crucial argument deployed by those who rejected the public's claims to pass judgement on public affairs. As Frederick II of Prussia famously commented in 1784: 'A private person has no right to pass *public* and perhaps even

[2] For instance, the 1860s which saw the final collapse of government press restrictions is heralded by Koszyk as the decade of the liberal press. See Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, II, p. 130.

[3] See Richard Kohnen, *Pressepolitik des Deutschen Bundes. Methoden staatlicher Pressepolitik nach der Revolution von 1848* (Tübingen, 1995), especially pp. 134–72; Wolfgang Piereth, 'Propaganda im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Anfänge aktiver staatlicher Pressepolitik in Deutschland 1800–1871', in Wolfram Siemann and Ute Daniel, eds., *Propaganda, Meinungskampf, Verführung und politische Sinnstiftung 1789–1989* (Frankfurt, 1994), pp. 21–43.

[4] Cited after Andreas Gestrich, *Absolutismus und Öffentlichkeit: politische Kommunikation in Deutschland zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1994), p. 12.

disapproving judgements on the actions … of sovereigns [and governments] … For a private person is not at all capable of making such judgement, because he lacks complete knowledge of circumstances and motives.'[5] In fact, the hunger for information was crucially important for the development of both the 'free' and the official press; the ability to control the flow of information was therefore central to government press policy.

Third, the history of government press policy in Germany demonstrates the extent to which – particularly after 1848 – German governments acknowledged, accepted, and adapted to the emergence of a politically influential public sphere. On one level, this conclusion simply adds to the growing body of 'revisionist' literature on the 1850s and 1860s, which emphasizes the creative and modernizing elements of German government policy during these reputedly reactionary decades.[6] On another level, the success of government press policy substantially modifies our vision of the *Öffentlichkeit*, as described in Habermas's seminal work on the subject.[7] Habermas stresses the autonomy of the *Öffentlichkeit*, which emerged independent of – and in opposition to – traditional state structures. Subsequent research into association formation in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany has already undermined the distinction between state and *Öffentlichkeit* in associational life, demonstrating the key role of state officials as association members.[8] Yet interaction of this kind was inevitably informal, indirect, and largely unconsidered. By contrast, government press policy represented a very deliberate, direct, and official form of interaction between state and *Öffentlichkeit*, which created a dynamic relationship between governments and the press, in which each significantly influenced the development of the other. Historians like Andreas Gestrich and Wolfgang Piereth have begun to explore this interaction for the earlier period, but the intervention of governments in the *Öffentlichkeit* at this time was quantitatively and qualitatively different in kind to that which took place after 1848.[9]

[5] Cited after Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1994), p. 25.

[6] See especially Wolfram Siemann, *Gesellschaft im Aufbruch. Deutschland 1849–1871* (Frankfurt, 1990), also Manfred Hanisch, *Für Fürst und Vaterland. Legitimitätsstiftung in Bayern zwischen Revolution 1848 und deutscher Einheit* (Munich, 1991), and the relevant sections of Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (3 vols., Munich, 1994–5), III.

[7] Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*.

[8] A good recent example of this is Charlotte Tacke's extremely sensitive analysis of the complex relationship between officialdom and associations, in the case of the *Detmold Verein für das Hermannsdenkmal*. See Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum, nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 80–96. The literature on association formation in Germany is vast. Thomas Nipperdey's article 'Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung I.', in Nipperdey, ed., *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie*, pp. 174–205, and Otto Dann, ed., *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland*, *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beihefte NF9 (1984), pp. 55–115, both provide excellent starting points.

[9] See Gestrich, *Absolutismus und Öffentlichkeit*, and Wolfgang Piereth, *Bayerns Pressepolitik und die Neuordnung Deutschlands nach den Befreieungskriegen* (Munich, 1999).

This article will argue that the liberal vision – subsequently adopted by Habermas – of the free press as a forum for formulating and expressing public opinion was fatally flawed. The cross-fertilization between governments and the press undermined the independence of the latter and compromised the autonomy of the public sphere, quite as much as it undercut the repressive stance of reactionary regimes. This argument draws primarily on the experience of three medium-sized German states (Hanover, Saxony, and Württemberg).[10] Some attention will also be paid to the experience of the two German great powers (Prussia and Austria).[11] This reliance on case studies enables a clear understanding of the process of government intervention in the press to emerge. Tellingly, developments in all five states were very similar. This indicates that the experience of these states was characteristic of that elsewhere in Germany and can indeed form the basis of a more general reinterpretation of nineteenth-century press history. The opening section will rewrite the traditional account of the emergence of a free press in Germany, so as to place this in the context of government press policy as a whole, and to emphasize the interplay between information and opinion on the one hand, and between the free and the official press on the other. A second section will consider the pivotal role of news and information in government press policy after 1848. A concluding section will reassess the nature, scale, and success of government press policy in the light of these findings.

II

Before the Napoleonic era, German governments were opposed to freedom of the press in every sense of the word and the German press was subjected to strict censorship. This wholly repressive attitude was not shared by Napoleon, who, as a child of the revolution, was keenly aware of the importance of the press. He sought to maintain his authority at home and abroad through propaganda as much as through military force. The Napoleonic era marked a decisive turning

[10] The only existing study of Hanoverian press policy is Alfred Hildebrandt, 'Die Pressepolitik der hannoverschen Regierung vom Beginn der Reaktionszeit bis zum Ende des Königreichs Hannover' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leipzig, 1932). There is no literature on press policy in Saxony, but on the semi-official/official *Leipziger Zeitung* see Gerhard Hense, 'Leipziger Zeitung, Leipzig (1665–1918)', in Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, ed., *Deutsche Zeitungen des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts* (Pullach bei München, 1972), pp. 75–90. On Württemberg press policy in the 1860s see Eberhard Naujoks, 'Der "Staatsanzeiger" und die württembergische Regierungspresse in der Krise der Reichsgründungszeit (1864–1871)', *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte*, 50 (1991), pp. 271–304.

[11] On Austrian press policy see Franz-Thomas Höfer, *Pressepolitik und Polizeistaat Metternichs. Die Überwachung von Presse und politischer Öffentlichkeit in Deutschland und den Nachbarstaaten durch das Mainzer Informationsbüro, 1833–1848* (Munich, 1983). Prussian press policy has been studied particularly closely. See Irene Fischer-Frauendienst, *Bismarcks Pressepolitik* (Münster (Westf.), 1963); Eberhard Naujoks, *Bismarcks auswärtige Pressepolitik und die Reichsgründung, 1865–1871* (Wiesbaden, 1968); and Gertrud Nöth-Greis, 'Das Literarische Büro als Instrument der Pressepolitik', in Jürgen Wilke, ed., *Pressepolitik und Propaganda. Historische Studien von Vormärz bis zum Kalten Krieg* (Cologne, 1997), pp. 1–79.

point in the relationship between German governments and the press, introducing a positive press policy directly into French-occupied Germany and the *Rheinbund*, indirectly elsewhere.[12] In 1810, Metternich overcame the Austrian government's instinctive dislike of the press and founded an official political newspaper, the *Österreichischer Beobachter*.[13] In Prussia too, the conflict with Napoleon forced the regime actively to woo public opinion through the press. Tellingly, Frederick William III published his famous appeal to the Prussian people, *An mein Volk*, in the newspapers rather than simply issuing a command. At the same time, the Prussian authorities tolerated liberal and nationalist newspapers like Görres's *Rheinischer Merkur* (1814–16), in the hope that they would strengthen public support for the struggle against Napoleon.

This relative freedom proved short-lived. After Napoleon's defeat, governments clamped down on the press once more. The fate of the *Rheinischer Merkur*, banned by the Prussian government in 1816, was emblematic of the new state of affairs. Three years later, in 1819, the Karlsbad Decrees introduced a harsh regime of pre-publication print censorship throughout the German Confederation. This regime was only partially successful. Not all members of the Confederation applied the legislation equally harshly: censorship was briefly abolished in Baden in 1832, and subsequently relaxed in Bavaria. In any case, the censorship laws excluded publications of over twenty pages, implicitly acknowledging the right of the more educated to express themselves and to form their own opinions. This assumption was reflected in censorship practice. Thus the Hamburg censor was relatively lenient in his treatment of the English language publication, *The Gleaner*, since he assumed that it would have a small and highly educated readership.[14] The real weakness of censorship, however, was its inability to keep pace with the dramatic expansion of the press. Between the 1820s and the 1840s, the number of books and newspapers published annually in Germany roughly doubled; by the 1870s it had risen by half as much again.[15] Increasingly, the sheer quantity of print publications made it impossible for censors to monitor the press properly. Nevertheless, the decline of censorship in Germany between 1815 and 1848 should not be overestimated. According to the Württemberger, Otto Elben, whose family owned the influential *Schwäbischer Merkur*, the gagging of the press even in this relatively liberal state was 'outrageous'.[16]

So far, so not very different. But it is important to realize that censorship did

[12] Notably Bavaria, see Piereth, *Propaganda im 19. Jahrhundert*.

[13] See Höfer, *Pressepolitik und Polizeistaat Metternichs*, pp. 39–43 for further details.

[14] See Margarete Kramer, *Die Zensur in Hamburg, 1819 bis 1848. Ein Beitrag zur Frage staatlicher Lenkung der Öffentlichkeit während des Deutschen Vormärz* (Hamburg, 1975), p. 93.

[15] The number of books published annually in Germany rose from 4,505 in 1821 and 5,168 in 1826 to 10,118 in 1837. In 1843 it reached a peak of 14,039, a level not reached again before 1879. In 1826 the number of German language newspapers stabilized at 371; by 1848 there were 688 and by 1850, 1,102. This sank to 845 in 1858, but rose again to 1,217 in 1867. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, II, pp. 524–5, 529; III, pp. 434–5.

[16] Otto Elben, *Geschichte des Schwäbischen Merkurs, 1785–1885* (Stuttgart, 1885), p. 164.

not apply to political opinions alone. Instead, as Elben noted: 'absolutely everything, which might offend the overly sensitive was quite simply deleted: unpleasant occurrences, economic, historic and literary views, even the official announcements of the criminal authorities fell victim to the censor's red pen'. This was no exaggeration. Censorship of the press applied as much to news and information as to political opinions during this period. Indeed, news reporting was particularly sensitive because the censorship of opinion was so comprehensive. Since opinion pieces were out of the question, news became the key battleground between censor and journalist. Yet historians have tended to overlook this crucial aspect of censorship, preferring to focus on freedom of opinion rather than freedom of information.

In fact, journalists were severely restricted in the news they could publish. Only a privileged few papers were authorized to publish political news at all. Cotta's influential *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* is the most famous example, but there were others, like the *Hamburger Unparteische Correspondent* or the *Schwäbischer Merkur* itself. Such political newspapers were inevitably watched more closely. In Hamburg, for instance, the four authorized 'political' newspapers were subjected to a separate censorship regime.[17] Foreign news was relatively uncontentious since it was less immediately sensitive, but only the most harmless domestic news appeared in print. Writing in 1866, Heinrich Wuttke recalled that the German news provided by Hamburg newspapers during this period was scanty, 'as if Germany was an insignificant little state'.[18] A satirical poem by Hoffmann von Fallersleben in praise of newspapers captures neatly the flavour of much of the German press:

Oh how interesting the newspaper is
For our beloved Fatherland!
How much we have learnt today!
The Princess gave birth yesterday!
And tomorrow the duke will be on his way!
The King has come back here,
The Emperor has won through there.
How interesting, how interesting!
God bless the beloved Fatherland.[19]

The poem clearly underlines the link between the colourless content of most news reports and political propaganda at this time.

In this context, liberal demands for a free press reflected a desire for information, quite as much as they reflected a longing for liberty. The few political newspapers tolerated by the censor did not satisfy the desire for information. Such newspapers usually enjoyed a cosy relationship with the

[17] The *Hamburger Unparteiliche Correspondent*, *Wöchentliche Gemeinnützige Nachrichten*, *Liste der Börsenhalle*, and *Adress-Comptoir Nachrichten*.

[18] Heinrich Wuttke, *Die deutsche Zeitschriften und die Entstehung der öffentlichen Meinung. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Zeitungswesens* (Hamburg, 1866), p. 70.

[19] A. H. Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Ausgewählte Werke* (Leipzig, n.d.), I, p. 117.

government and were therefore far from being independent news providers. Before 1850, the Württemberg government placed all its official announcements in the *Schwäbischer Merkur*, enhancing both the paper's finances and its circulation. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the interior minister reported in 1847 that the *Merkur*'s attitude was 'most loyal' – a comment which can only have referred to the paper's news coverage, since it printed no opinion pieces before the revolution.[20] The news provided by Cotta's *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* (the most influential newspaper in pre-revolutionary Germany) was no less suspect, despite its professed impartiality. The paper relied heavily on good relations with the Austrian government to provide high quality news, many of its contributors were Austrian officials and it had a large Austrian readership.[21] Yet the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* was not alone in being compromised by this relationship. Ironically, the very fact of government collaboration with the newspaper and the healthy retainers paid by Cotta to key Austrian officials for their 'contributions' helped to ensure a very limited and controlled trickle of information into the public sphere. This situation typified the two-way relationship between governments and the press that would emerge in the years after 1848 – a relationship in which the conflicting pressures to conceal and reveal information continued to play a pivotal role.

The revolution of 1848 brought an end to censorship at Confederal level. During the revolutionary period itself, the number of newspapers published in Germany more than doubled and the press as a whole became highly politicized. These developments proved permanent. As the reaction gathered strength, various German governments introduced regulatory legislation – ostensibly to protect the people from the 'misuse' of the press. They recognized, however, that they could not return to pre-revolutionary restrictions. The 1854 Confederal press law harmonized press regulation at national level, but it did not reintroduce pre-publication censorship.[22] Instead, the new press legislation attempted to influence the content of the press both directly, through setting limits to the freedom of expression, and indirectly, through exerting economic pressure on editors and publishers. Newspapers were forbidden to publish material that was libellous or might incite illegal actions, such as treason, resisting authority, violence, or illegal assembly. Editors and publishers risked a range of financial penalties, culminating in the withdrawal of the newspaper's publishing concession, if they failed to comply with these restrictions. The new legislation was enforced by the courts according to due legal process. Although governments could seize offending publications without prior legal authorization, all seizures had later to be

[20] Hauptstaatsarchiv, Stuttgart (HSAStu) E9 94 1 CabActen 1845–58 (194–9). Interior minister to King Wilhelm (HM), 22 Nov. 1847.

[21] Jörg Requate, *Journalismus als Beruf. Entstehung und Entwicklung des Journalistenberufs im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 271–9, gives an interesting account of this relationship.

[22] On the formulation and implementation of this legislation, see Kohnen, *Pressepolitik*, pp. 32–67, 92–121.

defended in a court of law, and newspapers could appeal against such measures for the first time. This crucial development liberated the German press from the arbitrary control of officials and significantly weakened the hand of German governments, since they could not risk damaging their reputation through too many judgements in favour of the opposition press. Similar considerations inhibited governments from issuing official warnings to opposition newspapers or from withdrawing their publishing concession. Such actions were invariably widely reported and added to the reputation of the newspaper in question, whilst presenting the government in a very bad light. In practice, therefore, the system was less repressive than it appeared and the climate 'far freer than in the forties', as even liberals like Otto Elben agreed.[23] This created a virtuous circle: the less effective governmental control of the press was, the more powerful the press became and the less governments could afford the kind of negative press coverage produced by governmental efforts to control it.

The lack of pre-publication censorship in Germany led to a shift in emphasis in press legislation and press policy, as governments were forced to recognize that preventing the spread of ideas was fruitless. With time, they turned their attention from the control of opinion to the control of news instead, abandoning repressive press policy in favour of a more creative approach. Positive press policy on the Napoleonic model had not been wholly neglected in the years after 1815. Government newspapers, like Metternich's *Österreichischer Beobachter* and the Saxon *Leipziger Zeitung*, existed in many states. In 1842, a press office was established in Prussia, testifying to the growing importance of the press. By and large, however, censorship and repression were the hallmarks of government press policy before 1848. This changed with the revolution. In 1848, the Austrian government set up its own press office. Meanwhile, the Prussian government remodelled the existing Prussian press office and substantially increased its funding. Governments in smaller states followed suit. For instance, the Saxon government purchased a second official newspaper in 1849, whilst the Württemberg government launched its first official newspaper in 1850. All these measures remained in place despite the failure of the 1848 revolution. In the field of press policy, the apparent triumph of the Reaction certainly did not lead to a return to the status quo. The press itself was fundamentally and irrevocably changed by the revolutionary experience – a fact which governments recognized and responded to. Their politics remained reactionary only in principle; in practice, many regimes were willing to modernize in order to survive.

The kind of positive press policy adopted by governments after 1848 took various forms. Official newspapers, openly controlled and funded by the government, were the most obvious way in which governments influenced the press. Semi-official newspapers were less obtrusive. They were financially and journalistically dependent on the government, but retained a pretence of

[23] Otto Elben, *Lebenserinnerungen, 1823–1899* (Stuttgart, 1931), p. 126.

independence that gave them greater credibility. Besides this, many governments also attempted to influence the press indirectly. Most German governments deployed some or all of these methods simultaneously. The Hanoverian government combined an official newspaper, the (*Neue*) *Hannoversche Zeitung*, with two short-lived, semi-official, newspapers (*Hannoversche Nachrichten* 1856–7, *Deutsche Nordsee Zeitung* 1864–6) and a press office, established in 1862. The Saxon government developed a similar three-stranded approach, combining the official *Dresdner Journal* with the semi-official *Leipziger Zeitung* and the exercise of systematic influence in the local press through granting monopolies of local government advertising. Press policy was less comprehensive in Württemberg, where it largely consisted of the official *Staats-Anzeiger für Württemberg*. The Württemberg government also supported two short-lived, semi-official, newspapers (*Deutsche Kronik* 1850–2, *Württembergische Landeszeitung* 1867) and two equally short-lived correspondence papers. Such measures were replicated throughout Germany, although historians have tended to dismiss the official press as insignificant and ineffectual.[24] In fact, as we shall see, this flowering of the government press shaped the *Öffentlichkeit* quite as decisively as the abandonment of censorship and the growth of press freedom.

Indeed, the two were intimately linked, since government press policy was always responsive to developments in the free press and never spontaneous. The development of press policy inevitably differed from state to state, but a few examples will suffice to demonstrate the linkage between press policy, public opinion, and political events in the years after as well as during the revolution. In Hanover, for instance, innovations in press policy persistently followed important political developments: in 1856, the launch of the semi-official *Hannoversche Nachrichten* followed the decision taken in 1855 by King George V to rescind the liberal Hanoverian constitution granted in 1848; in 1859, the appointment of an official to co-ordinate government press policy followed the foundation of the *Nationalverein*, a society dedicated to liberal and nationalist agitation; in 1862, the creation of a government press office followed the dramatic events of the catechism conflict, when King George V's attempt to introduce a more orthodox catechism in Hanoverian schools prompted a wave of popular protest and caused the fall of Hanover's reactionary ministry. Similarly, Italian unification and the re-emergence of the national issue in Württemberg forced the government to address foreign policy issues in the official *Staats-Anzeiger*, and led the foreign minister to take joint control of the newspaper in 1860. This pattern was absolutely typical. Changes in press policy were almost always externally motivated – a reaction to the growth of the opposition and, in particular, to the pressure of the opposition press.

This linkage was directly and repeatedly acknowledged by government

[24] Most recently, Kohnen, *Pressepolitik*, pp. 151–6.

ministers and their officials. In 1856, for instance, the Hanoverian interior minister, von Borries, recommended the semi-official *Hannoversche Nachrichten* to government officials, commenting: 'The less it is possible to ignore the influence of the press, the more the need for a domestic, conservative and independent newspaper has made itself felt.'[25] Sometimes the linkage between developments in the 'free' press and government press policy was even more explicit. In 1857, von Beust, the leading Saxon minister, proposed measures designed to intensify the ties between government departments and the official *Dresdner Journal*.[26] He justified this specifically in terms of the changing climate of the political press. Whereas in 1850 the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* had advertised itself as 'independent but conservative', in 1855 it advertised itself as 'independent and patriotic', and in 1856 as 'independent and free-thinking'. Beust saw these changes as a 'barometer of the popular mood'. He argued that repressive legislation was incapable of controlling the press, and that the only solution was 'an effective government press'. Some of Beust's ministerial colleagues were unwilling to co-operate, and he was subsequently forced to elaborate on this point. In principle, Beust accepted that 'it would mostly be desirable if the government were not forced to enter into a debate about government measures and principles in the press'.[27] In practice, however, the freedom of the press meant that this strategy was no longer viable: 'the government has no means of stopping the independent press from criticizing government affairs, the only question is: whether the government will leave the power of the press exclusively in the hands of the opposition, or attempt to use it to defend its own position in turn'.

III

Before 1848, censorship had suppressed both opinion and undesirable information. Conversely, the positive press policy introduced after 1848 depended as much upon the successful dissemination of officially endorsed news as it did upon the expression of pro-government views. Indeed, in many ways news, rather than polemic, was the corner-stone of government press policy. This aspect of government press policy has, however, been largely ignored by historians – in part because of the unwieldy nature of the source material. It is obviously harder to discern bias in news reports and in any case the sheer bulk of material involved is daunting to say the least. The failure of historians to consider government news management – rather than simply the spread of pro-government polemic – helps to explain why many continue to underestimate the importance of the official press during this period, and the extent

[25] Niedersächsischer Hauptstaatsarchiv, Hanover (HSAHan) Hann 113 A Nr.89 1. Interior Ministry (MdI) to Landdrosten and Berghauptmänner, 10 Oct. 1856.

[26] Sächsischer Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden (HSADre) Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (155–60). Beust to Gesammtministerium, 2 Jan. 1857.

[27] HSADre Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (176–83). Beust to Gesammtministerium, 4 May 1857.

to which government press policy shaped the emergent *Öffentlichkeit*.[28] In the following, I shall attempt to redress this balance, by demonstrating how and why news management acquired such a pivotal role in government press policy.

Once German governments had adopted a positive press policy, they had to adapt to market forces in the newspaper business. In this, government newspapers were no different to their rivals. As one Saxon official commented in 1854, the whole point of a government newspaper was to raise the tone of public debate, partly through exerting a positive influence, but, more realistically, through ensuring that 'other newspapers, more or less distant from the government's position, or even opposed to this, do not dominate the landscape and so hold sway over public opinion'.[29] The success of an official newspaper depended on understanding how to 'satisfy its domestic readership, through skilfully catering to their needs, and so expand this at the expense of other papers'. In practice, this meant learning from the opposition press. In late 1850, for instance, the Württemberg government asked local officials how to increase the circulation of the official *Staats-Anzeiger*.[30] In response, local officials looked to the established and successful *Schwäbischer Merkur* for inspiration.[31] Typically, the report from Ludwigsburg attributed the *Merkur*'s success to 'its articles on foreign policy, and in particular the news about domestic affairs and daily occurrences, as well as private advertisements and official announcements' – in a word, news.

Contemporaries generally accepted that news sold newspapers. As the Saxon minister, Beust, put it in 1857, 'the best way to attract readers is through good news reporting'.[32] Unless government newspapers were at least as well informed as the opposition press, they would fail to win over new readers. This point was clearly made by August Lewald, editor of the semi-official *Deutsche Kronik* in Württemberg.[33] In 1851, he complained that the *Kronik* could not compete with the *Schwäbischer Merkur* at present, since the latter published political news from Paris and elsewhere '24 hours before we can do so'. Lewald suggested that the situation would improve if the government could be persuaded to pass on official reports to the *Kronik*. He believed that if a semi-official newspaper, like the *Kronik*, could capitalize on its relationship with the government and gain access to official information, it might steal a march over its competitors. This hope, which was widely shared by government journalists

[28] See Eberhard Naujoks, 'Die offiziöse Presse und die Gesellschaft (1848/1900)', in Elger Blühm, ed., *Presse und Geschichte, Beiträge zur historischen Kommunikationsforschung. Referate einer internationalen Fachkonferenz der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft und der Deutschen Presseforschung/Universität Bremen 5.–8.Oktober 1976 in Bremen* (Munich, 1977), pp. 157–70, especially pp. 157–9, on the failure of historians to research this issue.

[29] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9492 (108–17). Illegible to MdI, 18 Jan. 1854.

[30] HSAStu E150 (IV) 1599 (139). MdI to Kreisregierungen, 7 Oct. 1850.

[31] HSAStu E150 (IV) 1599 (142, 143) Berichte (Schwarzwald Kreis, Ludwigsburg), 29 Oct. 1850.

[32] HSADre Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (176–83). Beust to Gesammtministerium, 4 May 1857.

[33] HSAStu E9 94 (334), Lewald to Maucler, 17 Oct. 1851.

and press officials, appears to have had some basis in fact. In 1865, Klindworth, publisher of the semi-official Hanoverian *Deutsche Nordsee Zeitung*, recalled how its predecessor, the *Hannoversche Nachrichten*, had once scooped rivals, thanks to an 'authentic report' sent in by a government official – prompting major German newspapers to subscribe to the paper by return of post.[34] Klindworth concluded that if the government could ensure 'that *facts and authentic reports* are first sent without delay to the *Deutsche Nordsee Zeitung* alone, then no publication of any importance would be able to forego [subscribing to] the newspaper, and our local views on current affairs would be disseminated as widely as possible'. Such requests went very much against the grain of government practice.

Pre-revolutionary governments were not used to publicizing their activities or to sharing information with the press. The views of the Hanoverian foreign minister, von Platen-Hallermund, were characteristic of this traditional attitude. In 1857, he wrote that: 'As a rule, the most urgent considerations prevent us from passing on material (usually received from a confidential source) as political news for the public.'[35] After 1848 this attitude ceased to be viable. To some extent, therefore, changes in government press policy from 1850 to 1866 can be seen as a gradual learning process, whereby governments abandoned traditional habits of secrecy in favour of propaganda. In Hanover, Saxony, and Württemberg changes in the structure of government press policy repeatedly attempted to improve liaison between the government and the official press.[36] Typically, in 1851 the Württemberg ministry took steps to ensure that 'the *Staats-Anzeiger* is able to compete with the *Schwäbischer Merkur*, through providing the interesting daily news items, which secure the large readership of the latter'.[37] The ministry recognized that the *Staats-Anzeiger* should 'exploit and make use of … all the sources of support, which its relationship with the government provides'. The repetitive character of such initiatives in Hanover, Saxony, and Württemberg testifies to entrenched resistance within government. This resistance reflected an instinctive scepticism about the very idea of a government press, as the Saxon minister, Beust, discovered in 1857. Beust wanted to improve links between government ministries and the official *Dresdner Journal* through instituting permanent channels of information. Other ministers were less than enthusiastic. The war minister, von Rabenhorst, replied that military material was strategically secret and unsuited to publication.[38] The finance minister went further,

[34] HSAHan Dep.103 IX 299. Abschrift, Platen-Hallermund to HM, 3 Feb. 1857.

[35] HSAHan Dep.103 IX 299. Platen-Hallermund to HM, 3 Feb. 1857.

[36] Changes in Hanover to the management of the Hannoversche Zeitung in 1851, and, after 1857, to its successor the *Neue Hannoversche Zeitung*, also steps taken after the foundation of the *Hannoversche Nachrichten*; changes in Saxony to the management of the Leipziger Zeitung and *Dresdner Journal* in 1851, and of the organization of the Dresdner Journal in 1857; changes in Württemberg to the management of the *Staats-Anzeiger* in 1851, 1860, and 1866.

[37] HSAStu E14 1186 (296–305/43). Gesammtministerium to HM, 11 Oct. 1851.

[38] HSADre Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (169–71). Von Rabenhorst to Gesammtministerium, 30 Jan. 1857.

commenting that government attempts to manipulate the press were often 'very problematic'.

The readiness or otherwise with which governments published news and information contributed significantly to the success of the official press. This was clearly demonstrated in Saxony during the tense months of early 1866. As diplomatic tension mounted, the Dresden police instructed the *Dresdner Journal* to avoid any mention of 'military affairs and Saxon military measures'.[39] The *Journal*'s editor appealed to the government.[40] Such a policy would, he argued, 'be tantamount to removing the *Dresdner Journal* from among the ranks of political newspapers at a stroke'. In the event, his advice was heeded, and the *Journal*'s coverage of the crisis led to a massive increase in circulation: from 2,925 in the first quarter of 1866, to 4,500 mid-June and 5,675 in August.[41] The incident demonstrates the complex interplay between government newspapers and the reading public. The latter were not passive recipients of propaganda, since if this propaganda was to be effective it had to respond to the public's tastes. Above all, this meant satisfying the hunger for information that led many readers to turn to newspapers in the first place.

When official newspapers made efforts to publish comprehensive, reliable, and up-to-the-minute reports, they became both more widely read and also more frequently used as a source for other newspapers. In its early years, the official Württemberg *Staats-Anzeiger* was seen as 'a newspaper … without its own correspondence articles, which nowadays are the only source of a newspapers' reputation, a newspaper in which all the political news was a day behind that in the *Schwäbischer Merkur*'.[42] By 1855, however, it had built up its own network of correspondents, and, so the editor asserted, was then a 'permanent source [of information] for many other newspapers in Germany and abroad'. Similarly, in 1856 the editor of the official Saxon *Dresdner Journal* listed a wide range of newspapers which reprinted news from the paper: the Austrian *Wiener Zeitung*, *Ostdeutsche Post*, and *Oesterreichsichse Zeitung*; Cotta's *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*; the Prussian *Staats-Anzeiger* and *Neue Preussische Zeitung*; the liberal *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Kölnische Zeitung*, and *Weser Zeitung*.[43]

In fact, the greater availability of information in the press after 1848 was deceptive, for news often concealed as much as it revealed. Government newspapers had always selected the news they presented to their readers in line with policy concerns. Some governments maintained this approach even after the revolution. During the 1850s, the official Württemberg *Staats-Anzeiger* deliberately avoided foreign policy issues due to their extreme sensitivity.[44] The Hanoverian government adopted a similar strategy in the official *Neue*

[39] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9514 (110a–b). Hartmann to Hugo Häpe, 25 May 1866.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Herbert Jordan, *Die öffentliche Meinung in Sachsen 1864–66* (Kamenz, 1918), pp. 48–9.
[42] HSAStu E150 (IV) 1599 (233–8). Redaktion, *Bericht*, 14 Feb. 1855.
[43] HSADre Minsterium des Innern 9510 (170). Hartmann, *Übersicht*, 23 Dec. 1856.
[44] HSAStu E14 1186 (296–305/43). Gesammtministerium to HM, 11 Oct. 1851.

Hannoversche Zeitung during the 1860s, simply failing to report major political events. In 1865, only three articles referred to a major ministerial crisis in Hanover and the subsequent change of ministry at all. Increasingly, however, governments attempted to put a positive spin on events, rather than to ignore them altogether. For instance, in 1851 a Saxon government journalist, Dr Kunath, advised against removing reports of parliamentary debates from the semi-official *Leipziger Zeitung*.[45] Such a move would provoke accusations of secrecy from the opposition press. More importantly, it would hamper attempts to influence public opinion. Were the *Leipziger Zeitung* to cease its reports, the opposition press would 'under the cover of impartiality' exploit the parliamentary debates for its own ends, through 'chiefly … tak[ing] into account the Opposition speakers, whilst the reporter for the state newspaper can find a thousand opportunities to keep his report in line with the special interests of the government, or at least objective on all sides'. This statement indicates quite how much the government had changed its attitude to the press since the pre-revolutionary era.

On one level, this kind of partial reporting simply reflected the spirit of the times. The Saxon government certainly believed that it was taking its cue from the opposition press. In 1851, the editor of the *Leipziger Zeitung*, Professor Bülau, attributed the success of opposition newspapers not to 'their fulminating leading articles' but rather to news reporting: '[T]his is where their strength lies – in presenting and reporting every little thing from their point of view.'[46] Consequently, government and opposition newspapers regularly provided diametrically opposite accounts of the same event, based on contradictory 'facts'. For instance, according to the *Reichszeitung*, the semi-official Hanoverian *Deutsche Nordsee Zeitung*, was an 'unread newspaper', but the *Duderstädter Wochenblatt* claimed it had 'found a wide circulation amazingly rapidly'.[47] Such contradictions were legion. Moreover, both government and opposition tended to see themselves as objective and their opponents as deceptive in their presentation of the facts. A dispute in Saxony over the *Leipziger Zeitung*'s coverage of Italian affairs demonstrates this very clearly. In February 1861, the official in charge of the paper complained that most correspondents in Italy had revolutionary, pro-Sardinian, sympathies – only the (pro-Austrian) *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* and the (ultra-conservative) *Kreuzzeitung* provided 'really objective original reports'.[48] Two months later, a delegate in the Saxon parliament, singled out the *Leipziger Zeitung*'s Italian news for particular criticism, when he publicly accused the paper of 'partisan news reporting' and declared that every shop-assistant could tell 'how false this news was and is'.[49]

[45] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9491 (158 D–R). Kunath to MdI, 4 Aug. 1851.
[46] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9491 (181–5). Bülau [to Friesen?], 4 Sept. 1851.
[47] HSADep 103 IX 288. 8 Dec. 1864, *Tagesbericht*; HSADep 103 IX 289. *Tagesbericht*, 12 Jan. 1865.
[48] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9494 (137–13). Witzleben to MdI, 2 Feb. 1861.
[49] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9494 (109–11). Seiler to Witzleben, 9 Apr. 1861.

Partisan news reporting had a particularly important role to play in the government press. Like their rivals, government journalists were constrained in what they wrote by the law. Even though government newspapers were unlikely to be seized by the police, government journalists could still be taken to court. In Württemberg, a liberal official did precisely this in 1851, when he claimed the semi-official *Deutsche Kronik* had falsely accused him of expressing republican opinions.[50] Actions of this kind were rare but hugely embarrassing for the government. Nearly ten years later, King William of Württemberg agreed not to publish an incendiary article in the *Staats-Anzeiger*, on the grounds that it would lay the editor open to a libel action.[51] But government journalists were also constrained by extra considerations.

Polemic was simply too crude a tool for the official press since the views expressed here tended to be discounted by the public. Government newspapers preferred subtler techniques. Thus Hugo Häpe, the Saxon official responsible for the *Dresdner Journal*, found a resumé of the daily press was an excellent vehicle for expressing government opinion.[52] The resumé avoided explicitly criticizing the excerpts from other newspapers printed, but did so implicitly, through the prominence accorded to a particular view. According to Häpe, the resumé provided an excellent opportunity for 'corrections and denials', 'especially …, where one wishes to avoid the impression that great importance is attached to [a matter]'. Official newspapers were regarded as the voice of the government and so had to express their views cautiously. As the Saxon minister, Beust commented in 1857: 'Such a newspaper … must always maintain the dignity of the government and take great care to avoid giving offence of any kind.'[53] Under these circumstances, an openly official newspaper had to use 'moderate' language and could not resort to polemic.[54] Many governments therefore reached the conclusion that, in the words of a Württemberg government circular: 'an argument is less important to political news reporting, than colouring the presentation of the facts'.[55]

German governments were acutely aware of the potential for bias in news reporting. They therefore went to great efforts to encourage the direct dissemination of pro-government news through the non-official press. As with the republication of articles from the official press, this enabled governments to influence public opinion discreetly; it also prevented newspapers from taking their news from the opposition press. Usually these efforts took the form of a government-sponsored correspondence newspaper, to which local newspapers subscribed as a news provider. In the early 1850s, the Württemberg government supported a *Württembergische Korrespondenz*. Linden, the interior

[50] HSAStu E9 94 (332). G. Mayer, *Notizen*, 5 Nov. 1851.
[51] HSAStu E14 1186 (376/82), Hügel and Linden to HM, 9 Feb. 1861.
[52] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9513 (260–2). Häpe to MdI, 24 Oct. 1964.
[53] HSADre Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (155–60). Beust to Gesammtministerium, 2 Jan. 1857.
[54] See also HSAStu E150 (IV) 1600 (430). Gessler to HM, 3 Feb. 1866.
[55] HSAStu E14 1186 (341–2), *Vorschläge*, undated, accompanying a circular to all ministers and heads of department, 15 Feb. 1860.

minister, noted in 1851 that this was particularly well suited for 'fleeting news items, which cannot be trusted to a regular newspaper' and 'for articles, which will then find their way into the larger journals, and first be discussed by the Württemberg press in this second stage'.[56] The paper was relatively short-lived, but a second Württemberg *Korrespondenz* was established after 1866. In Prussia, Bismarck set up a similar paper, the *Preußische Provinzial-korrespondenz*, in 1863.

Correspondence articles were another and far more common way in which governments could influence public opinion covertly. These were the most common forms of news: regular, mostly political reports sent in by freelance contributors at home and abroad. The articles were unsigned, but carried a symbol that attributed them to a particular author. In his memoirs, the Hanoverian press supremo, Oskar Meding, stressed the importance of correspondence articles precisely because few people could tell who had written them and most simply accepted them as fact.[57] Correspondence articles often appeared in several publications simultaneously and were frequently reprinted elsewhere. Consequently, their impact was not restricted to the official press. Moreover, not all government correspondents wrote for official publications. They also sent their articles to independent newspapers, which accepted them 'without any examination'. This had the added advantage of removing the taint of officialdom from government news and so rendering it more palatable to the public. As Meding noted smugly, 'with every correspondent one wins over safely and unobtrusively all the newspapers for which he writes'. Similarly, in his memoirs Meding claimed that by 1866 his correspondents in the European capitals 'sent off their correspondence pieces according to my instructions to various large newspapers, without a trace of their Hanoverian inspiration'.[58]

By this time, however, newspapers were turning to the telegraph for the most up-to-date news. Here, Prussia was at a distinct advantage in terms of disseminating pro-government news, since Wolff's telegraphic bureau in Berlin enjoyed a virtual monopoly of telegraphic news in Germany. In order to compete, the governments of other states needed to provide equally effective sources of information. In 1855, the editor of the official Württemberg *Staats-Anzeiger* described how the paper's prestige had risen once it stopped using the 'so-called Telegraphic Correspondence Bureau in Berlin' and instead began to receive 'telegraphic despatches from original sources in Paris, Vienna, and Trieste, which are widely respected because they are reliable and also cheaper'.[59] Oskar Meding had similar reservations about Wolff's bureau,

[56] HSAStu E14 1182. Linden to Maucler, 19 Dec. 1851.

[57] Oskar Meding, *Memoiren zur Zeitgeschichte* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1881), I, pp. 71–2. In many respects Meding's memoirs should be regarded as a highly unreliable source, since Meding himself was a notoriously unreliable character and his memoirs were clearly intended as personal propaganda. His views on the mechanics of government propaganda should, however, probably be taken seriously as here he had no axe to grind.

[58] Meding, *Memoiren*, II, p. 17.

[59] HSAStu E150 (IV) 1599 (233–8). Redaktion, *Bericht*, 14 Feb. 1855.

which he claimed purveyed anti-Hanoverian reports.[60] He negotiated a deal with Julius Reuter to set up a rival telegraphic bureau in Hanover, which would be 'independent of the influences of foreign governments and parties, and provide crucial support for the Hanoverian government press'. Hanover's annexation by Prussia in 1866 meant that the plan was never implemented. Given Reuter's subsequent success, however, we can only assume that the projected bureau would have had a major impact on news reporting in Germany.

Besides providing alternative sources of information in this way, governments actively encouraged newspapers to use them. Information was power in the newspaper business, and the possession of classified information gave governments a certain amount of leverage in their dealings with the press. As we have seen, Cotta's *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* cultivated ties with the Austrian government, providing sympathetic political coverage in exchange for information. More surprisingly, the same was true of the liberal *Kölnische Zeitung* during the 1850s.[61] In 1851 the editors signed an agreement with the Prussian press office, promising to adopt a conservative stance in return for reliable and up-to-date information. Initially, neither party felt that the other kept its side of the bargain, but a second agreement in 1855 proved successful. Thereafter, the *Kölnische Zeitung* acted as a semi-official newspaper on foreign policy issues, in exchange for which it received information, rather than financial support (as was usual). Similarly, in Hanover Meding made personal overtures through local officials to the publishers and editors of local newspapers. Mostly they were happy to publish articles from the government press office, which provided them with good, free, copy.[62] The Saxon government used a different technique to attain similar ends. In 1855, it granted a monopoly on local government advertising to officially endorsed newspapers, or *Amtsblätter*.[63] In return, editors promised to adopt a pro-government line and to print articles sent to them by the *Dresdner Journal*. The government hoped that they would 'use only the *Dresdner Journal* or the *Leipziger Zeitung* as the source for their political news and not, as hitherto, opposition newspapers'.[64]

IV

In Germany the rise of the free press and the rise of the official press were intimately linked. The former engendered the latter, but the latter was also able to influence the former. On the one hand, government press policy was a direct response to the growing freedom of the press and the pressures of public opinion. Consequently, the government press had to respond to existing market forces, in particular the need to provide good news coverage in order to

[60] Meding, *Memoiren*, I, pp. 329–33, 348–9.
[61] See Requate, *Journalismus als Beruf*, pp. 329–33, for further details.
[62] Meding, *Memoiren*, I, p. 62.
[63] See HSADre Ministerium des Innern 3681–5 for details of this initiative.
[64] HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9511 (156–7). Häpe to MdI, 2 Jan. 1858.

attract readers. This encouraged a more open attitude towards releasing information. On the other hand, once governments had become more open, their monopoly of certain kinds of information became a source of potential influence, as they learnt to control the passage of information into the public realm. Crucially, governments could choose to leak information to their own newspapers in order to spread an official version of events, to steer the attention of the public in certain directions, or to increase the readership of the government press. This privileged access to information gave government newspapers a distinct advantage when competing with the opposition press, both in terms of sales and in terms of disseminating partisan news. Indeed, control of information even gave governments a certain amount of leverage in their dealings with the local and independent press, as non-government papers were willing to trade integrity for information.

Assessing the actual effectiveness of government press policy remains fraught with difficulty. Although the development of official and semi-official newspapers can be studied with relative ease, it is almost impossible to quantify the extent of indirect government press influence. Yet the picture of government press policy outlined above, with the accent on news rather than polemic, indicates that news management was a major priority for governments and that indirect rather than direct press influence was central to this process.

Of course, evidence of the success of government news management and indirect press influence is fragmentary to say the least. Nevertheless, there are indications that it was relatively effective. In Hanover, for instance, Alfred Hildebrandt has concluded that by the end of 1862, 54 per cent of Hanoverian newspapers were wholly under the government's influence, printing all the articles sent by Oskar Meding, the Hanoverian press supremo; a further 26 per cent were susceptible to occasional government influence; only 20 per cent had no contact with the government.[65] Equally, in Saxony the *Amtsblatt* initiative clearly had a limited but significant impact on the local press. Numerous pleas from newspaper editors to be granted *Amtsblatt* status, so that they could retain the right to official advertising, indicate that the advertising monopoly was a very real benefit for local newspapers. At the same time, the refusal of some officials to advertise in *Amtsblätter* meant that the monopoly was not wholly effective. Furthermore, in 1857 Beust, the leading Saxon minister, claimed that 'the larger Saxon newspapers … reprint articles from the *Dresdner Journal* on a daily basis … and the provincial press takes the greater part of its daily news almost exclusively from the *Journal*'.[66] He even claimed that the oppositional *Constitutionelle Zeitung* took most of its news from the paper. This picture of a successful government press policy was borne out by opposition newspapers in both Hanover and Saxony. In May 1864, the *Deutsche Reichszeitung* complained

[65] Figures from Hildebrandt, 'Pressepolitik der hannoverschen Regierung', pp. 29–33. The material on which these figures are based was subsequently destroyed.

[66] HSADre Gesammtministerium Loc.7 Nr.7 (155–60). Beust to Gesammtministerium, 2 Jan. 1857.

that: 'most of [the Hanoverian Press] is in the hands of the government or otherwise influenced. But even the liberal press does not do its duty there'.[67] Likewise, in Saxony the liberal *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* complained in 1865 of the government's all-pervasive influence in the Saxon press, which made it 'extremely difficult for independent public opinion to maintain itself at the same time'.[68]

Moreover, official newspapers in both states were significantly more successful than historians have accepted before now. In the past, official newspapers have largely been dismissed as expensive failures, a conclusion primarily based on the small circulation of official and semi-official newspapers in large states like Prussia and Bavaria.[69] The perception is accurate as far as it goes, but it deserves serious qualification. In fact, some official newspapers were fairly successful. A circulation of 10,000 was large for any newspaper in the years 1850–1900 in Germany, and even a circulation of 2,000–5,000 was significant – particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, when literacy was lower and production and subscription costs high.[70] In Saxony the circulation of the *Leipziger Zeitung* did not drop below 5,000 during these decades, and that of the *Dresdner Journal* reached similar heights during 1866.[71] This was about the circulation level of the semi-official Prussian *Kreuzzeitung* (4,500–7,500), and double that of the official newspapers in both Prussia and Bavaria.[72] In relative terms, the influence of Saxon official newspapers was greater, since Prussia was eight times the size of Saxony and Bavaria twice as large. In fact, not all opposition newspapers had large circulations. The liberal *Kölnische Zeitung* was unusual in boasting a circulation of 10,000–15,000 during the 1850s.[73] In Saxony, both the *Dresdner Journal* and Saxony's leading opposition newspapers (the *Constitutionelle Zeitung* and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*) had circulations of about 1,000 during the years 1858–62, whilst that of the *Leipziger Zeitung* was, as we have seen, far higher. In 1865–6, the main opposition newspaper in Hanover, the *Zeitung für Norddeutschland*, had a circulation of only 2,500–3,000, barely larger than that of the official *Neue Hannoversche Zeitung* (2,500) or the semi-official *Deutsche Nordsee Zeitung* (2,150–2,500).[74] Indeed, the influence of *both* government and opposition newspapers depended less on their own circulation than on the reprinting of articles in the local and independent press. In this context, the dissemination of correspondence articles and news reports was crucially important, for precisely these articles were most likely to be

[67] Tagesbericht, 11/05/1864, HSAHan Dep.103 IX 285 (125–6).
[68] Cited in Jordan, *Die öffentliche Meinung in Sachsen*, p. 24.
[69] Most recently, Kohnen, *Pressepolitik*, pp. 151–6.
[70] See Naujoks, *Die offiziöse Presse und die Gesellschaft*, p. 158.
[71] Circulation figures for the *Leipziger Zeitung* and other Saxon newspapers to be found in HSADre, Ministerium des Innern 9511–14, *Verzeichnisse*. For *Dresdner Journal* circulation in 1866, see Jordan, *Öffentliche Meinung in Sachsen*, pp. 48–9.
[72] In 1862, the Preuss. Staats-Anzeiger (4,300); in 1849, the Neue Münchner Zeitung (2,450). Figures from Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland*, p. 400.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Figures for Hanoverian newspapers to be found in HSAHan Dep. 103 IX 311.

reprinted elsewhere. Here too, therefore, the accent shifts from direct to indirect government influence in the press, and from polemic to news reporting.

Why has the scale of governmental interaction with the press and the surprising success of this policy been overlooked before now? In part, this is testimony to the effectiveness of government press policy, which, as we have seen, relied heavily on indirect influence. Secrecy was an integral part of this process, and the success of official news management depended to a great extent on the ability of governments to disguise their hand. In fact, both governments and the newspapers they influenced had an interest in downplaying official involvement in the press. Governments hoped to increase the effectiveness of propaganda through concealing its source, whilst editors and newspaper owners were embarrassed to acknowledge the degree of government influence over their newspapers.

Yet there is also a second explanation. Government press policy explicitly targeted the provinces and the mass of smaller newspapers, which have been largely overlooked by subsequent historians. Individually, these were insignificant, but collectively, their readership was vastly greater than that of higher profile political newspapers. Local newspapers are harder to study and less obviously important than more prominent political papers. The latter were disproportionately significant because they boasted an influential readership and because the practice of reprinting articles meant that their views spread far beyond their immediate readership. Consequently, they have understandably been the first port of call for historians.[75] Nevertheless, it is clearly wrong to assume that the provincial press was simply an echo of more prominent publications or to underestimate its importance in opinion formation. Thus Oskar Meding, who ran the Hanoverian Press Bureau, argued that the larger political newspapers were relatively unimportant, since they tended to be read by those already inclined to agree with their views.[76] Instead, Meding believed that 'the small and very smallest newspapers, which make their way among the people, who have yet to form their own opinion and are very inclined to take the printed word as truth, form public opinion in a real and important sense'. This concern with reaching beyond the educated and official readership of political newspapers was shared by governments in Saxony and Württemberg. For instance, the editor of the Saxon *Leipziger Zeitung*, Bülau, claimed that this paper was 'so important precisely because a great many of its readers never see any other newspaper'.[77] Similarly, the Württemberg ministry described the *Staats-Anzeiger* in 1850 as a newspaper primarily destined for rural communities.[78] In all three states, local newspapers and their readership were the real targets of government press policy; news management, not polemic, was the chosen tool.

[75] See, for instance, the approach taken in Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, pp. 106–209.

[76] Meding, *Memoiren*, 1, p. 66–7.

[77] Bülau to Ew. Hochwohlgeboren, 4 Sept. 1851, HSADre Ministerium des Innern 9491 (181–5).

[78] K. Gesammtministerium, 9 Feb. 1850. HSAStu E14 1186 (273).

In a sense, this concern with the local press underlines the extent to which propaganda was both a product of the new post-revolutionary context and, at the same time, remained strongly influenced by the traditional governmental attitudes. For the orientation of government press policy towards the relatively uneducated readership of the smaller local newspapers reflected a continued faith in the fundamental loyalty of the rural and provincial masses, whom officials and publicists believed remained relatively uncorrupted by the liberalism of the urban middle classes. Thus Heinrich Elsner, a leading government publicist in Württemberg, spoke of the urgent need to counteract the negative impact of republican propaganda through the press, in order to bolster the 'right-thinking instincts of country folk'.[79] Similarly, in 1854 the leading Hanoverian minister, von Borries, blamed popular discontent on the 'dissemination of the bad press amongst the country folk' and stressed the need for positive action in order to stop the rot.[80] In many ways, this faith in the basic loyalty of country dwellers was a relic of the pre-revolutionary era. Nevertheless, attempts to shore up such loyalty through the press reflected a concern with public opinion and an awareness of vulnerability on the part of German governments which was both fundamentally new and very characteristic of the post-revolutionary period.

Government press policy in the 1850s and 1860s should not be viewed in isolation. Rather, press policy was part of a larger policy agenda, whereby governments sought to strengthen popular support for reactionary regimes through progressive legislation, like economic liberalization, railway construction, primary school reforms and the founding of state museums.[81] These policies were designed to demonstrate the continued relevance of conservative regimes in the modern world and to foster state patriotism by enabling German governments to take the credit for their role in promoting social, cultural, and economic change. The combination of old and new in official press policy was therefore characteristic of the wider transformation of government that took place in Germany after 1848. In press policy, as in other areas, governments responded creatively to the challenges of modernization. Consequently, the state did not remain divorced from wider social developments – in this case, the emergent *Öffentlichkeit*. Instead, government intervention in the *Öffentlichkeit* helped to shape the spread of news and information, thereby influencing the process of opinion formation and colouring the nature of the public sphere.

[79] Elsner to H.M., 25 July 1848. HSAStu E9 94 1 (146–8).

[80] Promemoria des Grafen Borries über die politische Gesinnungen der Grundbesitzer und Bauern, den Einfluß der Presse, der Geistlichkeit, Lehrer und Beamten, 7[?] Sept. 1854, HSAHan, Dep. 103 IX 41.

[81] For more in-depth analysis of these policies see chapters 3–6 of my forthcoming book, *Fatherlands: state-building and nationhood in nineteenth century Germany*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.