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“To Constantly Swim against the Tide Is Suicide”

The Liberal Press and Its Audience, 1928–33

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“Although our readers remained outwardly faithful, there was little doubt that their hearts were no longer with us. Inwardly, fully half of them were already in Hitler’s camp. . . . People rushed to him, swallowed his every word, while continuing, on the side, to read our newspapers.”¹ When Hermann Ullstein wrote this in 1943, he had lost his fortune and his home. One of the former owners of Germany’s biggest publishing company, he had been forced by the Nazi regime to sell his business and leave his country for the United States in 1934. His family had commanded some of Germany’s most influential newspapers and most popular magazines, including the venerable *Vossische Zeitung* and the popular *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (BIZ), yet millions of Ullstein’s readers helped to lever into power the man who would be responsible for their misfortune.

Hermann Ullstein’s quote encapsulates a central paradox of German media history: the failure of Weimar’s liberal, prodemocratic press, despite its formidable reach and influence, to prevent the rise of the Nazis. In their papers, the leaders of Weimar’s liberal press—major publishers like Ullstein, Mosse, and Sonnemann—supported the Republic’s democratic institutions and vigorously attacked Hitler and his party. Together these publications had millions of readers, yet they seemed to have hardly any political influence on them.² This paradox also represents a more general topic of media studies: how much influence do the media actually have? How strong are so-called media effects, i.e., behavior and mentalities, such as voting preference, occurring as a result of media influence? In many classic studies, the supposed seductiveness of Nazi propaganda has been

used as a particularly telling example of powerful media effects.³ By contrast, this chapter argues that the rise of the Nazis after 1929 in fact offers a prime example of the limited influence of the mass media: if readers of anti-Nazi newspapers voted for Hitler, then the audience must have had quite a lot of agency in their decision-making. In this perspective of an active audience choosing some content and ignoring other parts of a newspaper—notably, suggestions of whom to vote for—the behavior of Ullstein's readers does not seem so paradoxical. In fact, it is puzzling only to those who hold to the rather old-fashioned idea of audiences as a mass of atomized individuals unknowingly acting in unison.

The impotence of Weimar's liberal press has puzzled historians for a long time, and their answers have generally focused on institutional or structural explanations. Some have claimed that the commercial orientation of most liberal publications watered down their political agenda, while others argued, in contrast, that their extreme partisanship added to a deterioration of the political climate that benefited the Nazis.⁴ This chapter contributes to this debate in a different way: rather than looking for explanations for voting behavior, I examine the way liberal publishers in Weimar Germany reacted to the transformation of the political landscape around 1930 and what consequences this had for their view of their audience. In other words, I am not so much interested in finding out why readers of liberal newspapers voted for Hitler as in shedding some light on why this was seen as so surprising. Today, the study of media effects, particularly on voting behavior, is a highly specialized field with various competing schools and approaches from cultivation to agenda setting.⁵ However, there is a general agreement that media effects are diffuse and hard to measure.⁶ In the early twentieth century, the situation was very different: there was a widespread belief that mass media had a direct, powerful influence on their audience. Weimar's liberal journalists and publishers were no exception: they saw their audiences as loyal and easily led followers, an image that was firmly rooted in Germany's journalistic tradition, which is why their readers' votes for Hitler came as such a shock to many of them.

Historians of the Weimar press are faced with the problem that the archives of many German publishing companies were destroyed during World War II.⁷ The strategic decisions publishers took during the rise of the Nazis can often only be reconstructed through the coverage of their newspapers rather than be based on internal documents. In this chapter, I try to surmount this obstacle by focusing on the general shift in the way media professionals perceived their audience at the end of the Weimar Republic, based on changes in newspaper content formats, discussions among experts, and a small number of surviving strategic documents. As Bignell and Fickers remind us, "[a]s much as nations are, audiences are also imagined communities, which are summoned into existence by specific discourses."⁸ Retracing the way in which liberal publishers constructed the "imagined community" of their audience provides insight into the strategic decisions they took during Weimar's collapse. I argue that in light of the political "disloyalty" of their readership and external political and economic pressures, the

liberal press's understanding of its audience evolved from uncritical and passive consumer to active reader with agency. This undermined their approach to the rising threat of the Nazis: if parts of their audience supported Hitler and did so of their own free will while being immune to media influence, then the only option seemed to be to embrace these readers and their politics in order to retain their audience and ensure financial viability.

The struggle of the liberal press of Weimar Germany to come to terms with the rise of an illiberal political force has obvious parallels to today. The popularity of the “alt-right” in the United States, Ukip and the Brexit Party in the UK, or the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) Party in Germany poses a difficult question for established media organizations: how to report objectively about these groups without inflating their real influence or risking the alienation of readers who might sympathize with them. I do not pretend to provide an answer to this question. However, this chapter shows how complex and difficult the terrain is that journalists and publishers have to navigate in such a situation and that there are probably no easy or straight-forward solutions to this conundrum.

The Reader as Loyal Consumer

Before 1945, the Anglo-American ideal of impartiality and objectivity was not embraced by German journalists.⁹ As Jörg Requate has shown, most German newspapermen and women looked to France instead, which they saw as the “paradise (*Dorado*) of journalism.”¹⁰ Like their French counterparts, German journalists openly aligned themselves with political parties and saw it as their calling to convince their readers of their opinions and political convictions. This self-image developed in the nineteenth century, but it still dominated the profession in Weimar Germany and was shared by many scholars in the developing field of newspaper studies (*Zeitungswissenschaft*) at the time.¹¹ In 1928, Emil Dovifat, one of the founders of German media studies, stressed the “typically German character” of a journalism rooted in ideology:

While being able to very quickly research, understand and summarize a topic is of utmost necessity in journalistic work, it has to remain the work of *convincing*. The purposeful journalist bound by his conviction, rather than the ‘racing reporter’, has to remain the typical representative of German journalism. This should not be understood as belittling the materialistic techniques of journalism in other countries, it simply means a logical and adequate adaptation of our newspapers’ intellectual workers to the intellectual nature of the German national character.¹²

This interpretation of their professional mission also shaped how many German journalists viewed their audience: newspaper readers were mostly seen as willing followers. In 1929, Georg Bernhard, editor-in-chief of Ullstein's flagship broadsheet *Vossische Zeitung* and chairman of the National Association of Journalists, claimed that British and American readers were much more critical than German

audiences, who did not question what they read in the paper: “The German believes what his paper tells him.”¹³

To be sure, Bernhard’s pithy quote tells us less about the real behavior of German newspaper readers than about the self-image of German journalists and their ideas about the influence of their newspapers. This belief in powerful media effects was widespread among media professionals of the Weimar Republic, whatever their political orientation: Alfred Hugenberg, an influential right-wing politician and media magnate, spoke of the press as a direct “channel to the brains of the people.”¹⁴ Such views were reflected by early media effects research, which was developing during the interwar years and mostly defined the audience as an easily manipulated mass.¹⁵ Often influenced by the experience of the extensive use of propaganda during World War I, early media scholars operated with a “hypodermic needle model” of strong, direct media effects. Arguably the most influential study in this respect was Harold Lasswell’s *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), which claimed that the press had the power to “weld thousands or even millions of human beings into one amalgamated mass.”¹⁶ In Germany, the first academic institute dedicated to newspaper studies was founded in 1916 with explicit reference to the failure of the German press to create international goodwill during the first years of the war.¹⁷ During the 1930s and 1940s, the rise of the Nazi regime and its supposedly masterful crowd manipulation seemed to support such theories of strong, direct media effects on a pliable audience.¹⁸

For liberal journalists in interwar Germany, however, the popularity of the Nazis in fact undermined this view of the powerful media because *their* audience had quite clearly not listened to them. Liberal newspapers of the Weimar Republic told their readers repeatedly that Hitler was not to be trusted. Already in January 1928, before the Nazi Party had become a nationwide success, Mosse’s *Berliner Tageblatt* reported that the party was supported by secret donations from abroad, including France.¹⁹ The liberal *Hamburger Anzeiger* also reported on the Nazis’ shady financial dealings, which prompted Hitler to send several letters of protest to the newspaper.²⁰ When the Nazis disrupted a stump speech held in Munich by Gustav Stresemann, the country’s foreign minister and a leading liberal politician, the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* condemned the action as a “shameful spectacle.”²¹ At the end of the year, Ullstein’s *Tempo* poked fun at the Nazi leader’s infamous rhetorical prowess: “The swastika’s premier force, this man’s an impressive chap. When all else fails, he can rely on his great big trap.”²² On 15 September 1929, on the occasion of the referendum against the Young Plan, Georg Bernhard called Hitler a “scene-shifter” (*Kulissenschieber*) who “counts equally on the people’s stupidity and their short memory.”²³ With the Nazis’ rising popularity and the dramatic decline of the liberal vote, such attacks only grew more frequent and more pronounced. However, significant parts of the German public did not seem to listen, at least in regions like Saxony, where the Nazis gained over 14 percent of the vote in the regional elections of 1929. In Prussia, Ullstein’s and Mosse’s core market, the Nazis were less successful, gaining only 1.8 percent in 1928. But here, liberal publishers faced other problems that

also undermined the view of the German reader as a loyal consumer of opinions: in October 1929, the manager of the Ullstein branch on Wilmersdorfer Strasse in Berlin reported that many long-time readers of the *Vossische Zeitung* had cancelled their subscriptions because of its increasingly partisan tone.²⁴ One reader—Herr Dr. Wernicke, Neue Kantstrasse 4—was quoted as saying that the paper “now agitates like the *Lokal-Anzeiger*,” the far-right tabloid controlled by Hugenberg. The *Vossische Zeitung* had “lost its class (*Feinheit*) by trying to impose its political opinion on the reader.” In the increasingly polarized political climate of the late 1920s, the supposedly docile audience actively rejected the attempts of liberal publishers to influence them, even if it meant strengthening the existing political orientation of their newspapers.

This posed a serious problem in a quickly deteriorating economy, when no newspaper could afford to lose readers and audience retention became paramount. As a result, German journalists had to strike a more consumer-oriented tone, but this did not mean that they changed their view of the audience and their own educational mission. Rather, they now had to package their content in different ways to satisfy a seemingly more fickle, self-confident readership. On 24 May 1930, the *Zeitungsverlag*, the official organ of the Association of German Newspaper Publishers, dedicated a special issue to the “psychology of the reader.” In his contribution, the media scholar Kurt Baschwitz, editor-in-chief of the journal, claimed that the audience now wanted “to be treated as independently thinking human beings.”²⁵ This pretension, he argued, was reflected in the fact that many readers “misjudged the real influence of the newspaper” and denied its impact on the formation of their worldview. His advice to publishers was to humor the audience and exercise their influence cautiously: “The readers want to be led, but not bullied.”

Still, the feeling among German journalists that the audience had fundamentally changed its behavior toward the media, and that they had to adapt to these changed consumer demands, resulted in new content formats that granted the readers a more active, direct role. On 27 June 1929, for example, Mosse’s *Berliner Volkszeitung* introduced a regular section called “May I have the floor?” (*Ich bitte um’s Wort!*), in which readers could pose questions or vent frustrations. The paper called on other readers to write in and discuss these questions, turning the section into a forum for communication among its audience. The very first letter published in the new section complained about the oppressive number of public signs in Germany prohibiting everything from sitting on the grass to spitting on the floor: “For centuries, until the revolution, the authorities have led [the German people] by the nose. Everything we had to do or weren’t allowed to do was dictated by the police or the bureaucracy. Everywhere there are signs with rules and bans.”²⁶ Such an oppressive, authoritarian attitude was not fit for the changed times, the reader argued. The letter expressed a new confidence of German citizens in their relationship to the state, which made it programmatic for a new section named in clear reference to democratic, parliamentary deliberation. In this context, the letter also spoke of a new relationship between the readership

and their newspaper: it suggested that journalists telling their readers what to think was an aspect of Germany’s undemocratic past.

Over the next months, the section was continuously expanded and by October it took over a whole page every week. Other publishers joined this trend: in August 1930, *Tempo* introduced the weekly column “Ask Ms. Christine” (*Fragen Sie Frau Christine*) for questions from male and female readers about matters of personal and professional life.²⁷ The column, which also covered a whole page, proved to be very popular and became an important staple of the newspaper. Such attempts to include the readers more closely in the shaping of their newspaper’s content was clearly a reaction to the deteriorating economy during the onset of the Great Depression, which hit newspaper publishers particularly hard, dependent as they were on advertising spending from businesses.

The Active Audience Subjugates “Its Old Master”

The shocking results of the general election on 14 September 1930, when the Nazis became the second-biggest party after the Social Democrats, emphasized in dramatic fashion the lack of influence of Germany’s liberal media and of the journalistic profession more generally. The Nazi press was, in general, disorganized, badly produced, and had a fraction of the readers of Weimar’s mainstream newspapers.²⁸ And yet, the party had managed to increase their share of the vote sevenfold, from 2.6 percent in 1928 to 18.3 percent. The high number of Nazi voters, nearly 6.4 million, also suggested that at least some of the readers of liberal newspapers not only rejected a partisan tone but in fact supported Hitler and his party, against their newspapers’ outspoken attacks against him.

The fading of the German idea of a powerful press and the rise of the active reader was reflected at the Congress of German Sociologists (*Deutscher Soziologentag*) in October 1930, just two weeks after the general election. That year, the conference dealt with the topic “The Press and Public Opinion,” and the failure of the liberal press to prevent the success of the Nazis played a central role in the scholars’ discussions. “Last month, a party broke the chains that had made it a prisoner of this press,” the theologian Wilhelm Kapp claimed.²⁹ This was echoed by the editor-in-chief of the Social Democrats’ flagship newspaper *Vorwärts*, Eduard Stampfer, who represented the journalistic profession at the congress:

Where was the gigantic power of the press on 14 September? It had dissolved into nothing. The vanquished of 14 September were the big newspaper publishers Mosse, Ullstein and Hugenberg’s Scherl, and the victorious were—technically speaking—the small rags. Their parties gained immensely, while the parties who have the greatest press apparatus at their disposal did not perform well at all.³⁰

The idea of the audience as an unthinking, homogeneous “mass” came under particular criticism during the congress. Prefiguring later theories about interpersonal influence, Kapp argued that the mass audience was not a tabula rasa waiting

for the press to fill it with content but that it consisted of many different groups and “cells” that were tightly embedded into their own social and political contexts.³¹ This had consequences for the whole sector, and in the future “the press will have much less significance in voter decisions.” In a report of the conference, the *Vossische Zeitung* summed up the discussion with a rather nostalgic farewell to the idea of powerful media effects: “Is the press a sovereign power vis-à-vis its readers? . . . [O]r is in fact the taste of the readers—the firm will of the readers to hear this opinion and to find themselves confirmed in that judgment—the real power which has now subjugated its old master, the press?”³²

The results of the 1930 election intensified the trend to include readers in the production of newspaper content. On 27 November, the *Berliner Volkszeitung*’s “May I have the floor?” column was replaced by an even more elaborate effort to tie the audience to the paper by “giving them a say on the content of the newspaper.”³³ The new section was edited by a lay “jury” of readers—the *BVZ-Schöffen*—that met with the paper’s journalists twice a week. The three lay editors, chosen from the paper’s subscribers, were paid for their work and changed every two weeks. The paper claimed that this kind of reader participation was “globally unique” and “path-breaking for the whole of the press industry.”³⁴ Even the venerable *Vossische Zeitung* gave its audience the opportunity to play an active part in reportage: on 2 June 1931, the newspaper invited its readers to act as its “contributors” and to call in to report “accidents, fires and crimes” they witnessed on the street, at home, or at work. This constituted a shift in the newspaper’s conception of its own readers toward an active group with agency.

While the audience gained more influence over newspaper content, journalists increasingly lost their traditional role as partisan opinion leaders. On 8 December 1931, the Ullstein management told the company’s senior editors to tone down their political reporting. The political coverage of their newspapers was not to be “of an aggressive or hurtful character or attempt to support any parties or groups” but was “meant to offer a broad audience the opportunity to inform themselves objectively about the latest events.”³⁵ This was a direct rejection of the traditional self-image of German journalists and a reflection of the changed role of the audience: rather than being seen as passive followers, readers were now framed as active individuals making autonomous decisions based on objective information. This escalated the tensions between editorial staff and management that had been building since the economic crisis had begun to undermine the independence of journalists and put consumer demand first. Considering the highly partisan political climate of the early 1930s and—with the Nazis and Communists openly challenging the whole political system—the high stakes involved, many journalists did not give up the chance to influence their readers easily. At Ullstein, the left-wing editor-in-chief of the *B.Z. am Mittag*, Franz Höllering, who was fired after he refused to toe the new company line, was arguably the most high-profile victim of the conflict between management and editors over their political involvement.³⁶ On 14 December, barely a week after the company had announced its new rules about political reporting, the

B.Z. published an explosive story about a secret Nazi plan to establish a private air force. This would create a conflict with the Versailles Treaty, which prohibited the operation of military aircraft in Germany. The article caused considerable national and international concern, and Höllering was swiftly removed as editor-in-chief.

After Höllering's dismissal, Carl von Ossietzky, editor of the influential liberal journal *Die Weltbühne*, attacked Ullstein for their supposed opportunism.³⁷ Instead of using their newspapers to fight against antidemocratic forces, Ossietzky claimed, the company tried to please everybody, from the Nazis to the Communists, out of fear of losing readers. He was convinced that such attempts to follow consumer preference were futile because audiences now expected their newspaper to take a clear stance: "More than anything, the newspaper reader of today wants clarity and precision; no waffling, no equivocation, but full facts." What the liberal audience did not want, he claimed, were newspapers that also tried to please "the other side of the barricade." It is obvious from these comments that Ossietzky, true to his convictions as a German journalist, saw the audience in need of more, not less, political orientation, but he also acknowledged the role of readers in actively searching out facts and information.

However, the situation of liberal publishers was not as clear-cut as Ossietzky made it out to be. While commercial reasons certainly played a role in toning down the political coverage of their newspapers, the Ullstein management also had doubts whether attacking its political enemies would really have the desired effects on the company's readership. A few days after Höllering's dismissal, an internal memo warned that focusing too much on Nazi activities played into Hitler's hands.³⁸ In fact, supposed secrets such as the alleged attempts to establish a private Nazi air force uncovered by Höllering were often leaked on purpose to boost coverage, creating a distorted view of the real strength of the party, as the memo explained: "[B]y focusing on such news, the politically inexperienced reader will easily be led to the conclusion that the Hitler movement is growing every day and that the leader of the National Socialist party is the next big thing." This way, the memo suggested, the journalists' fight against the Nazis could unintentionally convert their own audience to their political enemy's cause. This argument shows how liberal publishers struggled to find an explanation for the fact that many of their readers seemed to vote for a party their newspapers had opposed so strongly, an argument that has found its eerie echo in current discussions about the media's treatment of populist politicians.³⁹ Ullstein's view of the audience that is reflected in the memo acknowledged the readers' independence from direct media influence, but raised the problem of such an independent audience drawing the wrong conclusions from the media content they were presented with.

The shift in the image of the audience from mindless followers to active readers created a strategic dilemma for liberal publishers. If their readers were immune to direct media influence and freely chose to vote for the Nazis, then their political decisions could not be dismissed outright but needed to be taken

seriously. In May 1932, a strategic memo circulated among Ullstein managers argued that National Socialism had to be interpreted as a “movement for political freedom and economic justice.”⁴⁰ The memo is indicative of liberal publishers’ acceptance of the Nazis as a genuine political expression of a major part of the population, in other words, of existing and potential readers. In their view, continuing to attack this group in the middle of the most severe economic crisis in history was not a viable strategy. However, this dilemma was not simply an economic one; it also challenged the self-image of many liberal publishers. Ullstein, the biggest German publishing house at the time, is a good example of this. Because of the high circulation figures of the myriad publications owned by the company, it had always seen itself as fundamentally democratic in the sense that it served a broad cross-section of the population.⁴¹ This was hard to square with excluding a genuine mass movement, which the Nazi electorate seemed to be after the September election.

On 3 December 1932, the media scholar Wilhelm Waldkirch, himself the owner of several newspapers, published a meditation on the relationship between publisher, editorial staff, and audience that reflected the changed view of media effects among media professionals in the late Weimar Republic.⁴² The audience had only recently become a focus of serious research, Waldkirch argued, but it was already clear that journalists had to serve the specific demands and preferences of their readership if they wanted to have any influence at all because it was the audience that granted newspapers their authority: “If the newspaper as a medium has any effect on the reader at all, this effect is based primarily on the trust of the readership in the intellectual leadership of the newspaper.” This leadership could only be maintained convincingly if the strict separation between a newspaper’s editorial department and its business management was given up for “a firm and unifying management (*Leitung*)” in the person of the publisher, who “embodied the tradition of his paper.” With such recommendations, Waldkirch openly questioned the independence of editorial staff, which had been undermined since the beginning of the economic crisis. He also constructed a rather paternalistic relationship between a newspaper’s owner and its audience, arguing that the readers were sovereign but that they used this independence to demand leadership. This kind of conceptualization foreshadowed Nazi press politics after 1933.

Conclusion

On 28 November 1933, the *Hamburger Anzeiger* reported on a lecture by Otto Dietrich, the NSDAP press chief, about the role of the press in the Third Reich.⁴³ In Dietrich’s definition, the journalist’s task was almost diametrically opposed to its nineteenth-century tradition. Rather than opinion leaders forming the minds of their readers, journalists were now to express the alleged will of the people. This should be taken to heart especially by “bourgeois” journalists,

he argued, who had followed the "wrong path" before the "seizure of power" earlier in the year and first needed to be "converted" into National Socialists. In his view, the readership represented the "national community," which was always right in its political instincts, while journalists only served it by being its mouthpiece. The Nazis, however, were anything but believers in weak media effects, and the regime often used propaganda in an attempt to produce consent among the population. Dietrich's demand was clearly aimed at putting formerly independent journalists in their place rather than acknowledging the independence of media audiences. However, both Dietrich's vision of the readership as a "national community" and the idea of the active audience as it was discussed in the early 1930s among scholars and liberal publishers had their roots in the loss of journalists' authority during the late Weimar Republic. Economic crisis and the rise of the Nazis put liberal journalists on the backfoot and forced them to abandon their traditional educational mission and communicate with their readers, including those who voted for the Nazis, on more equal terms. This fading of the idea of the journalist as educator and opinion leader went hand in hand with a power shift toward management and, above all, the audience: the readers were now seen as the "new masters," who set the agenda that newspapers had to follow.

Seven years after Dietrich's lecture, Hermann Ullstein bemoaned how his publishing house had "blundered Hitler into power" by not acting decisively enough to use the full force of its newspapers against the Nazis.⁴⁴ Echoing Ossietzky, he accused the rest of his family of pandering to the audience and thus contributing to Hitler's rise to power. However, in a private letter, his brother Franz still defended the populist orientation of the company's newspapers: "To constantly swim against the tide is suicide. . . . The audience may not be sovereign, but you have to respect a majority decision."⁴⁵ Current experiences with populist movements suggest that it might indeed not be as simple as Hermann Ullstein and Ossietzky assumed: even constant critical coverage seems to result in free publicity without affecting supporters' loyalty. Different strategies, like "no-platforming," i.e., refusing to give attention to certain groups, are problematic for other reasons. Should the press in democratic societies, which depend on freedom of speech, really deliberately exclude certain opinions? This certainly seems a valid approach in the case of groups that openly undermine the democratic order. However, it is doubtful if "no-platforming" the Nazis would have kept them out of power and saved Weimar democracy. In the end, people are not only part of media audiences but also belong to social classes, cultural milieus, religious communities, and a myriad of other groups that shape their political behavior. There are also broader transnational processes, such as economic crises, that have a profound influence on politics but are not directly related to media content. Media consumption does not happen in a social vacuum, and we need to take these contexts into account when examining the role of the media in the past, particularly their role in politics in democratic societies. One contribution to a better understanding of this role, as evidenced in this chapter, is to retrace

the conception journalists had of their own audience and how this influenced their work.

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Notes

1. H. Ullstein, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Ullstein* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), 217.
2. M. Eksteins, *The Limits of Reason: The German Democratic Press and the Collapse of Weimar Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 249–50. See also P. Fechter, *An der Wende der Zeit. Menschen und Begegnungen* (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1950), 53.
3. See, e.g., H. D. Lasswell and D. Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda: A Chicago Study* (New York: Knopf, 1939); H. D. Lasswell, *The Analysis of Political Behaviour: An Empirical Approach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948). This view is still accepted today. See G. Jowett and V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage, 2012), 239–52.
4. In their classic studies of the Weimar press, Koszyk and Eksteins mostly blame the commercial orientation of liberal publishers for their downfall. See K. Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse 1914–1945* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1972), 444–53; Eksteins, *Limits of Reason*. Ross argues along similar lines, blaming the “consumerist orientation” of many publishers. See C. Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 178. Bosch and Fulda focus more on the radicalized “climate of opinion” at the end of the Weimar Republic and the role liberal publishers played in it. See M. Bosch, *Liberale Presse in der Krise. Die Innenpolitik der Jahre 1930 bis 1933 im Spiegel des Berliner Tageblatts, der Frankfurter Zeitung und der Vossischen Zeitung* (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1976); B. Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also J. Wilke, “Geschichte als Kommunikationsereignis. Der Beitrag der Massenkommunikation beim Zustandekommen historischer Ereignisse,” in *Massenkommunikation: Theorien, Methoden, Befunde*, ed. M. Kaase, 57–71 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 69.
5. For an exhaustive overview, see W. R. Neuman and L. Guggenheim, “The Evolution of Media Effects Theory: A Six-Stage Model of Cumulative Research,” *Communication Theory* 21, no. 2 (2011): 169–96.
6. D. McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (London: Sage, 1994), 451–76. For a recent critical view of this conclusion, see N. T. Gavin, “Media Definitely Do Matter: Brexit, Immigration, Climate Change and Beyond,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2018): 827–45.

7. Fulda, *Press and Politics*, vii.
8. J. Bignell and A. Fickers, “Introduction: Comparative European Perspectives on Television History,” in *A European Television History*, ed. J. Bignell and A. Fickers, 1–54 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 23.
9. It is debatable to what extent this ideal was really practiced among English-speaking journalists. See M. Hampton, “The ‘Objectivity’ Ideal and Its Limitations in 20th-Century British Journalism,” *Journalism Studies* 9 (2008): 477–93. However, the important point is that this idea was accepted as a professional guideline.
10. J. Requate, *Journalismus als Beruf. Entstehung und Entwicklung des Journalistenberufs im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 399.
11. For Weimar era journalism and politics, see Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 17–21.
12. E. Dovifat, “Die moderne deutsche Redaktion,” in *Pressa. Kulturschau am Rhein*, ed. Internationale Presse-Ausstellung Köln, 50–52 (Berlin: Schröder, 1928), 50.
13. G. Bernhard, “The German Press,” quoted in Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 45.
14. Eksteins, *Limits of Reason*, 78.
15. J. G. Webster and P. F. Phalen, *The Mass Audience: Rediscovering the Dominant Model* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997), 1–23; D. McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (London: Sage, 1994), 35–36.
16. H. D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Peter Smith, 1938), 221; see also N. Gullace, “Allied Propaganda and World War I: Interwar Legacies, Media Studies, and the Politics of War Guilt,” *History Compass* 9 (2011): 686–700, 689–90.
17. T. Wiedemann, M. Meyen, and I. Lacasa-Mas, “100 Years Communication Study in Europe: Karl Bücher’s Impact on the Discipline’s Reflexive Project,” *SCM Studies in Communication and Media* 7 (2018): 7–30, 16.
18. McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 33; S. Lowery and M. L. DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects* (New York: Longman 1983), 12.
19. “Die Finanzquellen der Hitler-Bewegung,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 3 January 1928.
20. “Herr Hitler ist kühn,” *Hamburger Anzeiger*, 18 August 1928.
21. “Beschämende Vorgänge in München,” *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 27 April 1928.
22. “Sylvester-Knallbonbon,” *Tempo*, 31 December 1928.
23. G. Bernhard, “Die Kulissenschieber,” *Vossische Zeitung*, 15 September 1929.
24. See monthly branches report, 31 October 1929, Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, Nachlass Carl Misch, fol. 128.
25. K. Baschwitz, “Der Leser und seine Zeitung: Unser Versuch,” *Zeitungsverlag*, 24 May 1930, 3–6.
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28. Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 131–68. See also G. Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder. Die NS-Propaganda vor 1933* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1992), 180–86.
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31. *Ibid.*, 57–58.
32. *Vossische Zeitung*, 1 October 1930.
33. German original, “Neue Form, aber—wir bleiben die Alten!,” *Berliner Volkszeitung*, 27 November 1930.
34. “Am Tisch der BVZ-Schöffen,” *Berliner Volkszeitung*, 27 November 1930.
35. Memo from Dr. Wolf to Robolsky, Höllering, Elbau, Misch, Goetz, Josef Reiner, Dr. v. Müller, 8 December 1931, in Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, N2193 Misch, Nr. 13, fol. 70.
36. For the following, see J. Hung, “The ‘Ullstein Spirit’: The Ullstein Publishing House, the End of the Weimar Republic and the Making of Cold War German Identity, 1925–77,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 (2018): 158–84, 166–68; Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 189–90; Eksteins, *Limits of Reason*, 236–38.
37. C. Ossietzky, “Der Fall Franz Höllering,” *Die Weltbühne*, 5 January 1932.
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