

Transfers and Similarities:

Journalists, Politicians and Scandals in Imperial Germany and Britain

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The decades before 1914 brought many structural changes in political, social and cultural life which deeply influenced the development of the 20th century. Two major transformations are apparent in the western public sphere. On the one hand, the foundations of a modern media system emerged – with mass audience, a professional journalism, powerful publishers, printed photos and global news agencies.¹ On the other hand, the political culture underwent transformation in these years: Democratisation progressed, political parties developed, and society itself became much more politicized. Although suffrage increased only for men, this led to a process called ‘political mass market’. Both developments are well known and have traditionally been treated in isolation. It seems appropriate to ask to what extent these changes within the media and the political cultures were connected in Western Europe.

To research such interactions in more detail, this essay analyses political scandals in Germany and Britain. These countries were chosen because they obviously had quite distinct national political and cultural traditions. While Britain had developed parliamentarianism, the freedom of press and its self-perception as a “fourth estate” rather early-on in its national history, in Germany censorship and unelected governments lasted much longer.² One might ask whether the changes within the media market and the political sphere led to similarities between both countries. This paper analyses first of all the mechanisms of scandals within a comparative approach and then studies the interactions and transfers between both countries. This should point out how press reports about political scandals were transmitted across the borders.

The analysis of political scandals as an area of inquiry is a helpful way to suggest some answers to these questions. Scandals reveal actions and reactions of journalists, politicians and the wider public at the same time. Scandals are by nature media events which create a broad public and political international discussion. To this end, I analysed about 25 major political scandals in Germany and Britain between 1880 and 1914, concerning different topics and norms: corruption, homosexuality, colonial affairs and the monarchy. All those cases have in common – and are largely defined

¹ Cf. with global approach: Jane Chapman, *Comparative Media History* (Cambridge: polity press, 2005), 69-141.

² Cf. for instance: Hannah Barker, Simon Burrows (eds.), *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

by – the situation that they revealed and constructed the breach of cultural norms *and* led to a broad public indignation.³ The scandals studied were political, at least in a broader sense. They were inherent to political discourse, in parliament or between politicians, and they led to debates on collective norms.⁴ Consequently, this study analyses not only newspaper articles across the political spectrum, but also explores archival sources of journalists and politicians involved in these scandals, as well as parliamentary debates and court reports. Transcripts of conversations in pubs taken by police informants in Germany are also examined.⁵

This article argues that the transformation of politics and the media was interconnected in both countries. This interconnection led to ‘politics of sensation’ which changed norms of political communication. Characteristic for these ‘politics of sensation’ was a new political language, an agenda set by the media and the transfer of moral questions from the private to the public sphere. A comparative perspective helps to show the role which journalists *and* politicians played in these transformations.

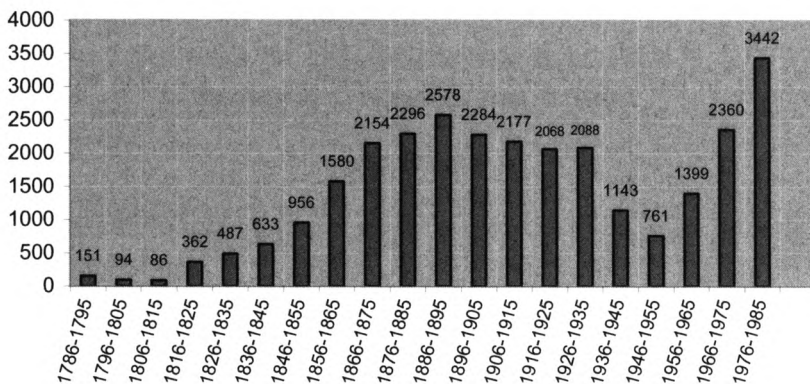
1. Who brought up scandals? Comparative Perspectives

Scandal is fundamental to these changes within the media and the political culture. First of all, we can observe a massive increase of scandals all over the Western world in the decades around 1900. The growing number of events which were conceived as scandal can be proven quantitatively. An electronic search of the entire article content of the *Times* shows, usage of the word scandal reached its peak in the late nineteenth century. The number of pages of each newspaper increased in the following decades and the word scandal remained in use quite similarly. This also suggests that the number of scandals was not continuously rising, but reached its first apex around 1900. Only since the beginning of the 1960s we can see a considerable increase of scandal once again, when the public sphere and the political culture again underwent reconstruction. A connection between the growing number of scandals and the changing structure of the mass media, of politics and the public becomes apparent.

³ See also the definitions in: Karl Otto Hondrich, *Enthüllung und Entrüstung: Eine Phänomenologie des politischen Skandals* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2002); John B. Thompson, *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age* (Cambridge: polity press, 2000).

⁴ Cf. for the definition of politics in a more cultural sense the actual debate about a new history of politics: Thomas Mergel, “Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik”, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), 574-606; Achim Landwehr, “Diskurs – Macht – Wissen: Perspektiven einer Kulturgeschichte des Politischen”, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 35 (2003), 71-117; Ute Frevert, Hans-Gerhard Haupt (eds.), *Neue Politikgeschichte: Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung*, (Frankfurt: Campus, 2005).

⁵ This article takes up a few arguments of my book, which contains more detailed sources; Frank Bösch, *Öffentliche Geheimnisse. Skandale, Politik und Massenmedien in Deutschland und Großbritannien, 1880-1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg-Verlag, 2009).



Tab. 1: Mention of the word *scandal* in the *Times* 1786-1985 (*Times Digital Archive*).

It is even more important that the increasing incidence of scandal can also be proven qualitatively. During the decades between 1885 and 1914 numerous great scandals were discussed for months and years all over the Western world. Many of them blended into the collective memory. One has only to recall the cases such as the Dreyfus and Panama-Scandal in France, the scandals concerning Wilde, Parnell or Marconi in Britain, or those of Eulenburg, Zabern or the Daily-Telegraph-Affair in Germany. Furthermore, one finds many other similar scandals in now-forgotten contemporary sources which aroused substantial public excitement.

How can the growing number of scandals around 1900 be explained? One could interpret them as a result of the new tabloids whose journalists peddled sensation to increase sales and income. In this explanation the scandals indicate a decline of a critical public sphere. If one takes a look at today's British media landscape, this pessimistic explanation sounds familiar and convincing. Alternately, one could also explain those scandals as a result of a new 'fourth estate' which challenged the politicians and started to control them.

I would argue that in both countries those scandals were neither the direct result of the new tabloid journalism and commercialisation of the media nor a sign for a new independent 'fourth estate'. Rather, they reveal in both countries a close interaction between press and politics to achieve political goals. These scandals were usually not brought up by journalists of the new independent tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* or the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*. Instead, in both countries journalists of politically orientated quality papers such as the *Times* or the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and minor papers closely connected to certain parties, were the main actors. In

Britain papers including the *North London Press*, the *United Ireland* or the *Daily News* started the scandals; in Germany political papers like *Der Vorwärts*, *die Kreuzzeitung* or *Die Zukunft* engaged in similar cultivation of scandal. Politicians often wrote for these papers or they were even owned by them. Politics and media worked hand in hand.

If we look at the individuals who brought scandal to light, additional similarities between Britain and Germany emerge. In both countries these individuals were often involved in the media as well as in politics. They can ideally be divided into two types. On the one hand there were politicians who acted as journalists. An English example of this type of 'politician as journalist' was the radical MP Henry Labouchere who initiated several scandals.⁶ In his newspaper *The Truth* he raised scandalous charges and in the House of Commons demanded justifications and explanation from the government. Irish Members of Parliament such as William O'Brien or Tim Healy, who still worked as journalists, acted similarly. They made scandalous charges in papers like the *United Ireland* or the *Freeman Journal* only a few days later to confront the government directly with these articles.⁷

In Germany, this type of "politician as journalist" could be found particularly among the Social Democrats. About half of their Members of Parliament had a journalistic background. This made it easier for them to understand the inner working of the media and reduced distances. This media-orientated type of politician also existed in other parties. A good example is Matthias Erzberger from the Centre Party, who continued to work as a journalist after he became a member of the Reichstag.⁸ He dredged up many colonial scandals using investigative methods in 1906. He also used the parliament to attack scandalous behaviour in the colonies. At the same time he wrote articles for various newspapers (especially for the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*) in which he argued his case.⁹ In this way, he became a media sensation and topic of gossip. Caricatures even presented him as a keyhole journalist who spied into the "colonial kitchen" of Chancellor Bülow.¹⁰

In both countries, scandal was also exposed by journalists who wished to attain political goals. They were not members of parliaments or parties,

⁶ Notes on his biography in: Gary Weber, "Henry Labouchere: Truth and the New Journalism of Late Victorian Britain", *Victorian Periodicals Review* 26 (1993), 36-43; Robert James Hind, *Henry Labouchere and the Empire 1880-1905* (London: Athlone Press, 1972).

⁷ Notes on their biography in: Frank Callanan, *T. M. Healy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War* (Dublin: Irish Academic, 1990).

⁸ Christian Leitzbach, *Matthias Erzberger: Ein kritischer Beobachter des Wilhelminischen Reiches 1895-1914* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1998).

⁹ See as a printed result of his speeches and articles: Matthias Erzberger, *Die Kolonial-Bilanz: Bilder aus der deutschen Kolonialpolitik auf Grund der Verhandlungen des Reichstags im Sessionsabschnitt 1905/06* (Berlin: Germania, 1906).

¹⁰ *Kladderadatsch* 33 (19.8.1906), 482.

but maintained strong and informal contacts with politicians. William Thomas Stead was a prototype of this “journalist as politician” in Britain. Stead is well known as the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and founder of the investigative and emotional New Journalism.¹¹ His programmatic articles like “Government by Journalism” characterized the journalist as an independent “uncrowned king”.¹² However, Stead’s correspondence shows that he established a close and informal communication network and interacted with leading politicians. Through these means he acquired the knowledge he required for his campaigns. Through his letters it is also clear that he often met with particular politicians.¹³ He discussed his ideas with them before and after the publication. Similar developments are also evident in Germany. The most famous journalist of the German Kaiserreich, and perhaps a counterpart to Stead, was Maximilian Harden. He also achieved stardom as leading German journalist after he had initiated several scandals from the 1890s onwards.¹⁴ Like Stead he was a fairly independent journalist. However, he also kept close and regular informal contacts with the political sphere which influenced and enabled his campaigns.¹⁵ And like his British counterpart Stead, Harden started scandals to reach political goals.

The accumulation of scandals since the 1880s was not only a result of the triumph of the mass media, but also of changes in the political culture. Especially the transformation and polarisation of the political parties bore responsibility. In Britain scandal began to emerge after the Irish Parliamentary Party was established and the division of the Liberals during the Home Rule split.¹⁶ In Germany, scandal increased from the beginning of the 1890s when the SPD reorganized itself following the *Sozialistengesetz* and the Conservatives had become divided after the dismissal of Bismarck. In this perspective, scandal was a result of the polarisation of the party system, an increased electorate and the struggle for votes of the

¹¹ Cf. Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon: W.T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972); Joel H. Wiener (ed.), *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (New York: Greenwood, 1988).

¹² W.T. Stead, “Government by Journalism”, in: *The Contemporary Review* 49 (1886), 653-674, quote 657; Online version at: <http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/index.php>, [29.04.2008].

¹³ The papers of Stead in the Cambridge University/ Churchill Archives Centre proved this. See also: Joseph O. Baylen, “Politics and New Journalism: Lord Esher’s Use of the Pall Mall Gazette”, in: Wiener (ed.), *Papers for the Millions*, 107-141.

¹⁴ Harry F. Young, *Maximilian Harden. Censor Germaniae: Ein Publizist im Widerstreit 1892 bis 1927* (Münster: Regensberg, 1971); Björn Uwe Weller, *Maximilian Harden und die „Zukunft“* (Bremen: Schönemann, 1970).

¹⁵ Famous are his contacts to Friedrich von Holstein; cf. Helmuth Rogge, *Holstein und Harden politisch-publizistisches Zusammenspiel zweier Außenseiter des wilhelminischen Reichs* (Munich: Beck, 1959).

¹⁶ A.B. Cook, John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain 1885-1886* (Brighton: Harvester, 1974).

“masses”. For these reasons, politicians and political journalists revised their practice and started to reveal scandalous secrets.

Although the new mass press seldom started scandal, it was responsible for its increase and intensity in both countries. Politicians and political journalists published scandalous accusations because they believed that the political interests of the “masses” and its press could only be evoked by juicy revelation. Politics quickly adjusted to the supposed sensational interests. Indeed, the mass press took up these charges after they had been presented in political journals, in parliament or at the courts. Also the illustrated press, which started to publish photos since the 1890s, intensified the dynamic of these scandals with their reports.

Documented by the secret police, pub talk in Germany affirms that the scandals of the day were indeed broadly discussed events. In these conversations the entertaining gossip of the scandal-reports was connected with political questions. It seems that the scandals increased interest in politics. Even quite apolitical scandals, such as those concerning incidents of homosexuality in the elite classes or adultery, led to a public discussion of topics that were of political importance. The scandal about the homosexuality of General Moltke, for instance, led to debates about homosexuality in the military; the scandal concerning the homosexuality of the industrialist Friedrich Alfred Krupp led to a discussion about the working condition in Krupp’s company; scandals about black prostitutes and corporal punishment in Africa prompted arguments about the legitimacy of punishment in the colonies.¹⁷

Many scandals set off new scandals with similar charges within each country. If, for instance, a scandal concerning homosexuality was successful, other scandals about homosexuality followed. A similar pattern is evident concerning scandals of adultery, corruption or violence within the colonies. Once a taboo was broken, other journalists moved in for the kill. The readers of the papers gave pieces of information on similar cases to the journalists and the journalists themselves started to investigate those questions. At this stage of the scandals, the new mass press and the courts enforced this reciprocal dynamic. There was also an element of political struggle for moral superiority. If a political group was successfully attacked for a moral misconduct, it tried to hit back with similar charges, while others tried to generalize the first accusations with new disclosures.

It is well known that the personal relationship between politicians and journalists was different in Germany and Britain. In Britain the informal contacts between journalists and politicians were already closer in the late

¹⁷ *Vigilanzberichte Bestand Politische Polizei* 331-3, in: Hauptstaatsarchiv Hamburg; as a detailed analyses of these sources see: Frank Bösch, „Zeitungsberichte im Alltagsgespräch: Mediennutzung, Medienwirkung und Kommunikation im Kaiserreich“, in: *Publizistik. Vierteljahreshefte für Kommunikationsforschung* 49 (2004), 319-336.

nineteenth century.¹⁸ German politicians talked to journalists of their own party. Furthermore, they regarded the press merely as a mouthpiece of politics. On closer look, however, these differences between both countries appear to have lessened. In Great Britain the relationship between parties and the press increased since 1900. Liberal papers like the *Reynolds' Newspaper*, *Pall Mall Gazette* or the *Daily News*, which had reported critically about liberal politics before, followed the party line during the scandals up to 1914. Even during the big Marconi-scandal in 1912 they defended the accused liberal Secretaries of State.¹⁹

The conservative campaigns of those years also show a closer cooperation of journalists and politicians. For instance, the editor of the *National Review*, Leopold Maxse, systematically organised campaigns for conservative politicians and gave them pieces of advice for their speeches. He collected information about the private lives of liberal politicians, which could help to create scandals, through questionnaires.²⁰ Even a publisher like Lord Northcliffe joined the campaigns against liberal entrepreneurs like Cadbury or Lever.²¹ The increasing connection between party politics and the press in Britain, in some respects, meant an approximation to the German model.

At the same time, Germany developed similarities to Britain. As the scandals show, censorship declined since 1900 and the relationship between German journalists and politicians improved. For instance the Leckert-Lützow-scandal in 1896 made public that single Secretaries of State, like Marshall von Bieberstein, regularly talked to critical liberal journalists. In this scandal the chancellor and the foreign secretary both defended those talks against charges by the conservatives in parliament.²² Though Social-Democratic journalists were still excluded from such meetings, already Chancellor Hohenlohe and especially his successor Bülow showed a growing willingness to speak with chosen journalists, even during their holidays or at home.²³ In general, requests for interviews increased in Germany since 1906 and were also granted, a behaviour which

¹⁸ Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

¹⁹ See Frank Bösch, „In Defence of the Tax-Payers: Korruptionspraktiken und -wahrnehmungen im edwardianischen Großbritannien“, in: Jens Ivo Engels, Andreas Fahrmeir, Alexander Nützenadel (eds.), *Geld – Geschenke – Politik: Korruption im neuzeitlichen Europa* (Beiheft *Historische Zeitschrift*) (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008), in print.

²⁰ West Sussex Record Office, Maxse Papers 467.

²¹ S.J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996), 111; J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe: Press Baron in Politics, 1865-1922* (London: Murray, 2000), 137.

²² Verhandlungen des Reichstags 5.2.1897, IX. Legislaturperiode, 168. Sitz, IV. Session 1895/97, Bd. 6, 4476.

²³ *Berliner Illustrierte* Nr. 13, 26.3.1898 and 30.7.1899; similarly politicians as the Secretary of Railway Budde (*BIZ* Nr. 33, 14.8.1904), the president of the Reichstag Graf von Ballestrem (*BIZ* Nr. 35, 29.8.1904) or the Secretary of the Interior Graf von Posabowsky-Wehner (*BIZ* Nr. 36, 4.8.1904).

had been more typical for Britain and the United States. Journalists from Britain and the USA were the first to be granted such interviews.

2. France as a Model: The Charge of Corruption

News of scandal was quick to jump national borders. Newspapers of European countries reported broadly on scandals abroad. These international reports were already expected when the scandals came into the public light. Foreign comments were reprinted immediately in domestic papers. The mutual reports about the scandals often created decisive perceptions and stereotypes about the other country. Scandal established ideas about the typical morality in each country, which was connected to political assumptions. The foreign comments were broadly taken as arguments (1) to underline the importance of the revelations; (2) to demand reactions and reforms, or; (3) to call for an end of public discussion. Cartoons from foreign newspapers were sometimes also reprinted to reach political goals.

In general, the German public was much more anxious about foreign reports on scandals than the British. Especially the German right-wing press stressed that one should not discuss scandal because it reduced the reputation of the government abroad and strengthened the arguments of the enemies. This underlines the lack of national self-confidence in Germany, but also the German claim to be a morally superior nation.

How such scandals were transferred across borders depended on the type of accusation. Corruption might be taken as the first example for these transfers and differences. After the famous campaigns against the "old corruption" in the late eighteenth century, scandals concerning corruption increased again around 1900 in Western Europe and North America. Obviously, not only an increase in corrupt practices was responsible for this, but also the rise of professional journalism, political polarisation and imaginative conspiracies directed at Jews and capitalists. All these elements were brought up in great scandals and then transferred to other countries. Especially France played a major role in these cultural transfers.

Up to 1900, Britain and Germany saw themselves as cultures with a superior administration where corruption had no place. They distinguished themselves from France which was seen as a morally and financially corrupt society. Especially the Panama Scandal in 1892 renewed this British and German self-perception because it revealed a great network of corruption in France which implicated several senior politicians and journalists.²⁴ Anti-Semitic attacks which were brought up by the right wing journalist Édouard Drumont due to the involvement of Jewish financiers were important elements of this French scandal. The countless international reports about the French scandal were taken as examples to create similar scandals at home. In the following years, analogue anti-Semitic accusations about

²⁴ Cf. Pierre-Alexandre Bourson, *L'affaire Panama* (Paris: Edition de Vecchi, 2000).

the existence of a corrupt conspiracy surfaced in Germany and Britain. In Germany, especially the anti-Semitic journalist and politician Hermann Ahlwardt brought up similar charges immediately after the Panama Scandal. In his right-wing journals and in the Reichstag Ahlwardt claimed, with explicit reference to the Panama scandal in France, that Jewish financiers had taken 100 million Mark from the "Reichs-Invalidenfonds" by corrupting several politicians.²⁵ None of these charges could he prove. In Britain especially the campaigns against the colonial engagement in South Africa showed similarities. Not only was Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain accused by liberal papers and politicians that he mixed political and private interests, but also anti-Semitic undertones were articulated against corrupt capitalist interests in "Jewburg".²⁶

While these early campaigns directly following the Panama Scandal were less successful, this changed later on. In Germany, the Social Democrats started a scandal by exposing corrupt connections between the Friedr. Krupp AG and the administration of the army. It is astonishing that it was discussed during the whole scandal in 1913, whether one could call it a "Panama" or not. The Social Democrat Karl Liebknecht had started his revelations in the Reichstag with the words: "It is a Panama, even worse than Panama."²⁷ Both the press and the courts argued over the following month about this comparison. The court martial, which was responsible for this case in the first trial, stated that the goal of the trial was to discuss and "to eliminate, if possible, the word Panama."²⁸ Similarly, the defense counsel declared that there was no "Panama", because „Panama meant the venality of senior persons."²⁹ Finally, the prosecutor and the conservative press also felt relieved that a "Panama" had not occurred, for this would have meant "corruption of the worst case."³⁰

These lasting references to and comparisons with the French scandals served two purposes. On the one hand, the reference to the Panama Scandal inspired the imagination of those who wanted to believe in a great corrupt conspiracy between the "capitalists" of heavy industry and the traditional government elite. French corruption showed the depths to which Germany could fall. On the other hand, the conservative elite responded to this comparison frequently, because it hit a sensitive point. The self-perception of the German elite relied on the assumption that the Ger-

²⁵ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 18.3.1893, 8. Leg. Per., 2 Sess., 70. Sitz. 1736; 20.3.1893, id., 1745-1750; *Vossische Zeitung* 22.3.1893.

²⁶ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939* (London: Arnold, 1979), 67-69.

²⁷ Reichstag, XIII. Leg., I. Sess., 144 Sitz., 19.4.1913, 4926. As a detailed analysis of this case: Frank Bösch, "Krupps „Kornwalzer“: Formen und Wahrnehmungen von Korruption im Kaiserreich", *Historische Zeitschrift* 270 (2005), 337-379.

²⁸ See the reports of the proceedings in: *Vossische Zeitung* 4.8.1913, 2; 6.8.1913, 4; *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 6.8.1913, 3.

²⁹ Reports of the proceedings in: *Vossische Zeitung* 5.8.1913, 2.

³⁰ Quote from the report of the proceedings in: *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 7.8.1913, 3.

man administration was highly effective, loyal and immune to bribery. Any comparison with France seemed to endanger the reputation of the German Kaiserreich. Consequently, especially the conservative journalists, politicians and lawyers tried to reestablish this difference to France and reinforce its image as an exceptional scandalous and corrupt country. However, the scandal was a great success for the Social Democrats, because at least regular corrupt interactions between Krupp and the Army were proved.

Corruption scandals related to the Panama scandal came up simultaneously in Britain. Especially the famous Marconi scandal in 1912-13 was connected to the cases in France. Those who started the Marconi scandal – two small conservative papers called *Outlook* and *Eye-Witness* – raised similar anti-Semitic charges. They called the Postmaster General Herbert Samuel and the managing director of Marconi „two financiers of the same nationality“, who were stealing money from the taxpayers.³¹ The journalist and author Hilaire Belloc, who was one of the authors of these anti-Semitic accusations, had grown up in France and had done his military service there when the Panama scandal started.³² His fantasy about a Jewish conspiracy probably relied on his personal relationship to France. The charges were merely based on the Jewish background of politicians and businessmen and excluded them as foreigners: „Like the other eminent recipient of public money he [Samuel, F.B.] is not of our blood or tradition and owns no real allegiance to the foreign state which has very unwisely hired him to serve it.“³³ In general, the Liberals were charged with corrupting society and being the marionettes of corrupt Jews: „We know that they [the Liberals, F.B.] sell peerages, that they sell places on the Front-Bench, that they sell policies. We know that a rich financier, though an alien and an unsavoury at that, can get hold of a politician just as he gets hold of a race-horse.“³⁴

In contrast to France, the charges were completely unfounded. There was no proof for the existence of a Jewish conspiracy between Marconi's company and the Postmaster General.³⁵ However, the debate revealed other improper business connections between the Chancellor of Exchequer Lloyd George, the Attorney General Rufus Isaacs and his brother from the Marconi Company, because the latter gave tips for speculations with shares of the company. This led to a genuine scandal and almost to the

³¹ *Outlook* 20.7.1912.

³² Notes on the anti-Semitism of the famous author in: A. N. Wilson, *Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984).

³³ *Eye-Witness* 15.8.1912, 257; similar *Eye-Witness* 8.8.1912, 227-230.

³⁴ *Eye-Witness* 17.10.1912, 545.

³⁵ See the files in: British Telecommunications Archives London POST 88/34. Comp. already: Frances Donaldson, *The Marconi Scandal* (London: Hart-Davis, 1962); Bentley Brinkhoff Gilbert, „David Lloyd George and the Great Marconi Scandal“, *Historical Research* 62 (1989), 295-317.

resignation of Lloyd George. The emotional debate which divided the British public suggested that the moral politics against corruption had now reached Britain, too. As in Germany, opposition journalists and politicians fought hand in hand to bring down the government with such emotional accusations concerning moral standards. British and German politicians and officials were indeed not as corrupt as those in France. However, the transfer of the scandals intensified the imagination that a similar corruption could happen – and this led to scandals, too.

3. Transferring taboos: Scandals about homosexuality

In Britain and Germany, France was also seen as a country without any moral standards in questions of sexuality. However, sexual scandals occurred rather rarely in France in the decades around 1900, but very often in Britain and Germany.³⁶ Especially the number of scandals concerning homosexuality increased in Britain since the 1880s and in Germany since 1900. One might ask if the British experience was taken up by German journalists and how the German cases transferred this debate back to Britain.

Scandals concerning homosexuality were connected with political debates and conflicts about class structures. In Britain, for instance, Irish journalists and politicians brought up such charges against members of the English administration in Dublin in 1883. The scandal, which developed quickly, was part of their fight for Irish independence. When the accusations were discussed in court, the so-called “Dublin Castle Scandal” created offending stereotypes about the moral degeneration of the English elite in Ireland.³⁷ In 1889, journalists from radical papers and the radical politician Henry Labouchere brought up a scandal concerning the homosexuality of aristocrats in London who had visited a male brothel. The aim of this scandal was to sully the reputation of the upper-classes.³⁸ Further similar scandals followed in the next years, which revealed the homosexuality of Edward Samuel Wesley de Cobain MP, of the colonial hero Hector MacDonald or of Oscar Wilde. Consequently, homosexuality became a

³⁶ An important exemption in France is the scandalous campaign of the *Figaro* against the love affairs of Caillaux; see Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

³⁷ Cf. Bösch, *Scandals*, Chapter 2.

³⁸ Excellent sources about this scandal can be found in the National Archive (TNA), especially in: TNA HO 144/477/X24427 and DPP 1/95. For its development, but with less interest in the interaction of media and politics, cf.: H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (London: W.H. Allen, 1976); Lewis Chester, David Leitch, Colin Simpson, *The Cleveland Street Affair* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976); Morris Kaplan, “Did „My Lord Gomorrah“ smile? Homosexuality, Class and Prostitution in the Cleveland Street Affair”, in: Nancy Erber, George Robb (eds.), *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflicts at the Turn of the Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 78-99.

theme widely discussed in the media, although this debate was still characterised by taboo and guarded insinuation.

The famous scandal of Oscar Wilde might be taken as an example of how these disclosures in Britain were transferred to Germany by journalists and politicians. During the trial of Oscar Wilde the journalist Eduard Bernstein reported from London for the press of the Social Democrats. His articles discussed the Social Democratic attitudes towards homosexuality in public for the first time.³⁹ The articles demanded that these men not be punished, but at the same time condemned a "decadent" kind of homosexuality such as Wilde's. Bernstein's article in *Die Neue Zeit* argued: „One has to judge in each single case, whether there are wild excesses or an insuperable love to the same sex, which should not be valued as a moral judge, but pathologically.“⁴⁰ Consequently, the Social Democrats did not support the rights of homosexuals in general, but constructed a critical distance to cases such as Oscar Wilde.

Those German articles about the scandal of Oscar Wilde had two consequences. On the one hand, they led to a broad German reform movement for the repeal of paragraph 175.⁴¹ The first gay associations were founded, signatures for the repeal were collected, and August Bebel brought up the topic in the Reichstag in 1898. In his Reichstag speech, Bebel used references on homosexuality in the upper classes to threaten his opponents with scandals immanent in Germany: „If the police in Berlin would do their duty on this field, I just want to speak of this city, there would rise a scandal, compared to which the Panama-Scandal, the Dreyfus-Affair, the Lützow-Leckert- and the Tausch-Normann-Schumann-Scandal are a cakewalk.“⁴² Although Bebel did not explicitly refer to British scandals in this speech, the charge itself and belief in the political power of scandals was transferred from abroad.

Only a few years later, the German Social Democrats started to attack the elite of the Kaiserreich with similar accusations of homosexuality as the Irish and Radicals in Britain had done before. In 1902 their major

³⁹ The most important ideas on moral questions before that were published in the several (revised) editions of: August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1878).

⁴⁰ „Es ist vielmehr in jedem einzelnen Fall zu unterscheiden, ob wüste Ausschweifungen oder eine unüberwindliche Liebe zum eigenen Geschlecht vorliegt, die nicht sittenrichterlich, sondern pathologisch zu beurteilen ist.“ Bernstein, „Die Beurtheilung“, in: *Die Neue Zeit* (1895), 231.

⁴¹ General notes on this movement in: Rüdiger Lautmann, Angela Taeger, „Sittlichkeit und Politik. § 175 im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871-1919)“, in: id. (eds.), *Männerliebe im alten Deutschland: Sozialgeschichtliche Abhandlungen* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1992), 239-268, here 243.

⁴² „Würde auf diesem Gebiet die Berliner Polizei – ich will zunächst nur einmal von dieser reden – ihre volle Pflicht und Schuldigkeit tun, dann gäbe es einen Skandal, gegen den der Panamaskandal, der Dreyfusskandal, der Lützow-Leckert- und der Tausch-Normann-Schumann-Skandal das reine Kinderspiel sind.“, Verhandlungen des Reichstages 13.1.1898, Bd. 159, 16. Sitz., 410.

newspaper, the *Vorwärts*, launched a big scandal by accusing the famous entrepreneur Friedrich Alfred Krupp of homosexual intercourse with young boys in Capri.⁴³ Here, the article used the same distinctions which were developed in the German reception of the Oscar Wilde scandal. The charges in the articles distinguished between legal “homosexual love” and decadent orgies with young boys, which should be punished. The information about Krupp’s supposed sexual behaviour was taken from socialist newspapers in Italy, which were then reprinted in Austria.⁴⁴ This transfer of charges did not only lead to a great scandal, but also to the death of one of the biggest industrialists in Europe. Only one week after the article Krupp died – most likely by committing suicide. Other scandals concerning homosexuality followed, especially the scandals of Eulenburg and Moltke in 1907/08, who were close friends of the emperor.⁴⁵

The scandals about homosexuality were taken up by the international press. The articles revealed differences within public discourse when one looks at the national provenance and the political slant of those papers. While the majority of the international press was talking about Krupp’s homosexuality quite directly, the majority of the British press stayed silent about the charges. The *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and the *Daily Express* wrote about Krupp’s life, but mentioned only “libels” which had contributed to his death.⁴⁶ Still, a radical paper like *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, which had also discussed the British homosexual scandals directly, called the Krupp scandal the most important event in Germany since Bismarck’s death and reported about Krupp’s contacts with boys at Capri and the “mania homosexualis”.⁴⁷

However, the mutual reports showed difficulties for British journalists who wrote about such scandals from Berlin. In general homosexuality was discussed much more openly and directly in Germany. In Britain, these cases helped to reduce taboos and construct new knowledge about homosexuals, too, but with a greater distance. Consequently, the Berlin correspondent of the *Times* started his article about a trial concerning homosexuality, which was connected to the scandal of Eulenburg, with the helpless words: „It is really difficult to know how to report a case of this kind in *The Times*. It is impossible to transmit the evidence verbatim [...]”⁴⁸ However, the journalist tried in the following lines with many details. Even the word “homosexual” was used for the first time in the *Times* in

⁴³ *Vorwärts* 15.11.1902, 2.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Propaganda* 18.9.1902, 15.10.1902; 20.10.1912.; *La Tiorpo* 23.10.1902; in Austria: *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 27.10.1902.

⁴⁵ As a recent investigation of these cases comp.: Martin Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal: Die Logik der Massenmedien und Transformationen der wilhelminischen Monarchie* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2005), 186-243.

⁴⁶ See *Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express* 24.11.1902.

⁴⁷ *Reynolds’s Newspaper* 30.11.1902, 1.

⁴⁸ *Times* 7.11.1907, 3.

this article. So one can conclude that such reports about scandals helped to create cross-border knowledge and supported the creation of similar scandals. However, they were not always used for systematic campaigns against another country.

4. Transnational Competitions: Scandals concerning Colonialism and the Monarchies

The “scramble for Africa” heightened political and cultural competition between Germany and Britain – especially from the German perspective. During the African land grab colonial scandal gave rise to important imaginative constructions of the other country. The numerous German articles about the violent deeds of Stanley’s Rear-Column in 1890, for instance, led to a scandal with an international debate and biting commentary in Germany. The mockery of Stanley’s hypocrisy, selfishness and profiteering was obviously directed at English colonialism in general.⁴⁹ Vice-a-versa, the German colonial project was also subjected to scandal mongering: the brutal behaviour of colonial officers like Heinrich von Leist, Alwin Wehlan and Carl Peters led to comments in the British press which questioned whether Germany should have colonies at all. The conservative newspaper the *Spectator* concluded on the Peters-Scandal: “This is the third case and yet German officials wonder why, even when they have acquired colonies, German settlers prefer to immigrate to America or to the British colonies.”⁵⁰

The perception of colonial scandal abroad gave arguments for coping with scandal at home. In Germany, right-wing papers and politicians in particular argued that countries like England behaved worse than the Germans. The media, however, did not go public with the details or express any kind of apology. For instance the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* argued: “Neither England nor France or any other colonizing power make much fuss about such attacks on natives.”⁵¹ The strength of the British Empire was not seen in its moral superiority, but in its power to ignore critical reports by using a patriotic self-censorship. Contrary to that, the German Liberal, Catholic and Social Democratic journalists and politicians used the British cases as examples of how one could react to German scandal. Martin Spahn argued that the British prevented further scandal by punishing the guilty party whereas the Germans did not undertake any investigations at all.⁵² Demands in Germany for the creation of parliamen-

⁴⁹ See esp. the articles in *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, 25 Oct.–20 Nov. 1890, esp. 8 Nov. 1890, 2; also *Vossische Zeitung*, 31 Oct. 1890, 2.

⁵⁰ *Spectator* 21.3.1896, 399.

⁵¹ *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 71, 13.1.1903; similar for instance: *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, 12, 22.3.1896.

⁵² *Times* 30.8.1906, 3.

tary select committees were made, but these usually investigated British scandal. British practice was adopted, however, in meting out punishment.

Scandal usually transferred between nations through translation of the content of foreign papers. Some papers had their own foreign correspondents in London or Berlin. Other international actors were journalists reporting from the African colonies. They travelled between British and German Colonies and reported rumours from both territories. Little is known about their work for only a few papers could afford such journalists. The papers of Eugen Wolf, probably the most important German journalist in Africa in the 1890s, are excellent sources for this purpose.⁵³ His articles for the *Berliner Tageblatt* helped to expose colonial violence. His work is also an example of journalistic cooperation between Britain and Germany. When the German authorities refused to grant him travel and telegraph permission because of his critical reports, the British helped him with his travels. Therefore the German foreign ministry spread the rumour that Wolf was a British spy.⁵⁴ The work of the African correspondent thus became part of the German-British rivalry.

The competitive interaction between the public of both countries was even more intense during scandal concerning the monarchies. The royal houses developed in connection with the extension of the media. Although the monarchs in Britain and Germany lost much of their direct political influence during the second half of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the mass media and the popular politics on the streets helped to increase the reputation and position of Queen Victoria and Wilhelm I. since the 1880s. While the papers tried to catch impressions of the royal household, the royals opened their doors to the media, presented their family life and participated in symbolic actions, which raised public attention.⁵⁵ Both increased not only their reputation, but also the incidence of scandal.

While Queen Victoria and Wilhelm I. were rarely scandalised, their successors Edward VII. and Wilhelm II. had a different experience. Their character, particularly, became a popular topic. Prince Edward's moral conduct was the source of much racy talk. With the Mordaunt scandal in 1870, he was charged with having had an affair with a married woman and was even questioned as a witness in a divorce trial.⁵⁶ Although the

⁵³ Cf. files in: Bundesarchiv Berlin/Lichterfelde R 1001-4694, and –4695.

⁵⁴ Report on 23.8.1892, in: BAB R1001-4694-121; cf. also newspaper articles in: *Hamburger Correspondent*, 13.8.1892.

⁵⁵ Cf. John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alexa Geisthövel, „Den Monarchen im Blick: Wilhelm I. in der illustrierten Familienpresse“, in: Alexa Geisthövel, Habbo Knoch (eds.), *Kommunikation von Beobachtung. Medienwandel und Gesellschaftsbilder 1880-1960* (Munich: Fink, 2003), 59-80.

⁵⁶ Reports of the proceedings in: *Times* 19.2.1870, 11; as a case study: Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Warwickshire Scandal* (London: Pan Books, 1999). Notes on his moral conduct in general in: Theo Aronson, *The King in Love: Edward VII's Mistresses* (London: Murray, 1988).

Prince was not convicted, his image as a womanizer was cemented, and beyond Britain, as well. His passion for gambling led to another scandal in 1891 and precipitated a crisis of the royal house.⁵⁷ The “Baccarat Scandal” revealed that the Prince used to play this illegal game of chance and even encouraged other aristocrats to join him. The public reactions during these British scandals were harsh. „Never perhaps during the present reign has there been such an outspoken criticism of one so near the Throne”, resumed the *Pall Mall Gazette* its extensive review of press reactions on the Baccarat Scandal.⁵⁸ Other papers referred to the Necklace Affair of Marie Antoinette, to stress the drama of the outrage.⁵⁹

These British scandals led to high-paced international reports and reactions. The German, French and American press made a laughing stock of the future British king. Their caricatures presented him as a gambler, drinker, debtor or in dubious company. Furthermore, foreign papers portrayed the Prince as a small boy next to his big mother. In this way the international media attacked the reputation of the future king, of Britain. Several of these foreign caricatures published during the Baccarat scandal were reprinted in the British press.⁶⁰ They were taken as evidence for the need to educate the Prince. These stereotypes about the royal house went temporarily dormant in the following years, but were reactivated during times of crises. Especially during the Boer War, when the German public became hostile against England, such accusations against King Edward VII. were presented in an even more dramatic manner.⁶¹ Edward was called a “debauchee” in German papers, which attacked British morality in general.

Scandals concerning Wilhelm II. discussed his character, too, but in general took a different direction. There was the usual questioning of sexual norms, but the attacks were directed at the entourage of the Emperor, not Wilhelm himself. The “Kotze-Scandal” in 1894 for instance revealed that a member of the high aristocracy was teasing members of the royal court with exaggerated sexual disclosures.⁶² Also the charge of homosexuality against his friends Eulenburg and Moltke led to a scandal which threatened the role of the Emperor.⁶³ However, the greatest scandal arising

⁵⁷ Michael Havers, Edward Grayson, Peter Shankland, *The Royal Baccarat Scandal* (London: Kimber, 1977).

⁵⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette* 10.6.1891, 6.

⁵⁹ *Daily Chronicle* 10.9.1891.

⁶⁰ See the international collection in: *Review of Reviews* Juli 1891, 16-22.

⁶¹ Dominik Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen (1896-1912)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 135-36.

⁶² See the letters in: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz HA I, Rep. 89, Nr. 3307/4 and /10. Some notes in: Tobias C. Bringmann, *Reichstag und Zweikampf: Die Duellfrage als innenpolitischer Konflikt des deutschen Kaiserreiches 1871-1918* (Freiburg: Hochschul-Verlag, 1997), 152-201; John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II.: Der Aufbau der persönlichen Monarchie* (Munich: Beck, 2001), 741-755.

⁶³ Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch*, 186-243.

from Wilhelm II. resulted from his public speeches and interviews. Despite his martial performances Wilhelm II. was not per se seen negatively in the British press.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, his public interventions in the issue led to dramatic reactions in the British public. His telegram to the Transvaal President Ohm Krüger, in which Wilhelm congratulated him for his victory after the Jameson-Raid, led not only to sneering and angry articles in the British press, but also to demonstrations in the streets and fights with Germans in London's East End.⁶⁵

Although the British public grew accustomed to Wilhelm's brutish rhetoric, his famous interview in the *Daily Telegraph* is a particularly illustrative example, how such scandals led to public cross-border interaction. While Wilhelm pretended to seek friendship with Britain in his boastful interview, the British press read it differently and became outraged.⁶⁶ While the Germans were merely joking about the British king, the British public was not only laughing about the German Emperor, but also interpreted his scandalous speeches as sign of the incomprehensible German manner.

Interviews with Wilhelm II. also illustrated how journalists and the press became transnational actors. As mentioned above, the role of interviews as a technique of foreign diplomacy increased in 1907-08. Several leading German statesmen received foreign journalists for interviews. Especially Chancellor Bülow granted several extensive interviews with English journalists in which he stressed his wishes for a good German relationship to England.⁶⁷ The two interviews with Wilhelm II in 1908 conveyed this in particular. The first interview, which was published in the *Daily Telegraph*, emphasized his personal friendship to England. In a second interview, which was conducted by the American journalist William Bayard Hale, Wilhelm stressed the friendship with America and warned about the threat from England.⁶⁸ Although the German government could prevent the printing of the second interview, at least the first one led to a major scandal which outraged all German parties. One could argue that the Emperor was simply inexperienced with interviews. He failed to consider the international reception or the alternative interpretation of his

⁶⁴ That at least parts of the British had a positive image of him or remained neutral, is the central result of: Lothar Reinermann, *Der Kaiser in England: Wilhelm II. und sein Bild in der britischen Öffentlichkeit* (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 2001).

⁶⁵ Id., 145-179.

⁶⁶ See *Daily Mail* 29.10.1908, 6; *Times* 29.10.1908, 9.

⁶⁷ See for instance the interview with Sydney Whitman, in: *Standard* 13.9.1908; WTB an Bülow 14.9.[1908], in: Bundesarchiv Koblenz N 1016-185-73; further interviews are mentioned in: Geppert, *Pressekriege*, 258-260.

⁶⁸ A detailed analysis of the origin of these interviews in: Peter Winzen, *Das Kaiserreich am Abgrund: Die Daily Telegraph-Affäre und das Hale-Interview von 1908. Darstellung und Dokumentation* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002); Ralph R. Menning, Carol Bresnahan Menning, „Baseless Allegations“: Wilhelm II. and the Hale Interview of 1908“, in: *CEH* 16 (1983), 368-397.

words. The Daily Telegraph Affair showed that politicians took the initiative to use the press for their diplomatic goals, but were not able to control the outcome and interpretations of their interviews because they circulated in an international context. At the same time it becomes clear that the journalists were not only interested in printing spectacular stories. Furthermore they kept a lid on problematic interviews such as Hale's to protect the diplomatic interests of their states and to maintain a semblance of peace.

5. Conclusion

The first aim of this article was to analyse the relationship between politics and the press through the study of scandal. The increasing number of scandals in the late nineteenth century was neither a result of the new yellow press and commercial interest nor the result of an independent fourth estate. Rather the growing interaction between the political press and the changing political culture led to polarised emotional disputes and scandalous charges. They were brought up by politicians, who acted as journalists, and journalists who had political goals. The belief that the masses could be directed by sensation influenced political and journalistic actions. In both countries the results of the scandals showed the power of this changed political communication. They often led to amendments, resignations or changed norms. Scandal not only increased the power of journalists, but it also strengthened opposition parties and parliamentary groups which used the media to publicise its sensational revelations. Despite all historical differences between Germany and Britain this development demonstrated how the British and German model of press and politics became more alike.

The second aim of this article was to point out the international transfer of scandal. Scandal played an important role in the self-perception of each nation and the perception of the other. The mutual reports of the media helped to establish stereotypes and increased tensions between the different countries. In this perspective, journalists and politicians were actors who influenced politics and culture by transferring scandals from other countries. Foreign correspondents translated scandals which were then taken up by the domestic journalists and politicians. The transfers of scandals showed differences which depended on the subject under debate. Colonial scandals led to the strongest reactions. They fostered a general critique of the colonial practice of the other country, but also forced domestic reforms which were modelled on examples from abroad. Scandal about the monarchy led to a similarly intense interaction and debate, especially because the scandalized monarchs were taken to be representative of their respective nations. Scandals concerning homosexuality came up first in Britain and were indirectly transferred to Germany. Legal debate followed. These scandals also led to discussion of so-called "decadent" forms

of homosexuality, which was attacked by even those who generally preferred an exemption from punishment. Finally, a specific kind of transfer was shown for corruption scandals. France was the major reference point for Germany and Britain. Especially the Panama scandal was an important event for both countries – as a model for anti-Semitic charges and imaginations about corrupt conspiracies, but also as a reference point for stressing the moral superiority over France.

Consequently, one can conclude that the elite of each country was the subject of suspicion during the decades around 1900. A new kind of moral scrutiny entered the political realm. This was also a struggle in the international arena. The international press watched and participated in the construction of those scandals. The competition for moral legitimacy and reputation anticipated the struggles on the real battlefield after 1914. Even on the battlefield, however, the moral denigration of the enemy through scandalous reports of atrocities remained a central element of politics *and* journalism.