‘A legend somewhat larger than life’: Karl H. von Wiegand and the trajectory of Hearstian sensationalist journalism*

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Abstract

This article re-evaluates the trajectory of sensationalism within twentieth-century American journalism and foreign correspondence by examining William Randolph Hearst’s chief foreign correspondent, Karl H. von Wiegand (1874–1961). By following von Wiegand’s activities as a journalist, celebrity, propagandist and diplomatic go-between through both world wars, it argues that post-World War I concerns over propaganda and commercial mass media’s reliability impacted the typically sensational methods of foreign correspondents particularly strongly. In von Wiegand’s case, his exceptionally sensational style, which became entangled in fascist propaganda throughout the 1930s and fell under an increasingly systematic ethical critique, caused his own reputation and ability to impact public opinion to weaken drastically.

‘Hell Karl, where out of the big world have you come from now?’ United States president Franklin D. Roosevelt (F.D.R.) greeted Karl H. von Wiegand, the ‘Dean of Foreign Correspondents’, on a ‘dreadfully hot’ summer’s day in July 1935.[1] The ‘extremely fair-minded thorough going newspaperman’, as the president had described von Wiegand to his ambassador to Germany a few months earlier, sat down for tea on a terrace overlooking the garden at the White House.[2] While sipping on his iced tea and nibbling on cake, the president asked the sixty-two-year-old correspondent to provide his administration with ‘confidential … report[s]’ of his insider diplomatic intelligence from Europe. Von Wiegand later claimed to have politely turned down the offer. Serving as a ‘secret agent under cover of journalism’ did not help ‘America’s foreign news service … [to] remain clean and above … suspicion’, he confided to his family.[3] However, the archival record proves von Wiegand’s claim to journalistic purity a deception; he not only reported on world politics throughout his life but also actively sought to shape them, often covertly.

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[1] Hoover Institution Archives (hereafter H.I.A.), Karl H. von Wiegand papers (hereafter K.H.V.W.P.), Box 9, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Lady Grace Drummond-Hay, 30 July 1935.

[2] F.D.R. Presidential Library (hereafter F.D.R.P.L.), The President’s Secretary’s file, 1933–45, Box 32, Letter from F.D.R. to William Dodd, 16 Apr. 1935.

[3] H.I.A., K.H.V.W.P., Box 12, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Charmion von Wiegand, 13 Apr. 1945.

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Figure 1. Karl H. von Wiegand, *c.*1930. Source: Karl H. von Wiegand privately held archive.

These practices, steeped in von Wiegand's style of sensational journalism, would place a target on the correspondent's back and draw suspicion to his work throughout his life.

Von Wiegand's career traversed what historians have deemed the interwar 'golden age' of foreign correspondence.[4] This historiographic consensus has some value; many correspondents achieved cultural stardom in an age when the American public was ever thirsty for word of the 'dark and confusing movements of continental nations and dictators', as one contemporary correspondent noted.[5] Additionally, journalism itself continued along a course of professionalization and modernization that had started at the turn of the century, leading the premier historian of foreign correspondence to deem the interwar period a 'high point in terms of professionalism and competence and clearly defined ideas of what quality foreign news was'.[6]

This article does not intend to entirely dispute the notion of the interwar period as a time of unprecedented glamour and import for foreign correspondents. Instead, using the overlooked case study of Karl H. von Wiegand – the chief foreign correspondent for the king of sensational yellow journalism, William Randolph Hearst – the article seeks to examine how the transformations of interwar journalism, steeped in post-World War I concerns over propaganda and the reliability of modern mass media, posed particular challenges to the oft-sensational modus operandi of foreign correspondents.

[4] Among those who deem the 'golden age' of foreign correspondence the interwar period are J. M. Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye: a History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge, 2009); and M. Heald, *Transatlantic Vistas: American Journalists in Europe, 1900-1940* (Kent, Ohio, 1988).

[5] Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye*, pp. 225–6.

[6] J. Cole and J. M. Hamilton, 'The history of a surviving species: defining eras in the evolution of foreign correspondence', *Journalism Studies*, ix (2008), 798–812, at p. 803.

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That journalism underwent seismic shifts after World War I is not a new discovery. As Michael Schudson has most clearly argued, the attempts of world governments during World War I to control and manipulate news, whether by censorship or by dedicated government-funded propaganda campaigns, left journalists feeling manipulated and the public feeling deceived. Journalists and the reading public alike began to approach the issue of news gathering and dissemination with a wary eye, worried about the creeping influence of government-manufactured propaganda – a word that gained its pejorative connotation only through the conflagration of World War I.[7] However, journalism's crisis of confidence did not impact all varieties of journalism equally. The 'dramatic, disorderly and episodic type' of journalism, as press theorist and journalist Walter Lippman deemed Hearst's style of sensational journalism, suffered especially from this crisis.[8]

Up until the late nineteenth century, this rambunctious and aggressive style of journalism that Hearst pioneered stayed in tune with the fiery populist spirit of the period, and Hearst appeared even to his competitors a 'pioneer in progressive journalism [that] goes on conquering'.[9] However, by the mid twentieth century, Hearst's newspaper empire had fallen out of the zeitgeist and crashed. As Hearst's most prominent modern biographer noted, the press tycoon's complete lack of 'commitment to objective, both-sides-of-the-story journalism', his interest in not merely 'reporting the news, but … making it', and his tendency to 'hold … his publishing empire hostage to his politics' made his newspapers vulnerable to attack and discreditation.[10] In the middle of the 1930s, the empire's financial collapse also coincided with the press tycoon's controversial sympathies with fascist powers – powers that gave Americans an uncomfortable 'propaganda consciousness'.[11] Hearst's bombast and showmanship, which helped launch his empire at the turn of the century, had become a liability by the mid interwar period.

In the interwar period, sensationalism in mainstream print journalism came under serious criticism.[12] But the work of foreign correspondents, those 'unsung heroes who risk their lives daily to keep their own people informed', as an advertisement for Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 film *Foreign Correspondent* gushed, still carried a certain sensational glamour.[13] Foreign correspondents' sensational purview even extended to the activist tradition of sensational journalism: 'The right kind of foreign correspondent is, in fact, an unofficial envoy who frequently performs services of value to the American people', reflected one Chicago newspaper editor in the 1920s.[14] They also had more leeway in injecting their own opinions and perspective into their journalism, as

[7] M. Schudson, *Discovering the News: a Social History of American Newspapers* (New York, 1981), pp. 144–56.

[8] 'Walter Lippman speaks on "epochs in journalism"', *Yale Daily News*, 13 Jan. 1931, p. 1 <http://digital.library.yale.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/yale-ydn/id/149424/rec/2> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[9] C.W. Joseph. *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Conn., 2001), p. 243.

[10] D. Nasaw, *The Chief: the Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston, Mass., 2000), p. 600.

[11] J. M. Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: the American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 17.

[12] This article will draw on the definition of *sensationalism* suggested by a collaborative essay book on the subject entitled *Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Mudslinging, Scandals, and Disasters in 19th-Century Reporting*: a combination of style and content forged in the nineteenth century that sought to appeal to a reader's emotions while providing exciting entertainment. In terms of content, the topics highlighted in the book title, with the important addition of 'war', entail the main subject indicators for 'sensationalism' in this article. Stylistically, hallmarks of nineteenth-century sensationalism included a tendency towards hyperbole, dramatic word choice, self-promotion and at times outright fabrication (*Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Mudslinging, Scandals, and Disasters in 19th-Century Reporting*, ed. D. B. Sachsman and D. W. Bulla (New Brunswick, N.J., 2013), pp. xi–xiii).

[13] 'Lanett Theatre', *West Point News* (West Point, Ga.), 24 Oct. 1940, p. 6 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/572105214/> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[14] Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye*, p. 176.

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confusing foreign news had 'to be [explained] subjectively', as one contemporary correspondent noted. 'The man in Europe who is of most value to his newspaper is the man who expresses opinions in his writings.'[15] But foreign correspondence was not entirely immune to the same forces that threw sensational journalism more broadly into doubt.

As will be shown in this article, von Wiegand embodied the sensationalism of the 1930s foreign correspondent. In the advertising campaign for Hitchcock's film, he was specified as one of the daring 'hero' correspondents who inspired the project. His 1961 *Time* magazine obituary referred to him as the 'stage version of the foreign correspondent, complete with collar-up trench coat, brim-down hat and blackthorn cane'. But the obituary also noted that 'separating the real from the legendary Von Wiegand would have been an impossible assignment for Von Wiegand himself. He took too much pleasure in embellishing the legend.'[16]

Ultimately, von Wiegand's career was a cautionary tale regarding to what extent sensationalism had a place in foreign correspondence. As one journalist had warned in the 1920s, 'If the reader thinks the correspondent is a partisan, the correspondent's influence is distinctly impaired, regardless of how faithful may be his presentation of the truth as he sees it.'[17] Von Wiegand's glaringly sensational, cloak-and-dagger and propaganda-infused style of journalism – a hallmark of his turn-of-the-century training – fell under increasingly systemic critique after World War I, impacting not only the correspondent's posthumous legacy but also his contemporary reputation and ability to mould public opinion. Von Wiegand's rise and fall throughout the first major era of mass media also illuminates how competing styles of journalism struggled throughout the early twentieth century to capture the public's trust and readership amidst a rising backdrop of propaganda – and how sensationalism in mainstream journalism, even in foreign correspondence, fell out of favour in the late interwar period.

This first study of von Wiegand, besides a few brief and incomplete encyclopedia articles, employs a broad archival approach.[18] In addition to von Wiegand's papers at the Hoover Institution Archives, this study benefits from access to materials from a privately held, and less sanitized, archive of his personal correspondence, diaries, photographs and other artifacts. Archival work in the William Randolph Hearst archive at the University of Berkeley, combined with investigations in papers of other Hearst employees, illuminated von Wiegand's evolving place within the vast Hearst media empire. Material from diplomatic, political and intelligence archives in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy help locate von Wiegand's place within international diplomatic circles. A variety of newspaper databases, most importantly Newspapers.com and its copy of Hearst's West Coast flagship publication, the *San Francisco Examiner*, helped reconstruct von Wiegand's journalistic corpus. They also assisted in tracing how newspapers across the United States and the Anglophone world reacted to von Wiegand's journalism throughout his career. Although this study does primarily focus on one individual, it

[15] Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 147.

[16] 'Larger than life', *Time*, 16 June 1961, pp. 37–9.

[17] Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye*, p. 176.

[18] N. Domeier, 'Wiegand, Karl Henry von', *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, last updated 17 Apr. 2018 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/wiegand_karl_henry_von> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021]; and 'Karl Henry von Wiegand', *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Karl_Henry_von_Wiegand&oldid=924414351> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

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takes the advice of recent biography theorists to heart and is 'rooted in ideas and events larger than the individual subject'.[19]

Although focused in the politically fraught years of the interwar period, the article considers the entire trajectory of von Wiegand's career. It starts with his schooling in turbulent Western journalism at the turn of the century and progresses to his sensational scoops and interviews as a foreign correspondent in World War I. It then follows his career into the interwar period, where von Wiegand continued engaging in sensational journalism while also navigating the propaganda-laced minefield of post-World War I journalism. The article then considers how von Wiegand came to grips with the rise of fascism in Europe by becoming a 'fighting pacifist' non-interventionist. It then explores how von Wiegand entrenched himself further in sensational journalism, even as Americans increasingly associated his practices with an un-American and corrupted form of journalism. The article then considers the apex of the confluence of the issues of fascist-linked propaganda and Hearstian sensational journalism in the form of von Wiegand's interview with Adolph Hitler in the summer of 1940 during the invasion of France. It concludes by analysing the public suspicion and governmental surveillance that emerged as a reaction to the Hitler interview, and finally considers the place of von Wiegand's style of foreign correspondence within American journalism's historical trajectory.

Von Wiegand was born into a world undergoing unprecedented economic, political, cultural and political change: industrialization, urbanization, the rise of mass media. He was also almost certainly not born 'von Wiegand', adopting the aristocratic *von* only when he began his journalism career in the early 1900s. Four or five years after his birth, he and his parents immigrated to the United States, settling in the rural Midwest like many millions of fellow Germans who sought a new future across the Atlantic Ocean. After running away from home, as he described in his unpublished memoirs, he spent his childhood and early adulthood wandering the Midwest acquiring 'practical knowledge of men in the rough' through various Huckleberry Finn-esque misadventures, allegedly including a brief stint on a farm 'connected' with famous cowboy-turned-entrepreneurial-showman William Frederick 'Buffalo Bill'.[20] In 1899 his first signed article (simply under 'Wiegand') appeared in an Arizona newspaper. Around the same time, he decided to prepend presumptuous and misleading 'von' to his byline, and in 1901 he joined Hearst's famous *San Francisco Examiner* as a beat reporter.[21]

Von Wiegand first joined Hearst's multimedia empire during the high point of sensational journalism. Hearst began his newspaper career by taking charge of his father's newspaper the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1887 and turning it into a 'decided success', as the trade journal *The Journalist* noted, and doubling its circulation within a year.[22] As Hearst continued to build his multimedia empire over the coming decades, acquiring the *New York Journal* in 1895 to compete with Joseph Pulitzer, his techniques remained consistent. He visually streamlined and expanded his papers, promoted sensational stories (particularly of crime and corruption), and masterfully wove his paper into the fabric of turn-of-the-century urban life. Hearst boasted in his New York papers that 'While

[19] D. Nasaw, 'Introduction', *American Historical Review*, cxiv (2009), 573–8.

[20] H.I.A., K.H.V.W.P., Box 47, N. D., 'An autobiographical effort'.

[21] K. H. von Wiegand, 'I must have a gas stove', *Arizona Republican*, 21 June 1899, p. 4 <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020558/1899-06-21/ed-1/seq-4/> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021]; and *Hugoton Hermes* (Hugoton, Kan.), 15 Nov. 1901, p. 2 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/375479946/?terms=%22von%2Bwiegand%22> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[22] Nasaw, *The Chief*, p. 78; and 'The traveler', *The Journalist*, 24 Sept. 1887, p. 2 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=iau.31858036690661&view=1up&seq=8&size=150&q1=hearst> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

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Others Talk the JOURNAL Acts'.[23] Although Hearst's pioneer style of journalism was contemporarily lauded as the 'type that goes on conquering', it also provoked controversy and created the space for opposing styles of journalism.

Partially as a reaction to Hearst's 'freak journalism', as his earliest critics derided it, the *New York Times*, with its simple layout, sober style and solemn promise 'to print all the news that's fit to print' with 'entire impartiality', emerged as the primary alternative to the sensational model. Throughout the early twentieth century, Hearst firmly believed that there was space for both styles of journalism to compete. 'From political policies to news judgements … it is desirable for us not to be like the [New York] *Times* but to be sufficiently different from the *Times*', he informed his management.[24] As von Wiegand's career shows, Hearst was wrong. Sensationalist media in various formats continued to have its place throughout von Wiegand's life, but in terms of reliable newsprint journalism, the *New York Times* and the style of journalism it represented came to decisively eclipse Hearst's model by the mid twentieth century.

Von Wiegand's formative experiences as a journalist with Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*, 'the hardest and severest school in practical training in news gathering and reporting … in the United States', as he later recalled it, reflected the era's sensational and rough-and-tumble zeitgeist. Like many of his colleagues, von Wiegand was expected to put himself at extreme personal risk in order to snag the sensational scoop; he experienced physical assault while investigating a poisoning and covered courtroom assassinations, prison breaks and railway wrecks.[25] After a brief stint as a night manager at the Western Division of the Associated Press (A.P.), he was headhunted in 1910 by the United Press, a relatively new A.P. competitor, to become a foreign correspondent in Europe, something he had 'long wanted'.[26] He became particularly enamoured with bustling Berlin, with 'signs of progress and modernity, an American touch in many things', as he would later reminisce. While he claimed to have forgotten most of his native German over the prior three decades and to have rapidly re-learned it, he managed to ingratiate himself within influential German political and military circles just in time for the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914.

*

World War I forced foreign correspondents to struggle to find their place within the web of nationalism, censorship and propaganda that the conflict engendered. Governments both resented and needed foreign correspondents – they were an intrusive burden and a potential liability, yet they were also a conduit desperately sought after by all warring nations to rally domestic and international public opinion. To achieve its goals, Britain banned its own war correspondents from the front line for the first year of the war, while other countries imposed similar restraints and established propaganda or press bureaus in an attempt to manufacture and control the narrative of the war.[27] Perhaps more so than in any previous war, World War I was as much a war of information and propaganda as it was of weapons and men.

[23] Nasaw, *The Chief*, p. 127. 'Journal' was double bolded and all capital letters in the original newspaper. For the most recent scholarship on Hearst's early career, see K. Whyte, *The Uncrowned King: the Sensational Rise of William Randolph Hearst* (Berkeley, 2009).

[24] Nasaw, *The Chief*, p. 441.

[25] H. I. A., K. H. V. W. P., Box 47, N. D., 'An autobiographical effort', p. 3.

[26] H. I. A., K. H. V. W. P., Box 47, N. D., 'An autobiographical effort', p. 3.

[27] E. Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I : a Comprehensive History* (New York, 2019); and T. Luckhurst, 'War correspondents', *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, last updated 15 March 2016 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_correspondents/2016-03-15> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

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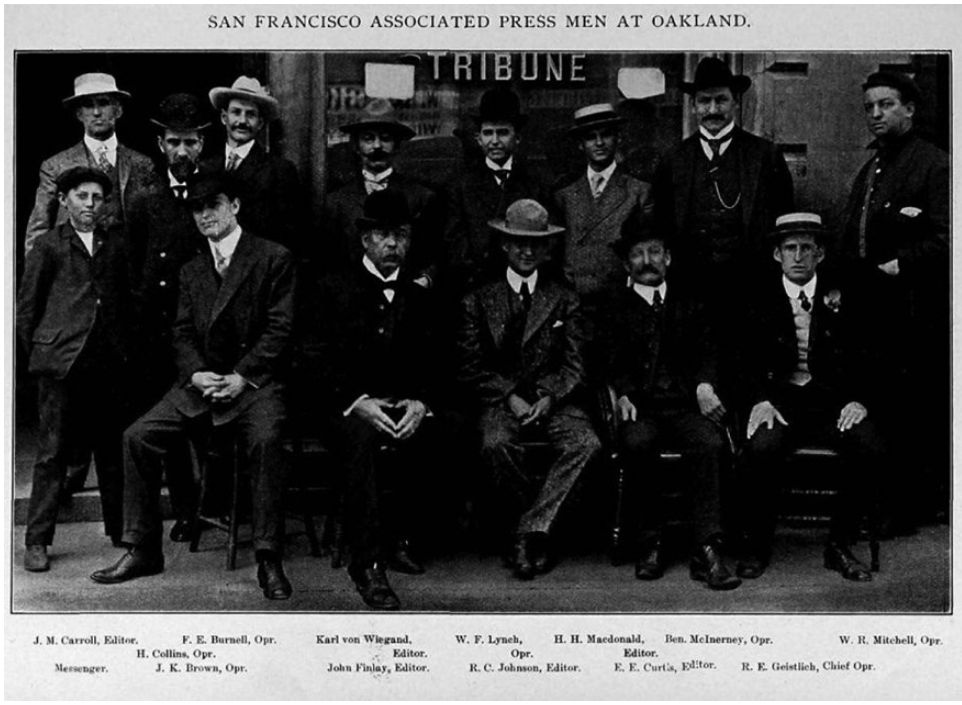

Figure 2. Von Wiegand with fellow A.P. correspondents, 1906. Source: Associated Press Archives.

The fact that von Wiegand came from a neutral country yet bore a German name, with language skills to boot, helped von Wiegand to 'almost overnight' gain a 'world-wide reputation as a war correspondent', as the historian of the United Press argued.[28] He was the first foreign war correspondent to reach the fighting on the eastern front between Germany and Russia. His cabled story, written in the first person and delayed by British censors, placed himself as a daring agent risking his life to transmit the inside story back to his readers. 'Rivulets of blood' and 'broken, bloody bodies' dotted the battlefield.[29] With his 'heart thumping like a hammer', he breathlessly reported the battle blow by blow, conveying the 'staccato rattle of machine guns', the Russian advancing front 'falling like dominoes in a row' under fire, and the sight of a village 'literally flattened under a deluge of iron and steel' by artillery. His visceral, first-hand war correspondence, while tending to highlight German military vigour and bolster his own reputation, must have been a thrilling, page-turning read for an American public thirsty for war news.

The Germans soon realized von Wiegand could be a useful resource in their propaganda campaigns; Britain had cut Germany's overseas telegraph cables at the start of the war and was thus able to control and censor much of the flow of information coming from the European continent. At least up until America's entry into the war in 1917, the Germans would use von Wiegand to reach out to the American public,

[28] D. Zacher, *The Scripps Newspapers Go to War, 1914–18* (Urbana, Ill., 2010), p. 53; and J. A. Morris, *Deadline Every Minute: the Story of the United Press* (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), p. 67.

[29] 'First eye witness terrible battle', *Williston Graphic* (Williston, N.D.), 15 Oct. 1914, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/174809247/?terms=%22von%2Bwiegand%22> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021].

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hoping to establish better German-American relations, combat British 'atrocity propaganda' and dissuade America from entering the conflict. Besides his tendency for dispatching bloody German-sympathetic war stories, von Wiegand's specialization in conducting interviews with prominent entente political actors also helped the German cause.

Von Wiegand's interviews, most notably with German crown prince Wilhelm (the 'first direct statement made to the press by any member of the German royal family since the outbreak of the war', von Wiegand bragged), German Navy vice admiral von Tirpitz ('the most famous interview of the First World War', as he remembered it) and Pope Benedict XV, caused controversy while also landing him on the front page of the journalism trade publication *Editor and Publisher*.[30] The tendency of von Wiegand's interviewees to urge the United States to not intervene on the sides of the Allies led the British press to label the correspondent as 'not only a German', but one who 'identified … with the German military party'.[31] The sheer validity of his interview with the Pope also came under fire, with the Vatican's official newspaper claiming that it was not an interview, but a 'simple audience, one which the Holy Father usually grants daily'.[32] Although von Wiegand defended the validity of the interview for his entire life, other evidence shows that his interviewing practices were far from impeachable. Correspondence with his United Press manager Roy Howard shows that his interview with the Crown Prince, advertised as a 'direct statement made to the press by … the German royal family', was actually a consequence of von Wiegand's 'observations of him and talks with him for several days' – condensed, repackaged and quoted without the Crown Prince's consent.[33] He also made no pretence at impartiality in his interviewing practice; he publicly admitted that weeks before meeting the Pope he had decided to 'get a peace interview with someone important enough so that his words for peace would ring throughout the world'.[34] In private correspondence with Roy Howard, he even boasted that various 'sources' had told him that he 'could become a great unofficial channel that might lead to some idea about peace'.[35]

The controversy surrounding the authenticity and politics of von Wiegand's interview practices spoke to a larger scepticism towards the mere idea of the 'interview' – largely itself an innovation of the late nineteenth-century American sensational press. European commentators thought the invasive and crass technique 'typical of that [American] spirit of inquiry and espionage'.[36] Since the birth of the sensationalist turn-of-the-century press, the interview and the cult of celebrity were inextricably enmeshed – and often criticized on moral grounds. One American star interviewer from the 1910s remarked that 'interviewing outstanding personalities is … merely a piece of glorified salesmanship'.[37] Others criticized it directly as 'immoral … [and] an assault'.[38] Von Wiegand's descriptions

[30] 'U.P. scores big beat', *Editor and Publisher*, 5 Dec. 1914, p. 1 <https://archive.org/details/sim_editor-publisher_1914-12-05_47_25> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[31] 'Von Wiegand's pessimistic despatches', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 July 1916, p. 4.

[32] 'L'autorità e la parola del Papa', *L'osservatore Romano*, 17 Apr. 1915, p. 1.

[33] Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Roy Wilson Howard papers, Reel 2, Frame 265, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Roy Howard, 4 Jan. 1915.

[34] 'Gives words of Pope', *Washington Post*, 19 Apr. 1915, p. 2, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/28941349/> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021].

[35] Letter from von Wiegand to Howard, 4 Jan. 1915.

[36] M. Schudson, 'Question authority: a history of the news interview in American journalism, 1860s–1930s', *Media, Culture & Society*, xvi (1994), 565–87.

[37] *The Penguin Book of Interviews: an Anthology From 1859 to the Present Day*, ed. C. Silvester (London, 1993), p. 21.

[38] Silvester, *Penguin Book of Interviews*, p. 2.

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CAUGHT WITH GOODS.

TELEGRAPH OPERATOR WHO HAD BEEN STEALING NEWS IS ARRESTED.

Melville E. Stone Baits the Hook and Lands His Fish in the Globe Office in the Person of Henry Linder, a Telegraph Operator, Who Had Forwarded Bogus Dispatch to Ticker Company, and Is Held for Trial.

Melville E. Stone, general manager of the Associated Press, has for some time been convinced that A. P. dispatches were being stolen and distributed by the other news agencies, and so last Saturday he went fishing with a choice piece of bait and at the first cast of his line landed the thief, in the person of Henry Linder, a Postal Telegraph operator, assigned to duty in the office of the New York Globe. Linder was arrested and on Wednesday was held for the grand jury by Magistrate F. B. House at the Tombs Police Court, under Section 552 of the Penal Code which provides for the punishment of a person who reveals the contents of a telegraphic message to a person other than to the one for whom it is intended.

The bait employed was the following message:

PETROGRAD, Nov. 27.—The Russian dreadnaught Pliba, formerly the Ismail, striking a mine in the Gulf of Finland, is a complete loss, with 430 lives.

ADD PETROGRAD UNDER DASH—LOSS OF PLIBA.—The Ismail was one of four battle dreadnaughts laid down at the Kronstadt yards in 1912. She had a displacement of 28,000 tons and carried nine 14-inch guns and twelve 5-inch.

The dispatch was bogus. There is no Pliba in the Russian Navy. The name was cryptic. By substituting for the initial consonant the consonant following it in the alphabet and for the two vowels the vowels following the word becomes "Globe."

One of the humorous incidents connected with the publication of the Pliba message in the Evening Sun was the appearance in that newspaper of a cut and description of the Russian ship which did not exist.

Before the dispatch could be printed in the Globe an order came from the Associated Press to kill it.

The message was transmitted at 9.26 a. m. Saturday by John C. Bates, an A. P. operator to G. H. Boothby another A. P. operator in the Globe office.

Ten minutes after Bates had transmitted the message it appeared on the tickers of the Stock Quotation Company, a corporation, with offices at 26 Beaver street, and within two hours it was printed in the Evening Sun under the page-wide heading, "New Russian Battleship Is Destroyed by a Mine." It also appeared in the Evening World, Evening Journal and Evening Telegram.

According to Boothby's affidavit, Linder "cut in" on the wire so that both he and Linder received the message at their respective keys. Linder transmitted it immediately to the ticker service.

Linder was arrested by Charles J. Pender, superintendent of the Pinkerton detective agency, and Thomas Donahue, who took him to the Tombs Court where he was held under $5,000 bail until December 1 for examination.

The Evening Sun killed the story in a later edition and published a statement that the message had been sent out by the Central News of America. J. B. Shale, president of that organization sent to the New York Times, and presumably all the other New York newspapers a letter saying that it did not furnish the dispatch to the Evening Sun.

The United Press did not send the Pliba dispatch to its clients.

In the hearing before magistrate House on Tuesday Kent Cooper, traffic manager of the Associated Press, testified that following his arrest on Friday Linder had asserted in Cooper's presence that he received $4 a week from a man named Rice, who, he said, was telegraph manager for the New York News Bureau.

George H. Boothby, Associated Press operator in the Globe office, said:

"One morning when I went to work I found a 'jack' wedged into the keyboard on which I received the dispatches. I traced it out, and found that it connected Linder with my circuit. When I asked him about it he said that he wanted to get in on my messages for practices, as the Associated Press work is rapid and is very good practice. On Monday of last week I saw two telegraph instruments on Linder's desk, and while I was examining them one of the instruments ticked out, 'Give us some news.'"

Magistrate House held Linder for the grand jury.

KARL H. VON WIEGAND,
MANAGER OF THE BERLIN OFFICE OF THE UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATIONS.

BIRD BUYS BOSTON PAPERS.

Takes Over the Advertiser and Record and Will Run Them As Independent Newspapers.

Charles Sumner Bird, twice Progressive candidate for governor of Massachusetts, has purchased the Advertiser Newspaper Company, which publishes the Boston Advertiser and the Boston Evening Record.

Francis W. Bird has been appointed publisher and George D. Dutton, treasurer. Mr. Bird announces that he will have no active part in the conduct or management of either paper.

In an editorial in Tuesday's issue of the Advertiser Mr. Bird says:

"It is our aim in both papers to maintain an honorable tradition and to establish a name for liberal and independent journalism that shall hold itself free from alliance with any party, any group, any special interest."

The Daily Advertiser has been established many years. James W. Dunphy was president and publisher of the company up to the time of Mr. Bird's purchase of the property; Guild A. Copeland was editor; C. H. Adams, business manager and secretary, and Henry Parkman, treasurer.

U. P. SCORES BIG BEAT.

VON WIEGAND, BERLIN CORRESPONDENT, INTERVIEWS CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY.

Dispatch Aroused Great Interest Both Here and in England—London Papers Reproduced It with Editorial Comments—Von Wiegand, an American, Who Worked on San Francisco Newspapers.

If there is anything a real live newspaper man loves it is a whacking big beat—not one of the little measly kind that don't amount to a Hannah Cook, but one that, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, makes you exclaim, "By George, that's fine!" Beats of this kind are as scarce as strawberries in the Great American desert. Therefore, when one turns up, it creates more talk than a church sociable.

The greatest beat of the European war printed in America thus far was scored on Monday by Karl H. Von Wiegand, manager of the United Press bureau in Berlin. It was a several-thousand-word report of an interview with the Crown Prince of Germany which Von Wiegand himself secured. The article was forwarded to the clients on that day and appeared in the afternoon papers in first-page position with big headlines. It created a sensation because it contained the frank views of Emperor William's successor to the throne. He denied that there had been a war party in Berlin that had precipitated the conflict in which nearly all Europe is now involved. He was grieved at the attitude of the press and people of the United States toward Germany and could not understand why it should be blamed for the war.

The dispatch was cabled to London and appeared under the United Press copyright line in all the papers of the British metropolis, with the exception of the Telegraph and the Post, and the leading provincial dailies. The editorial comments on the interview complimented Von Wiegand for his enterprise and ability in securing it.

The Birmingham Post, in a lengthy editorial, says: "We are almost tempted in our admiration of Von Wiegand's performance to say we should like to know him despite the forbidding sound of his name." The Berliner Tageblatt, Ralph Blumenthal editor, characterized the interview as Germany's latest attempt to influence American opinion.

Karl H. Von Wiegand, whose brilliant achievement has brought to the United Press many compliments, is not a native of Germany, as one might conclude from his name, but an American, having been born in Phoenix, Arizona. He began his newspaper career as a correspondent of various New York, Kansas City and San Francisco papers. For a time he was on the local staff of the Examiner of the latter city. When the Los Angeles Examiner was started, he was a member of the local staff. During the Japanese-Russian war Von Wiegand was cable editor of A. P. in San Francisco. He scored a beat on the Berkely airship disaster, the first to occur in this country. He was standing by the side of Francis J. Heney, of San Francisco, when he was shot by a thug during the great municipal upheaval in that city.

Von Wiegand was with the Associated Press three years and was then placed in charge of the San Francisco bureau of the United Press. He went to Berlin as manager of the U. P. bureau there in 1911. He is about 38 years old.

Figure 3. Front-page story from a journalism trade publication on von Wiegand's 'whacking big beat' in publishing an interview with the crown prince of Germany. Source: 'U.P. scores big beat', Editor and Publisher, 5 Dec. 1914, p. 1 <https://archive.org/details/sim_editor-publisher_1914-12-05_47_25> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

of the Pope's 'magnificent private library … afford[ing] a vista of Rome and the snow-tipped, purplish mountains in the distance' was a standard technique for offering an information and entertainment-hungry public a sense of a live show. Absolute word-for-word truth or representation of the moment was not necessarily expected or even desired; per journalistic conventions of the era, von Wiegand took no notes during his interview with the Pope.[39] Sensational, turn-of-the-century journalism, operating in

[39] H. I. A., K. H. V. W. P., Box 47, N. D., 'An autobiographical effort', p. 72.

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the grey space between fact and fiction, between entertainment and news, allowed von Wiegand the opportunity to twist facts to suit his (exciting) story.

Von Wiegand's style of sensational, mass-appeal journalism – rooted in the Hearstian turn-of-the-century tradition – was never without its critics.[40] However, World War I, 'the first modern effort at systematic, nation-wide manipulation of collective passions', as one historian described it, gave a new set of vocabulary for criticizing journalism and its connections with power and politics.[41] The word *propaganda*, which before the war average Americans would have understood as 'the spreading of self-interested opinions through publicity', began to gain its more insidious connotation only during and after the war, as the deliberate manipulation and control of information by governments became clearer.[42] After the war many Americans believed that British-directed 'atrocity' propaganda, depicting German soldiers as vicious, baby-eating Huns, had played a large role in mobilizing American public support for intervention. The war prompted journalists, many of whom had been inadvertently or willingly swept up into government propaganda machines, to question the nature of their own craft.

Despite this budding criticism towards propaganda-infused journalism, von Wiegand's reputation soared during and immediately after World War I. When he moved from the United Press to Pulitzer's *New York World* in 1915, his United Press replacement worried in private to his own family that 'von Wiegand is the most famous correspondent in the war zone, and it overwhelms me to think that I am to take – or try to take his place'.[43] Von Wiegand's sensational style and ability to land important interviews had cemented his reputation, at least in the short term, and by 1917 he had become the chief foreign correspondent for Hearst's International News Service. The shifting norms and understandings of journalism caused by World War I would take a while to impact von Wiegand's practices.

If anything, von Wiegand further entrenched himself in sensationalism during the 'roaring' 1920s. The headlines of his cultural and human interest stories screamed 'Moslem flappers getting "too gay", have to don veils', 'You can marry in evening and be divorced next morning in the land of communism' and 'Shortage in Vienna corpses'.[44] In an era of rampant German inflation, von Wiegand also took advantage of the relative strength of the dollar to live palatially, purchasing a Bavarian lakeside castle, motorboat and Mercedes Benz.[45] In 1928 and 1929, just before the economic crash, he organized and reported aboard transatlantic and circumnavigatory Zeppelin stunt expeditions. True to his growing reputation as the 'stage version of the foreign correspondent',

[40] L.W. Hausman, *Criticism of the Press in U.S. Periodicals, 1900–1939: an Annotated Bibliography* (Austin, Tex., 1967). A search of the bibliography shows at least twelve critiques of Hearst's journalism in periodicals and magazines between 1900 and 1918 alone.

[41] Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, pp. 7–9.

[42] Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, p. 9.

[43] M. Menard, 'Reporting for the State Department: Carl W. Ackerman's cooperation with government during WWI' (unpublished Louisiana State University M.A. thesis, 2015), p. 20 <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/grad-school_theses/92/> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021].

[44] K. H. von Wiegand, '"Communism fails to make all equal in Russia" – Wiegand', *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 June 1927, p. 41 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457889835/> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021]; and K. H. von Wiegand, 'Shortage in Vienna corpses', *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 June 1921, p. 59 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457458804/?terms=%22von%2Bwiegand%22> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021].

[45] '"Dog day" season on in Berlin', *Editor and Publisher*, 13 Aug. 1921, p. 13 <https://archive.org/details/sim_editor-publisher_1921-08-13_54_11/page/12/mode/2up> [accessed 3 June 2021]; and von Wiegand, 'Shortage in Vienna corpses'.

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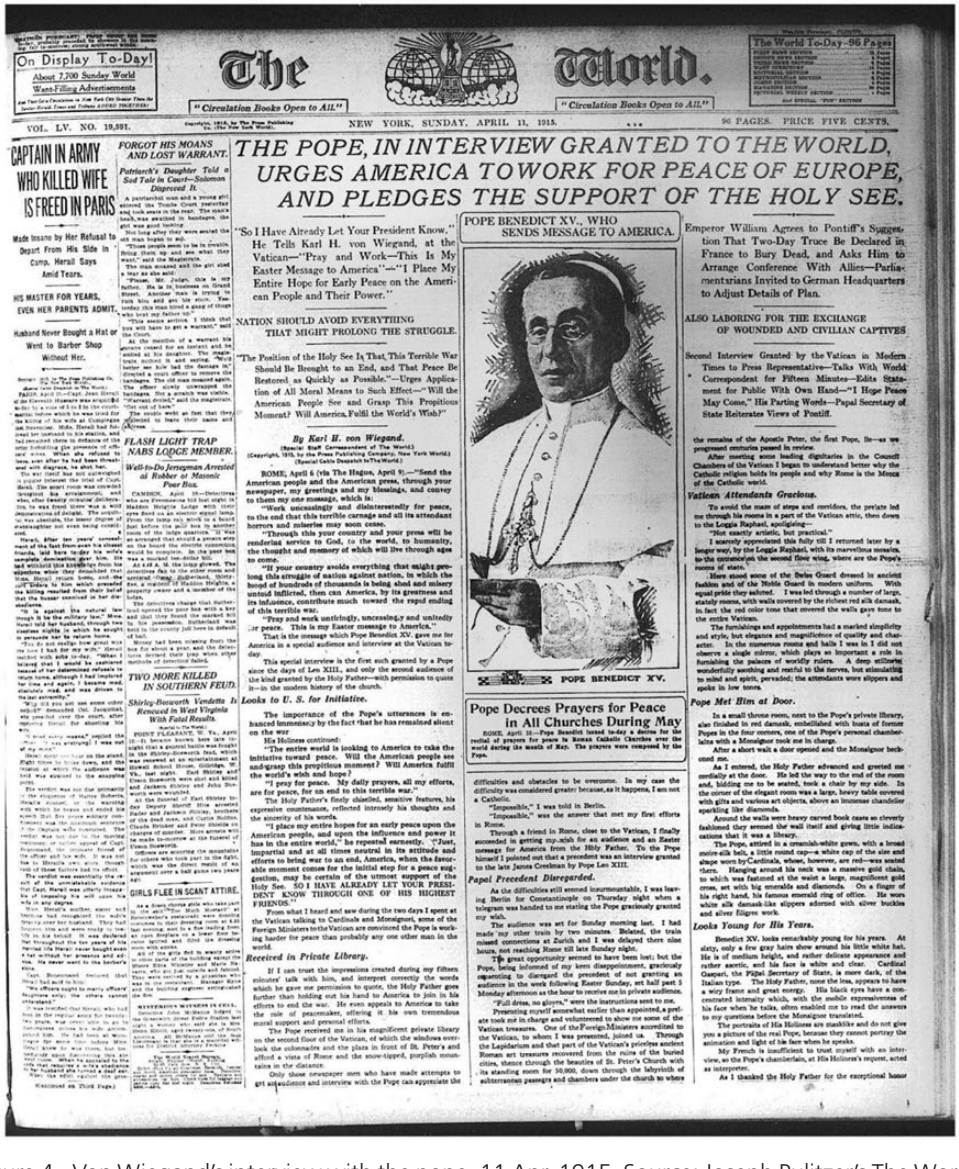

The World.

" Circulation Books Open to All."

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1915.

96 PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

THE POPE, IN INTERVIEW GRANTED TO THE WORLD, URGES AMERICA TO WORK FOR PEACE OF EUROPE, AND PLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE HOLY SEE.

"So I Have Already Let Your President Know," He Tells Karl H. von Wiegand, at the Vatican—"Pray and Work—This Is My Easter Message to America"—"I Place My Entire Hope for Early Peace on the American People and Their Power."

NATION SHOULD AVOID EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT PROLONG THE STRUGGLE.

"The Position of the Holy See Is That This Terrible War Should Be Brought to an End, and That Peace Be Restored, as Quickly as Possible."—Urges Application of All Moral Means to Such Effect—"Will the American People See and Grasp This Propitious Moment? Will America Fulfil the World's Wish?"

By Karl H. von Wiegand.

(Special Staff Correspondent of The World.)

(Copyright, 1915, by the Press Publishing Company, New York World.)

(Special Cable Despatch to The World.)

ROME, April 6 (via The Hague, April 9).—"Send the American people and the American press, through your newspaper, my greetings and my blessings, and convey to them my one message, which is:

"Work unceasingly and disinterestedly for peace, to the end that this terrible carnage and all its attendant horrors and miseries may soon cease.

"Through this your country and your press will be rendering service to God, to the world, to humanity, the thought and memory of which will live through ages to come.

"If your country avoids everything that might prolong this struggle of nation against nation, in which the blood of hundreds of thousands is being shed and misery untold inflicted, then can America, by its greatness and its influence, contribute much toward the rapid ending of this terrible war.

"Pray and work unceasingly, unceasingly and unitedly for peace. This is my Easter message to America."

That is the message which Pope Benedict XV. gave me for America in a special audience and interview at the Vatican today.

This special interview is the first such granted by a Pope since the days of Leo XIII., and only the second audience of the kind granted by the Holy Father—with permission to quote it—in the modern history of the church.

Looks to U. S. for Initiative.

The importance of the Pope's utterances is enhanced immensely by the fact that he has remained silent on the war.

His Holiness continued:

"The entire world is looking to America to take the initiative toward peace. Will the American people accept this propitious moment? Will America fulfil the world's wish and hope?

"I pray for peace. My daily prayers, all my efforts, are for peace, for an end to this terrible war."

The Holy Father's finely chiselled, sensitive features, his expressive countenance, reflected intensely his thoughts and the sincerity of his words.

"I place my entire hopes for an early peace upon the American people, and upon the influence and power it has in the entire world," he repeated earnestly. "Just, impartial and at all times neutral in its attitude and efforts to bring war to an end, America, when the favorable moment comes for the initial step for a peace suggestion, may be certain of the utmost support of the Holy See. SO I HAVE ALREADY LET YOUR PRESIDENT KNOW THROUGH ONE OF HIS HIGHEST FRIENDS."

From what I heard and saw during the two days I spent at the Vatican talking to Cardinals and Monsignori, some of the Foreign Ministers to the Vatican are convinced the Pope is working harder for peace than probably any one other man in the world.

Received in Private Library.

If I can trust the impressions created during my fifteen minutes' talk with him, and interpret correctly the words which he gave me permission to quote, the Holy Father goes further than holding out his hand to America to join in his efforts to end the war. He even appeals to America to take the role of peacemaker, offering it his own tremendous moral support and personal efforts.

The Pope received me in his magnificent private library on the second floor of the Vatican, of which the windows overlook the colonnades and the plaza in front of St. Peter's and afford a vista of Rome and the snow-tipped, purplish mountains in the distance.

Only those newspaper men who have made attempts to get an audience and interview with the Pope can appreciate the difficulties and obstacles to be overcome. In my case the difficulty was considered greater because, as it happens, I am not a Catholic.

"Impossible," I was told in Berlin.

"Impossible," was the answer that met my first efforts in Rome.

Through a friend in Rome, close to the Vatican, I finally succeeded in getting my wish for an audience and an Easter message for America from the Holy Father. To the Pope himself I pointed out that a precedent was an interview granted to the late James Creelman by Pope Leo XIII.

Papal Precedent Disregarded.

As the difficulties still seemed insurmountable, I was leaving Berlin for Constantinople on Thursday night when a telegram was handed to me stating the Pope graciously granted my wish.

The audience was set for Sunday morning last. I had made my other train by two minutes. Belated, the train missed connections at Zurich and I was delayed there nine hours, not reaching Rome till late Saturday night.

The great opportunity seemed to have been lost; but the Pope, being informed of my keen disappointment, graciously consenting to disregard the precedent of not granting an audience in the week following Easter Sunday, set half past 5 Monday afternoon as the hour to receive me in private audience.

"Full dress, no gloves," were the instructions sent to me.

Presenting myself somewhat earlier than appointed, a prelate took me in charge and volunteered to show me some of the Vatican treasures. One of the Foreign Ministers accredited to the Vatican, to whom I was presented, joined us. Through the Legislarium and that part of the Vatican's priceless ancient Roman art treasures recovered from the ruins of the buried cities, thence through the beauties of St. Peter's Church with its standing room for 50,000, down through the labyrinth of subterranean passages and chambers under the church to where

POPE BENEDICT XV., WHO SENDS MESSAGE TO AMERICA.

POPE BENEDICT XV.

Pope Decrees Prayers for Peace in All Churches During May

ROME, April 10.—Pope Benedict issued to-day a decree for the recital of prayers for peace in Roman Catholic Churches over the world during the month of May. The prayers were composed by the Pope.

Emperor William Agrees to Pontiff's Suggestion That Two-Day Truce Be Declared in France to Bury Dead, and Asks Him to Arrange Conference With Allies—Parliamentarians Invited to German Headquarters to Adjust Details of Plan.

ALSO LABORING FOR THE EXCHANGE OF WOUNDED AND CIVILIAN CAPTIVES

Second Interview Granted by the Vatican in Modern Times to Press Representative—Talks With World Correspondent for Fifteen Minutes—Edits Statement for Public With Own Hand—"I Hope Peace May Come," His Parting Words—Papal Secretary of State Reiterates Views of Pontiff.

the remains of the Apostle Peter, the first Pope, lie—as we progressed centuries passed in review.

After meeting some leading dignitaries in the Council Chambers of the Vatican I began to understand better why the Catholic religion holds its people and why Rome is the Mecca of the Catholic world.

Vatican Attendants Gracious.

To avoid the mass of steps and corridors, the prelate led me through his rooms in a part of the Vatican attic, then down to the Loggia Raphael, apologizing—

"Not exactly artistic, but practical."

I scarcely appreciated this fully till I returned later by a longer way, by the Loggia Raphael, with its marvellous mosaics, to the entrance on the second floor wing, where are the Pope's rooms of state.

Here stood some of the Swiss Guard dressed in ancient fashion and of the Noble Guard in modern uniform. With equal pride they saluted. I was led through a number of large, stately rooms, with walls covered by the richest red silk damask, in fact the red color tone that covered the walls gave tone to the entire Vatican.

The furnishings and appointments had a marked simplicity and style, but elegance and magnificence of quality and character. In the numerous rooms and halls I was in I did not observe a single mirror, which plays so important a role in furnishing the palaces of worldly rulers. A deep stillness, wonderfully soothing and restful to the nerves, but stimulating to mind and spirit, prevailed; the attendants wore slippers and spoke in low tones.

Pope Met Him at Door.

In a small throne room, next to the Pope's private library, also finished in red damask, embellished with busts of former Popes in the four corners, one of the Pope's personal chamberlains with a Monsignor took me in charge.

After a short wait a door opened and the Monsignor beckoned me.

As I entered, the Holy Father advanced and greeted me cordially at the door. He led the way to the end of the room and, bidding me to be seated, took a chair by my side. In the corner of the elegant room was a large, heavy table covered with gilts and various art objects, above an immense chandelier sparkling like diamonds.

Around the walls were heavy carved book cases so cleverly fashioned they seemed the wall itself and giving little indications that it was a library.

The Pope, attired in a cremish-white gown, with a broad moire-silk belt, a little round cap—a white cap of the size and shape worn by Cardinals, whose, however, are red—was seated there. Hanging around his neck was a massive gold chain, to which was fastened at the waist a large, magnificent gold cross, set with big emeralds and diamonds. On a finger of his right hand, his famous emerald ring of office. He wore white silk damask-like slippers adorned with silver buckles and silver filigree work.

Looks Young for His Years.

Benedict XV. looks remarkably young for his years. At sixty, only a few gray hairs show around his little white hat. He is of medium height, and rather delicate appearance and rather ascetic, and has dark eyes and clear. Cardinal Gasparri, the Papal Secretary of State, is more dark, of the Italian type. The Holy Father, none the less, appears to have a wiry frame and great energy. His black eyes have a concentrated intensity which, with the mobile expressiveness of his face when he talks, often enabled me to read the answers to my questions before the Monsignor translated.

The portraits of His Holiness are manlike and do not give you a picture of the real Pope, because they cannot portray the animation and light of his face when he speaks.

My French is insufficient to trust myself with an interview, so the Pope's chamberlain, at His Holiness's request, acted as interpreter.

As I thanked the Holy Father for the exceptional honor

these journalistic aviation stunts spawned self-promotional newspaper advertisements, a Hearst-published pamphlet – *Story of a Great Adventure* – wherein he recounted his aerial adventures, a series of newsreels, and even a short film glamourizing their trip, *Around the World Via Zeppelin*.[46]

As von Wiegand was styling himself as a European aristocrat-playboy, journalists back in the United States were coming to terms with the changes and challenges that World War

[46] 'Around the world via Graf Zeppelin!', *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 Dec. 1929, p. 12 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458132431> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021]; and K. H.V. Wiegand and L. Drummond Hay, *The First Trans-Oceanic Voyage of an Air-Liner* ([New York], 1928).

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HEARST GETS WAR'S BEST REPORTER

Karl H. von Wiegand, Former San Francisco Newspaperman, Has Put Over World-wide "Beats"

BEGAN WITH 'THE EXAMINER'

Writer Has Interviewed Crowned Heads and Foremost Statesmen, Getting "Big News"

BY WILLIAM HOSTER

NEW YORK, January 27.—A box of cigarettes bearing the royal arms of Bulgaria lay on the table—the gift of His Majesty. Elsewhere were mementoes of intimate association with other noted actors in the great drama—Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, Hindenburg, von der Goltz, Zeppelin, von Tirpitz, Apostle of Frightfulness; Pope Benedict, Apostle of Peace.

Karl H. Von Wiegand, Former Reporter on Examiner, Now Most Famous War Correspondent and Confidant of German Officials.

Figure 5. Hearst boasts about acquiring von Wiegand as a foreign correspondent, 13 Jan. 1917. Source: W. Hoster, 'Hearst Gets War's Best Reporter', *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 Jan. 1917, p. 16 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458146031/> [accessed 16 Apr. 2021].

I had wrought upon their field. Critics lamented that the pre-World War I landscape of 'free and in the main honest' journalism struggled to report truth in this new 'age of lies'.[47] Press theorists argued that objectivity and a more honed, scientific approach to reporting was now necessary for journalism to fulfil its duties in the modern age.[48] The first national journalistic code of ethics, stating that 'promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare … is not compatible with honest journalism', was written in 1923.[49] Even by 1917 some journalists, particularly those who had served in Europe, had started to wonder 'if von Wiegand is not an actual attache of the German Press Bureau'. At the conclusion of one piece criticizing von Wiegand's German-slanted journalism, the writer noted:

> There is a celebrated and pro-ally newspaper in New York [*The New York Times]* whose motto is 'All the news that's fit to print'. The motto of the German war press bureau is 'all the news that's safe to print'.[50]

Despite von Wiegand's cultural stardom in the early interwar period, Americans were beginning to juxtapose his style of propaganda-laced Hearstian journalism to the more sober style of the New York Times. Europe directly after World War I was far from peaceful, and von Wiegand kept a wary eye on the fractured and violent post-war society in Germany, 'undeterred by machine gun bullets or flying grenades',

[47] W. Irwin, 'An age of lies', *Sunset*, Dec. 1919, p. 23 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89069292076&view=1up&seq=608&size=125> [accessed 5 Apr. 2021].

[48] The most prominent critique was W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (London, 1922); see also Schudson, *Discovering the News*.

[49] *Code of Ethics or Canons of Journalism* (Washington, D.C., 1923), <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/4457> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[50] T. Curtin, 'In Hun shackles', *Des Moines Register*, 18 Dec. 1917, p. 10 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/130896072/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; and D. T. Curtin, *The Land of Deepening Shadow: Germany-at-War* (New York, 1917), p. 102.

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as one U.S. newspaper claimed.[51] As communist-inspired revolutions rippled across Germany and Eastern Europe in the post-war environment, he began to warn that the 'unprecedented economic burden laid upon the German people' by the post-war settlement might drive Germany 'into the camp of militant communism', putting the country at the 'disposal of the Napoleons of bolshevism in Moscow'.[52] In 1921 he first became acquainted with a rabble-rousing World War I veteran and carpenter-turned-revolutionary-militant by the name of Adolf Hitler. Shortly after Benito Mussolini's rise to power in October 1922, von Wiegand cabled back to the United States the first English-language story and interview of Hitler. In the tradition of sensational interviewing, von Wiegand profiled the thirty-three year old 'man of the people' and former 'master builder' (an exaggeration of Hitler's dabbling in carpentry) in vivid detail.[53] Although the Nazis had little more than 7,000 formal members around this time and would not gain any significant political power for nearly a decade, von Wiegand claimed that the 'German Mussolini' had 200,000 followers and warned that the 'shadow of the Fascisti' was rising in Munich.[54]

As the roaring twenties marched into the much more precarious and politically volatile thirties, the 'Chief's' controversial style and politics began to worry von Wiegand. As crippling economic depression struck the United States, Hearst had begun to wonder if a stronger, more illiberal hand – like those rising in Italy and Germany – would be necessary to guide the country through these difficult times.[55] With von Wiegand's help, Hearst found a way to wed his dual interests in capturing sensational scoops and in promoting, or at the very least showcasing, the values of fascist, strongman rule. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, a panoply of fascists, including Hitler and Mussolini, found their way, often through von Wiegand's assistance, to Hearst's payroll as celebrity correspondents for the feature sections of his papers.[56] Hearst's team of foreign dignitary writers did not consist only of fascists, but dictators (both communist and fascist) and their often heavy-handed wielding of propaganda – in both foreign and domestic spheres – had begun to provoke a 'propaganda consciousness' among Americans.[57] Entire books were written attempting to educate the American public on how to be less susceptible to propaganda, particularly in the news.[58] Ethics guidebooks for the A.P. informed their foreign correspondents that the syndicate did 'not lend itself to propaganda'.[59] As von Wiegand saw articles from Mussolini declaring that his rule had seen 'successive accomplishment in geometrical progression' for Italy he began to worry about his role in helping Hearst 'spread … Mussolini's propaganda to millions

[51] 'The story of the Von Wiegands', *Herald and Review* (Decatur, Ill.), 24 March 1920, p. 6 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/90649410/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[52] K. H. von Wiegand, 'To destroy German nation would mean new world war', *Salt Lake Telegram*, 3 July 1921, p. 19 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/288652983/> [accessed 8 Oct. 2020]; and K. H. von Wiegand, 'Stage set for German revolution: von Wiegand', *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 Sept. 1923, p. 63 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457639138/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[53] K. H. von Wiegand, 'Fascisti in Germany defy Berlin', *San Francisco Examiner*, 13 Oct. 1922, p. 17 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457818620/>[accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[54] S. A. Mook, 'The first Nazis, 1919-1922' (unpublished Brandeis University Ph.D. thesis, 2009), p. 35.

[55] Nasaw, *The Chief*, pp. 510–22.

[56] B. R. Sullivan and P. V. Cannistraro, *Il Duce's Other Woman* (New York, 1993).

[57] Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, p. 17.

[58] See the extensive biographies throughout the chapters of E. Ellis, *Education Against Propaganda: Developing Skill in the Use of the Sources of Information About Public Affairs* (Philadelphia, 1937).

[59] Associated Press Collections Online, Miscellaneous Publications: Series I: Early Publications, 1894–1950, p. 1, 'A guide for foreign correspondents, ca. 1930', 1930.

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Second Section
Main News

San Francisco Examiner
Monarch of the Dailies

Pitiful Plight of Unwanted Babies of England
Nation stirred to activity against professional baby farms
IN NEXT SUNDAY'S EXAMINER

SUNDAY — SAN FRANCISCO, SEPTEMBER 16, 1923 — SUNDAY

STAGE SET FOR GERMAN REVOLUTION: VON WIEGAND

GIRL, 14, SOLD AND SHIPPED OVER 3 LANDS

Assyrian Miss Taken to Mexico From Persia and Later Sold to San Francisco Man

Uncle Rescues Child in Chicago, Where She Is Being Held Under Juvenile Court

CHICAGO, Sept. 15.—Haroun-al-Raschid, if he were roaming the streets of Chicago these nights looking for wrongs to redress, would surely bring the barbarous into requisition in the case of Arpenek Kalbain, an Assyrian girl of only 14, who has been sold like a chattel, married, shipped across three continents, reduced by an uncle, and now is in the hands of Cook County Court Judge Harry MacElveen of the Juvenile Court.

The woman who had her shipped from Persia to Mexico has sued for a writ of habeas corpus to get possession of her again, but she is opposed by Attorney James B. Howe, president of the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and Attorney M. J. Laventhal,

American Women Will Wear 'Back in Front' Gown This Winter, Say Fashion

Buying of Paris Creation by Many Fashionable Houses in U. S. Assures Its Popularity

By MOLLIE MERRICK.

The "back in front" gown, enthusiastically adopted by American modistes at the early Paris openings, will be newest of the new for the winter of 1923.

Every smart American house brought back at least a couple of models of this latest creation, thereby assuring its popularity on this side of the water. The "back in front" gown, known under the various titles, most popular of which is the "apron front," removes the mode of other years, which permitted string vests, tailor bows, overdrapes and various other trimmings on the back of the skirt.

All the trimming in the new mode is on the front of the gown. The back is uncompromisingly plain and tight, drawn smoothly around the hips in the fashion known as "wrap around" skirt. The front part of the wrap around is transformed into an apron with a ten to twelve inch ruffle at the lower edge. This

GERMANS AS ACTIVE FRENCH FOE, IS FEAR

Representative Hamilton Fish Jr. Told Millions of Germans Would Gladly Battle Invaders

Ruhr Inhabitants, Independent and Always Free of Militarism, Anxious to Drop Passive Role

By REP. HAMILTON FISH JR.
Member Committee of Foreign Affairs in Congress.

BERLIN, Sept. 12.—Von Rosenberg, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, told me that it was all the government could do to keep the passive resistance in the Ruhr from turning into active resistance. He said the people in the Ruhr have always been independent and free from military control, and even during the monarchy the German government never dared to station a battalion of troops there.

When the first contingent of 10,000 French soldiers invaded the Ruhr six months ago, the working men, numbering a million, proposed to attack the invading force simultaneously on a given night and

HUMBLE GIRL WEDS WEALTH, KILLS HERSELF

Relatives Probing Death of Princess Abbas Halim, Daughter of London Public House Owner

Jessica Harrington's Spectacular Career Starts on Stage and Ends in Egyptian Palace

By JOHN T. BURKE.
Staff Correspondent International Service.

LONDON, Sept. 12.—The start of relatives to Alexandria, Egypt, to investigate the fatal shooting of Princess Abbas Halim, has turned the attention of London to two amazing sisters, daughters of a country innkeeper near here, both of whom married into royal families.

Princess Abbas Halim, or Jessica Harrington, as she was then known, was one of four daughters of James Harcourt Harrington, licensee of "The Spread Eagle" inn and public house on the high street of Wadesmith, a suburb of London.

Her elder sister, Beatrice, is registered in the Almanac de Gotha as the wife of Prince Louis de

NOTED CORRESPONDENT

Karl H. von Wiegand, the most famous news correspondent in the world, staff correspondent of the Hearst papers in Central Europe, now on a short visit to the United States.

COOLIDGE, PINCHOT FORCES SEEK CREDIT FOR COAL PEACE

SWAY OF SOVIET THROUGH NATION PREDICTED FOR THIS WINTER BY LEADING MEN

Berlin and Parts of Middle Germany Will Fly Red Flag, Say Observers; Bavaria Expected to Secede and Declare Her Independence

By KARL H. VON WIEGAND
Staff Correspondent of "The Examiner" in Berlin, who is now on a short visit to the United States.
(Copyright, 1923, by Star Company)

Is Germany going bolshevistic? That question has been put to me more often than any other since my return home a few days ago—much more often than "Will Germany pay reparations?"

The question invariably reflects a certain interest in that particularly impending political development in Germany, the direct result of the Shylocking policy of Poincare, and usually is accompanied by a note of concern. And well may the United States, politically and economically, be concerned if Germany is driven into the camp of militant communism and places her intellectual and highly organizational ability at the disposal of the Napoleons of bolshevism in Moscow.

BOLSHEVISM EMBRACED FOR REVENGE

From an intimate knowledge of the political and eco-

Figure 6. Hearst's 'Noted Correspondent' warns of 'Sway of Soviet' in post-World War I Germany, 16 Sept. 1923. Source: K.H.v. Wiegand, 'Stage Set for German Revolution,' *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 Sep. 1923, p. 63 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457639138>.

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of … readers', as he privately lamented in 1934.[60] Although Hearst advertised that his columnists were 'asked to confirm to only one editorial policy – that of giving their best work', in reality, as David Nasaw has shown, he rejected any proposed columns or articles he personally disagreed with as 'propaganda', ensuring that his correspondents would seek out and acquire articles that fit Hearst's political bill.[61] In Hearst's conception, labelling a work as 'propaganda' had less to do with its source or veracity and more to do with its relationship to his personal beliefs; as long as what Hitler chose to espouse in his columns did not conflict with the Chief's views, Hearst's correspondents could proudly pat themselves on the back for being 'the official spokesman of the Hitlerites'.[62] As von Wiegand came to see, control over the content of the material that would appear in Hearst's columns, read by more than four million Americans, was a coveted resource and power.[63]

Von Wiegand's attempts on behalf of Hearst to purchase the rights to reprint the first English translation of Adolf Hitler's notoriously deceitful pseudo-memoir *Mein Kampf* is a prime example of the struggle between the sensationalist impulse to win the exclusive scoop and the potential issue of reproducing foreign propaganda. Probably due to scarcity of archival material, this episode is entirely absent from Hearstian scholarship.[64] In the privately held von Wiegand archive there are two surviving pages of a three-page letter from the prominent Nazi Franz Eher Nachfolger Press. They show that in 1931 Hearst's Berlin office – which von Wiegand managed – was in high-level discussions to purchase the translation and syndication rights to *Mein Kampf* in 1931 for up to $150,000 (or over $2.5 million in 2020, adjusted for inflation). The first English translations would be published only in 1933, by other publishers.[65] Prevising problems with future official 'sanitized' versions that cut some of the most virulently antisemitic passages, the Franz Eher Nachfolger Press, noting the 'tense domestic political situation in Germany', demanded the right to 'prohibit the publishing of passages which it does not consider appropriate'.[66] Ultimately, the deal fell through for unknown reasons.

As records of these negotiations appear only in this scant and well-hidden archival document, von Wiegand and Hearst were in all likelihood embarrassed about the deal. This was not the Hearst press's only time printing translated syndicated fascist propaganda; in the late 1920s it had carried the laudatory work 'Mussolini – The

[60] B. Mussolini, 'Duce reviews ten years of fascist rule', *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 Oct. 1932, p. 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458110396/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; and Karl H. von Wiegand privately held archive (hereafter 'Wiegand Archive'), Letter from Karl H von Wiegand to Charmion von Wiegand 16 Oct. 1934.

[61] 'Daily march of events page in Examiner stimulates minds', *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 Nov. 1931, p. 11 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458142533/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[62] Nasaw, *The Chief*, p. 499.

[63] A. M. Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America: the Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York, 1937), p. 217. In 1935 his daily newspapers distributed just over four million, and his Sunday newspapers distributed over five million. These statistics do not include the various syndicated columns and services that Hearst sold to other papers.

[64] The only other discovered primary source mention of Hearst's attempts to buy the English-language rights for *Mein Kampf* is from the memoir of Nazi partisan Kurt Georg Wilhelm Ludecke (K. G. W. Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler: the Story of a Nazi Who Escaped the Blood Purge* (New York, 1937)). The main monograph treatment on *Mein Kampf*'s English-language publishing history did not discuss Hearst. See J. J. Barnes, *Hitler's Mein Kampf in Britain and America: a Publishing History, 1930–39*, ed. P. P. Barnes (Cambridge, 1980).

[65] Barnes, *Hitler's Mein Kampf*, pp. 1–20.

[66] Wiegand Archive, Letter from Schickendanz (?) to Hearst Press and Universal Service, 11 Dec. 1931. *Mein Kampf* was not explicitly mentioned in this agreement, but context makes it clear that Hitler's memoir is the topic of discussion.

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Man of Destiny' by one of Mussolini's early journalism colleagues.[67] But Hitler's personal memoir and raging manifesto, for which some Americans by the end of the 1930s were snidely suggesting the alternative title *A Propagandist Tells All*, was another matter.[68] If word of their negotiations to reprint a Nazi-sanctioned, sanitized version of *Mein Kampf* had leaked to the public after 1945, or even in the late 1930s, by which time fascism foreign and domestic had become intrinsically linked to subversive propaganda, the P.R. fallout could have been devastating. Despite von Wiegand never mentioning this incident in his papers, it presumably impressed upon him the importance of the political power, and controversy, that surrounded access to Hearst's columns.

The press was also increasingly facing criticism for being out of touch with the common American. For example, more than 80 per cent of the press, with Hearst at the forefront, opposed Roosevelt in his sweeping electoral victory of 1936. Accusations of corruption inherent to the commercial nature of the news were common; 65.8 per cent of respondents to a *Fortune* magazine poll believed that publishers managed news to their own benefits.[69] Sensational journalism did not die out – Hearst's newspapers continued to grow during the early 1930s. However, other inherently more sensationalist and less journalistic mediums, such as the growing tabloid and magazine industries, began to be perceived as the more appropriate place for von Wiegand's style of journalism. By 1933 *Time* magazine was noting that Hearst's sensational style was being 'outgrown … in both directions, above and below', and hinting that proper newspaper journalism was becoming the domain of 'sober journalism [such] as that of the New York Times'.[70] In 1929 the *New York Times*'s owner Adolph Ochs, had slyly commented that although the 'chain newspapers' (a clear reference to Hearst) continued to grow, the public was beginning to understand that their chief function 'seems to be entertainment rather than news'. Entertainment for entertainment's sake was losing its place in *newspaper* culture. The public, especially the newspaper-reading public, so Ochs thought, wanted a more 'clean, dignified paper', like the *Times*.[71] As Hearst's controversial anti-communist political crusades and 'alleged leaning toward Hitler' drew public scrutiny and criticism, von Wiegand noted that Ochs's paper, 'an institution with a tradition and … [a] chief policy … to give the news', was challenging Hearst's circulation.[72] As von Wiegand sought to negotiate his place as a correspondent within both Hearst's and Hitler's empires, the very style of newspaper journalism on which he had built his career on was crumbling beneath his feet.

*

Von Wiegand's personal politics were always somewhat opaque – as a journalist, he could always criticize from afar without offering coherent alternatives. However, his experiences reporting on the tumultuous and violent affairs of interwar Europe, including the rise of Nazism in Germany, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the civil war in Spain, forged a certain internal political logic that would guide his career

[67] V. E. D. Fiori, 'Mussolini – the man of destiny', *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 July 1928, p. 19 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457510549/> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[68] W. E. Cole, 'America's greatest need', *Modern View* (St. Louis), 7 Dec. 1939, p. 27 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/569280386> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[69] W. Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago, 1986), p. 80.

[70] 'Hearst', *Time*, May 1933, pp. 19–22.

[71] 'Adolph Ochs and Morgenthau guests at Jewish luncheon', *St Louis Globe-Democrat*, 30 Jan. 1929, p. 6 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/572173416/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[72] H.I.A., Frank E. Earl Mason papers, Box 1, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Frank Mason, 27 Sept. 1939.

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into the late 1930s. Since the early post-World War I years, he had warned against the 'Sway of Soviet' throughout Europe, and thought that Nazi Germany could act as a bulwark against Soviet territorial and ideological expansion.[73] After the Nazi seizure of power in 1934, von Wiegand recognized that the 'Anglo-American-German line-up', based on shared notions of 'liberty … democratic institutions … [and] tolerance' that the correspondent had 'long hoped [for] and even worked for was now impossible'.[74] He lamented that saving the 'Western White world [from carnage]' was no longer an option, but hoped that at least the Anglo-American world could be saved 'by standing together'.

Von Wiegand's understanding of 'standing together' involved diffusing geopolitical tensions between the Axis and Allied powers. Having fallen for what Ian Kershaw identified as the 'Hitler Myth', a carefully crafted propaganda image of the Führer as a righteous leader above the squabbles and thuggery of lower-level party members, von Wiegand never gave up on the idea of negotiating with the Führer as a rational political actor. As he witnessed the horrors of modern war in the Spanish, Abyssinian and Chinese theatres, he became convinced that 'the malignant forces of war are coming more and more into a convulsive struggle with the benign but often so negative and weak influences for peace'. After his meeting with F.D.R. in 1935, he even passed on a message from the president to Mussolini in an attempt to dissuade Italy's march to invade Ethiopia.[75] By January 1938, in a typical article, he declared that 'the many wars I have seen have not made me a milk and water pacifist. They have made me a fighting pacifist'.[76] The high stakes of late interwar politics had motivated von Wiegand to further entrench himself in his old activist and sensational journalistic milieu.

This decision further wedded von Wiegand to a style of journalism on the decline. Mainstream sensational journalism of the 'dramatic, disorderly and episodic type' was losing mass respect, as journalist and press theorist Walter Lippman commented in the early 1930s. The sensation of sensationalism was beginning to wear off; a 'more sober, less … sensational, [and] increasingly reliable and comprehensive' style of journalism was overtaking the old style, at least in newsprint.[77] In a 1936 survey of ninety-nine Washington D.C. newspaper correspondents, Hearst's newspapers were deemed the 'least fair and reliable papers', with the *New York Times* ranking at the top.[78]

The self-promotional momentum of sensationalist Hearstian journalism helped lock von Wiegand further into this decaying style, as von Wiegand's reaction to the December 1937 *Panay* incident, in which a U.S. gunboat stationed in China near Nanking was (mistakenly) sunk by Japanese forces, shows. The incident had caused a diplomatic uproar and was threatening a strong American diplomatic or military response; von Wiegand pulled out all the stops in a front-page piece for the Hearst press, headlined 'U.S – Japan war is avoidable: but Wiegand asserts Tokio [Tokyo] aggression must be halted'. The article began with a bold demand:

[73] K. H. von Wiegand, 'Sway of Soviet through nation predicted for the winter by leading man', *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 Sept. 1923, p. 63 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457639138/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[74] H.I.A., K.H.V.W.P., Box 11, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Grace M. Drummond-Hay, 4 Apr. 1934.

[75] Sullivan and Cannistraro, *Il Duce's Other Woman*, pp. 470–1.

[76] K. H. von Wiegand, 'Horrors of war told', *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 Jan. 1938, p. 17 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457737239/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[77] 'Walter Lippman speaks on "epochs in journalism"', *Yale Daily News*, 13 Jan. 1931, p. 1 <http://digital.library.yale.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/yale-ydn/id/149424/rec/2> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[78] L. Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York, 1937), pp. 194–8.

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America, pause! Stop. Look. Listen.
Consider where you are going. Just think a little.
Sinister forces are at work against you. From Europe, you are being shoved toward war. From the Far East, you are being dragged and provoked toward war. From within the United States, insidious voices urge you to war.[79]

Dropping all pretence of objectivity or impartiality, von Wiegand went on to argue that the U.S. should take a non-interventionist stance towards rising global military tensions. His dispatch quickly caught the eye of Hearst, who personally commended von Wiegand for his 'very magnificent article … [that would help] America keep out of war' and gave specific instructions for how all his newspapers should print the story, including demanding they carry 'a single column picture of von Wiegand'.[80] Spurred on by Hearst's support, von Wiegand drafted further emotive non-interventionist articles, including the January 1938 article in which he declared the 'fighting pacifist' stance referenced earlier.[81] Hearst's favourable play of this article instructed von Wiegand that a less objective, more sensational and opinionated style would bring attention to his own name, quite literally, and allow him a larger platform to promote his own politics.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, von Wiegand became a figure in his own journalism in a way that he had not experienced since his days gallivanting around the world in Zeppelins in the 1920s. Some variation of 'von Wiegand says …' hung over most of his articles from this period, which had been rare previously. However, the newspapers could not decide whether he was merely the 'dean of American war correspondents', as his byline described, or one of Hearst's many 'able commentators … holders of widely divergent opinions, [who] present their views [and] invite you to draw your own conclusions', as Hearst's newspapers advertised him.[82] He was certainly publicized as a celebrity journalist – even garnering promotional material advising readers to 'watch for Ace Correspondent's Graphic Dispatches … First Tomorrow', but was he an objective, fact-reporting journalist or an opinionated subjective columnist?[83]

Von Wiegand tried to be both, even though journalistic ethics since the early 1920s had urged journalists to 'make … clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion'.[84] While von Wiegand's more explicit think pieces tended to be labelled as 'Special' dispatches, theoretically allowing readers to designate the article as opinion, he also continued engaging in more standard reporting. It is uncertain whether the average reader would have discerned these distinctions easily. On 4 December 1938 Hearst newspapers carried two articles from von Wiegand: one more objective-appearing front-page news story on a French strike, and then on page twenty-seven a more subjective-appearing opinion-feature piece on the weakness of the British Empire.[85] In April 1938

[79] K. H. von Wiegand, 'U.S.-Japan war is avoidable', *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 Dec. 1937, p. 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458071828/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[80] H.I.A., Joseph Freeman papers, Box 40, Letter from Karl H. von Wiegand to Charmion von Wiegand, 31 Dec. 1937; and U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, William Randolph Hearst papers, Carton 34, Folder 29 (International News Service), Letter from Joseph Willicombe to Seymour Berkson, 23 Dec. 1937.

[81] Von Wiegand, 'Horrors of war told'.

[82] Advertisement, *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 Apr. 1940, p. 62 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457968293/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[83] K. H. von Wiegand, 'Von Wiegand on way east to cover war', *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 Jan. 1938, p. 13 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457765906/> [accessed 12 Oct. 2020].

[84] *Code of Ethics or Canons of Journalism*.

[85] K. H. von Wiegand, 'New France rises from strike', *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 Dec. 1938, p. 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457839474/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; and K. H. von Wiegand, 'Fall of British Empire expected by dictators', *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 Dec. 1938, p. 27 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457840983/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

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the *San Francisco Examiner* even carried on its front page an interview one of its city correspondents had conducted on von Wiegand himself.[86] To a greater degree than in any previous point of his career, von Wiegand presented himself as a mix of mere reporter, opinionated columnist and source of news – not making it clear at any given moment which hat he wore.

Von Wiegand's highly activist style of journalism also saw the correspondent emmesh himself deeper into international propaganda networks. In discussions with British diplomats in Brussels in late 1937, which were sent back to the British Foreign Office marked 'very confidential', he urged the British to propose co-operation with American in repairing Sino-Japanese relations. If they did, von Wiegand hinted that he 'could help, and would see that such a statement was given the widest publicity in America'.[87] In September 1939, after the outbreak of war between Germany and Britain, von Wiegand helped the Germans cover up their accidental torpedoing of the British unarmed passenger ship *Athenia*, which carried a heavy complement of American passengers. The Germans had publicly denied it, despite widespread suspicion otherwise. Von Wiegand reached out to Grand Admiral Erich Raeder seeking to clarify Germany's side of the story in the light of the 'indignation … surging through America because of the alleged torpedoing'.[88] Raeder's apologetic responses to von Wiegand's soft questions were reprinted in the Hearst papers – and passed by the correspondent to American diplomatic officials. Raeder appreciated von Wiegand's 'desire to clarify in the American press' Germany's innocence and 'counter the abominable lies' from American media. Von Wiegand wielded every tool available to him as a foreign correspondent – his close connections with German and American diplomatic officials, in addition to his platform and status as Hearst's 'dean of foreign correspondents' – to influence German-American relations and avert America's entry into global conflicts. That he ended up passing along German propaganda, a habit von Wiegand had found unfavourable in his boss just a mere five years ago, no longer seemed to matter.

As von Wiegand, with his boss's full support, launched his political crusade, the newspaper empire he wrote for was collapsing. Hearst's exorbitant personal expenses had long put a drain on the financial resources of his newspaper empire. Additionally, by 1936 most of his newspapers were losing money. Because of his 'journalistic policies' and damaged prestige, investors were no longer interested in bailing out the 'Chief'.[89] His journalistic competition correctly observed that Hearst had 'lost control of his newspapers except as editor'.[90] As the empire's finances collapsed, several of his newspapers were sold off or consolidated. Even as von Wiegand geared up for the biggest crusade of his career, the foundations of the newspaper empire he worked for had been irrevocably damaged.

Meanwhile, alternative news media continued to make inroads on print journalism – the audiovisual mediums of radio and newsreel were not without their commentators, but the immediacy and directness of this type of medium led listeners to trust broadcasters

[86] K. McArdle, 'Von Wiegand here, reviews world affairs', *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 Apr. 1938, p. 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457594947/> [accessed 12 Oct. 2020].

[87] The National Archives of the U.K., FO 371/21017, F9571, Message from United Kingdom Delegation of Brussels to British Foreign Office, 15 Nov. 1937.

[88] *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1983), ii. 288, 841.357 Athenia/207, Telegram from the chargé in Germany (Kirk) to the secretary of state, 12 Sept. 1939 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1939v02/d255> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[89] Nasaw, *The Chief*, p. 54.

[90] Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center (First Division Museum at Cantigny Park), Robert R. McCormick papers, Business correspondence (I-60), Box 39, Letter from Mae to Colonel R McCormick, 20 June 1938.

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more than columnists.[91] Columnists ranked last (at 3.4 per cent) in a poll that asked respondents to choose which source they would be most likely to believe if they heard conflicting versions of a story; radio ranked at 40.3 per cent. Newsreels such as the famous *March of Time* series, dubbed as the pinnacle of 'pictorial journalism', were starting to master how to harmonize entertainment, news and interpretation.[92] Hearst purchased some radio interests in the 1920s and 1930s and ran a newsreel service but his newspapers were still his primary business; von Wiegand dabbled in radio journalism, broadcasting live from the Munich crisis in 1938, but he never made the systematic shift from print journalism to radio that his more remembered colleagues accomplished, such as William Shirer and 'This is London Calling' Edward R. Murrow, still referenced by modern day media critics.[93] At the same time, polling data from the late 1930s showed that Hearst's key demographic – the working class, including 'negroe', poor and lower middle class individuals – were more likely to get news from radio than newspapers.[94] More sober and reliable styles of newspaper journalism that catered to the upper classes, exemplified by the *New York Times*, tended to better weather these media transformations.

This style of journalism, which presented itself as more impartial and measured, did not tend to encourage the sensationalist jumble of tools that von Wiegand engaged in with unprecedented intensity and frequency during the late 1930s, laying bare his own politics. Drawing inspiration from his sensationalist turn-of-the-century journalistic training, von Wiegand tried to confront the looming crisis as a reporter, correspondent, interviewer, informal diplomat and propagandist. He was unable, nor did he make a strong effort, to sharply distinguish between these roles. Von Wiegand's tendency to conflate his various roles all converged during his interview with Hitler in June 1940, to destructive effect for his reputation and credibility.

*

From the early stages of planning his interview with Hitler, von Wiegand knew that the interview would become a part of the Nazis' propaganda and diplomacy. Amid the Nazi invasion of France in early June 1940, after a conversation with an American 'government official', von Wiegand approached the German Armed Forces with the message 'Germany should now offer peace on generous terms; an offer of peace by the führer would find the most ready support in the U.S.A.', but warned that 'if such a peace is not attained in 1940 … the U.S.A will then enter the war on the side of the allies'.[95] Within a week, he received a phone call from the German Embassy in Rome inviting him to interview Hitler on the battlefront. After a missed flight, a train, a plane, two separate car rides and a luncheon with Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, von Wiegand arrived at a hilltop red-brick Belgium château for the most important, and controversial, interview of his career.

[91] H. Cantril and M. Strunk, *Public Opinion, 1935–1946* (Princeton, 1951), p. 525. A prime example of the phenomenon of the public's faith in radio broadcasts is Orson Welles's infamous broadcasting of *The War of the Worlds*.

[92] R. Fielding, *The March of Time 1935-1951* (New York, 1978), pp. 74–5.

[93] Paley Center for Media Archive, N.B.C. Red, 'International broadcast from Prague: Karl von Wiegand', 15 Sept. 1938, 1:00 p.m. For a prominent example of the strength of the 'Murrow Boys' in public media consciousness, see B. Smith, 'Americans don't trust the media anymore. So why do they trust the Cuomos?', *New York Times*, 5 Apr. 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/05/business/media/brothers-cuomo-andrew-chris.html> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[94] Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, p. 524.

[95] Office of Naval Intelligence, *War Diary: German Naval Staff Operations Division* (Washington, D.C., 1948), p. 16 <https://archive.org/details/wardiarygermann101940germ/page/16> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; and K. H. von Wiegand, 'Paris victory march Hitler aim, writer told', *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 June 1940, p. 19 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/457962770/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

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Figure 7. The small Belgian château in Lausprelle where Hitler received von Wiegand. Source: author's photograph.

As von Wiegand himself described it, the interview itself was clearly a manufactured propagandistic enterprise. A whole assortment of Nazi officials attended the interview, including von Ribbentrop and Reichspress chief Dr. Otto Dietrich, but military men were absent – perfect for an interview that would emphasize German peace and diplomacy. The interview was a curious mix of friendly conversation read from sheets of paper, formal interview and prepared speech. Evidently, the interview was prepared and curated by some apparatus of the Nazi regime, as officials had drafted in advance a set of ten questions and official answers, in both English and German.[96]

The interview was part of Hitler's concentrated propaganda program and diplomatic plan to make peace with Britain and convince the U.S. he had no plans to invade across the ocean, thus ensuring non-intervention by the industrial behemoth.[97] One of the prepared questions presumed his pacifist stance as guaranteed, asking 'What are

[96] H.I.A., K.H.V.W.P., Box 32, '"Europe for the Europeans" typescript', 11 June 1940.

[97] R. North, *The Many Not the Few: the Stolen History of the Battle of Britain* (New York, 2013), p. 33; J. Lukacs, *The Duel: the Eighty-Day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler* (New Haven, Conn., 2001), pp. 120–1; and B. Simms, *Hitler: a Global Biography* (New York, 2019), pp. 383–4.

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the führer's conceptions of a peace in Europ[e] and in the world which will last for tow [*sic*] to three generations?' Proclaiming, 'The Americas to the Americans, Europe to the Europeans', Hitler emphasized that 'at no time has Germany had territorial or political interests in the American continent … nor has Germany any such interest now.'[98] However, just as Germany disavowed military intervention in the Americas, Hitler declared that a reciprocal Monroe Doctrine of American non-intervention in European/German affairs had now to be 'mutually observed'. Nefarious, warmongering propaganda had also soiled peaceful relations with England, Hitler proclaimed, which had declared war against Germany on 'ridiculous and stupid pretexts'. 'It has never been my aim or intention to destroy the British Empire', Hitler emphasized. 'There is only one German peace aim and that is the establishment of peace'.

Von Wiegand conceived of the interview as both a major diplomatic and journalistic coup. He was well aware, as he confidentially told American diplomats shortly afterwards, that the Nazi regime had offered the interview for two main reasons: 'to pacify public opinion in the United States' and 'to induce England to make overtures for peace'.[99] Upon returning to the United States in the fall of 1940, he frequented New York dinner parties and, according to a local newspaper, proclaimed that the American people did not know 'the truth about Hitler or his regime'.[100] He even believed the knowledge and 'truth' he had accumulated through his interview worthy of attention of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), providing the organization with a full report of his observations of the European scene, which was sent to F.D.R.[101]

In von Wiegand's goal to shift American public opinion about Nazi geopolitical intentions through his interview, he failed utterly; by the late 1930s, the mainstream American public was well primed to associate non-interventionist agitation and propaganda with subversive foreign and domestic fascism. Most Americans, despite their strong opposition to U.S intervention in the war, had by the summer of 1940 hardened their hearts to Hitler; in 1938, after Hitler's invasion of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, 92 per cent of Americans refused to believe Hitler's claim to have no further territorial ambitions, and by the outbreak of war in 1939, 83 per cent favoured the Allies winning.[102] 'It would be a strange man indeed who could stomach their [the Nazis'] creed and attitudes', remarked even the strongly non-interventionist and anti-Roosevelt *Chicago Tribune* in 1939.[103] Even before the outbreak of war in February 1939, 69 per cent of Americans thought that if European war broke out, the country should 'do everything possible to help England and France win, except go to war ourselves'. The work of overt and covert Nazi-sympathetic groups in the United States, such as the openly Hitler-supporting German-American Bund and an inept Nazi spy ring discovered by F.B.I. agents in the late 1930s, further convinced Americans that the fascist powers were out to undermine and destroy American society. The Hollywood

[98] K. H. von Wiegand, 'Hitler says: no interference in Americas', *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 June 1940, p. 1 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458001759/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[99] National Archives (College Park), 7400.0011, European War 1938/2855, Telegram from Heath to secretary of state, 13 June 1940.

[100] 'Opinion', *New York PM*, 2 Sept. 1940, p. 2.

[101] F.D.R.P.L., Franklin D. Roosevelt papers as president, Official file 10b (Department of Justice, F.B.I.), Box 16, F.B.I. Report 314, 18 Sept. 1940.

[102] S. Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (New York, 2001), p. 20; and G. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971* (3 vols., New York, 1972), i. 125.

[103] Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, p. 20.

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Figure 8. Hitler (left) explains his point to von Wiegand (right) in June 1940 interview. Photo taken by the German dictator's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann. Source: Karl H. von Wiegand privately held archive.

depiction of the Nazi spy plot, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, taught its American audience to be suspicious of the German-printed non-interventionist propaganda 'designed to fundamentally alter the ideas of a kindly and peace-loving people' flooding over in boatloads to America. [104]

The interview was largely met with ridicule and disbelief in American press circles. F.D.R., a master manipulator of the media, set the tone by declaring in a press conference that the interview brought up 'recollections' of the German dictator's previous broken promises.[105] A qualitative glance at the avalanche of negative editorials and opinion pieces that followed the interview suggests this view of the press response. Von Wiegand's interview was frequently printed with, or over the ensuing days quickly followed by, some form of criticism. Papers commented that Hitler's 'grim record speaks for itself' and reprinted the interview under headlines such as 'Hitler has no designs on America – but that's only his side of [the] story'.[106]

Part of the interview's negative reception can be attributed merely to American public opinion's souring towards Nazi Germany, but the journalistic circumstances surrounding the interview also raised suspicion. One contemporary scholar of public opinion astutely observed, without the benefit of the archival material to prove it, that

[104] M. Krimes, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939) Shooting Script*, ed. J. Wexley (Alexandria, Va., 2009).

[105] F.D.R.P.L., Press conferences of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933–1945, Press conference no. 652, 14 June 1940 <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/pc/pc0102.pdf> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[106] B. Nover, 'Nazi blueprint: Hitler's plans for the Americas', *Washington Post*, 17 June 1940, p. 7; and R. O. Zollinger, 'Hitler has no design on America – but that's only his side of story', *Austin American-Statesman*, 24 June 1940, p. 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/366707301/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

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the interview had 'converted the interviewer into a mere conveyor of an oral Nazi handout'.[107] The prominent and well-syndicated columnist Drew Pearson speculated that von Wiegand's decade-long ties to Germany helped him be 'selected as the man who could best put across a message' from Hitler about Germany's peaceful intentions towards the United States.[108] One Tennessee newspaper, citing von Wiegand's own admission in the article that Hitler had read prepared answers from a sheet of paper, prefaced the interview with a warning that the 'typical example of Hitler propaganda … a tissue of stupid lies and distortions' was printed for its importance only as 'news', not as truth.[109]

American readers were right to associate the interview with 'Hitler propaganda'. German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbles noted in his diary on 14 June that the interview was a part of 'our sharp polemics against England using … propaganda'.[110] Furthermore, an 'authorized translation of Chancellor Hitler's statement' was broadcast on German shortwave stations.[111] The Germans also broadcast the interview, or information about it, to England, occupied Denmark, occupied Holland, neutral Greece, Axis Hungary and British India.[112] The Berlin Deutsche Informationsstelle (German Information Centre), tasked with creating propaganda for an international market, also picked up the interview, creating and distributing pamphlets of the interview in at least ten different European languages.[113] The German consulate in New York reprinted the interview in a 100,000-copy edition of their propaganda bulletin *Facts in Review*, describing the interview as a 'clear answer to wide-spread propaganda about alleged Germans intentions concerning the Western Hemisphere'.[114]

Von Wiegand's interview was also taken up by the burgeoning German-funded non-interventionist domestic propaganda campaign. Key to this operation was George Sylvester Viereck, a former Hearst columnist, German-American fascist go-between and, according to one scholar, the 'single most important source of U.S. political intelligence for the Third Reich'.[115] Under German funding and instruction, Viereck was engaged in a scheme to convince non-interventionist congressmen to use congressional

[107] S. A. Freifeld, 'Nazi press agentry and the American press', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vi (1942), 221–35.

[108] D. Pearson and R. S. Allen, 'Washington merry-go-round', *Messenger-Inquirer* (Owensboro, Ky.), 19 June 1940, p. 5 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376140532/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[109] 'Hitler lies', *Nashville Tennessean*, 15 June 1940, p. 4 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/161154533/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[110] *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels Online* [The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels Online], 14 June 1940 <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/tjgo/html> [accessed 3 June 2021].

[111] *Facts in Review*, 1 July 1940, p. 282.

[112] Radio sources from Monitoring Service of the B.B.C., London, *Daily Digest of World Broadcasts* (1942), microform, reel 15, 'Von Wiegand's interview with Hitler', Germany to England broadcast (xv), 15 June 1940; 'Fuhrer gives interview: Berlin statement', occupied territories to Denmark broadcast (viii), 17 June 1940; reel 16, 'Brazil: Hitler's declaration', Germany to France broadcast (vi), 17 June 1940; reel 15, 'Hitler's interview: American reactions', Germany to Greece broadcast (vi), 15 June 1940; reel 16, 'Fuehrer gives interview: Spanish press', occupied territories to Holland broadcast (vi), 16 June 1940; reel 15, 'Hitler gives an interview', Germany to India broadcast (ii), 15 June 1940; reel 16, 'Fuehrer gives interview: Moscow press', Germany to Hungary broadcast (ii), 16 June 1940; reel 16.

[113] An exhaustive search on WorldCat and the Deutsche National Bibliothek Online Catalog found editions in English, German, French, Hungarian, Swedish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian and Croatian:
<https://www.worldcat.org/search?q=ti%3A%22von+wiegand%22+hitler&qt=advanced&dblist=638>; <https://www.worldcat.org/search?q=ti%3Af%C3%BChrer+1940+wiegand&qt=advanced&dblist=638>;<https://www.worldcat.org/title/europa-europenilor-adolf-hitler-despre-situatia-mondiala-in-timpul-campaniei-din-franta-un-interview-cu-karl-v-wiegand-cartierul-general-al-fuehrerului-11-junie-1940/oclc/72388445&referer=brief_results>; <https://portal.dnb.de/opac.htm?method=simpleSearch&query=72388444> [all accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[114] *Facts in Review*, 1 July 1940, p. 282.

[115] B. W. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends: the Third Reich's Supporters in the United States* (New York, 2018).

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franking privileges to inexpensively print and mail out massive quantities of the official *Congressional Record* – filled with inserts of pro-German propaganda read into it by his allied congressmen. One Viereck-allied congressman, Montana Republican Jacob Thorkelson, an antisemitic, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*-believing congressman, was led to insert von Wiegand's interview as an addendum into the *Congressional Record*. Above von Wiegand's interview, Thorkelson added the preface that 'the constant [anti-Nazi] propaganda … divert[s] public attention … from the international financiers who fear that their power to dominate the world gold will be destroyed should the Bank of England lose this war'.[116] Thorkelson's office alone ordered five thousand additional reprints. The interview, bearing von Wiegand's byline, was sent out under the name of this 'hero of anti-Jewish agitators', as contemporaries recalled Thorkelson.[117] By the late 1940s, interviewing Hitler and uncritically passing his words onto the American public was a dubious process. In June 1941 Hitler sat for his next and final interview with an American; the magazine that carried the interview prefaced its article with a recognition of the 'grave responsibility' in carrying the interview and did so only 'because it is confident its readers can intelligently recognize this interview for what it really is – an essential part of Hitler's political strategy of "softening up" the U.S. with large denials of aggressive intentions'.[118] Couching non-interventionist sympathies in seemingly 'objective' interviews with the Führer of the German nation was fast becoming unacceptable to the American public – and raising suspicions about the motives of von Wiegand's journalism.

It is unclear whether von Wiegand was an outright Nazi agent, but the archival record suggests at the very least a strong professional relationship between von Wiegand and the Nazi regime during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The most damning evidence comes from a September 1946 investigation by the Department of Justice into Nazi fifth column penetration into American politics. It contained testimony from Paul K. Schmidt, von Ribbentrop's chief press spokesman, that von Wiegand's articles 'were highly regarded by Hitler and also by [von] Ribbentrop', who 'saw in him a man who wanted to keep America out of war and who could help us in this task'. The report also alleged that senior German propaganda official Hans Fritzsche had remembered receiving a telegram during the war from a 'very old and well-known American journalist' based in China requesting to get on the Propaganda Office's payroll. Fritzsche claimed that Goebbels showed the telegram to 'the Führer [,] as he knew the man'. Fritzsche recalled, 'I think this man was von Wiegand.'[119]

If Fritzsche, who recalled honestly and accurately these statements during the high-pressure context of the Nuremberg trials, then at some point during 1940 or 1941 von Wiegand openly offered his journalistic services while stationed in East Asia to the Nazi propaganda bureau for a price. Although Fritzsche's allegation cannot be completely corroborated, evidence from chief propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels's diary is more damning. In response to one of von Wiegand's then recent articles, Goebbels wrote in 1941 that 'Wiegand is no longer quoted in our press, as not to *compromise* him'.[120] Goebbels often admired the power of von Wiegand's journalism as propaganda in his

[116] *Congressional Record (Senate)*, 15 June 1940.
[117] G. Britt, *The Fifth Column Is Here* (New York, 1940), p. 112.
[118] J. Cudahy, 'Hitler on Americas', *LIFE Magazine*, 9 June 1941, pp. 34–6.
[119] O. J. Rogge, *The Official German Report: Nazi Penetration, 1924 to 1942, Pan-Arabism, 1939 to Today* (New York, 1962), pp. 233–8.
[120] *The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels*, 28 Oct. 1941 (emphasis added).

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Figure 9. Von Wiegand (left) with Nazi officials on the balcony of the Crillon Hotel in Paris, a few hours after the Germans invaded the French capital. Source: Karl H. von Wiegand privately held archive.

diary, remarking that 'these interviews from a reputable journalist, who has a great name in the world, serve us extremely well right now'.[121]

Von Wiegand's murky propaganda relationship with the Nazi regime caught the attention of Anglo-American intelligence agencies. By mid 1941 the British Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.), 'Churchill's Secret Army' tasked with espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in Nazi occupied or influenced lands, was paying attention. Operatives in New York realized that the Axis-sympathetic articles von Wiegand was writing from Shanghai were 'doing great harm [to the] Allied cause in America', and asked its Singapore division to 'interfere with his activities'. However, cautioning that 'Hearst thinks highly of this man and would entertain nothing against him', the New York branch offered only 'to publish attack if given factual material … reasonable indication that he is a German agent', suggesting as damning material von Wiegand's assistant and extramarital love interest Lady Grace Drummond-Hay. The London branch tasked the Singapore branch with finding smear information on von Wiegand for 'publication in rival American press', but never received it.[122] Since June 1940 the F.B.I. had also been monitoring von Wiegand – over the next twenty years, they would create a 419 page case file.[123] His journalism also caught the attention of the Anti-Nazi Sectarian League,

[121] *The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels*, 1 Oct. 1941.

[122] The National Archives of the U.K., HS 1/205, Cables between Singapore, New York and London branches of S.O.E., 6 to 26 June 1941. See also B. Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai* (Boston, Mass., 1999).

[123] Declassification of the file, which will make the contents of the file open for research, is ongoing. Author's correspondence with National Archives and Records Administration, Special Access and F.O.I.A. Branch (RD-F), 11 July 2019.

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a group originally begun by Jewish liberals in New York in the 1930s to advocate for boycotting Nazi Germany, who decided in 1959 to conduct an investigation of von Wiegand's Nazi connections from the late 1930s and early 1940s. Based on a review mostly of published memoirs, without benefiting from the wealth of archival evidence that has surfaced over the past six decades, the author of the report believed the evidence 'DEFINITELY warrants charging [von Wiegand with] violation of criminal provision of three … Fedwarl [*sic*] laws', namely the Logan Act, the Trading With the Enemy Act and the Foreign Agents' Registration Act.[124] The available archival evidence does not explain why the Anti-Nazi Sectarian League, which in the post-World War II era concerned itself with human rights and political extremism, decided to investigate von Wiegand so far after his alleged crimes. It is possible that his journalism in the Cold War period, in which von Wiegand continued to engage with and support fascist and authoritarian leaders, led the organization to examine his past work.

It was not just intelligence and activist organizations who doubted von Wiegand's work; the broader American public also came to deem the correspondent a 'Press Agent for Hitler'. In January 1941 a U.S. senator publicly warned against the work from this 'fifth columnist', who was producing non-interventionist propaganda, noting that 'if Dr. Goebbels himself had written it, [it] could not have been … more helpful to the Nazi cause.'[125] One Australian newspaper even carried an unflattering cartoon caricature of 'Adolf's Booster', declaring him a 'Press Agent for Hitler'.[126] Furthermore, the only declassified page from von Wiegand's F.B.I. file is a single letter from a disgruntled reader and concerned citizen urging the F.B.I. to investigate the potential 'Representative … of a Foreign Nation', who was probably 'propagandizing under German motives, if not under German aid'.[127] It is unlikely that this is the only citizen complaint in the approximately 419-page file.

*

The trajectory of von Wiegand's career reflects a cosy and unnerving relationship between sensationalism, propaganda and totalitarian strongman politics in the first half of the twentieth century. This is not to say that propaganda or passionate journalism had no place in mainstream American society by the 1930s or 1940s; Americans simply had developed a hardened aversion towards overtly propagandistic mass media, particularly involving foreign affairs. As one film critic from the *New York Times*, the standard-bearer of a more sober style of journalism, noted when reviewing a heavy-handed Soviet propaganda film in 1936, propaganda was most effective towards Americans when wielded with 'the icy precision of a surgeon's scalpel', not with the 'butcher's cleaver'.[128]

This is also not to say that foreign propaganda had no place in more 'respectable' sober journalism outlets; the infamous spread of Soviet disinformation propaganda about the

[124] Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Records of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights, Box 319, Folder 20, Karl von Wiegand investigation, 30 May 1959.

[125] *Congressional Record (Senate)*, 2 Jan. 1941.

[126] 'Press agent for Hitler', *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), 15 Feb. 1941, p. 10 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/234608570> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[127] F.B.I., F.O.I.A. vault, William Randolph Hearst file, Part 1, p. 40 <https://vault.fbi.gov/William%20Randolph%20Hearst%2C%20Sr./William%20Randolph%20Hearst%2C%20Sr.%20Part%201%20of%205/view> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[128] F. S. Nugent, 'The screen; "Der Kampf", at the Cameo, is an anti-Nazi film dramatizing the Reichstag fire of 1933', *New York Times*, 11 Sept. 1936, p. 29 <https://www.nytimes.com/1936/09/11/archives/the-screen-der-kampf-at-the-cameo-is-an-antinazi-film-dramatizing.html> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; and T. P. Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933–1939* (New York, 2013), p. 189.

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Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932–3 by *New York Times* and Pulitzer Prize-winning Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty illustrates this. But Duranty was largely able to escape serious contemporary criticism, perhaps because of the veil of sobriety and professionalism surrounding his work.[129] Although Americans were clearly not able to detect all foreign propaganda, the gut-wrench aversion to overtly subversive foreign propaganda – which was most clearly identifiable in the sensational press – that hardened in the American consciousness during the late 1930s proved useful. As historians such as Bradley Hart have well documented, fascist powers did make serious, if largely ineffective, attempts to subvert American politics through concerted propaganda campaigns and fifth column activities. But Americans' growing wariness towards misinformation and the problems inherent towards mass media, spawned from World War I and hardening throughout the interwar period, also impacted mid-twentieth-century journalism on a more fundamental level.

By the time of von Wiegand's death in 1961, his style of blatantly sensational journalism – forged in what Teddy Roosevelt had called the 'fiery discontent' of the progressive age – had fallen out of mainstream respectability. Originally perceived as a tool for populist crusading, a force that could concentrate and wield the unruly emotions of a burgeoning modern society, by the mid twentieth century it was perceived as a corrupted and un-civic journalistic liability. This transformation was directly related to what some scholars have deemed the 'postwar decline of newspapers'.[130]

The reasons for this decline are complex and involve competition from new forms of mass media and a growing critique of the monopolistic concentration of American newspapers. However, within this critique, the issue of sensationalism was directly linked to the structural economic issues of the American newspaper business. One former Hearst reporter noted that 'the whole process [of choosing news stories] consists in finding or creating sensations to exploit. The object being to sell papers, not to maintain just values, "news" is not that which informs but that which sells another newspaper to a badgered reader'.[131]

The tension between the commercial and civic responsibilities of journalism even caught the eye of some press barons, such as the founder of *Time* magazine, Henry R Luce. In 1937 he perceived that the 'present crisis in world affairs may be described as a crisis in journalism'. Although the American press, unlike those under totalitarian regimes, was 'free – economically free to engage all the talent in the world, free to commit moral and intellectual suicide, free to pander to the people … and seduce them to their own enslavement', citizens could not learn to 'govern themselves in an industrial society' unless they were presented with 'the facts, the significant facts, the difficult complicated facts of industry and finance and politics and technology'.[132]

A few years later Luce funded a commission of intellectuals to examine the problem of a free commercial press in a democratic country, which ultimately decided that 'owners and managers of the press' had 'responsibilities … to their consciences and the common good for the formation of public opinion'.[133] In a specific section of their report dedicated to 'scoops and sensations', the committee criticized that 'to attract the

[129] S. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, the New York Times Man in Moscow* (New York, 1990).

[130] D. R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945–1965* (Westport, Conn., 2006).

[131] G. Marion, *The 'Free Press': Portrait of a Monopoly* (New York, 1946), p. 15 <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/miun.atf9522.0001.001> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[132] 'American press facing a crisis', *The Morning News* (Wilmington, Del.), 3 Sept. 1937, p. 20 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/160557251/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[133] Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Chicago, 1947), p. 50 <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.211705> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

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maximum audience, the press emphasizes the exceptional rather than the representative, the sensational rather than the significant.'[134] By the mid 1940s, if not earlier, Americans were seriously re-evaluating the place of a crassly commercial sensational press in a democratic society.

This is not to say that sensationalist media disappeared from the American media landscape. Far from it; media that was often more blatantly sensationalist than von Wiegand's and Hearst's styles thrived, particularly in tabloid and magazine journalism. Hearst had dabbled in tabloid journalism in the 1920s with his *Daily Mirror* – recognizing that such a style called for '90 per cent entertainment, 10 per cent information'[135] and that its 'success … is largely [dependent on] pictures'[136] – and held some magazines, but the bread and butter of his empire and brand name was still newspapers. Reflecting on Hearst's forced sale of his prized *New York American* during his economic crisis in 1937, a contemporary critic from *Time* magazine noted that while the 'more sedate and reliable Times, Herald and Tribune [had] crowded the World and the American[137] down upon the subway trade … the tabloid news [had come] to take away that trade' and that by timidly entering the tabloid field in response, Hearst was 'really competing with himself'.[138] As another writer from *Time*, a magazine that synthesized journalism, striking visuals and entertainment far more effectively than Hearst's newspapers, had presciently noted a few years earlier, Hearst's style of journalism would be 'outgrown … in both directions, above and below'.[139]

The foreign correspondent, with purview over the exciting and exotic foreign world, held out against the anti-sensational tide in newspaper culture better than other journalists, but was ultimately not immune. Further research is necessary on the sparsely studied subject of foreign correspondence to determine how foreign correspondents, even while experiencing some degree of cultural stardom, navigated the minefield of post-World War I journalism. This article also suggests the need to interrogate the historical relationships between the style of journalism and its perceived trustworthiness; did the professionalization and soberization of mainstream American print journalism by the mid twentieth century improve its quality or trustworthiness? This issue takes on an increasing urgency in the face of contemporary society's deep divisions over what news organizations (and their respective styles) to trust – and distrust of journalism at large.[140]

This article has also suggested that Hearst, via his correspondents, held deep and multifaceted diplomatic and propaganda ties to fascist actors – ties that were much deeper and more formalized than scholarship on Hearst and his newspaper empire

[134] Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press*, p. 55.

[135] S. M. Bessie, *Jazz Journalism: the Story of the Tabloid Newspapers* (New York, 1938), p. 159.

[136] Yale University, Sterling Memorial Library, Box 7, Than Vanneman Ranck papers, Letter from William Randolph Hearst to all editors and publishers of Hearst Newspapers, 12 March 1937.

[137] The *New York World*, a Pulitzer paper, and the *New York American*, a Hearst paper.

[138] 'The press: American's end', *Time*, 5 July 1937 <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,770685-1,00.html> [accessed 2 Apr. 2021].

[139] 'Hearst', *Time*, May 1933.

[140] Gallup/Knight Foundation, 'Indicators of news media trust' (12 Sept. 2018) <https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media_elements/files/000/000/216/original/KnightFoundation_Panel4_Trust_Indicators_FINAL.pdf> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]. According to this Gallup/Knight foundation survey, 69% of U.S. adults, and 94% of Republicans, found their overall trust in U.S. news media decreasing over the past ten years. E. Guskin, 'Americans are scattered and divided over which source they most trust for news', *Washington Post*, 19 Dec. 2018 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/12/19/americans-are-scattered-divided-over-which-source-they-most-trust-news/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]. Among those respondents to the Washington Post who listed cable as their most trusted news medium, 22% of republicans selected Fox News as most trustworthy, versus 1% of Democrats. C.N.N. was selected as most reliable by 19% of Democrats and 3% of Republicans.

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Figure 10. Von Wiegand (right) confers with an unknown man, possibly in early 1960s Japan, in the only known surviving colour photograph of the 'Dean of Foreign Correspondents'. Source: Karl H. von Wiegand privately held archive.

has hitherto suggested.[141] Further research is necessary to determine the full extent of Hearst's connections with fascist propaganda machinations – the major weak area that reviewers of the otherwise well-received biography of Hearst by David Nasaw noted.[142] Although some research has begun to expose how 'respectable' news organizations, such as the A.P., became implicated in furthering Nazi propaganda interests, further work is necessary to understand how a particular media organization's sensational style, or lack thereof, influenced their dealings with fascist politics.[143]

When von Wiegand died in June 1961, just short of his eighty-seventh birthday, the Hearst papers, by this point a mere shadow of their former strength, ran a laudatory obituary complete with official condolence statements from the Hearst family and corporation.[144] The more 'respectable' *New York Times* ran only the short A.P. wire obituary. It fell to Luce's *Time* magazine – as representative of the next generation of

[141] The only major work to approach this issue has been L. Pizzitola, *Hearst Over Hollywood Power, Passion, and Propaganda in the Movies* (New York, 2002). However, Pizzitola considered Hearst's fascist connections in a more polemical and biographical light rather than as a systemic issue within American journalism and society.

[142] E. Harold, 'Press baron's progress', *New York Times*, 2 July 2000 <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/07/02/books/press-baron-s-progress.html> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

[143] Associated Press, 'Covering tyranny: the AP and Nazi Germany (1933–1945)' (2017) <https://www.ap.org/about/history/ap-in-germany-1933-1945/ap-in-germany-report.pdf> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021]; H. Scharnberg, 'Das A und P der Propaganda. Associated Press und die nationalsozialistische Bildpublizistik', *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe*, xiii (2016), doi: 10.14765/zzf.dok-1413; and N. Domeier, 'Geheime Fotos. Die Kooperation von Associated Press und NS-Regime (1942–1945)', *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe*, xiv (2017), doi: 10.14765/zzf.dok.4.967.

[144] W. H. White, 'Famed writer von Wiegand dies', *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1961, p. 28 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/458913117/> [accessed 7 Apr. 2021].

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media that had helped undercut von Wiegand's place in print journalism – to bid the reporter farewell in breathless prose reminiscent of his own style:

> Last April, fiddle-footed as ever, he flew out of the Sahara, chasing down one more story from the Far East. But the hunt was over. Stricken with pneumonia in Tokyo, he was rushed by plane to a hospital in Zurich, his summer home. There, Karl von Wiegand died last week at 86, the last of his breed, a legend somewhat larger than life.[145]

A legend *somewhat* larger than life. With this epitaph, the anonymous *Time* author perfectly encapsulated the ambivalence of the legacy of von Wiegand and his peculiar style of journalism. Half tipping his cap, half sneering, he paid homage to the 'Sunday-supplement excitement' of a bygone era while backhandedly questioning whether the 'old man and his improbable stories [that] sounded like a relic from a world that never was' were at times too good to be true. But it was precisely this enigmatic and thrilling ethos that defined both the rise and the fall of the captivating and sensational, yet deeply suspect style of the 'Dean of Foreign Correspondents'.

[145] 'Larger than life' (see above, n. 16).

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