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Fake News in Germany from Hitler to now

François Genton

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Fake News in the German 20th century Dictatorships



Adolf Hitler 1 September 1939 „Seit 5 Uhr 45 wird zurückgeschossen“. (Since 5.45 we have been shooting back)



Walter Ulbricht (SED) 15 June 1961: „Niemand hat die Absicht, eine Mauer zu errichten“
(Nobody intends to build a wall...)

The Berlin Wall was built on 13 August 1961...

Fake News in the German democracy

2011 H4 outbreak... *The German health authorities, without results of ongoing tests, incorrectly linked the O104 serotype to cucumbers imported from Spain...* (51 deaths in Germany) Hamburg had to pay a compensation

to the Spanish farmers (400-700.000 €...)

The agriculture minister of Lower Saxony identified an organic farm in Bienenbüttel, Lower Saxony, Germany, which produces a variety of sprouted foods, as the likely source of the E. coli outbreak...



The moral of the story: Old prejudice... We are clean, it must come from the dirty southern part of Europe...

Fake News in the German democracy: Claas Relotius in 2018



Die Geschichte „Jaegers Grenze“, erschienen am 17. November 2018. ließ alles

A brilliant young journalist (born in 1985, studies in journalism in Hamburg... the heart of the German press)

Best newspapers and magazines in Germany and Switzerland publish his texts (SZ, Spiegel, NZZ, FAZ...)

Falsified his articles « on a great scale »! Exposed in 2018 by a frustrated colleague – with a Spanish name... and born in 1972 in Spain: Juan Moreno - of the magazine « Der Spiegel »

Wrote what German educated readers from the upper middle-class would like to read... then: anti-Trump reports about border militias in the US, a town sign with the sentence: « Mexikans keep out », the death penalty in the US, honest syrian migrants in Germany...

The moral of the story: Politically overcorrect discourse... and in fact the implementation of an old principle of national preference...

Fake News in the German democracy: Claas Relotius in 2018

- ✓ Fake news work only if they address preexistent widespread opinions – if they meet exactly what large swaths of the population wish to read, hear or see...
- ✓ For instance Islamist propaganda cannot presently reach a large majority of people educated in overwhelmingly non-Islamic regions...
- ✓ Fake news are conveyed by many means and actors: governments, lobbies, the press, the social networks...
- ✓ New « actors » like algorithms do not fundamentally change the influence of « fake news » on public opinion – but the actors change...

The most efficient way to fight fake news: Education, « Sapere aude », Dare to think for yourself! (Immanuel Kant quoting Horace in 1784)