

Sunday June 21st 2009

- Home
- This week's print edition
- Daily news analysis
- Opinion
 - All opinion
 - Leaders
 - Letters to the Editor
 - Blogs
 - Columns
 - KAL's cartoons
 - Correspondent's diary
 - Economist debates

- World politics
 - All world politics
 - Politics this week
 - International
 - United States
 - The Americas
 - Asia
 - Middle East and Africa
 - Europe
 - Britain

- Special reports
- Business and finance
 - About our new page
 - All business and finance
 - Business this week
 - Economics focus
 - Management
 - Business education
 - Economics A-Z

- Markets and data
 - All markets and data
 - Daily chart
 - Weekly indicators
 - World markets
 - Currencies
 - Rankings
 - Big Mac index

- Science and technology
 - About our new page
 - All science and technology
 - Technology Quarterly
 - Technology Monitor

- Books and arts
 - All books and arts
 - Style guide

- People
 - People
 - Obituaries

- Diversions

- Audio and video
 - Audio and video library
 - Audio edition

- The World In
 - The World in 2009
 - The World in 2008
 - The World in 2007
 - The World in 2006
 - The World in 2005
 - The World in 2004

- Research tools
 - All research tools
 - Articles by subject
 - Backgrounders
 - Economics A-Z

Europe

German media

The mirror crack'd

Jan 10th 2008 | BERLIN
 From *The Economist* print edition

A brave tale of journalists who sacked their editor



Editors in danger too

year ever.

Founded in 1947, even before the Federal Republic of Germany's official birth, *Der Spiegel* made its name by tormenting the Adenauer government, promoting dialogue with the communist east and dredging up scandals. In 1950 the Bundestag even convened a special committee to deal with its allegations that parliamentarians were bribed to choose Bonn as Germany's capital. Rudolf Augstein, the founding editor, gave *Spiegel's* staff half the company's shares in 1974.

Mr Aust's detractors think he has betrayed the Augstein legacy. To fight off *Focus*, they say, he made *Spiegel* less political and more superficial. Rather than crusading from the left, *Spiegel* launched tirades from the right, especially against the Social Democrat-led government of Gerhard Schröder in 1998-2005. "The fish rots from the head," complained Augstein's daughter, Franziska, in 2005. Worse, Mr Aust was rude to his staff. They have retaliated by ending his tenure early, in 2008 rather than 2010. One insider sees this as a last spasm of rebellion by ageing "68ers".

IF THE editor mangles this article, his correspondent can do little but fume. That would not be true at *Der Spiegel* ("The Mirror"), Germany's leading newsweekly, where the staff are in control. They have just abruptly dethroned their long-serving editor, Stefan Aust.

Mr Aust had made *Spiegel* shine. He was hired in 1994 to strike back against *Focus*, a colourful upstart, which he managed by livening up the magazine's appearance, grooming its prose and publishing more provocative covers. *Spiegel* now leads the newsweekly pack, selling 1m copies and having lost fewer readers than either *Focus* or *Stern*. *Spiegel* television, which Mr Aust once ran, is thriving; the *Spiegel* website (which is not his patch) has crushed all rivals. The magazine has lost political clout, but it still reaches the elite, says Henning Kornfeld of the *Kress Report*, which studies the media. Financially, 2007 was the *Spiegel* group's best



- Recommend (6)
- E-mail
- Share
- Print
- Reprints & permissions

Related Items

Country briefing
 Germany

Websites
Der Spiegel has a dossier about Rudolf Augstein. *Die Welt*, a German newspaper, discusses the search for a new editor. See also *Focus* and *Stern*. (All sites in German.)

Advertisement

Important calls reach you wherever you are.

see how Avaya can help >

Unified Communications by AVAYA

economics A-Z
Special reports
Style guide

Country briefings
All country briefings
China
India
Brazil
United States
Russia

My account home

Newsletters and alerts
Manage my newsletters
Manage my e-mail alerts
Manage my RSS feeds
Manage special-offer alerts
More »

Print subscriptions
Subscribe to *The Economist*
Renew my subscription
Change my print subscription delivery, billing or e-mail address
Pay my bill
Activate premium online access
Report a missing copy
Suspend my subscription
More »

Digital subscriptions
Subscribe to Economist.com
Manage my subscription
Mobile edition
Audio edition
Download screensaver
More »

Classifieds and jobs

The Economist Group
About the Economist Group
Economist Intelligence Unit
Economist Conferences
Intelligent Life
CFO
Roll Call
European Voice
EuroFinance
Reprints and permissions

EIU online store

Economist shop

With Mr Aust gone, *Spiegel* can mesh its print and online personalities and launch more products bearing its brand, believe his executioners, who were joined by the publisher, Gruner+Jahr, owner of a 25% stake. But will any forceful personality be ready to put himself at the mercy of colleagues who have just turfed out an editor as successful as Mr Aust? The answer may become clear only when a new editor is picked, perhaps later this month.

[Back to top ^^](#)

Advertisement

"That last 401(k) statement really knocked the wind out of me."

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Get your old 401(k) working again.
Roll over with Schwab.

- More control
- More choices
- More help

ROLL OVER YOUR 401(k) ►

TALK TO CHUCK

charles SCHWAB

Advertisement