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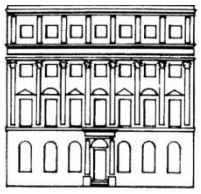

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REVIEW ARTICLE

MONARCHY AND ITS LEGACIES IN GERMANY SINCE 1918

Matthew Stibbe

LOTHAR MACHTAN, *Die Abdankung: Wie Deutschlands gekrönte Häupter aus der Geschichte fielen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2008), 432 pp. ISBN 978 3 549 07308 7. €24.90
THOMAS BISKUP and MARTIN KOHLRAUSCH (eds.), *Das Erbe der Monarchie: Nachwirkungen einer deutschen Institution seit 1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008), 331 pp. ISBN 978 3 593 38727 7. €34.90

I

The appointment of Gabriela von Habsburg, sculptor, diplomat, and granddaughter of the last Austrian Emperor, Karl I, to the post of Georgian ambassador to Germany in November 2009, and her formal investiture in March 2010, were occasions for much comment in the German press. The journalist Frank Herold, for instance, wrote in the *Berliner Zeitung*:

> The times when the higher nobility dominated the diplomatic service are long gone. The only thing that survives is the extravagant form of speech which is formally reserved for ambassadors. On official occasions the representatives of foreign states are still addressed, in modern democratic Germany, as 'Your Excellency'. But even this . . . would not be appropriate for the rank of Gabriela von Habsburg . . . [she] is an Archduchess and 'Her Imperial Highness'.[1]

[1] Frank Herold, 'Blaues Blut und kalter Stahl', *Berliner Zeitung*, 2 Mar. 2010, p. 1.

Such comments, together with references to von Habsburg's 'celebrity' status as a habituée of Lake Starnberg, the 'playground of fashionable Munich society',[2] speak volumes about contemporary media images of royalty and aristocracy in Germany. But in spite of this, historians have had relatively little to say about the cultural or political legacy of the institution of monarchy since 1918. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, as Lothar Machtan points out, the unheroic way in which the German princely rulers abdicated at the end of the First World War, with hardly a murmur, let alone a fight back, meant that monarchism itself became an 'orphaned principle' (p. 13)—a model of government which no longer had any determined supporters, even among the most militant anti-republicans of the 1920s. In the words of one disillusioned count, who later went over to the Nazis, the German monarchy of the early twentieth century had turned out to be a system 'that failed to display greatness even in death . . . but instead, broken inside and with its nerves frayed, abandoned its posts at the first pistol shot' (p. 16). In many ways, the whole 1930s cult surrounding Hitler, the public adulation of an authentic *Führer* who could really translate his political will into actions and deeds, derived from the emotional fallout from this earlier, and spectacular, failure of political leadership.

Secondly, German history-writing since 1945 has been dominated by attempts to explain the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazis, and in respect of both events, the former royal households have been seen as playing far less of a role politically than other, more obvious 'villains': Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Ebert, Hugenberg, Brüning, von Papen, and von Schleicher. Above all, the Weimar constitution has been seen as offering inadequate protection against the abuse of state power. Thus as Heinrich Mann, no friend of the German monarchical system, once pointed out, the three Kaisers of the post-1871 era, for all their many and varied faults, never tried to suspend the constitution or pass finance bills without reference to parliament. Yet Ebert and Hindenburg, using the emergency powers granted to them under Article 48 of the new constitution, both did this on several occasions.[3] Meanwhile, in the decades

[2] Ibid.

[3] Heinrich Mann to Rudolf Feistmann, no date (stamped 15 Mar. 1947), in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundes-

after 1945 it was left to historians outside the (West) German historical establishment to highlight the malign role played by Wilhelm II in German politics, notably the GDR Marxist scholar Willibald Gutsche, the American academics Thomas A. Kohut and Lamar Cecil, the Cambridge historian Christopher Clark, and, most prominent of all, the Sussex-based Anglo-German expert John Röhl.[4]

Finally, if Wilhelm II has been largely written out of history, then this applies even more to the other sovereign princes who ruled in Germany up to 1918. The latter, if mentioned at all, have been dismissed as more minor examples of the 'semi-absolutist', 'authoritarian' tendencies inherent in Imperial German politics,[5] or, more convincingly, as the product of Bismarck's idiosyncratic 'solution' to the German question in 1866–71, which left some royal houses in place while arbitrarily abolishing others, most notably the former Kingdom of Hanover.[6] Bismarck was, strictly speaking, always more of a Prussian hegemonist than a traditional monarchist, and the dualism between Prussia and the Reich which he created continues to irritate historians to this day, particularly as its legacy can still be felt in the highly complex and confusing organization of German government archives for the period 1866 to 1945.

Given all this, and given Wolfram Pyta's recent biography of Hindenburg, which argues that the *Ersatzkaiser* of the war years and the Weimar Republic consciously projected an image of himself as the exact opposite of Wilhelm II in terms of personality and leader-

archiv, NY 4102/31, fos. 121–3: 'On closer examination, the [Reich President] was an unlimited monarch[;] before him, no Kaiser ever sought to lay aside the existing constitution.'

[4] See Willibald Gutsche, *Wilhelm II. Der letzte Kaiser des Deutschen Reiches: Eine Biographie* (Berlin, 1991); Thomas A. Kohut, *Wilhelm II and the Germans: A Study in Leadership* (New York, 1991); Lamar Cecil, *Wilhelm II.* i. *Prince and Emperor, 1859–1900*, ii. *Emperor and Exile, 1900–1941* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989, 1996); Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: Profiles in Power* (Harlow, 2000); and John Röhl, *Wilhelm II.* i. *Die Jugend des Kaisers, 1859–1888*, ii. *Der Aufbau der persönlichen Monarchie, 1888–1900,* iii. *Der Weg in den Abgrund, 1900–1941* (Munich, 1993, 2001, 2008).

[5] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918*, trans. Kim Traynor (New York, 1985; first published in German, 1973), 54–5.

[6] Peter Alter, *The German Question and Europe: A History* (London, 2000), 60–1; Katharine Anne Lerman, *Bismarck: Profiles in Power* (Harlow, 2004), 120.

ship qualities,[7] it might legitimately be asked whether the former royal houses had any relevance to state and society in Germany after 1918. The two items under review here both try, in different ways, to offer a more nuanced view, demonstrating the surprising importance of monarchical legacies in a number of different political and cultural contexts, without denying the undoubted importance of the year 1918 as a decisive (and final) break with all twenty-two monarchical systems that had previously, and unhappily, ruled in Germany.

II

Lothar Machtan, also known as the author of a provocative study of Hitler and homosexuality,[8] sets out in his new book to provide the first detailed account of the part played by Germany's princely rulers in bringing about their own downfall. In his view, 'the collapse of the monarchy [in November 1918] was no natural catastrophe, or twist of fate, but was in good part due to the active and passive ruination of this institution by its foremost representatives' (p. 351). In particular, he focuses on their anachronistic self-understanding as monarchs ruling 'by the grace of God'; their disastrous personal interventions (and non-interventions) before and during the war; and their 'collective renunciation of power' ('kollektive Selbstaufgabe') (p. 355) during the 1918 revolution, culminating in the Saxon King Friedrich August III's riposte to one of the ministers in the new provisional government on 12 November: 'Macht doch eueren Dreck alleene' (p. 311).[9] This, together with the deliberate blocking of moves towards parliamentarization until the last minute, and the pursuit of self-serving dynastic war aims during the war, demonstrates the complete failure of the German monarchs to fit in with the spirit of the age, and also bears witness to their 'notorious aversion to democracy' ('notorische Demokratieferne') which 'they were never able to overcome' (p. 355).

[7] Wolfram Pyta, *Hindenburg: Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Berlin, 2007), esp. 91–153 and 521–38. See also Conan Fischer's review of this book in *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 31/2 (Nov. 2009), 119–30, at 122–4.

[8] Lothar Machtan, *The Hidden Hitler*, trans. John Brownjohn (Oxford, 2001).

[9] A rough translation would be: 'Now go and do your dirty business on your own.'

Machtan provides an excellent overview of how monarchical rule functioned between 1871 and 1918, challenging many orthodoxies in the process. Imperial Germany, in his view, was not governed by a Wehlerite 'semi-absolutist sham constitutionalism', but by a modern, nineteenth-century constitutional monarchy, albeit one 'which left the monarchs in full possession of their special rights and privileges (*Sonderrechte*)' (p. 61). Within this system, royal power was restricted by the existence of partially representative *Landtage* in all the federal states, although often elected on an extremely restricted franchise; by the growth of a professional civil service and military; by the rise of a free press and civil society; and by the democratically elected Reichstag as the Empire's supreme law-making body. But it was also limited by collective weakness, lack of ambition, and the absence of princely solidarity in the face of new internal and external challenges. The domination of Prussia was, of course, partly assured by the person of the Kaiser and the constitutional make-up of the Bundesrat, but—contrary to Bismarck's intentions—the other federal princes also by and large neglected their duty to act as sovereign co-leaders of the Reich, seeing themselves 'first and foremost as territorial rulers and not as co-actors on the national stage' (p. 63). Bismarck's removal from office in 1890 paved the way for Wilhelm II, as *primus inter pares* among the princes, to become a 'figure of national integration' and even a de facto Imperial Monarch (*Reichsmonarch*), albeit one who completely failed to live up to the image he created for himself (p. 62).

Wilhelm II's responsibility for the collapse of the German monarchical system was thus broader and deeper than that of his fellow royals. But, equally importantly, within their own territories, the kings, grand dukes, dukes, and princes continued to insist on their supposed divine right to rule, thus hindering the development of a modern parliamentary state with proper scrutiny over appointments to public office (p. 59). They also saw any interference in these privileges, whether bureaucratic or democratic, as an 'unacceptable deprivation of their rights' (p. 69). In their view, it was self-evident that they knew what was best for 'their' subjects. Yet the modern media-driven age threw up new expectations of the princely rulers, namely that they should act as exemplary leaders in their personal and public lives, govern within the laws and customs of the land, and join together as a *Fürstenbund* to protect the interests of the Reich and the welfare of its people at moments of crisis. And this proved to be

beyond most of them, particularly during the closing stages of the war when they failed utterly to recognize the severity of the political, economic, and military situation. Hence for Machtan it was 'not only the personality of the Kaiser which proved to be calamitous for the monarchy; the marked reluctance of the other monarchs to seize the moment also worked in the same direction' (p. 130).

Reactionary figures such as Friedrich August III of Saxony and Friedrich II of Baden are obvious targets for criticism in this respect. Yet even more enlightened rulers, such as Ernst Ludwig, Grand Duke of Hesse, who was cosmopolitan in his tastes, open to modern art, *menschenfreundlich*, and highly contemptuous of the political pretensions of his royal cousin Wilhelm II, receive short shrift from Machtan. Traditionally, Ernst Ludwig's refusal to flee or abdicate—which makes him unique among all the German monarchs in November 1918—has been presented in a positive light: he respected democracy, apparently wanting to await the outcome of elections before making his decision; and he did not lose his nerve, or abandon his people in their hour of need. However, Machtan challenges this assertion, showing that it was the Hessian Social Democrat leaders who acted decisively on 9 November. They appealed to the revolutionary soldiers and sailors who had gathered in front of the Neues Palais in Darmstadt to refrain from violence, while forcing the Grand Duke to negotiate with representatives of the newly elected councils. Their main motive, in fact, was not to save the monarchy, but to uphold law and order and ensure the safety of the state against the 'incalculable dangers of mass revolutionary action' (p. 336). Meanwhile, even after Ernst Ludwig accepted his removal from power following the Reichstag elections on 19 January 1919, he still refused to make a formal declaration renouncing his throne, instead insisting on his right to the continued use of his official residences, the Neues Palais in Darmstadt and the former hunting lodge at Schloss Wolfsgarten, and to the title of 'Grand Duke'. Unlike other monarchs, he did not go into exile or engage in plots to restore his throne after 1918–19; for him, the *Sonderrechte* of his class had always been more important than political ambition of any kind.

All in all, Machtan's critique of Germany's princely rulers, while devastating, is largely fair and backed by extensive documentation, much of it previously unused by historians. Yet some of his broader conclusions are less convincing. In particular, his excessive preoccu-

pation with failings at the personal and dynastic levels blinds him to the bigger picture. Thus his argument that the question of individual responsibility should not be 'hidden behind references to a doom-laden determinism or abandoned to notions of the First World War as a Moloch demanding many sacrifices' (p. 352) is undermined by his own form of reductionism, which puts the failure of the royal houses to 'grasp the reality facing them', and their 'cluelessness as to where the German ship of state was heading' down to their 'high birth' and their subsequent lack of political intelligence (pp. 75 and 121). Wolfram Pyta perhaps comes closer to the truth when he argues that Wilhelm II 'was driven into the background in terms of symbolic representation above all by the inherent dynamic of wartime events' ('Eigendynamik des Kriegsgeschehens')—and not simply because of his personal shortcomings as Kaiser and Supreme War Lord.[10] The same might well apply to the other federal princes. Contingency, in particular, Hindenburg's surprise victory against the Russians at Tannenberg in late August 1914 and his ability successfully to manipulate that victory, also had a part to play.

Secondly, Machtan is undoubtedly correct to stress that the November revolution was based largely on a popular revolt 'from below' which from the start contained a 'strong anti-monarchical thrust and a considerable potential for violence' (p. 353). Yet he personalizes this issue again when he argues that the individual monarchs failed to survive as rulers partly because of their inability to show empathy for the suffering and sacrifices of the ordinary people during the war. Here I think he exaggerates the importance of empathy over leadership in 1918, not least because the people, having faced years of material hardship and the possibility that the war might continue if peace could not be made, found themselves revolting against the entire system of 'Prussian' military-bureaucratic rule which had manifestly failed to provide leadership *at all levels*. This, surely, is why the 'progressive' king Wilhelm II of Württemberg also had to go in November 1918; not just because of his association with the war and monarchical system per se, but, as the *Schwäbischer Merkur* put it, because 'this prince also showered military decorations on Ludendorff, the dictator of Germany, when the latter left office, thereby showing his support for a system of government that was in many respects more Prussian than Prussia' (p. 318).

[10] Pyta, *Hindenburg*, 111.

In my view, the monarchs could only have saved themselves, if at all, by taking charge of the domestic reform process in October 1918 in alliance with moderate Social Democrats and the 'bourgeois' centrist parties. But of course they were unable or unwilling to do this (even Ernst Ludwig did not consider any need for change in Hesse until 7 November), rendering them guilty in the eyes of the people of having tolerated the war and the 'Prussian' system of military rule. Nor, in spite of their constitutional position as a league of princes, were they able to reach a collective agreement on the position of Wilhelm II as Kaiser, leaving the hapless Max von Baden to send the Prussian Interior Minister, Bill Drews, to military headquarters at Spa on a doomed mission to persuade the chief monarch to sacrifice himself in order to save the monarchy as a whole. The November revolution, born of despair and an overwhelming desire for peace, then overthrew the system entirely, without, however, settling the question of leadership in anything like a permanent manner.

Leaving the revolution to one side, it might be more plausible to suggest that one of the reasons why Hindenburg succeeded in salvaging and even furthering his reputation during the transition from war to peace, while the image of the royal houses (and Ludendorff) declined, was his greater ability to display empathy with the German people at crucial moments, for instance, in November 1919 when he told the Reichstag Committee of Inquiry that the army was not defeated in the field but 'stabbed in the back' by hostile elements at home.[11] The 'Hindenburg cult' and the victory of the *Ersatzkaiser* in the second round of the 1925 presidential election is indeed often taken as evidence of the continuation of pseudo-monarchical beliefs in Germany, or at least of a scepticism towards republican democracy.[12] Yet a little over a year after Hindenburg's election, almost the same number of Germans—14.46 million compared to 14.66 million—turned out to vote in a referendum in favour of the outright dispossession of the former royal houses.[13] Those who supported this

[11] Ibid. 405–9.

[12] See e.g. Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London, 2003), 81–2.

[13] Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 240–3. The ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II subsequently called these 14.46 million Germans 'sons-of-bitches' (ibid. 242). Although the 'yes' vote failed to reach the 50 per cent of the electorate necessary to force a change in the law, it was still a substantial achieve-

measure were not just responding to the political calls of the SPD and German Communist Party (KPD), or to anti-monarchical sentiments stemming from the war, but were also acting on Schiller's classical humanist message of 1801: 'The majesty of the German people never rested on the shoulders of its princes' (p. 355).[14] The great merit of Machtan's book is that it shows just how right these German voters were.

III

Given the political and symbolic significance of the 1926 referendum, it is a shame that it is only mentioned in passing in one or two of the chapters in the collection edited by Thomas Biskup and Martin Kohlrausch, which is the second work to be considered in this review article. In fact, as the introduction makes clear, the volume's aim is not to investigate the failure of a political system at the personal or collective level, but to examine the more subtle, hidden, or persistent legacies of the monarchical past for Germany since the end of the First World War. Hence there are essays on media representations and sentimental understandings of 'monarchy'; on royal palaces, art collections, and other forms of material inheritance; and on political cultures, movements, and institutions under different regimes since 1918. At the same time, the editors are keen to use evidence of such legacies as a means of shedding new light on the changing role of monarchy in late nineteenth-century Germany, including its contribution to the rise of 'modern' conceptions of family, 'celebrity', mass spectacle, and the public sphere.

The 'strategies of self-representation' (p. 40) adopted by monarchs who had already lost their thrones between 1830 and 1870, including their bizarre tactical alliances with republicans and Bonapartists, their cultivation of specific (anti-Prussian) cultural memories and tra-

ment, especially when one considers that Hitler, at the height of his electoral popularity, only managed 13.75 million votes. In 1926 a mere 585,714 Germans turned out to vote *against* the dispossession of the royal houses. Voting figures taken from the website *Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik* <http://www.gonschior.de/weimar>, accessed 19 Apr. 2010.

[14] Also cited in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, i. *1700–1815* (4th edn. Munich, 2006), 44–5.

ditions, and their selective publication of secret diplomatic documents, might be one aspect of this process, as Heidi Mehrkens and Dieter Brosius both show. Yet another example, provided by Eva Giloi, is the repackaging of Kaiser Wilhelm I's image after 1871 in terms of his childhood relationship with his mother, the famous Queen Luise of Prussia. This was intended to create an emotional identification between the people and their Emperor based on the idea of a just victory in a defensive war against France followed by a return to civilian norms and values. Gifts sent to the monarch on specific festive occasions also encouraged such sentimental myth-making, and became a special form of communication between the old Kaiser and 'his' subjects in the 1870s and 1880s.

The decisive advantage that late nineteenth-century 'monarchy' had here was that, like 'empire', it became a fictional object onto which the media could project 'modern' emotions and feelings, thereby 'fill[ing] a void left by the political rationalism of the [mid-nineteenth-century] liberal era'.[15] Or, to put it another way, the life story of an individual monarch like Wilhelm I could be told in a personalized, intimate way, thereby reconciling the twin principles that modern Germany claimed to be built on: the modern 'bourgeois' family combined with traditional military values. This message was reinforced, as Jürgen Luh argues, by the use of the new Hohenzollern museum, opened in 1877 in the Monbijou Palace in Berlin, as a forum for exhibiting the domestic or even vulnerable side of the Prussian rulers alongside their soldierly exploits on the battlefield. Admittedly, though, it also came at the risk of encouraging a certain amount of nostalgia for the 'good old days' which was at odds with the more opulent 'money and power' image consciously and disastrously projected by the new Kaiser Wilhelm II after 1888, an image skilfully analysed by Dominik Petzold in his essay on the role of cinema as a modern stage for monarchical myth-making.

The various scandals which engulfed Wilhelm II's reign were indeed largely attributable to what Christopher Clark describes as a 'devil's pact' between the Imperial court and the media (p. 319). Events such as the Harden–Eulenburg–Moltke libel trials of 1907–8 and the *Daily Telegraph* affair of 1908–9 showed the inherent dangers in personalizing and sensationalizing the monarchy, and in creating

[15] E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London, 1987), 105.

too many (false) expectations of a close emotional bond between ruler and ruled. Hence the significance of 1918, as portrayed by the essays here, is that it completed a process by which the nineteenth-century vision of a 'modernized monarchy firmly entrenched in state and society' became decoupled from the increasingly tarnished image of individual monarchs (p. 23). At one level this gave the republican regime that followed a certain degree of freedom; unlike the French Third Republic in the 1870s and 1880s, for instance, it did not have to fear sustained attempts to restore the monarchy or a sudden revival of royalist sentiment (p. 311). Even the German–Hanoverian party abandoned its previous campaign to reinstate the Welf dynasty after 1918, while Hohenzollern weddings in the 1920s and 1930s were hardly 'national' events, as Daniel Schönpflug shows (pp. 88–91). On the other hand, the continued presence of material reminders—palaces, museums, art collections—and of monarchical mentalities in a broader sense, exposed the lack of equivalent, emotionally appealing republican symbols and legacies which could be used to support more democratic visions of the German nation, at least in the inter-war period.

The solutions found by Weimar-era bureaucrats and administrators were only partly successful, and tended to highlight the incomplete nature of the 1918 revolution. The individual states, or rather the state-appointed trustees who acted on their behalf, had no intention of bowing to the political demands of the left for all former royal property to be confiscated without compensation. Nor were they willing to subordinate the interests of the state to those of the recently deposed princely houses. Rather, they sought a 'reconciliation between the old system and the new' in an attempt to ensure the continuity of the *Rechtsstaat* in spite of the change of regime (p. 182). The result was that former ruling dynasties often ended up as official patrons of state art collections or foundations, even though in theory they were now just private citizens without any *Sonderrechte*. This hardly restored the political legitimacy of monarchy, but it did help in part to underscore its ongoing symbolic presence in the public sphere, as both Cajetan von Aretin and Marc Schalenberg emphasize in their contributions.

As far as the Third Reich is concerned, the main question, as Christopher Clark notes, is whether the idea of a German *Führer* was a direct legacy of late nineteenth-century monarchical beliefs and

fantasies, or whether it represented a renunciation of the past (p. 315). Several of the contributors stress continuity here, including Daniel Schönpflug and Monika Wienfort, both of whom focus on marriage ceremonies and other high-profile public events, which allowed the Nazis to tap into certain types of memory and at the same time to transform them into something new and more modern (or, using Jeffrey Herf's phrase 'reactionary–modern'[16]) (pp. 94–5, 138–9). Goering's state wedding to Emmi Sonnemann in 1935, for instance, borrowed heavily from former monarchical rites and symbols, including the use of the leitmotivs *Liebe* and *Treue* to symbolize the return of strong ties of love and trust between rulers and ruled; it was described in positive terms by *Germania* as an 'authentic National Socialist family celebration' ('ein echt nationalsozialistisches Familienfest') (pp. 91–3). On the other hand, Arne Hofmann is also correct to point to the hostility which many of the more extreme monarchists, that is, those who made the restoration of the monarchy the be all and end all, felt towards the *Führerkult*. For some, it could be a bridge between the Second Reich and the Third Reich, but for others it was precisely the anti-monarchical and anti-federal tendencies within the fascist cult of the leader that eventually brought them into political opposition to the Nazi regime. Even so, there was absolutely no chance of a restoration of the monarchy while Hitler remained alive, and even the July 1944 plotters do not seem to have seriously considered bringing back such a discredited and politically compromised institution.

After 1945 the GDR and the Federal Republic were both seemingly more confident about their political status as republics, and therefore less sensitive to the supposed threat of an emotional identification of the people with monarchy, albeit for different reasons. Franziska Windt focuses in her essay on the role of Schloss Schönhausen, a former Hohenzollern royal palace situated in the Pankow district of Berlin, as the official residence of the East German President Wilhelm Pieck (1949–60) and then as a guest house for visiting foreign dignitaries. Here she shows how the GDR's monarchical heritage was used as a means of symbolizing its diplomatic presence in the world and simultaneously of portraying the victory of

[16] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984).

socialism at home. Pieck's personal preference for displaying Old Masters and books by Goethe in his study was thus an important part of presenting the 'workers' and peasants' state' as the legitimate heir of the classical humanist tradition in Germany, in contrast to the 'fascist' and 'militaristic' Federal Republic (p. 235). At the same time the rebuilding of the palace was a demonstration of the 'productive potential of the GDR's construction industry and handicrafts', and with a former carpenter as head of state, an illustration that the revolutionary workers' movement had now 'inherited' a rich material culture which had been created by labourers but had hitherto *belonged* to the 'decadent' aristocracy and middle classes (p. 224). In many ways, then, the East German regime's deliberate association with this former royal palace from 1949 onwards prefigured the later debates about 'heritage' and 'tradition' which took place during the Honecker era in the 1970s and 1980s.[17]

In West Germany, on the other hand, the popular fascination with European monarchy, and especially with the British royal family, became part of a broader project of integration with the West and ideological separation from the East. This could be seen, for instance, in the positive media reception of the coronations of the Belgian King Baudouin in 1951 and the British Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the latter ceremony being remembered as one of the 'major television event[s] of the 1950s' (p. 142). Nonetheless, Tobias Kies is right to warn against overplaying the monarchical aspects of the new office of Bundespräsident or Federal President in the public imagination (p. 282). Rather, the 'Europeanization' and popularization of monarchy after 1949 probably had more to do with legitimizing the Federal Republic as a new regime which, after the calamity of the two world wars, could help Germany return to its supposed rightful place among the 'core countries of bourgeois society'.[18] Or, as Monika Wienfort puts it, the 'aesthetic enjoyment' of royal weddings and coronations had no perceptible impact on the 'unspoken core republican consensus' ('unausgesprochene republikanische Grundkon-

[17] Cf. Günther Heydemann, 'Geschichtsbild und Geschichtspropaganda in der Ära Honecker: Die "Erbe-und-Tradition"-Konzeption der DDR', in Ute Daniel and Wolfram Siemann (eds.), *Propaganda: Meinungskampf, Verführung und politische Sinnstiftung 1789–1989* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 161–71.

[18] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, 109.

sens') which lay at the heart of the new constitution and political system and was shared by all of the mainstream parties in the Bundestag (pp. 140 and 157). Whether this *Grundkonsens* should be explained in negative terms as a rejection of the (Prussian) past and its 'heritage', or whether it had more to do with the positive experience of building a strong and stable *Kanzlerdemokratie* in the 1950s and beyond—an outcome which was, of course, unforeseeable to the original framers of the *Grundgesetz* in 1949—is a question cleverly raised by Christoph Schönberger in a penultimate chapter.

One final point relates to balance. All of the contributors to this volume seem to be united in agreeing that 1918 was a major historical turning point for Germany in political terms, marking the permanent end of monarchical rule, while also pointing to evidence of continuities in the emotional reception, popular appreciation, and symbolic representation of 'monarchy' before and after the First World War. This is fine in itself but, to my mind, it also carries the danger of underplaying the vital role of overtly anti-monarchical and republican discourses in the transformation of Germany into a modern state and society. The development of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist wing of the SPD between 1890 and 1914 was certainly a part of this, but so too were the radical nationalist criticisms of the Kaiser's foreign policy at the time of the Boer war, and the general condemnation on both right and left of the hollow 'Byzantinism' associated with official royal festivities and celebrations, especially in the anniversary year of 1913.[19] One is also reminded of Jeffrey Verhey's finding that after the outbreak of European war in 1914 'German intellectuals clearly felt that the old myths, largely monarchical myths, did not suffice, that a new collective identity was needed' if the country was to hold together in the future.[20] Scepticism, ambiguity, and even outright hostility towards monarchy therefore played a key role in the formation of Wilhelmine culture and politics. How and why such sentiments were expressed, and by whom, also has an

[19] Steffen Bender, *Der Burenkrieg und die deutschsprachige Presse: Wahrnehmumg und Deutung zwischen Bureneuphorie und Anglophobie 1899–1902* (Paderborn, 2009), esp. 152–71; Jeffrey R. Smith, *A People's War: Germany's Political Revolution, 1913–1918* (Lanham, Md., 2007), esp. 25–49.

[20] Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000), 133.

important bearing on our understanding of the heritage that was bequeathed by that era to different German regimes after 1918.

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