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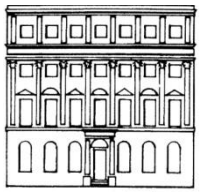

BULLETIN

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Michael Schaich:
Dynastic Politics, Monarchical Representation, and the Union between Hanover and Britain
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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Dynastic Politics, Monarchical Representation, and the Union between Hanover and Britain. Conference organized by the German Historical Institute London and the Historische Kommission für Niedersachsen and Bremen, and held at the GHIL, 11–13 Oct. 2012.

The year 2014 marks the tercentenary of the succession of the Hanoverian dynasty to the British throne and the start of the personal union between England and Hanover, which created a link between the two countries that lasted for more than a hundred years until its dissolution in 1837. In order to commemorate this event the Historische Kommission für Niedersachsen and Bremen and the German Historical Institute London teamed up to organize two international conferences which took place in Osnabrück (28–31 March 2012) and London respectively. The local organizers were Ronald G. Asch (University of Freiburg) and Thomas Vogtherr (University of Osnabrück and chair of the Historische Kommission) for the Osnabrück symposium and the GHIL for the London gathering.

Taken together the two conferences provided a comprehensive analysis of the history of the personal union within its European, British, and German contexts. The first conference in Osnabrück concentrated on the wider concept of composite statehood in the eighteenth century by putting the Anglo-Hanoverian Union into a comparative European perspective. It also explored the predominantly German side of the Personal Union by looking at the impact that links with Britain had on trade, warfare, and politics in the northwestern corner of the Holy Roman Empire. In contrast, the London leg focused mainly on the 'Hanoverian dimension in British history', to quote the title of a book edited by Brendan Simms and Torsten Riotte in 2007, which was the first systematically to explore the ramifications of the Anglo-Hanoverian Union for British politics.

After introductory remarks by Andreas Gestrich (GHIL), Thomas Vogtherr, and Michael Schaich (GHIL) the conference was opened by Ronald G. Asch. In his keynote speech he surveyed the difficult lega-

The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

cy of the seventeenth-century Stuart monarchy for the Hanoverian image of kingship. Analysing the conflict between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* during the Restoration period and the alternative version of kingship which emerged in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, he refuted the old master narrative of the disenchantment of monarchy and stressed instead Christian morality and Protestant providentialism as the new hallmarks of the British monarchy after 1689, which also continued to shape the self-representation of the Hanoverians. The themes addressed by Asch resurfaced in the first session of the conference. G. M. Ditchfield (Kent) charted the considerable range of idealizations (and criticisms) of kingship in the later Hanoverian period, highlighting in particular the enduring Protestant image of the Georgian monarchy and the association of George III and George IV with army and navy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The role of the army was also at the centre of Hannah Smith's (Oxford) paper. She investigated the politicization of the British officer corps in the last years of Queen Anne's reign, when pro-Hanoverian views became prevalent in military circles. After 1714 they played an important part in the self-fashioning of the British army. Reviews of troops were also a highly visible feature during the repeated visits of the Hanoverians to their electorate, as Andrew Thompson (Cambridge) demonstrated in his reflections on the impact that monarchical travel had during the reign of the first two Georges. Taking George II's stay in Hanover in 1735 as an example, he dealt with the practicalities of travel, consequences for the process of decision-making, and communication channels between Britain and Hanover.

A second major theme of the conference, the question of allegiances and loyalties to the crown and the dynasty, was introduced by Frank O'Gorman (Manchester) in his talk on 'The Origins of Loyalism and the Eighteenth Century, to 1789'. Going back to the late sixteenth century, he uncovered the roots of the loyalist movement of the 1790s, which has been at the heart of much recent research. Starting in the latter stages of Elisabeth I's reign, governments could rely on so-called bonds of association to the monarch for popular support during the recurring moments of national crisis throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The loyalism of the 1790s had thus been rehearsed, as O'Gorman claimed, during the preceding two centuries. Allegiance to crown and state, however, was only one side of

the coin. Eighteenth-century Britain was also the site of contested loyalties, Jacobitism being chief among anti-Hanoverian stances. Gabriel Glickman (Oxford) explored the various challenges to the Hanoverian regime which the existence of the Jacobite movement posed in international relations, in Scotland and in England. In particular, he spelt out how the spectre of Jacobitism opened up domestic debates for continental affairs and placed mistrust at the centre of the political nation in Westminster. In addition, the language of Jacobitism could be used by figures at the heart of the Hanoverian establishment, such as Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, to strengthen their own political cause. The relationship between radicalism and monarchy in the 1790s was also far from straightforward as Amanda Goodrich (Open University) maintained. Instead of calls for regicide and republicanism, anti-aristocratic rhetoric and demands for constitutional reform held sway in political debates. Anti-monarchism can be found in contemporary discourse, but was overtaken by a critical attitude focusing on the constitution and the role of the aristocracy.

The third set of papers dealt with the whole area of court culture and visual representations of the Georgian monarchy. Tim Blanning (Cambridge) started proceedings with a wide-ranging lecture on the iconography of the Hanoverians, bringing together seemingly diverse aspects such as the long-standing effects of anti-Catholic propaganda in British history, the importance of blood sports and hunting, and the picture of thrift and economy that George III created for himself, one that was reinforced by satirical prints of the king. Throughout his talk Blanning emphasized the role of the public sphere in fashioning the image of the monarchy, concluding that, in contrast, for example, to developments in France, 'legitimacy was thrust upon the Hanoverians'. Blanning's presentation was followed by an equally vivid and intriguing paper by Robert Bucholz (Chicago), who took the bodies of the first two Hanoverians as his object of study. Although both were portrayed in contemporary paintings and sources as rather trim and fit and at worst non-descript, later on they came to be depicted as fat and ugly and, by extension, rapacious, profligate, and stupid. This distorted image can be traced back to eighteenth-century Jacobite propaganda. From there it moved into academic discourse during the nineteenth century and then into popular genres such as novels and films, an observation verified most recently by the blockbuster

Pirates of the Caribbean IV, which features a rather ungainly depiction of George II. Eirwen Nicholson (Virginia) followed this up with a paper on the representation of the Hanoverian queens, concentrating on Sophia Dorothea, the estranged wife of George I and 'queen in absentia'; Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, wife of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales; and George III's consort, Queen Charlotte. All three were derided and demonized in contemporary prints in an attempt to attack their husbands and the dynasty as a whole. Finally, Frank Druffner (Marbach) turned attention to the lacuna in the image policy of the Hanoverians—architecture. Unlike many contemporary princes, George I abstained from major building projects. This was in line with ideals of economy and prudent housekeeping promoted by German authors such as Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff, but also betrayed a different conception of splendour, one that was rather inward-looking. Princely magnificence was displayed not in palace architecture, but in interior decoration and dress. In this respect the London court of George I was not dissimilar to that of the emperors in Vienna.

The most important asset of the Hanoverians' self-representation, however, was their Protestantism. As David Wykes (London) and Jeremy Gregory (Manchester) explained in the fourth session, the Georges appealed to a wide variety of Protestant constituencies. Dissenters were attracted to the Hanoverian succession in 1714, as Wykes made clear, because they hoped for a repeal of the laws discriminating against nonconformists. Although these expectations proved futile, dissenting ministers remained loyal to George I and George II. This only changed from the 1770s, as they became vociferous critics of the Trinitarian views of the king and the conduct of his ministers who were seen as increasingly corrupt. A similar picture emerges with regard to the colonial churches, the topic of Gregory's talk. Attempts to read the conflicts of the 1760s and 1770s back into the earlier period have obscured the fact that the Hanoverians managed, for almost half a century, to portray different versions of Protestant kingship in the American settlements that spoke to both non-Anglican and Church of England groupings. In addition, the first two Georges were not far removed from the colonists, as has previously been suggested, but had a strong symbolic presence in their overseas dominions (daily prayers for the monarch, royal coats of arms in colonial churches), maintained close links with the colonies via the

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and provided financial support for individual ecclesiastical institutions.

Eckhart Hellmuth's (Munich) lecture on the eighteenth-century fiscal–military state brought the discussion back to the European scene. Hellmuth analysed the fiscal regimes and military capabilities of three leading European powers, the Habsburg Empire, Prussia, and Britain, and then applied the notion of the fiscal–military state to the Electorate of Hanover, which maintained a surprisingly large army and witnessed a rising tax burden during the century. In his concluding remarks he pointed to some of the more general conclusions which emerge from an analysis of the highly militarized state machines for our often too benign assessment of the eighteenth century, and stressed the disastrous sight that many German states afforded around 1800.

The session that followed this lecture addressed one area which has received relatively little attention so far in accounts of the Personal Union, the circulation of knowledge and ideas between Britain and Hanover. Justin Champion (London) took the relationship between the Electress Sophia and her unlikely advisor and correspondent John Toland, a writer in the tradition of non-monarchical Commonwealth discourses, as an example. In a number of publications Toland went to great lengths to fashion the powerful public image of an anti-Catholic, enlightened, and republican queen, which held out great promise for the future of the British monarchy after the Hanoverian succession. Thomas Biskup (Hull), in turn, outlined the networks and communication channels between Britain and northern Germany and described how the Anglo-Hanoverian composite state shaped the exchange of knowledge in the field of natural history in particular. According to Biskup the integration of the electorate and its surrounding territories into the British Empire made the German lands the hinterland of the Atlantic world. A different perspective was taken by Dominik Collet, who looked at less straightforward, more roundabout ways of knowledge transfer. Concentrating on the collections of the Royal Society in the late seventeenth century and Göttingen's Academic Museum in the late eighteenth century, he stressed the creative misunderstandings and unintended consequences that cultural exchange entailed, and warned against an overemphasis on networks without sufficient consideration being given to content.

The conference concluded with three papers on the last phase of the Personal Union, which usually attracts less interest than its earlier stages. Brendan Simms (Cambridge) illuminated the ongoing significance of the Union by reconstructing the role of the 2nd Light Battalion of the King's German Legion during the battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815. He defined the regiment as an Anglo-German hybrid, which operated effortlessly within the structure of the British army and played a crucial part in the defeat of Napoleon. Driven by hatred of the French emperor, it held the advance of Napoleon's troops for long enough to allow the allied forces to win the day. The political history of the Personal Union during its last decades and beyond came under scrutiny in two papers by Christine van den Heuvel (Hanover) and Torsten Riotte (Frankfurt am Main). Van den Heuvel described the development of the assembly of estates in Hanover from its first meeting in 1814 to the dissolution of the Union in 1837. As she repeatedly pointed out, the beginnings of Hanoverian parliamentary culture benefited from the close ties which the kingdom maintained with the British political system. Even the ceremonies surrounding the opening of deliberations closely followed precedents set by the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. In the final paper of the conference, Riotte explored the role of the Personal Union in Britain during the nineteenth century in three steps. He underlined Hanover's continuing role as bogeyman in British political discourse and identified some dynastic as well as legal legacies of the former links with the German lands. Discussions about citizenship in connection with the Stepney Election Petition of 1883 were just one way in which the Personal Union impacted on British political and social life even after its demise. Like all other papers in this three-day conference, Riotte's foray into largely forgotten aspects of Anglo-Hanoverian history should help to further stimulate research on a topic which has been neglected for a long time, but seems to be generating more interest, not least because of the upcoming tercentenary in 2014. A publication of the conference proceedings is envisaged.

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