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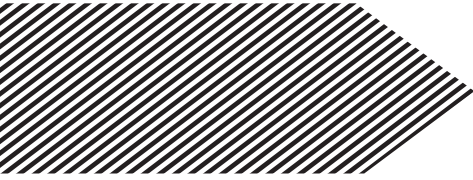
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PREFACE

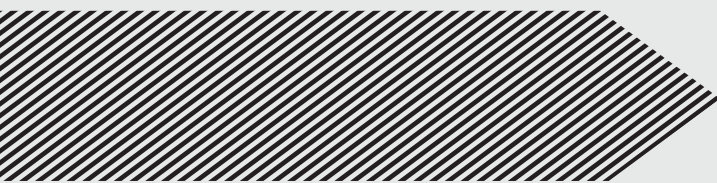
Since the year 2019 marks the centenary of the founding of the Weimar Republic, we decided to offer readers of the *Bulletin* a thematic *Forum* on the history of the Weimar Republic. We present scholarly essays, commissioned for this issue, from the five historians who participated in the German Historical Institute's Spring 2019 lecture series, "The Weimar Republic Reconsidered," — Kathleen Canning, Mark Jones, Laurie Marhoefer, Molly Loberg and Tim Müller — as well as from one of our visiting research fellows, James McSpadden. At the current political moment we thought that the history of the Weimar Republic would be of interest to many readers eager to learn more about the challenges and struggles of a fragile democracy. At the same time, we assembled a diverse set of essays that focus not only on the Republic's collapse, but also on its formative phase, especially the revolution of 1918/19, and that are attentive to the role of contingency in the Republic's history and demise. Please turn to the *Forum's* introductory essay for an introduction to the individual essays and their historiographical context.

The conference reports in this issue reflect the Institute's continuing commitment to German history as well as its focus on the history of knowledge and on transnational history, especially the history of migration. With regard to German history, this issue includes reports on the GHI's 25th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History, the meeting of West Coast Germanists, which was co-organized by the GHI's Pacific Regional Office, and a conference on the "Politics of Sovereignty and Globalism" in modern Germany. The history of knowledge is represented by three conferences: on the "Transmission of Financial Knowledge"; on the role of "Migrant Knowledge" in the Pacific region; and on "Political Culture and the History of Knowledge." The Institute's work in transregional history and the history of migration is documented in conferences ranging from "Migrant Maritime Missions: Religion, Ethnography and Empires in the Long Eighteenth Century" to "In Global Transit: Forced Migration of Jews and Other Refugees" to "Entangling Pacific and Atlantic Worlds."

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Simone Lässig (Director) and Richard F. Wetzell (Editor)



Forum: The Weimar Republic Reconsidered

**Edited by
David Lazar
Richard F. Wetzell**

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC RECONSIDERED: INTRODUCTION

Richard F. Wetzell

GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

In the current political situation, recent discussions of the Weimar Republic in the United States have tended to focus on the collapse of the Republic and the transition to the Nazi dictatorship.¹ When the German Historical Institute decided to organize a lecture series to mark the centenary of the founding of the Weimar Republic in 1919 and to publish this special thematic *Bulletin* Forum on the Weimar Republic,² we, too, were at least in part motivated by the thought that lecture audiences and *Bulletin* readers would find the history of the Weimar Republic of special interest as many of us seek to learn more about the fragility of democracy and the threats it can face. At the same time, however, we were careful to assemble a diverse set of lectures, and then essays, that do not focus only on explaining the Republic's collapse but also examine the revolution of 1918/19 and the Republic's formative years, and that are attentive to the role of contingency not only in the Republic's making but in its subsequent history.

Interpretations of the Weimar Republic as a "gamble which stood virtually no chance of success" have a long history.³ The teleological argument that the Weimar Republic was doomed has been made in a variety of different forms. In the so-called *Sonderweg* interpretation of German history, the failure of the Weimar Republic was presented as a result of Germany's special path (*Sonderweg*) of modernization, which was claimed to have deviated from the supposedly standard path of Britain and France. Whereas Britain and France developed liberal democratic regimes, it was argued, the failure of the German revolution of 1848 revealed the weakness of German liberalism, which continued during the Kaiserreich. For *Sonderweg* historians, given this lack of a well-developed liberal and democratic tradition, the failure of the Germany's experiment with democracy during the Weimar era appeared virtually inevitable.⁴

A second strand of the teleological interpretation that Weimar was doomed from the start confines its analytical frame to the interwar period. This strand attributes the failure of the Republic to mistakes made at the Republic's inception. With varying emphasis, its adherents argue, among other things, that: the revolution of 1918/19 was

1 For important contributions by historians to this discussion, see, for instance: Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy: Hitler's Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic* (New York, 2018); Christopher Browning, "The Suffocation of Democracy," *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 25, 2018).

2 This Bulletin "Forum" presents significantly revised contributions from the five speakers in the Spring 2019 GHI Lecture Series "The Weimar Republic Reconsidered," organized by David Lazar and Richard Wetzell, and one additional article, by James McSpadden, who was a Visiting Research Fellow at the GHI in 2018/19.

3 Quote from Gerald D. Feldman, "Weimar from Inflation to Depression: Experiment or Gamble?," in *Die Nachwirkungen der Inflation auf die deutsche Geschichte*, ed. Gerald D. Feldman (Munich, 1985), 385.

4 On the *Sonderweg* historiography, see: James J. Sheehan, "Paradigm lost? The 'Sonderweg' revisited," in *Transnationale Geschichte*, ed. Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz (Göttingen, 2006), 150-160; Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford, 1984).

not radical enough; anti-republican elites were left in place; the Versailles Treaty burdened the Republic with unsustainable reparations; the Weimar Constitution (especially its infamous article 42 on emergency decrees) was fatally flawed. In this strand of interpretation, the middle years of the Republic are only a brief interlude between its turbulent beginnings and its equally turbulent dissolution from 1930 to 1933. Here, too, the demise of the Weimar Republic appears to have been foreordained.⁵

5 For a critical review of interpretations of Weimar as a doomed republic, see Anthony McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic: Authority and Authoritarianism, 1916 to 1936* (London, 2014), 1-3.

6 For recent overviews, see Anthony McElligott, ed., *Weimar Germany* (Oxford, 2009); Kathleen Canning, Kirsten Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York, 2010); Andreas Braune and Michael Dreyer, eds., *Republikanischer Alltag: Die Weimarer Demokratie und die Suche nach Normalität* (Stuttgart, 2017).

7 For a comprehensive overview of the German-language historiography, see Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin, 2013); see also Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Blick zurück und in die Zukunft: Die Sicht auf die 'Novemberrevolution' 1919 bis 2018 und mögliche Perspektiven einer kritischen Revolutionshistoriographie," *Sozialgeschichte Online* 23 (2018): 107-165; for an influential American historiographical overview, see Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 629-656.

8 Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung*, 163-201; for a classic statement of the early postwar interpretation, see Karl Dietrich Erdmann, "Die Geschichte der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Wissenschaft," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 3 (1955): 1-19, as well as Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Die Zeit der Weltkriege* (=Gebhardt, Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte, 8th ed; Stuttgart, 1959).

For some time now, historical research on the Weimar Republic has pushed back against these teleological interpretations. Historians have demonstrated that despite the political, social, and economic struggles of the early postwar years, by 1924 the Weimar Republic had successfully established itself as a stable democratic regime. Recent historical work on the Weimar Republic has also emphasized the openness of the historical situation, the room for maneuver available to politicians, and the contingency of political decision-making, especially in the Republic's final phase.⁶

I. Revolution, democracy, and violence

The first two contributions to this *Forum* focus on the revolution of 1918/19, which was the subject of a wave of important historical research in the 1960s and 1970s, only to fall into neglect in more recent decades.⁷ The so-called revisionist research of the 1960s and 1970s challenged West Germany's prevailing postwar interpretation, according to which the revolutionary situation of 1918/19 was characterized by a stark choice between parliamentary government in alliance with the old elites, including the military, or a social revolution that would have installed a dictatorship of the proletariat on the Soviet model.⁸ By contrast, the revisionist historians argued that the *Rätebewegung* (the council movement) was not, in fact, dominated by communists but pursued a social revolution that was compatible with the SPD's commitment to democracy but would have pushed democratization further. Therefore, Ebert and the provisional government had been misguided in their hostility to the Councils and had missed an opportunity to cooperate with them to bring about a more thorough-going democratization.⁹ Although the mainstream

9 Key works of the revisionist turn included Eberhard Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik*

1918-1919 (Düsseldorf, 1962), Peter von Oertzen, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution* (Düsseldorf, 1963),

and Reinhard Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland 1918/19* (Wiesbaden, 1968).

of the revisionists endorsed neither the polemical charge that Ebert and the SPD had “betrayed” the revolution¹⁰ nor the thesis that the revolution could have embarked on a “third path” between parliamentary government and Bolshevik dictatorship, critics of the revisionist thesis did not always observe these distinctions.¹¹ As a result, even though by the early 1980s the revisionist interpretation represented an almost complete consensus among specialists in the history of the revolution, it failed to prevail in many of the handbook accounts and general histories of the Weimar Republic as a whole.¹² Moreover, from the 1980s onward, the revolution became a rather neglected topic within the flourishing historiography of the Weimar Republic.¹³ In the last decade, however, since its ninetieth anniversary in 2008, the revolution of 1918/19 has again begun to attract the attention of historians.¹⁴

Kathleen Canning’s opening article in this forum moves beyond the debate between the revisionists and their critics by examining the invention of new forms of democratic participation and representation during the revolution. Canning, who has long been at the forefront of research on gender and citizenship in the Weimar Republic,¹⁵ argues that participation in the councils (*Räte*) was not limited to soldiers, sailors, and male workers, but had considerable resonance as an “experimental form of political representation” among women, intellectuals and artists, even among bourgeois opponents of the revolution. In the end, however, most municipal councils narrowed the parameters of participation by limiting voting to those employed for wages and thus ended up excluding most everyone except factory workers. As a result, it was the declaration of equal suffrage, which first took effect in the elections for the National Assembly, that opened up the “arena of popular mobilization for the invention of democracy,” which is so skillfully examined in Canning’s article.

The revolution’s popular mobilization and the contest over the revolution’s political forms and goals was not a peaceful process but one that was accompanied by considerable violence. In his article, Mark

10 For this argument, see Sebastian Haffner, *Die verratene Revolution* (Bern/Munich/Vienna, 1969), reissued in 1979, and thereafter, under the title *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19*; on related arguments within

the East German historiography, see Niess, *Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung*, 320-370.

11 See Reinhard Rürup, “Demokratische Revolu-

tion und ‘Dritter Weg’: Die deutsche Revolution von 1918/19 in der neueren wissenschaftlichen Diskussion,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983): 278-301.

12 Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung*, 259-319.

13 *Ibid.*, 371-406.

14 Helga Grebing, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19* (Berlin, 2008); Volker Ullrich, *Die deutsche Revolution von 1918/19* (Munich, 2009); Alexander Gallus, ed., *Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19* (Göttingen, 2010); Dietmar Lange, *Massenstreik und Schießbefehl: Generalstreik und Märzkämpfe in Berlin 1919* (Münster, 2012); Axel Weipert, *Die zweite Revolution: Rätebewegung in Berlin 1919/1920* (Berlin, 2015); Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott, Kirsten Heinsohn, eds., *Germany 1916-23: A revolution in context* (Bielefeld, 2015); Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19* (Berlin, 2017); see also Alexander Gallus, “Auf dem Weg zur Reaktualisierung durch Historisierung: Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19 Revisited,” in *Weimar als Herausforderung*, ed. Michael Dreyer and Andreas Braune (Stuttgart, 2016), 17-18.

15 See Kathleen Canning, “Claiming Citizenship: Suffrage and Subjectivity in Germany after the First World War,” in *Gender History in Practice* (Ithaca and London, 2006), 212-237; Canning, “The Order and Disorder of Gender in the History of the Weimar Republic,” in *Geschlechter(un)ordnung und Politik in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Gabriele Metzler and Dirk Schumann (Bonn, 2016), 59-79.

Jones, the author of a recent, widely discussed book on violence in the German revolution of 1918/19,¹⁶ offers us an “intimate history of violence” during the first five months of the revolution. Through careful analysis of a series of specific incidents of violence, Jones identifies the key turning points at which the capacity for the de-escalation of violence, which could still be observed at the outset of the revolution, was lost. After a chaotic confrontation between government forces and revolutionary sailors on December 23, 1918, Friedrich Ebert, the head of the provisional revolutionary government, abandoned his previous opposition to using force and permitted the government troops to use military force against leftist opponents. This decision led to the use of military force in Berlin on December 24, and to extremely violent military operations against rebels during the January Uprising, with a death toll of about two hundred, including civilian bystanders. The January Uprising also marked the first time that rebels who had been taken prisoner were killed by government soldiers. As Jones notes, “a taboo” had now “been broken”: Instead of condemning the killing of the rebel prisoners and bringing the perpetrators to justice, the government “continued to defend the conduct of soldiers and blame the Spartacists for *all* of the violence.”

Jones’s conclusions engage with the historiography in two important ways: First, Jones rejects the thesis that the revolutionary violence can be attributed to the brutalization of trench warfare, arguing instead that the causes for the escalation of violence must be found in the revolutionary situation. Second, at least implicitly, his analysis challenges the interpretation that the provisional government and its opponents on the radical left shared equal responsibility for an escalating spiral of violence.¹⁷ Instead, Jones stresses that the escalation of violence must primarily be attributed to the SPD-led provisional government rather than the government’s opponents on the revolutionary left. The Social Democratic Party, the government, and the Social Democratic and liberal press, he argues, had developed a justification of political violence that hinged on dehumanizing their political opponents.

16 Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (Cambridge, 2016).

17 On this point, see Rüdiger Hachtmann’s discussion of Jones’s book and its reception in Germany in: “Blick zurück,” 124-125.

II. Bringing together cultural and political narratives

There is a strange disjuncture in historical writing on the Weimar Republic. On the one hand, political histories of the Weimar Republic often tell a dispiriting story of missed opportunities, miscalculations, and mistakes that doomed the Republic to failure almost from the start; even less teleological accounts tend to stress the final dissolution

of democracy and the rise of Nazism. Weimar's political history is a grim tale. On the other hand, cultural histories of the Weimar Republic relate a fascinating story of cultural experimentation in a wide spectrum of fields, including literature, theater, dance, art, architecture, print media, radio, film and advertising; of the rise of a new type of consumer culture; and of the advent of new gender roles and sexual liberation, especially for women and homosexuals. In short, Weimar's cultural history, at least in Berlin and other urban centers, is usually told as the story of a flourishing culture of experimentation cut short by the Nazi seizure of power.¹⁸ These two historical narratives — the cultural history and the political history of the Weimar Republic — are most often left unconnected to one another. It is one of the great virtues of the essays by Laurie Marhoefer and Molly Loberg in this *Forum* that they seek to connect Weimar's cultural and political histories.

The essay by Laurie Marhoefer, the author of a pioneering study on *Sex and the Weimar Republic*,¹⁹ critically examines two historical interpretations that have drawn causal connections between the history of sexuality and the collapse of the Weimar Republic. The first interpretation, which was advanced by cultural conservatives after 1945, claimed that the “sexual decadence” of the Weimar Republic eroded social and moral norms and thereby helped to create an immoral climate that made the rise of Nazism possible. In other words, sexual immorality as practiced by Weimar homosexuals, promiscuous women, and sex workers supposedly set the stage for the mass murder perpetrated by the Nazis. Marhoefer rebuts what she calls the “Kit Kat Klub theory” (after the nightclub in the musical *Cabaret*) by pointing out that if this kind of “sexual immorality” had had any affinity with Nazi ideology, one would expect to find a substantial number of people with progressive views on sexuality among the supporters of the Nazi party; in fact however, the opposite was the case. The hostility of most Nazis to progressive sexual politics is at the core of the second interpretation critically examined in Marhoefer's essay. According to the “backlash thesis,” Weimar sexual politics — in particular the push for sexual liberation — was a destabilizing force that provoked a conservative cultural and political backlash from which the Nazis benefited. This thesis, too, Marhoefer shows, is not backed up by empirical evidence. After examining Weimar-era Nazi publications, she found no evidence that the Nazis highlighted sexual politics as a political issue in their press and electoral propaganda. One explanation for this reticence, she argues, is that SA leader Ernst

18 For a recent overview, see Sabina Becker, *Experiment Weimar: Eine Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands, 1918-1933* (Darmstadt, 2018).

19 Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German homosexual emancipation and the rise of the Nazis* (Toronto, 2015).

Röhm's homosexuality had become public in a scandal; a good reason to tread softly on the topic of sexuality. Furthermore, she contends, the backlash thesis overestimates the degree to which Weimar sexual politics upset conservatives. Instead, Weimar sexual reforms represented a compromise that was widely accepted by people with divergent views on sexuality and gender roles. In this arena, as in others, she concludes, Weimar functioned as a stable democracy; its collapse was not related to sexual politics.

The essay by Molly Loberg, the author of an important monograph on Weimar-era politics, consumption, and urban space, titled *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin*,²⁰ also connects the cultural and political narratives of Weimar history. In this case the cultural aspect is that of consumer culture and the culture of the street. Berlin's streets, Loberg argues, functioned as "the most consequential mass medium of the era" because they were saturated with expression, in many competing forms, including shop window displays, advertisements, campaign posters, demonstrations, motorcades, and spectacles. The same modern shop design, with large display windows and self-service areas, that had aimed to make retail alluring also made it vulnerable. By the early 1930s, Berlin experienced a sustained wave of looting. This kind of property crime, Loberg suggests, must be understood as political violence, both in terms of its motivation and its effects. Regarding motivation, she notes that attacks on commercial sites increased, at least in part, because of growing restrictions on political demonstrations, such as "no protest zones" around Berlin's political institutions. Regarding its effects, Loberg argues that unrelenting waves of property crime targeting commerce increased the perception of crisis and undermined support for the state, not just among shopkeepers. The Weimar Republic, she concludes, was less tolerant of violence against property than of violence against people, a finding that provides a disturbing counterpoint to Mark Jones's account of how political violence against persons became legitimated during the Republic's founding phase.

20 Molly Loberg, *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin: Politics, Consumption, and Urban Space 1914-1945* (Cambridge/New York, 2018).

21 The standard accounts are: Peter Krüger, *Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (Darmstadt, 1985); Gottfried Niedhart, *Die Aussenpolitik der Weimarer Republik*, 2d ed. (Munich, 2006). For the early years, now see also: Jörn Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden: Versailles und die Welt 1918-1923* (Munich, 2019).

III. The Weimar experiment in Geneva

The standard historical accounts of the foreign policy of the Weimar Republic have focused on the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles, major rapprochements with other powers, the reparations issue, and the reintegration of Germany into the international system, for which Germany's admission to the League of Nations was a major milestone.²¹ James McSpadden's article in this *Forum*

takes a novel approach by asking whether the “eclectic experimentalism”²² that is said to have characterized the Weimar Republic, especially, but not only, in the cultural realm, might also have played a role in foreign policy. McSpadden, who is completing a book on “parliamentary networks and backroom politics” in interwar Europe, identifies an instance of such experimentalism in the composition and operation of the Weimar Republic’s delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva. Bringing together the historiography of the Weimar Republic with that of the League of Nations, he reveals that when Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, its delegation to the League’s General Assembly included male and female parliamentarians, including parliamentarians from opposition parties such as the Socialists and the Conservatives. Although this inclusion of parliamentarians was part of an international trend, the reasons for including parliamentarians in the delegation were also rooted in domestic political contexts. While Gustav Stresemann’s decision to include parliamentarians (rather than cabinet ministers) effectively bolstered his own control of the delegation, the selection of particular parliamentarians usually derived from domestic political considerations. For the political parties, the participation of parliamentarians in the League’s General Assembly had the advantage of keeping them abreast of foreign policy developments. Some opposition parliamentarians, however, felt that they were being used as “fig leaves” for the government’s foreign policy, an argument that eventually led the SPD to refuse to allow its parliamentarians to serve on the delegation, a decision that spelled the end of the practice. McSpadden also calls attention to the role of the League of Nations in opening the door to women in the realm of international relations. Women were included in the national delegations to the General Assembly not only as parliamentarians but quite often as technical experts. And once a slot on the delegation had been filled by a woman, McSpadden shows, that slot often became institutionalized as a woman’s slot.

IV. Historiography

The forum’s closing essay, by Tim Müller, the author of a thought-provoking book on the “Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien,” the efforts of modern democracies to establish themselves after the First World War, addresses historiographical questions.²³ Among the essay’s wide-ranging reflections, three issues are particularly salient. The first concerns the *Sonderweg* interpretation of German history, briefly discussed at the beginning of this introduction. Although the

22 Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?,” 631.

23 Tim B. Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien* (Hamburg, 2014).

Sonderweg has lost its paradigmatic status for writing German history²⁴ — without, however, having been replaced by another research paradigm — its shadow lingers over the historiography of the Weimar Republic. Not least among the lingering effects of the *Sonderweg* is an often unspoken assumption that the failure of Weimar democracy stands in contrast to the success of democracy in Western countries, especially Britain and the United States, in the interwar years. This assumption, however, has become untenable in the face of research demonstrating that the interwar history of democracy in these countries was far from a linear success story and was, rather, characterized by fragility, ambiguity, and setbacks. The history of the Weimar Republic, Müller argues, should be embedded in the context of the history of interwar democracy in other countries, especially in Western Europe — but in a way that acknowledges that many of the challenges and struggles of Weimar democracy were far from unique.

Another salient issue in Weimar historiography is the definition of democracy. As Müller shows, some strands in the historiography have defined democracy according to an ahistorical norm of parliamentary democracy; as a result, attempts to strengthen the Republic's executive have often been interpreted as antidemocratic. Drawing on recent democratic theory, which stresses the improvisational and fragile character of democracy, Müller calls on historians to write the history of the Weimar Republic as that of an open-ended process of democracy in the making. A more process-oriented definition of democracy also entails the recognition that the dividing line between authoritarian and democratic rule is hard to draw, and that historians must therefore be sensitive to fluid transitions between the two. In the case of Weimar, this also means that historians should not be too quick to characterize the Brüning government as a decisive step on the road to authoritarianism; and that the question of when exactly Weimar democracy ended remains, for good reason, a difficult one.

No matter what subject they write about, historians always face the difficult task of explaining the course of events — why things happened the way they did — and, at the same time, conveying an understanding that, within certain constraints, the historical actors had the freedom to make choices, so that things did not necessarily have to happen the way they did. Because the Weimar Republic's collapse resulted in a murderous regime that unleashed unprecedented suffering, death, and destruction on the world, writing the Republic's

24 See Sheehan, "Paradigm lost?"

history without letting the historical outcome overwhelm the sense of historical contingency is particularly difficult. It therefore makes good sense to remind historians of the Weimar Republic, as Müller does, to avoid a one-sided focus on causal explanations of outcomes and make room for contingency.

Richard F. Wetzell is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute Washington and editor of the GHI's *Bulletin*. His publications include *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (co-edited, Cambridge UP, 2017), *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany* (edited, Berghahn Books, 2014), and *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945* (UNC Press, 2000). He is currently working on racial science in Nazi Germany as well as a history of penal reform in modern Germany (1870-1970).

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING GERMANY'S FIRST DEMOCRACY: REFLECTIONS ON THE FOUNDING OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC IN 2019

Kathleen Canning

RICE UNIVERSITY

The founding of Weimar democracy is most often marked by the ceremonious opening of the National Assembly on February 6, 1919 when its 423 members convened in the National Theater of Weimar to draft, debate, and ultimately to ratify the constitutional terms of Germany's new democracy. The scenes of polite deliberation and passionate debate that filled the theater were legitimated by the democratic elections of January 20, 1919. The writing and ratification of the constitution that concluded in August 1919 has long been recognized as the Republic's founding moment.

Yet this focus on the constitution and the National Assembly has long overshadowed a markedly different founding moment for the Weimar Republic — that of November 1918 — when the coalescing forces of military defeat, popular revolution, and collapse of the state called the question of democracy as political form.

Indeed, the revolution of November 1918 proved a necessary prerequisite for the emergence of democracy in Germany, although this connection is seldom asserted in historical accounts of the founding of the Weimar Republic. Until quite recently, the revolution of November 9, 1918 was a mostly “forgotten” political episode best known as a “failed revolution.” Distinct descriptors were attached to the notion of failure: it was abbreviated or incomplete, became stuck, left a lasting and irreparable hole in the heart of Weimar democracy or caused the republic itself to be “stillborn.”¹ In the wake of the Paris Peace agreement of 1919, nationalist rhetoric turned the insurgent soldiers, sailors, and workers of 1918-19 into the “November criminals,” whose revolutionary uprising was a crucial stage in the legend of the stab-in-the-back that brought about Germany's catastrophic defeat.² For right-wing nationalists, the act of instituting the republic was a longer-term consequence of the revolution, one that forged an inextricable link between November 1918 and the republic's founding as conjoined acts of betrayal.³

In the past two to three years leading up to the centennial of both the revolution and the founding of the Weimar Republic, retrospectives

- 1 Eberhard Kolb, “1918/19: Die steckengebliebene Revolution,” in Carola Stern and Heinrich A. Winkler, eds., *Wendepunkte deutscher Geschichte 1848-1990* (Frankfurt a.M., 2001), 100-25; Reinhard Rürüp, “Problems of the German Revolution 1918-19,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 3/4 (October 1968):109-35; Heinrich August Winkler, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution von 1918/19: ein Rückblick nach sechzig Jahren* (Berlin, 1979).
- 2 Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf, 2003); George Vascik and Mark Sadler, eds., *The Stab-in-the-Back Myth and the Fall of the Weimar Republic: A History in Documents and Visual Sources* (Bloomsbury, 2016).
- 3 Axel Schildt, “Der lange November: zur Historisierung einer deutschen Revolution,” in *Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19*, ed. Alexander Gallus (Göttingen, 2010), 244.

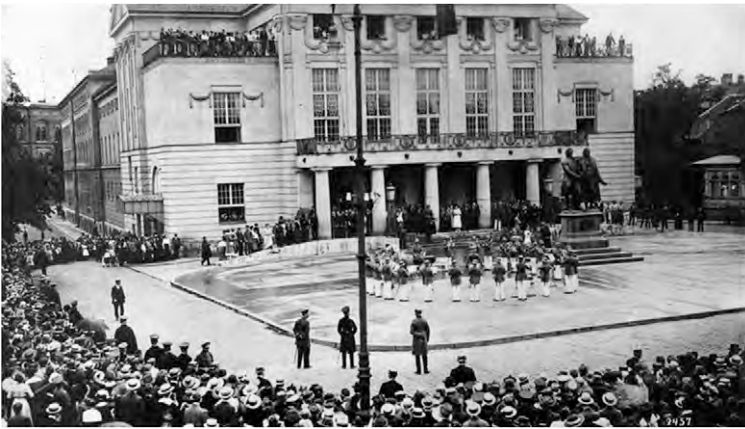


Figure 1. Closing ceremony for the Nationalversammlung at the National Theater in Weimar. © bpk.

as academics, politicians, and museum curators share their reflections and reinterpretations of history with the broad public. Notable in the contiguous centennials of the November Revolution and the formal founding of the Weimar Republic is the marked distance between these two foundational moments.

The goal of this essay is to situate the November Revolution in the story of Weimar democracy's founding and as one of its origins. My recent work examines crucial citizenship effects of the revolution that were formative of Germany's first democracy as new terms of political participation and representation were invented, improvised and imagined in that in-between time and space from November 9, 1918 to the convening of the National Assembly in February 1919.⁵ Since this centennial juncture is one in which the presumed failures — of both the Weimar Republic and the November revolution — have

have sought to historicize the place of both events — or their relative absence — in Germany's commemorative culture.⁴ The commemoration of such anniversaries constitutes a uniquely performative realm of history's meaning in which *Tagespolitik* meets scholarship,

4 Conferences include: "Der Kieler Matrosenaufstand in der Revolution 1918. Epizentrum eines politischen Umbruchs?" Wissenschaftlicher Workshop im Vorfeld des 100. Jahrestages der Kieler Novemberereignisse 1918, Kieler Stadt- und Schifffahrtsmuseum/Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, March 3-6, 2016; "Living the German Revolution: Expectations, Experiences, Responses," German Historical Institute London, October 18-20, 2018 (see the conference report by Marius S. Ostrowski, *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, Vol 41, No. 1 (May 2019): 155-163). Also noteworthy were the

conferences organized by the Forschungsstelle Weimarer Republik, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena: "Zusammenbruch, Aufbruch, Abbruch? Die Novemberrevolution als Ereignis und Erinnerungsort," November 24-26, 2017 and "Die Weimarer Reichsverfassung: Aufbruch und Innovation," December 6-8, 2018. Notable studies include: Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution*

von 1918/19 (Berlin/München/Zürich/Wien, 2017); Daniel Schönplugh, *Kometenjahre 1918: Die Welt im Aufbruch* (Frankfurt, 2017); Heiko Mass, "Die Weimarer Nationalversammlung als demokratischer Erinnerungsort," and Alexander Gallus, "Auf dem Weg zur Reaktualisierung durch Historisierung. Die vergessene Revolution von 1918 re-visited," in Michael Dreyer und Andreas Braune,

eds., *Weimar als Herausforderung. Die Weimarer Republik und die Demokratie im 21. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 2016), 3-6; 9-21.

5 Kathleen Canning, "Gender and the Imaginary of Revolution in Germany," in Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott, and Kirsten Heinsohn, eds., *In Search of Revolution: Germany and Its European Context, 1916-1923* (Berlin, 2015), 103-26.

been subject to new exploration and analysis,⁶ the starting point of this essay is a brief examination of the ways in which these specters of failure have haunted the history of Germany's twentieth-century democracies.

The view of Weimar as a republic that was flawed, or even doomed from its revolutionary beginnings, meant that its democratic sensibilities left little trace in the formation of the Federal Republic's post-1945 democracy. Yet, the Weimar past was not wholly absent. Rather, as Sebastian Ullrich has argued in his study, *Der Weimar Komplex*, it hung over the Federal Republic's beginning like a very long shadow — the shadow, that is, of democracy's catastrophic failure.⁷ West German politicians who sought to anchor the Federal Republic in democratic ideas of the past thus looked much further back. In 1948, not surprisingly, celebrations were held to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the 1848 revolution, while the thirtieth anniversary of Weimar's founding went largely unmarked.⁸ Indeed, the success and self-confidence of the emergent Federal Republic in the late 1940s and early 1950s seemed to depend on its ability to distance its democracy in form and content from the crisis-ridden republic of Weimar. The GDR, by contrast, sought to enshrine and overcome the legacy of the Weimar Republic by launching its own "antifascist-democratic revolution" after 1945.⁹

The relative absence of the Weimar Republic in the public commemoration of Germany's path to democracy is critically examined in the introduction to the 2016 essay collection, *Weimar als Herausforderung*, whose editors, Michael Dreyer and Andreas Braune, note that an expansive 2001 compilation of German sites of memory, for example, featured few memorials from the Weimar period. The inclusion of the Bauhaus in commemorative culture linked it not to the Weimar period but instead highlighted its fate under Nazism

6 Dreyer and Braune, *Weimar als Herausforderung*; Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich, and Irina Renz, eds., *1918: Die Deutschen zwischen Weltkrieg und Revolution* (Berlin, 2018); Tim B. Müller and Adam Tooze, eds., *Normalität und Fragilität. Demokratie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2015); Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-19* (Cambridge/New York, 2017); Albert Dikovich and Alexander Wierzock, eds., *Von der Revolution zum Neuen Menschen: Das politische Imaginäre in Mitteleuropa 1918/19: Philosophie, Humanwissenschaften und Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1918).

7 Sebastian Ullrich, *Der Weimar-Komplex. Das Scheitern der ersten deutschen Demokratie und die politische Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2009). Also see his "A Democratic Legacy? The Memorialization of the Weimar Republic and the Politics of History of the Federal Republic of Germany," in Bill Niven

and Chloe Paver, eds., *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (New York, 2010), 381. Also see Christoph Gusy, *Weimars lange Schatten. Weimar als Argument nach 1945* (Baden-Baden, 2003).

8 Ullrich, "A Democratic Legacy," 381.

9 Ullrich, "A Democratic Legacy," 379.

and its subsequent revival and dissemination across the two postwar Germanies and in the United States.¹⁰ Dreyer and Braune point to the overwhelming prominence of 1933 in the venues of popular political education, even as Germany still lacks a museum dedicated to Weimar history and political culture. Their volume calls for new commemorative attention to the Republic's founding, its capacity to foster loyalty in the face of political murder and putsch attempts, to defend democracy and to sustain republican governance as it dug itself out of crisis and paralysis time and time again, at least until 1931.¹¹ Dreyer and Braune seek a critically positive engagement with the innovative, imaginative, and inventive aspects of Weimar democracy, not least its anchoring of a social state at the heart of republican democracy, a laudable legacy for the post-1945 Federal Republic and beyond in the view of progressive and Social Democratic scholars and politicians.

While a refurbished memory of the Republic might make room for its embrace of a social state ahead of its time, it is not surprising that the piece-by-piece dismantling of the Republic and its ultimate collapse in 1933 have long overwhelmed this more positive vision. Instead, the Republic has been rendered a site of mourning and lamentation — not only for a lost democracy but also for the exile of its cultural ambition, and most profoundly, of course, for the catastrophic human consequences of the Nazis' rise to power. In this sense, the founding and the collapse of Germany's interwar democracy has reverberated across continents and decades and is indisputably a world-historical event with global implications. This sense of mourning and loss remains a powerful legacy of the Republic even as interpretive reflections on Weimar democracy began to shift some three or four years ago, as scholars and politicians began to look towards its centennial. The backdrop for that change is a new recognition and appreciation for the high-stakes task of building a democracy, of sustaining it and insuring its survival in the face of rising populist, nationalist and authoritarian movements.

Indeed, the Weimar Republic has become a readily available paradigm for imperiled democracies, a case study of “the suffocation of democracy,” a lesson in “how democracies die,” even if they do so under indisputably specific historical circumstances.¹² In fact, these days we German historians in North America are regularly called upon to offer reflections on possible parallels between Germany in the early 1930s and the intensifying denigration of democracy in the United States since January 2017. In its struggle to design, negotiate, enact, and defend democracy in the face of vigorous and periodically

10 Dreyer and Braune, “Weimar als Herausforderung. Zum Umgang mit einer schwierigen Republik,” in *Weimar als Herausforderung*, xi-xiii.

11 Dreyer and Braune, “Weimar als Herausforderung.” On Weimar democracy's capacity to generate a vigorous defense, even the desire for democracy, see Manuela Achilles, “Anchoring the Nation in the Democratic Form: Weimar Symbolic Politics Beyond the Failure Paradigm,” in Geoff Eley, Jennifer Jenkins and Tracie Matsysik, eds., *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar. A Contest of Futures* (London, 2016), 259-82.

12 Christopher Browning, “The Suffocation of Democracy,” *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 25, 2018) and Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York, 2018).

violent opposition, Weimar has gained a poignant place in the history of western democracies. This new attention to the fate of Weimar democracy allows for its reframing as an inherently fragile yet still visionary political formation.

I. Revolution and the inception of democracy

This essay's reflections on how republican democracy became a possibility in 1918 are framed by two key arguments: the first considers Weimar democracy's temporal dimensions, namely its advent as a sudden democracy, a term that is suggestive for the beginnings of Germany's two twentieth-century postwar democracies. A sudden democracy, even if popularly summoned, as in 1918, requires improvisation and invention, as established structures of governance are shattered, and as juridical and constitutional changes propel the disenfranchised or partially enfranchised into the new status of full citizens (1918-19) or create the conditions for restoration of disbanded citizenships to those who had lost or forfeited them (1945-48). These processes of rebuilding forms of governance and political representation often take place in the absence of tradition or in open conflict with past forms of belonging. The speed with which sudden democratic frameworks are built were often compelled by external conditions, such as military collapse and defeat, the terms of peace and occupation, and by the need for alleviation of the civilian population's dire material needs. The notion of sudden democracy takes seriously "the broken character" of revolution, defeat, social and national collapse that calls forth new forms of governance and political representation under the conditions of emergency.¹³ The sudden inception of Weimar democracy might be understood as an eruption, while Germany's democratization after the Second World War was in one sense indisputably sudden — in the violent end of the Nazi state and its war of annihilation and the installation of military occupation by the victorious Allies. Yet postwar democratization also required a deliberate and gradual process of demilitarization, denazification and conversion that lasted into the early 1950s.¹⁴ The popular memories of the Weimar Republic as a time of "political instability and misery," along with the view, widely shared among intellectuals and politicians, that democracy "was an ideology foreign to the German people" necessitated a process of conversion.¹⁵

Second, the contests over forms of governance between November 1918 and spring 1919 make clear the ways in which democracy as a political form is one that is continually "in the making," a contention

13 Axel Schildt refers to the "gebrochenen Charakter der Revolution" in his essay, "Der lange November," 244.

14 Jennifer Fay, "Becoming Democratic: Satire, Satiety and the Founding of West Germany," *Film History. An International Journal* 18/1 (2006): 6-20; Jennifer Kapczynski, *The German Patient: Crisis and Recovery in Postwar Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2008); Sean Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945* (Cambridge/New York, 2014) and "Reconsidering the 'Unpolitical German': Democratic Renewal and the Politics of Culture in Occupied Germany," *German History* 32/1 (2014): 53-78.

15 Ulrich, "A Democratic Legacy?", 379-80.

that Tim B. Müller and Adam Tooze have recently asserted most persuasively and that was implicit in my exploration of citizenship and the convening of democratic subjectivities in 1916-19.¹⁶ Peter Fritzsche's hallmark essay, "Did Weimar Fail" similarly emphasized the *contingency* of Weimar democracy, a formulation that is close to the notion of democracy in-the-making. Citing Alfred Döblin, Fritzsche argued that the Republic came "without operating instructions."¹⁷ From another angle we might understand democracy as "in-the-making" because it suffers recurrent crises of representation. Democracy is chronically beset by challenge as conflicts ensue over who is entitled to representation and how representation is structured or restricted, for example, on the basis of class, employment status, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality. Contests over the terms of inclusion/exclusion raise critically important questions about how democratic sensibilities are awakened in actors and subjects who seek to convene, assemble, defend or restore democracies and how we, as historians, find and interpret evidence of these sensibilities, affinities, and disavowals. A further question with particular relevance for the history of Weimar democracy is how democratic affinities begin to disintegrate, are damaged or rendered dangerous, how they are dismantled or ultimately shattered.

Peace, bread and democracy had been the slogans of popular protest since 1916 that demanded an end to the military state of siege and its suspension of civil and political rights. Democracy came to stand not only for the restoration of these liberties, but also for the enactment of new rights of political participation and new forms of political representation, in which socialist and parliamentary visions mingled. The widespread everyday protests across the urban landscape of Germany over bread, coal, over the inequities of rationing, exposed the state's inability to provide for its citizens, while mass strikes in the munitions industry laid bare the precariousness of industrial labor under the conditions of war in spring 1917 and the early winter of 1918.¹⁸ As the legitimacy of the Hohenzollern state grievously weakened and Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff were forced to request an armistice, Prince Max von Baden's provisional government enacted the October reforms, embracing the vision of a parliamentary monarchy that stopped short of democracy and sought to stave off a revolutionary uprising.

That Germany's catastrophic defeat, popular revolution, and the collapse of the Kaiser's state all occurred within the span of a few

16 Tim B. Müller, "Die Weimarer Republik und die Europäische Demokratie," in *Weimar als Herausforderung*, 59-60; Tim B. Müller and Adam Tooze, eds., *Normalität und Fragilität. Demokratie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2015), Introduction, 15; Kathleen Canning, "Gender Order/Disorder and New Political Subjects in the Weimar Republic," in Gabriele Metzler and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Geschlechterordnung und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Heidelberg, 2016), 59-80 and "Gender and the Imaginary of Revolution in Germany."

17 Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *Journal of Modern History*, 68/3 (September 1996): 631.

18 See, for example, Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918* (Providence/Oxford, 1966) and Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War. German Society 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1978).

days led to competing sites of governmentality and forms of political representation. In this sense the “double declaration of the republic” on November 9, 2018 — Philipp Scheidemann’s announcement of the “German Republic” from a Reichstag balcony on November 9, 2018, followed two hours later by Karl Liebknecht’s declaration of the “free socialist Republic of Germany” from the balcony of the Berlin *Stadtschloss*¹⁹ lent a framework to the ensuing contests over political representation, which found expression on the one hand, in the spontaneous formation of workers’ and soldiers’ *Räte* across Germany and on the other, in the rushed reorientation of parties, unions, clubs and associations towards mass mobilization of new voters, including millions of women, for Germany’s first democratic elections.²⁰ As I have argued elsewhere, these two forms of political representation also formed explicitly gendered fronts of revolution.²¹

Contemporaries across the political spectrum expressed disbelief and shock at this sudden emergence of competing and incompatible futures, encompassing the possibilities of council rule or democratic elections, but also prospects as varied as the resumption of war through a *levée en masse*, a Spartacist seizure of power on the path to a proletarian revolution, or the return of the Kaiser at the helm of a new constitutional monarchy.²² While democracy had constituted a vague ideal of a future polity during the war, between November 1918 and February 1919 it became an alternative to revolution, the return of the Kaiser or the resumption of hostilities. Yet these imagined futures were nonetheless present in the founding of Weimar democracy, whether in the narratives of loss and longing — for Kaiser and empire — or the desire for revenge in the guise of the stab-in-the-back legend, or in the violent crushing of revolutionary hopes with the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in January 1919.²³

The revolution lent Germany’s interwar democracy a specific temporality: it was born of a *Traditionsbruch* — a rupture of tradition — amidst disastrous defeat, imperial collapse, and dire material crisis, without a template for governance under these conditions. Contingency and the capacity to imagine, invent, and experiment were necessary and inevitable aspects of the republic’s founding. How this contingency was experienced and described is revealed in memoirs, letters, and diaries of contemporaries that highlight the disparate standpoints and sensibilities of the revolutionary moment as it authorized new actors, subjects, and publics, who puzzled over the spatial locations and temporal implications of the revolution — where it

19 Axel Schildt, “Der lange November,” 244; Hirschfeld, Krumeich, and Renz, 1918: *Die Deutschen zwischen Weltkrieg und Revolution*; Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19*.

20 Kathleen Canning, “Das Geschlecht der Revolution: Stimmrecht und Staatsbürgertum 1918/19,” in Alexander Gallus, ed., *Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19*, (Göttingen, 2010), 84–116.

21 Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld und Franziska Mann, *Was jede Frau vom Wahlrecht wissen muss!* (Berlin, 1918), 7.

22 Michael Geyer, “Insurrectionary Warfare: The German Debate about a *Levée en Masse* in October 1918,” *Journal of Modern History* 73 (Fall 2001): 459–527 and Michael Geyer, “Zwischen Krieg und Nachkrieg — die deutsche Revolution 1918/19 im Zeichen blockierter Transnationalität,” in Gallus, *Die vergessene Revolution*, 187–222.

23 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery*, transl. Jefferson Chase (New York, 2003), 8–31; 193–207; Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration*.



Figure 2. Revolutionary street scene, 1919.
© Ullstein Bild.

the revolution was inextricable from the experience of war, for both herself and her dead son.

began, when it might end — along with its possible course and outcomes: what it might disrupt, transform, invent, dismantle.²⁴ The artist Käthe Kollwitz, for example, mused mournfully about the meanings of the revolution, imagining her fallen son, Peter, as one of the revolutionary soldiers. For Kollwitz

So this *is* really happening. We experience it but can scarcely grasp it. I am continuously thinking of Peter. If he had lived, he would have joined them. He would have ripped off those insignias as well. But he did not live and when I last laid eyes upon him he had the same hat with the cockade and his face was shining.²⁵

The diary entries of Thomas Mann report his observations of the sound of distant shots and express his wish for rain that might quell the gunfire:

The dry but frosty weather favors the revolution: the sun breaks through. If it were pouring rain, the revolution would certainly languish ... No mail delivery today. The rebels have also taken over the railway station and stopped all trains from passing through ... All of this will soon fade away and calm will return, one way or another, and you will carry on with your lives as they were, as they will be ...²⁶

While Mann conveys a sense of revolution as a minor annoyance that could be easily dispelled by rain, Theodor Wolff, the editor-in-chief of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*, offered a starkly different view in his editorial of November 10, 1918:

24 Alexander Gallus has recently drawn attention to the importance of the experience of revolution, its psyche and emotional dimensions, while Mark Jones' 2018 monograph sheds new light on the ethnography of fear, rumor and violence in the revolution. Alexander Gallus, "Auf dem Weg zur Reaktualisierung durch Historisierung: Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19 Revisited," in *Weimar als Herausforderung*, 17-18; Jones, *Founding Weimar*.

25 Käthe Kollwitz, *Die Tagebücher 1908-1943*, ed. Jutta Bohnke-Kollwitz (Munich, 2012), Entry for Nov. 9, 1918, 378-79. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

26 Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918-1921*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt, 2003), 60-61.

One can call it the greatest of all revolutions because never before has such an attempt taken such a firmly built Bastille surrounded by solid walls. A week ago a military and civil administrative organization still existed ... and it seemed that its regime was ensured to last the course of time. The grey cars of the officers raced through the streets of Berlin like monuments to power. Police stood on the squares; an enormous military organization seemed to surround everything ... Early yesterday morning, in Berlin at least, all of that was still there. By yesterday afternoon none of it existed anymore.²⁷

These brief observations of politically attuned intellectuals reveal a range of responses to a revolution that none appeared to anticipate, from Mann's skeptical dismissal to Wolf's wonderment at revolution's sudden and non-violent quality, to Kollwitz's embrace of an uprising that promised justice for her son.

II. Inventing democracy

During the frenetic weeks between November 9, 1918 and the first democratic elections on January 20, 1919, new terms of political participation and representation had to be invented, improvised and imagined and new kinds of political expertise were convened to provide tutelage to new citizens. This was the critical dilemma the revolution posed for those who would invent the republic. Although both the *Räte* and the new mobilizations of voters redefined and expanded the terrains of politics, suffrage reform has scarcely figured as significant in historical analysis of this period of revolution and rupture. In fact, during the revolutionary period from November 1918 through late January 1919, revolution and suffrage represented radically different political imaginaries. The vision of a republic of councils foresaw direct democracy, led by soldiers, sailors and male workers, but it also found adherents well beyond these constituencies, attesting to its (at least momentary) resonance as a new form of political representation. Intellectuals and artists, radical female socialists, even housewives in one or two locations, were inspired to convene councils of their own. The formation of *Räte der geistigen Arbeiter* (councils of intellectual workers) aimed to "act for the cultural political radicals on the ground of the new republic."²⁸ Kurt Hiller, Jewish pacifist, journalist and influential activist for homosexual rights, who led the Berliner Rat der geistigen Arbeiter (Berlin Council of Intellectual Workers), sought

27 As cited in Mark Jones, "The Crowd in the November Revolution 1918," in Weinbauer et al., *In Search of Revolution*, 48-49.

28 Ian Grimmer, "'Moral Power' and Cultural Revolution: Räte geistiger Arbeiter in Central Europe 1918/19," in Weinbauer et al., *In Search of Revolution*, 205-206.



Figure 3. Women's protest, 1919. © Archiv der deutschen Sozialdemokratie/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

sought to mirror the workers' and soldiers' councils by making innovations in art and architecture accessible to a broader population.³⁰

Hans Joachim Bieber's study of *Bürgerräte und Bürgerstreiks* in Germany uncovered agile bourgeois activists who quickly overcame their shock at the revolutionary events and sought to organize councils on the grounds of previous associational networks, interest groups, or along the lines of profession. He points to a feverish level of activity in the months of November and December, as the *Bürgerräte* sought to deflect a radicalization of the revolution and to mobilize support for the convening of a National Assembly.³¹ Councils quickly figured as an experimental form of political representation, even for those who sought to deflect or oppose revolutionary change.

If the Independent wing of the Social-Democratic Party (USPD) and the later Communists (KPD) were the only political parties that explicitly embraced the formation of women's councils, it appears that female members of the Bund deutscher Frauenvereine also convened their own councils, as reported in the association's journal, *Die Frau*.³² Indications that the term *Rat* (council) may have been an open-ended trope of political mobilization can be found in reports like one from Posen about a women's council that was founded there in December 1918 to protect the interests of "das bedrohte Deutschtum" (endangered "Germanness").³³ While little is known about the internal

to "extend the revolution beyond the demands of the traditional labor movement in the hope of advancing a cultural revolution."²⁹ At the same time, the Berliner Arbeitsrat für Kunst, founded in November 1918 by Bruno Taut and Walther Gropius,

29 Grimmer, 'Moral Power' and Cultural Revolution, 205-06.

30 Regine Prange, "Der Arbeitsrat für Kunst und seine Ausstellungen," in Thorsten Scheer, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt, eds., *Stadt der Architektur - Architektur der Stadt: Berlin 1900 - 2000* [exhibition catalog] (Berlin, 2000), 93-104.

31 Hans-Joachim Bieber, *Bürgerräte und Bürgerstreiks in Deutschland 1918-1920* (Hamburg, 1993).

32 Willy Albrecht, Friedhelm Boll, Beatrix W. Bouvier, Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel, Michael

Schneider, "Frauenfrage und deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Beginn der zwanziger

Jahre," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 19 (1979): 489. Also see Ute Gerhard, *Un-erhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*

(Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1990), 330-31.

33 "Frauenräte," *Die Frau* 26/3 (1918/19): 96.

workings of the women's councils or of the *Hausfrauenräte*, which also found occasional mention, both sought to transcend the definition of council membership in terms of *Beruf* (profession) or place of production. Although some feminists sought to redefine the work of housewives as constituting productive labor,³⁴ the tendency of most municipal councils to limit voting membership to those "who were employed for wages or salaries" resulted in the *de facto* exclusion of women and workers in agriculture and domestic industry, as well as casual, temporary, or marginally employed workers. As historian Peter Caldwell has argued, the definition of a new notion of council citizenship in terms of "those active in production, to workers of 'hand and head,'" was intrinsic to the council movement's vision of democratization, which was to encompass not only politics but also the socialization of production.³⁵ These narrow parameters of participation fostered more fundamental criticism of the council ideology by none other than liberal feminist Gertrud Bäumer, who, in the spring of 1919, noted scathingly that "as a system of representation based solely on profession with essentially economic goals" the councils could not be entrusted with the task of political representation.

In our struggle for female suffrage we have always been aware that peoples' interests must be represented not only in relation to production, but also from the standpoint of their roles as consumers, of their locations and interests outside of work. One of the crucial shortcomings of constitutional processes thus far has been a starting point that is too exclusively focused on production and that does not sufficiently consider peoples' activities as consumers, renters, members of a family, or their much more essential and personal life contexts outside of the sphere of work."³⁶

If in the council debates, democracy was at best a transitory state on the way to revolution, the declaration of equal suffrage opened an arena of popular mobilization for the invention of democracy. Sudden and unanticipated by all parties on November 12, 1918, the proclamation of equal suffrage granted new political rights to women over age twenty and to working-class men whose right to vote had been restricted by the Prussian three-class suffrage laws. The suffrage declaration thus resolved the hard-fought battle of the pre-war period over political participation of socialist and working-class men but also the decades of socialist and feminist campaigns, in Germany and across Europe, for the right to vote. In the aftermath of war and in the face

34 Margarete Weinberg, „Rätesystem und Hausfrauen.“ *Die Frauenbewegung* 21 (Juli 1919): 51-52.

35 Peter C. Caldwell, "The Citizen and the Republic," in Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski, eds., *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany*, (Stanford, 2008), 45-46.

36 Gertrud Bäumer, "Die neue Gefahr für das Frauenstimmrecht," *Die Frauenfrage* 21 (May 1919), 36-37. See also Anja Weberling, *Zwischen Räten und Parteien. Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1918-1919* (Pfaffenweiler, 1994), 36.

of the massive loss of men at the front, equal suffrage meant that two million more women than men would decide the new form of state. Especially against the backdrop of the presumptive “excess” of female citizens, the proclamation of equal suffrage had a significant impact on debates about the terms of political participation and representation, prompting waves of nationalist anxiety about the feminization of politics.³⁷ The work of inventing democracy called for hastily assembled campaigns led by experts who could begin the process of tutoring female voters, who purportedly lacked political experience and the capacity for political judgment in the exercise of their first vote.³⁸ The gender of revolution, as I have argued elsewhere, is precisely in the different forms of political representation it unleashed, including the mass mobilization and education of new voters.

As this massive mobilization of voters began, the Spartacists and the newly formed KPD drew a dividing line between the revolutionary councils and the prospect of parliamentary government. Assessing the elections to the National Assembly as constituting a “cowardly detour” from revolution, one that aimed to “defraud the socialist revolution of its socialist goals and to emasculate it into a bourgeois democratic revolution,” Rosa Luxemburg castigated the idea of a National Assembly as “an outmoded legacy of bourgeois revolutions, an empty shell, a relic from the time of petit-bourgeois illusions of a ‘united people’ and of the ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ of the bourgeois state.”³⁹ When the KPD met for its inaugural congress on December 23, 1918, it faced the critical decision of whether the KPD should take part in the elections to the National Assembly.⁴⁰ Recognizing that the revolutionary forces were “not yet in a position to secure the victory of socialism simply through the overthrow of a government,” Luxemburg appealed to her comrades in the pages of the *Rote Fahne* to support participation in the elections while holding out the prospect of utilizing “the elections to the National Assembly to fight against the National Assembly” and upholding the call: “all power to the councils!”⁴¹ She disparaged the idea of “exploring parliament for so-called positive gains,” noting that “not the parliamentary majority in the National Assembly,” but the popular mobilization in factories and streets “will decide the fate of the National Assembly.” Indeed, Luxemburg imagined “the electoral action” and the floor of the parliament itself as “a means of training, rallying and mobilizing the revolutionary mass” to ultimately “take this fortress by storm and raze it to the ground.”⁴² Luxemburg’s vision was defeated in a vote of 62 to 23, and the KPD boycotted the elections to the National Assembly. Luxemburg’s shrewd realism

37 Ute Planert, “Women’s Suffrage and Anti-Feminism as a Litmus Test of Modernizing Societies,” in Sven Oliver Müller, *Imperial Germany Revisited. Continuing Debates and New Perspectives* (New York/Oxford, 2011), 107-25 and *Anti-feminismus im Kaiserreich: Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (Göttingen, 1998); see in particular chapter 5 „Geschlechterpolitik im ersten Weltkrieg.”

38 I first outlined these arguments in my essay, “Das Geschlecht der Revolution,” in Gallus, *Die vergessene Revolution*, 84-116.

39 Rosa Luxemburg, “The National Assembly,” *Rote Fahne* (November 20, 1918), published in: *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings*, ed. Robert Looker and transl. W.D. Graf), 262-65.

40 Paul Fröhlich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Ideas in Action*, transl. Johanna Hoornweg (Chicago, 2010; 1st edition Chicago, 1939), 285-86.

41 Fröhlich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, 282.

42 Luxemburg, “The Elections to the National Assembly,” *Rote Fahne* (December 23, 1918), published in *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings*, 287-90.

had led her to recognize the complications and difficulties the revolution faced, not least because of its entanglement with notions of democracy that were undergoing redefinition in all political arenas.⁴³

As insurgent workers and soldiers seized sites of governance across towns, cities, provinces, and the capital of Berlin and

Wilhelm made off to Holland, “democracy” remained without a template, even as the Social Democratic leadership and the liberal professoriate, notably Max Weber, Hugo Preuss and Walther Rathenau, were engaging in more earnest explorations of parliamentarism as an offensive strategy of democratization since mid-1917.⁴⁴ On November 14, 1918, five days after the revolution, Hugo Preuss, who led the writing of the Weimar constitution, sought to “bridge the gap between revolution and constitution,” outlining in the *Berliner Tageblatt* a political space for democracy that would institutionalize the “power of the people.” Acknowledging the revolutionary legacy of democracy, Preuss sought to convince contemporaries of the compatibility (for a time) of these two political terms. The common ground of democracy was the sole political form that could resolve Germany’s crisis of governance:

The aims of the present holders of power [Author’s note: here he refers to the councils] might be the best and most pure imaginable; yet they cannot escape from the logic of the situation, which is that the attempt to constitute the new State while excluding the bourgeoisie must lead unavoidably, within a short space of time, to Bolshevik terror ... If a democratic political organization has not been established to secure equal rights for all citizens, then there will be no alternative to violence... Not classes and groups, not parties and estates in hostile isolation, but only the whole



Figure 4. César Klein, Poster commissioned by the Rat der Volksbeauftragten, 1919. © Bundesarchiv.

43 Fröhlich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, 285.

44 See Marcus Llanque’s *Demokratisches Denken im Krieg. Die deutsche Debatte im ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2000), 169-70 and Ch. 2, Section “Die Strategie einer offensiven Argumentation der Demokratie,” 170ff.

German people, represented by a German National Assembly elected by completely democratic elections, can create the German republic. And that must be created quickly if unspeakable misfortune is not to crush completely our poor people.”⁴⁵

By the time Max Weber authored his essay “Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland” in December 1917, he sensed the acute danger of the “growing bitterness of the masses” under the conditions of war. Weber’s attempt to define democracy as a new form of politics was built around the firm rejection of both the *Obrigkeitsstaat* (authoritarian state) and the prospect of socialism.⁴⁶ Weber regarded uniform, equal suffrage for all political bodies in the Reich as a fundamental precondition for the “internal unification of the nation in its struggle for existence,” warning that if “the democratization of Germany’s constitution were thwarted now, it would occur ‘at the expense of Germany’s future.’”⁴⁷ Weber’s vision of democracy called up a new form of “positive politics” in 1917-18: for Weber equal voting rights meant that “at the point of social life, the individual, for once, is not, as he is everywhere else, considered in terms of the particular professional and family position he occupies, nor in relation to difference of material and social situation, but purely and simply as a citizen.”⁴⁸ Here Weber offers a remedy for the criticism that Gertrud Bäumer leveled at the political form of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils.

Weber provided an outline of the space in which democracy should take shape in 1918-19 — if it were to constitute an alternative to violence and “unspeakable misfortune.” Indeed, as Hugo Preuss undertook first steps to realize the task of shaping Weimar democracy’s form and content, millions of new citizens, casting their first vote in the elections of 20 January 1919, heralded democracy’s arrival. Art historian and entrepreneur Oskar Münsterberg reflected on that day:

Today at 3 pm I went to the polls with Helene. For the first time, today, German women were able to exercise their right to vote. The polling stations were overrun with people: rich and poor, old and young, men and women — stood in long lines for hours in order to fulfill their new duty to vote for the new Republic’s first National Assembly. How quickly democratic thought saturated all social groups and the duty to vote embraced by all circles of the population! I voted today for the first time myself. Under previous

45 Hugo Preuss, “Volksstaat oder verkehrter Obrigkeitsstaat?” *Berliner Tageblatt* November 14, 1918, reprinted in Hugo Preuss, *Staat, Recht und Freiheit* (1926; repr., Hildesheim, 2006), 365-368.

46 Terry Maley, *Democracy and the Political in Max Weber’s Thought* (Toronto, 2011), 52-53.

47 As cited in Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890-1920* (Chicago, 1990), 247. Mommsen cites here Weber’s *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, December 1917, 252.

48 Maley, *Democracy and the Political*, 53. He cites here Weber’s “Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland,” in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Tübingen, 1988), 299.

governments, I knew that my vote would have no influence. The Reichstag was merely a speaker's tribune, not a significant site of power.⁴⁹

The stakes of participatory citizenship in 1918-19 were much higher than the affinities of citizens with their chosen political parties. Rather, in those heady days between November 1918 and 20 January, 1919, democratic sensibility encompassed the conscious recognition that there was no turning back, no return to “the old system” and that citizenship now meant the capacity to shape the *Zukunftsstaat*, the future state, its form, and its national boundaries, and the terms and consequences of the anticipated peace negotiations. The coincidence of Germany's defeat, revolution and the imagining of a new German democracy in 1918/19 also meant that political visions and programs were inextricable from the structures of feelings, from grief and mourning, from the desire for absolution, resolution, revolution, and democracy. The somber acknowledgement by liberal feminist Agnes von Harnack, for example, that “an entire sea of blood and tears” overshadowed Germany's first democratic election, opened an unusual space for the recognition of emotion as a crucial component in the sensibilities of this sudden democracy.⁵⁰

III. Conclusion

Rejecting the longstanding view of a “pathologizing democratization” in post-World War I Europe, the historian Tim B. Müller has recently called for an assessment of the “conditions of possibility for interwar democracy.” Situating Weimar democracy in the context of a European, even global process of emerging mass democracies in the interwar period, Müller notes the absence of models and predecessors for incipient democracies born of war, social revolution, and the collapsing and refiguring of empires and nations. The democracy Müller examines is also much more than a set of political or constitutional structures, fixed in place by a constitution in a given year and place. Rather than an “ordering



Figure 5. Safin, Poster commissioned by the Werbedienst der sozialistischen Republik Deutschland, 1919. © Bundesarchiv.

49 Aufzeichnung aus dem Tagebuch des Unternehmers und Kunsthistorikers Oskar Münsterberg (1865-1920) aus Berlin (LEMO Online, Deutsches Historisches Museum), DHM-Bestand) <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/oskar-muensterberg-wahlzur-nationalversammlung.html>

50 Agnes von Harnack, *Die Frauen und das Wahlrecht* (Ausschuss der Frauenverbände Deutschlands, n.d., 2-3. This brochure most likely appeared in late November or December of 1918.

concept,” Müller views democracy as constituting a new way of life, a new imaginary encompassing actions, institutions, ideas, habits and affects.⁵¹

Methodologically, research on “democracy in the making” returns to the perspectives and experiences of contemporaries who engaged in the day-to-day work of imagining and seeking to build both ideals and structures that would anchor interwar democracy. Citing Social Democratic Minister of Labor and Chancellor Gustav Bauer (1919-20), Müller notes that, at the outset of the Republic, Bauer viewed democracy as constituting a political system defined in terms of the people’s sovereignty, notions of self-governance, and the need for a vibrant economic democracy. Yet Bauer also envisioned democracy as a “way of life, a moral-ethical sensibility” that encompasses all arenas of everyday life.⁵² During the Republic’s middle years, its so-called period of stabilization, Julius Hirsch, state secretary in the Ministry of Economics, conceived of democracy as compatible with and even advancing a “democratic culture of conflict” (“eine demokratische Streitkultur”) that would encourage citizens to craft their own political judgments amidst competing viewpoints and claims. Müller explicates the vital place of argument, critical engagement and contest in Hirsch’s notion of a democracy in the making. For Hirsch, democracy was not a gift: rather it arose through the unleashing of a terrain of struggle (“Freigabe eines Kampfbodens”).⁵³ A focus on democracy in the making, of course, poignantly lays bare a democracy in the fight for its life, in which Weimar has won new empathy. Michael Dreyer highlights the *Republikschutzgesetz* (Law for the Protection of the Republic), passed in the aftermath of Walther Rathenau’s murder in 1922, as one example, while Tim Müller points to the 1925 funeral of Friedrich Ebert as a turning point at which the liberals and Social Democrats worked to foster a political culture that could nourish and secure a democratic form of rule.⁵⁴

These brief elaborations of the competing forms of political representation in 1918/19 prompt the fundamental question as to whether democracy as a form of government necessitates “a new kind of subject,” a new kind of sensibility, as a field of interaction between exterior framings and “technologies of citizenship” — the changes in law, governance, national boundaries, law, social or cultural codes — and the emotions and affective affinities of postwar citizens who longed for a new civic culture and participatory politics, for an end to authoritarian, violent, annihilative regimes, and for a new kind of

51 Tim B. Müller and Adam Tooze, *Normalität und Fragilität. Demokratie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*; Tim B. Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien* (Hamburg, 2014); Tim B. Müller, “Die Weimarer Republik und die Europäische Demokratie,” in Dreyer and Braune, *Weimar als Herausforderung*, 57-74.

52 Müller, “Die Weimarer Republik und die Europäische Demokratie,” 66.

53 Müller, “Die Weimarer Republik und die Europäische Demokratie,” 69-70. Also see Jens Hacke, “Liberal Alternatives during the Crisis of Democracy: The Political Economist Moritz Julius Bonn and the Era of the Two World Wars,” *New German Critique* 42/3 (November 2015): 145-68.

54 Dreyer, “Weimar und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in *Weimar als Herausforderung*, 295-307 and Müller “Die Weimarer Republik und die Europäische Demokratie,” 67-68.

polity between revolution and restoration of the dismantled state. This was true not only in 1919, but also in 1945.

A century separates the convening of democratic sensibilities in 1918-19 and our current crisis of democracy. Linking both is perhaps an understanding of democracy — with political scientist Bonnie Honig — as a “form of politics that is always in emergence in response to everyday emergencies of maintenance.”⁵⁵ James Miller’s recent study *Can Democracy Work?* opens with the question of what is living and what is dead in the modern democratic project.⁵⁶ Arguing that the democratic project is inherently unstable, he reminds us of Hannah Arendt’s view that “the shared political experience of exuberant new beginnings is a recurrent feature of modern democratic revolts.” In fact, Miller argues that “these *revolts* are a central part of the story of modern democracy, not an unfortunate blemish on the peaceful forward march toward a more just society. Rather they form the heart and soul of modern democracy as living reality.”⁵⁷ Drawing upon Arendt, Miller illuminates the tension between “episodes of collective self-assertion,” which are “invariably fleeting,” and “the need for a more stable constitution of collective freedom, embodied in the rule of law, and representative institutions that can operate at a larger and more inclusive scale,” which aptly describes the Weimar Republic at its founding and during subsequent later crisis points.⁵⁸ James Miller’s definition of the “democratic project” as “inherently unstable” offers an intriguing parallel to the more recent rediscovery of Weimar’s legacy for twentieth-century European democracies, but also for the present-day democracy of the Federal Republic. Miller suggests that even in times when liberal democratic institutions, such as trust in representative politics, are “more fragile than ever,” democracy continues to flourish in the guise of “furious dissent.”⁵⁹

Although the legacy of the Weimar Republic was, for the most part, effaced or even actively denied during the founding of the Federal Republic and the conversion of Germans to democracy in the post-1945 period, the dichotomy long upheld between Weimar as the “bedrohte Demokratie” (democracy under threat) and the Federal Republic as the “wehrhafte Demokratie (democracy capable of self-defense) now requires rethinking.⁶⁰ In revisiting the fragility of the Weimar Republic, we also can establish its capacity for self-defense at critical junctures from 1919 until its end. Indeed, the ability of the Bonn Republic to become a “defensible democracy” derived in part at least from the lessons of Weimar — both its tenacity at these turning points and its ultimate collapse. Despite periodic challenges

55 Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, 2011), xvii.

56 James Miller, *Can Democracy Work? History of a Radical Idea from Ancient Athens to our World* (New York, 2018).

57 Miller, *Can Democracy Work*, “Prelude: What is Democracy?”, 10. Emphasis in the original.

58 *ibid.*, 11.

59 *ibid.*, 11-12.

60 Michael Dreyer makes this point convincingly in his essay, “Weimar und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in Dreyer and Braune, *Weimar als Herausforderung*, 303-06.

to its authority by the student movement or terrorism in the 1970s, the Federal Republic never confronted the fundamental and ferocious assaults on democracy of 1920, 1923 and 1931 to 1933. In this sense, Weimar lives on as a case study of democracy's precarity, but also of its inventiveness in the face of recurrent crises and relentless delegitimization.

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FOUNDATION VIOLENCE: ATROCITIES AND THE BIRTH OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY

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The German Revolution of 1918-19 was one of twentieth-century Europe's formative events.¹ It was both the end of the First World War and of the German Empire; as well as the birth of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first fully democratic state. The revolution was part of a wider period of political change that saw the collapse of the continent's multi-ethnic land empires and their replacement with nation-states — a series of upheavals that were collectively of a scale unlike anything seen in Europe since the French Revolution.² Within Germany the historical processes captured by the revolution included the breakdown of the authority of the Imperial state and its replacement with a Republic in November 1918, the formation of new political institutions that included new political parties, as well as the newer phenomena of workers and soldiers councils, the extension of voting rights to all women and the election of a National Constitutional Assembly in January 1919, the writing of a new constitution over the spring and summer of 1919, the build up to the signing of the Versailles Treaty in June 1919 and a series of challenges to the new order that occurred during the first six months of 1919 that included Council's Republics in Bremen and Munich, armed insurrections, strikes, protests, and border wars.

Despite the range of events and actions that require historical explanation and debate, historians' interest in the German Revolution of 1918-19 has not remained constant. Its heyday was surely the two decades that followed the publication of a series of seminal studies on the councils' movement in the late 1960s — a decade which also saw the publication of the most popular West-German account of the revolution, Sebastian Haffner's *The Revolution Betrayed*, which is still in print, albeit under a less polemical title.³ The late 1960s and 1970s also saw the re-emergence of historical interest in Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht as well as yet more work on the revolution's political institutions. By the early 1980s, the field was unrecognizable compared to what had existed twenty years earlier. The older myth-histories of the revolution that had grown out of conservatives' rejection of the Weimar Republic had been overthrown. Similarly, the new historiography had also challenged the East-German

- 1 For an overview of its place in twentieth-century revolutions see: Martin Conway and Robert Gerwarth, "Revolution and Counter-revolution," in Robert Gerwarth and Donald Bloxham, eds., *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2011), 140-75. See further Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *Revolution in History* (Cambridge, 1986).
- 2 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War failed to end* (London/New York, 2016).
- 3 For a recent overview of the revolution's historiography see: Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung. Deutungen von der Weimarer Republik bis ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2013). Seminal publications include: Eberhard Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-19* (Düsseldorf, 1962); Peter von Oertzen, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution* (Düsseldorf, 1963); Reinhard Rürup, "Problems of the German Revolution," *JCH* 3:4; Ulrich Kluge, *Soldatenräte und Revolution: Studien zur Militärpolitik in Deutschland 1918/19* (Göttingen, 1975); Sebastian Haffner, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19* (Cologne, 2008).

scholarly attempts to co-opt its history to provide legitimacy to the East German state. With Heinrich August Winkler's *From Revolution to Stabilization*, first published in 1984, this new historiography appeared to have found its crowning analysis.⁴

Looking back, the publication of Winkler's book also appears to mark the high tide of the period of research that began in the 1960s. From the mid-1980s onwards, the pace of research began to decline before it appeared to come to a complete standstill — best captured by the title of an edited volume published in 2010 under the title *The Forgotten Revolution*.⁵ While that title aptly captures the lack of interest in the revolution's history during the 1990s and 2000s, it would be unthinkable to use the same formula to describe the history of the Weimar Republic more generally. For while research on the revolution declined, research and interest in the Weimar Republic surged ahead. This is something of a conundrum for historians of the Weimar Republic: at precisely the point in time when historians turned their backs on the history of the revolution that brought the Republic into existence, they have transformed our understanding of the Weimar Republic as a whole.⁶

This untenable disjuncture has recently begun to unravel. Partly inspired by new academic studies, and partly inspired by the Revolution's centenary, a series of new publications have attempted to restore the revolution to its rightful place at the center of historical analysis and debate. Without the revolution, this work implies, the history of Weimar will always be incomplete.⁷

In this article I want to focus on one aspect of this new revolutionary historiography: the revolution's violence. As a consequence of the forgetting of the revolution that has occurred since the mid-1980s, when historians think of the violence of the Weimar Republic, they tend to think of the violence that occurred at the Republic's end. The period of street fighting between Nazis and Communists. For the revolution that marked the Republic's beginnings, with the exception of the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the founders of the German Communist Party and cultural icons for the remainder of the twentieth century, until recently the role of violence has received far less attention.

By focusing on the intimate history of violence during the revolutionary months of November to March 1918-19, I want to show how violence occurred and examine what factors led to its radicalization

4 Heinrich August Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1924* (Bonn, 1984).

5 Alexander Gallus, ed., *Die vergessene Revolution von 1918/19* (Göttingen, 2010)

6 Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *The Journal of Modern History*, 68:3 (1996): 629-656; Benjamin Ziemann, "Weimar was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic," *German History*, 28:4 (2010): 542-571.

7 Klaus Weinbauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirsten Heinsohn, eds., *Germany 1916-1923. A Revolution in Context* (Bielefeld, 2015); Julian Aulke, *Räume der Revolution. Kulturelle Verräumlichung in Politisierungsprozessen während der Revolution 1918-20* (Stuttgart, 2015); Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar. Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-19* (Cambridge, 2016); Robert Gerwarth, *Die Grösste aller Revolutionen. November 1918 und der Aufbruch in eine neue Zeit* (Munich, 2018).

over the course of the winter of 1918-19 as a whole. My purpose is to suggest that there was more to the violence than simply the murder of Rosa Luxemburg — the event that received the most media attention in and beyond Germany during the revolution's centenary. By understanding the radicalization of mentalities that occurred in parallel to the escalation of violence and the ensuing atrocities, I argue, we can better understand the nature of the Republic's politics at its very beginnings. The analysis of the escalation of violence during the winter of 1918-19 does not intend to suggest that the Republic was "doomed from the start." Rather, its broader historical significance lies in what it tells us about the potential for social and political radicalization in Germany during the 1920s. By understanding that potential, I argue, we gain a better understanding of how and why contemporaries reacted to the violence of the Republic's end. After all, for contemporaries, the violence of the Republic's beginnings was of a greater and more intense nature than that which accompanied its end.

I. November's violence: Panic gunfire

Let me begin with a civilian victim of revolutionary violence. Charlotte Nagel. She was killed alongside a sixty-year-old man at Berlin's Alexanderplatz on 11 November 1918. The gunfire was caused by panic. It occurred when pro-revolutionary soldiers started firing after they thought that they had come under fire from counter-revolutionaries. The outburst was one example of the waves of panic gunfire that occurred in Germany between 3 and 11 November 1918. The pattern started in Kiel, the starting point for the November Revolution, where pro-revolutionary sailors took control of the naval garrison following their refusal to sail out to attack the British Royal Navy at the end of September. But even if Kiel has a special place in the Revolution's history, the pattern was similar elsewhere. There were simply too many people who believed that revolution would be met by a violent reply from monarchists. Rumors and fake news (*Falschmeldungen*) spread wildly. One of the most important suggested that officers loyal to the king were hiding in buildings and on rooftops sniping at revolutionaries in the streets below.

The expectation triggered waves of panic gunfire. As one observer explained a few weeks later: "Everyone knows how quickly a shot can go off when a gun's safety is switched off. When this happens, all of the armed men immediately think that someone in the crowd has fired

upon them and a horrifying volley of gunfire [*entsetzliche Knallerei*] begins, without there being any real reason for the shooting.”

An important example of this kind of panic firing occurred in Kiel at lunchtime on 5 November 1918. Given that this example demonstrates the potential for de-escalation it is important to analyze its course in detail. Employees of the Kiel Sparkasse (savings bank) explained what had happened. While the city was shaken by the previous day’s events, that morning, life in the bank had proceeded as normal. At around 2 p.m., Oberstadttassistent von Pein, the most senior bank official present, opened a window in the customer waiting area. He thought that the air in the room was stuffy. Looking out of the window, he noted a horse-drawn cart pass by with a sailor at the reins. Von Pein watched as the sailor stopped the horses before returning to work. About ten minutes later, Fräulein Stender, one of the bank’s two assistants, was close to the window. She was looking for a book on a colleague’s desk when she heard gunfire outside. Curiously, she approached the window to try to see if she could discover what was happening. Outside the bank, she caught a glimpse of a group of soldiers who were pointing at the bank. Worse than this, “one of them pointed his gun in the direction of the bank.” She jumped back from the window, warning everyone present that they should flee to the cellar. But without sufficient authority her opinion was ignored. Some of the staff even wanted to look out the window to judge the situation for themselves. Then the first bullets smashed through the building’s windows and no-one doubted Fräulein Stender’s suggestion. They raced to the cellar. Von Pein was the last to make it. He first took shelter behind a door, from where he listened to the sounds of a whistle before another round of shots rang out.

The terrified bank employees waited in the cellar until they thought that the shooting had stopped. Once they had been reassured by a few moment’s silence, they ventured out from their hiding place, only to rush back in when another round of gunfire shattered their illusion that the ordeal was over. But this time the apprentice Völkert did not join them. Perhaps fearful of theft, or keen to impress the bank’s many female employees, he went back to “put things away in the cheque and giro department.” For some time, while they stayed in the cellar, none of his colleagues knew what had happened to him. While they waited, a patrol of soldiers entered the cellar and told them to stay there until the entire building had been thoroughly searched. The bank staff only came out when soldiers told them that it was safe to do so.

By the time they did so, Völkert had already been carried away on a stretcher. A soldier later explained that he had been accidentally shot after he had been mistaken for a sailor who was about to shoot at them. Then the bank employees were told that they were all under arrest. The women were given five minutes to change their clothing, while von Pein, the only man amongst the revolutionaries' captives was searched for weapons. The soldiers and sailors then took them to the recently established revolutionary headquarters at the trade union building. In that moment, they were suspected counter-revolutionaries, accused of either being responsible for firing upon revolutionary sailors and soldiers from the Sparkasse building, or aiding the gunman who had done so.

The worst treatment was reserved for the building's live-in caretaker, Oldenburg. When the firing started, he had been with his family in their kitchen. As soon as the first bullets smashed through the windows of the upper floor rooms, he told his family to take cover in a corner and then went to investigate. In the landing he found a group of people trying to escape that included civilians and soldiers. Then, amid the commotion, a group of soldiers suddenly started shouting at him, accusing him of being responsible for the firing. No one listened to his quiet pleas of innocence. Instead, "they threatened him with weapons and declared him under arrest. They shouted at him and ordered him to come down the steps with his hands up. He was told he had to open the upstairs apartments." He refused to do so. Instead, the soldiers and sailors took him into the cash office, which had borne the brunt of the firing and was badly damaged. While he was there, he watched as the injured Völkert was carried out on a stretcher. In this moment, an "unknown civilian was playing with a revolver." Oldenburg pleaded with him that the gun was not necessary. After initially ignoring his requests, the man finally put the weapon away. By this time, Oldenburg's family had already been led away by angry revolutionaries. While Oldenburg continued to protest his innocence, his assailants told him that his wife and children would pay the price if the culprit was not found. Then Oldenburg was brought to the trade union building, where he stood trial in a makeshift revolutionary court.

This was the point when Oldenburg's luck changed. Inside the trade union building, when the soldiers and sailors produced a rifle and claimed that it had been used to fire upon them, cooler heads inspected the weapon and discovered that years had passed since the

gun had last fired a shot. Then a man intervened on behalf of him and his family, offering bail for them. But most importantly, while some of the soldiers and sailors were possessed with rage, others calmed them down and recognized Oldenburg for what he was: a man who had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. The idea that Oldenburg was a gunman, or that he had used his position as caretaker to allow the sniper to enter or exit the building was dismissed for what it was, a fantasy on the part of nervous sailors and soldiers. Soon after, just as had been the case with the bank employees who had been arrested earlier, Oldenburg and his family were released. Völkert made a full recovery. He later stated that it was the civilian with the revolver who had shot him.⁸

A week later, when the revolution reached Berlin, leading to the announcement of the Kaiser's abdication at mid-day on 9 November 1918 and the proclamation of a German Republic on the same day, there were similar outbursts of panic gunfire in the German capital. As crowds formed in the government area around Unter den Linden, and at the Royal Palace and Stables at its eastern end, the first outbursts of panic gunfire occurred during the late afternoon. Rumors suggested that counter-revolutionary officers were hiding in Berlin's Royal Opera, the Neue Wache and in front of the Royal Palace. It was even alleged that officers were firing with machine guns and that there was an anti-revolutionary sniper in the dome of Berlin cathedral. But no culprits were ever found and once the revolutionaries received "strict instructions" to stop firing, all of the gunfire ceased.⁹

The waves of panic gunfire described here are a reminder that the first ten days of November 1918 were not as peaceful as some of the most recent accounts of the revolution would like us to believe. November 1918 was not November 1989. It was not a "peaceful revolution."¹⁰ At least sixty people lost their lives — fifteen alone in Berlin.¹¹

The gunfire terrified contemporaries. It was the most important sound during the revolutionary upheaval. Even those in favor of the revolution were concerned by the breakdown of control over public spaces. The number of those killed might pale in comparison to the millions of dead during the First World War, but it still amounted to an important historical turning point: it was not since 1848 that the political elite experienced such a sudden and seemingly total loss of control. For many, it felt like much worse violence would soon follow. As a result of the fears of future violence that were in part the result of the sound of gunfire, many contemporaries believed that they

8 The events at the Sparkasse are retold in: Stadtarchiv Kiel Nr.32665. Akten des Magistrats zu Kiel (November 1918). I am grateful to Dr. Johannes Rosenplänter (Landeshauptstadt Kiel, Stadtarchiv) for his assistance in locating this set of files. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

9 Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 55-63.

10 Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19. Der wahre Beginn unserer Demokratie*, (München, 2017).

11 Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 91.

were already participants in a moment of violent radicalization that could destroy Germany. Perhaps tragically, contemporaries failed to recognize that, as the revolutionary's failure to execute their prisoner Oldenburg and his family shows, in November 1918 the capacity for de-escalation was greater than the capacity for escalation. This was to change over the course of the winter of 1918-19.

II. The 6 December and the first use of the machine gun

The starting point for that change was 6 December 1918. The first time that machine gun fire resulted in civilian casualties during the revolution. The firing took place shortly before 6 p.m. at the intersection of the Chausseestraße and Invalidenstraße on 6 December 1918 — one of the main junctions in north central Berlin just a short distance from the Spree River. It only lasted for at most one and half to two minutes. But its impact was devastating. Bullets rained down on a crowded street at a busy urban interchange as people made their way home from work. A number 32 tram was caught in the line of fire. It suddenly crashed to a halt. Many of its passengers collapsed as blood splattered across the tram. Beside the tram bullets pulverized a horse that was pulling a cart. On the sidewalk screaming civilians fled for their lives, knocking each other to the ground. Some escaped by throwing themselves through the glass windows of a large department store — the cuts of the glass were more merciful than the bullets of machine and rifle gunfire. On board the tram, terrified passengers tried to escape. In an instant, one man, an engineer from Reinickendorf, watched as the soldier standing in front of him collapsed dead, struck down by the bullets. Behind him a woman was also hit. She was left seriously injured. He was physically unscathed, but his clothes were wet. It was the blood of the victims, who had been standing beside him. Later he sent a letter to the compromise revolutionary government created in the immediate aftermath to the events of 9 November, known as the Council of People's Representatives. In it he pleaded that "careful, cold-blooded behavior on the part of the soldiers would have considerably reduced the numbers of dead and injured."¹²

After the soldiers stopped firing, for a while almost complete silence reigned over the scene. Then the first people ventured onto the street and looked at the battlefield.¹³ They saw bodies lying on the ground. There were large pools of blood on the street. Injured people, including at least five women, lay there groaning, moaning and crying out

12 BArch Berlin-SAPMO NY 4131/25 (Eichhorn Papers) Bl.86-87: Friedrich Neddermeyer. An den Polizeipräsidenten von Berlin. 7 Dez. 1918.

13 "Ein Spartakus-Putsch in Berlin," *DZ* Nr. 622, 7 Dec. 1918 MA; "Die Vorgänge in Berlin [Priv. Tel. Berlin 7 Dez.]," *FZ* 7 Dec. 1918 AA; "Sturmzeichen in Berlin, Eine Spartakus-Versammlung. Maschinengewehrfeuer in der Chausseestraße," *Post* Nr. 625, 7 Dec. 1918 MA.

for help.¹⁴ There were not enough ambulances available to bring all of the injured to hospital — later it was also claimed that there were so many bodies that no one was sure about what was to be done with them. In total at least sixteen people lost their lives. The 17 year-old apprentice Martha Komorowski was the youngest victim. She was on board the number 32 tram when it arrived at the junction. A further eighty people were hurt in some way, of whom at least twelve suffered serious injuries.¹⁵ The dead included a group of people who had been standing waiting at a tram stop.¹⁶

A taboo had been broken. The machine gun fire in central Berlin was a clear example of what could happen if the violence went out of control. After weeks of anxiety that Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were about to use violence to seize power along the lines of Lenin's Bolsheviks, this explosive event brought home just how dangerous the situation could become if mass violence broke out. Across Germany people learnt how the violence of one of the First World War's most emblematic weapons suddenly transformed an everyday urban setting into a space defined by unexpected violent death.¹⁷ The *Vossische Zeitung* told how "many bullets hit the tram, others struck the windows of the banks and the shops on the left hand side of the Chausseestraße," as well as warning chillingly that "several people collapsed" instantly.¹⁸ The *Berliner Morgenpost* thought that the firing created "indescribable panic" while the correspondent of the *Neue Hamburger Zeitung* added that even if they were not struck by bullets, many women fainted because of the sound of gunfire.¹⁹ One ultranationalist newspaper claimed that "soldiers used to gunfire" pulled "terrified civilians" to the ground.²⁰

While historians will never be able to say with certainty whether the firing was orchestrated or not, the shockwaves that followed were quickly and deliberately politicized. The firing of 6 December occurred at the same time as an attempted counter-revolutionary putsch. The putsch's organizers had tried to imprison the Berlin-based

14 "Spartakus gegen Maikäfer," VZ Nr. 625, 7 Dec. 1918 MA; "Ein bewegter Tag in Berlin," BM Nr. 339, 7 Dec. 1918.

15 "Ein Spartakus-Putsch in Berlin," DZ Nr. 622, 7 Dec. 1918 MA.

16 Kluge, *Soldatenräte und Revolution* gives the figure of sixteen killed and twelve seriously injured. On 7 December 1918, the *Rote Fahne* gave the figure of fourteen dead, while on the same day the *Vossische Zeitung* estimated that twenty-four people were killed and that a further sixty were injured: RF Nr. 22, 7 Dec. 1918; VZ Nr. 625, 7 Dec. 1918 MA. In its edition of 7 December, the *Berliner Morgenpost* suggested that the latest available figures that came in late the previous evening put the death toll at sixteen and the injured at fifteen: "Ein bewegter Tag in Berlin," BM Nr. 339, 7 Dec. 1918. Another historian, Karl Heinz Luther, has suggested that fourteen people died and that twelve were injured: Karl-Heinz Luther, "Die nachrevolutionären Machtkämpfe in

Berlin, November 1918 bis März 1919," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* (1959): 187-222, here 199.

17 "Ein Spartakus-Putsch in Berlin," DZ Nr. 622, 7 Dec. 1918 MA; "Die Vorgänge in Berlin [Priv.

Tel. Berlin 7 Dez.], FZ 7 Dec. 1918 AA; "Sturmzeichen in Berlin, 'Eine Spartakus-Versammlung. Maschinengewehrfeuer in der Chausseestraße," Post Nr. 625, 7 Dec. 1918 MA.

18 "Der Straßenkampf in der Chausseestraße," VZ Nr. 625, 7 Dec. 1918 MA.

19 "Ein Putsch in Berlin [Berlin 6 Dec. Eigene Meldung]," NHZ Nr. 621, 7 Dec. 1918 MA; "Ein bewegter Tag in Berlin," BM Nr. 339, 7 Dec. 1918.

20 "Blutige Straßenkämpfe in Berlin," *Reichsbote* 7 Dec. 1918 MA.

Executive Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, which was known as the *Vollzugsrat* and which some revolutionaries believed was empowered to monitor and control the revolutionary government. At the Reich Chancellery the putschists had tried to proclaim Ebert as a new German dictator. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg argued that the conspirators behind the putsch had pre-planned the bloodbath, deliberately organizing a massacre to accompany their attempt to seize power. Almost every other political group blamed the Spartacists for the loss of life. They argued that the gunfire only started after the Spartacists had declared that they were going to hang Ebert from the next lantern and that the first shots were fired by Spartacists at the soldiers.

In response, on 7 December, Liebknecht and his supporters demonstrated with machine guns along the Siegesallee. Many people were terrified. Fearful that the Spartacists were about to seize power, members of the political elite made plans to flee Berlin at a moment's notice. Some rumors even suggested that Liebknecht controlled a secret army of up to 100,000 men. The fear that Germany was about to follow Russia down the path of Bolshevism and civil war was about to reach its zenith. But none of these fears of a new revolutionary Armageddon were ever realized. Instead, at the same time as the fear of the streets continued to grow, Ebert's agenda received a powerful boost from the first national congress of workers' and soldiers' councils which began meeting in Berlin on 16 December 1918. This congress, which acted like a revolutionary parliament with delegates being elected by soldiers and workers, strongly endorsed Ebert's plans for the democratization of Germany. Of the 512 delegates, recently selected in meetings of workers' and soldiers' councils across Germany, only twelve were Spartacists. The Social Democrats had more than 300. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were unable to secure a mandate.²¹

Once again, however, before the Social Democrats' successes in the congress could manifest themselves in the political life of the revolution, violence intervened. Whereas the 6 December 1918 was the first occasion when a machine gun was fired upon a civilian crowd, on 24 December 1918 the escalation of violence reached a new key when front soldiers used the assault tactic in central Berlin at dawn on 24 December 1918. The battle pitted front soldiers from the Guard Cavalry Division (GSKD) under the command of the General Commando Lequis against a group of pro-revolutionary sailors known as the *Volksmarinedivision*.

²¹ A record of proceedings was published in 1919, see *Allgemeiner Kongreß der Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte Deutschlands. Stenographische Berichte* (Berlin, 1919). Important historical analysis includes: Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, 197-216; Kluge, *Soldatenräte und Revolution*, esp. 197-204; Miller, *Die Bürde der Macht*, 121-129; Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, 100-109.

The soldiers had been rushed to central Berlin during the night of 23-24 December 1918. They were sent there following a series of confrontational events in the government district on 23 December. While the exact chronology of those confrontations may never be entirely possible to re-establish, at their end we can be certain that they included armed sailors taking the Social Democratic town major Otto Wels hostage, armed sailors temporarily blocking access to the Chancellery Building (in effect briefly making Friedrich Ebert a prisoner of his own guards) and crucially, a gun battle on Unter den Linden that left two sailors dead and brought their comrades to boiling point. Later accounts often portray the sailors as having been angry at plans to disband their division and remove it from the castle and stables without pay. Accounts that represent the sailors in this way forget that at least some of them were motivated by the deaths of two of their comrades in a shootout with unidentified snipers that the sailors later claimed were counter-revolutionaries.

The sum of these events changed Friedrich Ebert's attitude to violence. Up to this point, the most important majority Social Democratic politician was opposed to using force against his opponents on the revolutionary left. But the chaos and confusion of 23 December led him to abandon his previous constraint. He now gave General Groener, who was de-facto the head of the Supreme Military Command (OHL), permission to use military force to create order. For the first time in the revolution, the OHL could move militarily against the sailors. The assault, led by the prestigious Guard Division, began at 8 a.m on 24 December. It turned the eastern end of Unter den Linden into a warzone. The sailors defended their positions in the Schloss and Marstall, which they had occupied since mid-November, while the soldiers attacked them from the Zeughaus, the Lustgarten, and the Neue Wache. Assault soldiers [*Sturmsoldaten*] raced across the space in front of Berlin cathedral and along Unter den Linden. The statue of Friedrich the Great was even struck by bullets and the Schlossplatz destroyed by the fighting.

By lunchtime the assault was over. Only days after Friedrich Ebert had told the front soldiers that they were "undefeated in the field," the Guard Division surrendered to a group of rebel sailors. That afternoon, the soldiers and officers marched out of the city humiliated. Major Pabst, who would go on to orchestrate the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht three weeks later, described it as the worst moment of his military career. Seeking a scapegoat

for his failure, the officer in charge of the assault, General Lequis, blamed women and children for interfering with the military operation, creating a dangerous myth that suggested that reluctance to fire on civilians led to military failure and humiliation. Days later, Lequis was dismissed.

Many people thought that this was the nadir of the revolution. Typical of the mass panic that follows sudden violence in civilian areas — think of the recent responses to terrorist attacks in western Europe — it was believed that hundreds of people had been killed. The real figure was closer to ten. But facts mattered little. New rumors even suggested that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's rule of violence had begun. In reality the Spartacists did not have sufficient followers to undertake a putsch. Indeed, the sailors who had been victorious on December 24, 1918 were unwilling to accept the authority of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. When Liebknecht visited them, they refused to come under his leadership. Instead, both sides called their supporters out on to the streets: on December 29, central Berlin became the stage for a massive plebiscite on Germany's future. Supporters of the government gathered at the Reichstag end of Unter den Linden. Its opponents formed crowds at the opposite end of Berlin's most important boulevard. The opponents' demonstration surrounded the coffins of the sailors killed on 24 December. Their demonstration was a political funeral. The sailors were later buried in the burial grounds of the fallen of 1848. For the government's supporters, the demonstrations of support for the Social Democrats were a massive victory. They believed that the size of the crowds that came out to support them was a clear indicator that the will of the majority was firmly behind them.

The Council of People's Representatives could not survive this pressure. The Independent Socialist members Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann, and Emil Barth, who were accused of collaborating with the majority Social Democrats against the ideals of their own party, quit the council. They were replaced by two Social Democratic hardliners, Gustav Noske and Rudolf Wissel. From this point on the council renamed itself the *Reichsregierung* — the government of the Reich.

Large anti-Spartacist demonstrations on 29 December encouraged the SPD hardliners. Their supporters demanded that the government use force to restore order. Bernhard Dernburg, one of the founders of the liberal German Democratic Party was cheered by thousands at the Moltke memorial when he called out: "We can tolerate it no longer,

that 2000 Spartacists terrorize all of Berlin, and we must demand that the government immediately use the forces available to them and cease from, as they have done up to now, leaving them hanging on the wall. If they cannot do that, then we will all once again pull on the old grey field coat, to restore order and quiet.”²²

III. Performing state power: Crushing the January Uprising

Ebert’s government got an opportunity to prove that it could do so on 5 January 1919, the first day of the January Uprising — often described as the “Spartacist Uprising.” The uprising began when unexpectedly large demonstrations took place in support of the Independent Socialist chief of police Emil Eichhorn. Eichhorn had become police chief during the revolution of 9 November. But since mid-December 1918 he had been increasingly identified as a threat to the democratic order being created. He was rumored to have lived from the profits of organized crime and he was accused of harboring secret stashes of weapons to arm the government’s opponents when the next revolutionary situation occurred. But what Eichhorn’s opponents did not realize was that there was considerable support for the idea that the chief of police had to remain in the hands of the working class. Hence, the news that Eichhorn had been dismissed brought about unexpectedly large anti-government demonstrations. For radical revolutionary socialists determined to emulate the Russian Bolsheviks and seize power, it looked like it was now or never. They believed that the demonstrations in support of Eichhorn were a chance to seize power. Late in the evening of 5 January, armed workers occupied several buildings in Berlin’s press district. That night a coalition of radical groups in Berlin, including Karl Liebknecht (but not Rosa Luxemburg, who was not present) proclaimed the 6 January 1919 as the first day of a worker’s uprising. It lasted less than a full week.

Sebastian Haffner’s *Die Verratene Revolution* is remarkably misleading about what happened next. He describes January 6 as a real chance for the proletariat to seize power and blames the failure of the radical leadership for the absence of a successful second revolution. What his account deliberately forgets is that the radicals were not the only people in the streets on 6 January 1919: thousands of government supporters blocked off the Wilhelmstrasse and demanded to be given weapons to protect the government.²³ While the government successfully mobilized its supporters, the radicals lost theirs. Rosa Luxemburg’s daily articles in the *Rote Fahne* desperately pleading for

22 For a fuller account of the events related in this section and detailed source references, see Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 136–172.

23 Sebastian Haffner, *Die deutsche Revolution: 1918/19* (Reinbek, 2004), 158.

workers to join in the struggle went unheard. As the state prosecutor put it a few weeks later “‘the worker’ disappeared at the moment when the demonstration turned into a putsch and armed rebellion.”²⁴

While Luxemburg used words to call for violence, in central Berlin between 6 and 11 January 1919, the fighting took the form of street battles, outbursts of panic gunfire, and skirmishes between rebels and supporters of the government. More innocent civilians were killed. By 8 January, thirty people were dead — the final death toll was around 200. While many of the dead were rebels, the uninvolved civilian population also suffered: every day in Berlin between 6 and 11 January at least one female civilian lost her life in the crossfire. Dead women and girls included Hermine Seidel (16), Sonne Waldow von Wahl (20), Marie Freystadt (20) and Ella Wiesener (26). Unlike Luxemburg or Noske, there is no place for them in contemporary memories of the Revolution of 1918-19.

There were attempts to negotiate an end to the violence. But the Majority Social Democrats chose to end the rebellion with a performative display of the state’s power. Like the founders of so many new states, they were determined to use violence to send a message: we will stop short of nothing to defeat anyone who challenges our right to rule (a right that was indisputably confirmed by the results of the elections to the National Assembly on 19 January 1919). They summed up their intention in an announcement on 8 January 1919. It ended with the promise that “the hour of revenge draws near [*Die Stunde der Abrechnung naht*].”²⁵

That hour came at the rebels’ stronghold, the *Vorwärts* newspaper building on Lindenstrasse on 11 January 1919. The newspaper was the Social Democrats’ most important political organ. During the First World War its editors had been dismissed when they began to be critical of the party leadership’s support for the war. Hence, many opponents of the Social Democratic leadership believe that the *Vorwärts* had been stolen from them.

Rather than seal the building off and wait for the rebels to surrender, the government forces undertook a spectacular assault that began with artillery fire and was followed by assault soldiers racing across the Belle-Alliance-Platz (today Mehringplatz). Like the operation on 24 December, the tactics behind the assault treated a building in a civilian area as if it was an enemy trench on the western front. During the first assault, five government soldiers were killed. The assault

24 GStA PK. Rep.84a. No. 11759. Bl.61-62.

25 As quoted in “Die Stunde der Abrechnung naht!” *Reichsbote*, 9 Jan. 1919 MA

soldiers blamed their losses on a machine gun which they claimed was operated by Rosa Luxemburg — the origins of this false belief lay in a rumor that had circulated during the previous days. When they got their hands on their first prisoners — including a group of men attempting to negotiate the rebels' surrender — they brought them to the Dragoon Barracks (today the tax office of the Kreuzberg district). Soon after they became the first prisoners murdered during the revolution of 1918-19. One of the dead men, a 30-year-old father of two, Wolfgang Fernbach, was a German Jew. No one was ever convicted for the crime.

Testimonies vary as to how the seven men were actually killed. The officer who led the assault, Franz von Stephani, claimed that they were all shot in a single volley of fire. One witness, Willi Köhn, a soldier in the republican *Sicherheitswehr*, contradicted his account. Köhn claimed that the soldiers had killed the prisoners without any order to fire. He suggested that as many as 100 or 200 men participated in what he described as a “general outburst of gunfire that was nearly as dangerous for those who were watching.”²⁶ Another witness, Hans Stettin, a medical orderly of the Guard Dragoons, described the beaten men before their deaths as “bleeding from various parts of their bodies including their faces.”²⁷ Although none of the dead were Russian,²⁸ as they killed their first prisoner, the men screamed “Russian pig” amongst other insults at him. “Without further ado,” Stettin added, “he was put with his face against the wall and killed by a shot to the back of his head.”²⁹ After they had done so, Stettin claimed that they made the other prisoners file past this body, insulting them, and telling them that the same fate awaited them.³⁰ In his words: “The first man was shot while standing up; two or three men were shot while they were lying down, and even hit by several bullets, so that half of their faces were completely destroyed. A body lay to the right on the powder case; there was only a small part of its face left. It had been indiscriminately set upon.”³¹

Another witness, the soldier Wilhelm Helms, thought that ten minutes passed between the killing of the first and second groups of prisoners. He described how at first two men were shot against a wall, before a second group was killed by gunshots as they stood between two carriages. Before the first two men were shot, Helms claimed that the soldiers had beaten their prisoners so badly that they were “incapable of action, they were completely covered with blood and no longer looked like humans; they were now only spineless pieces

26 *Prussian Parliament B*, “Gericht der 1. Garde-Division, Amtstelle Potsdam, - als Verfahren wider Unbekannt wegen Erschießung des Schriftstellers Fernbach.” Summary of Köhn’s testimony to a military court. Presented to the Prussian Parliament on 12 September 1919, 284.

27 *Prussian Parliament B*, Stettin testimony 3 July 1919, 129.

28 Gumbel, *Vier Jahre Mord*, 9; Memorial Finanzamt Kreuzberg.

29 *Prussian Parliament B*, Stettin testimony 3 July 1919, 129. The report of the *DZ* also referred to one of the prisoners as a Russian: “Der Kampf um den “Vorwärts”,” *DZ* Nr. 11, 12 Jan. 1919 MA.

30 *Prussian Parliament B*, Stettin testimony 3 July 1919, 129.

31 *Ibid*.

of meat.”³² Helms thought that twenty to thirty men participated in this vicious act of violence. He said that the men had been killed “like at the front.” In his words:

The prisoners were lined up in groups, and then they were shot. The command “fire” was given. The first two were shot around eight times. The effects were so terrible, that their brains were left on the ground, as if one was buying brains [*Brägen*] in a butcher’s shop. Afterwards someone happily shot again at the bodies, as one of them was allegedly still moving; this was almost an hour later. However there was no command given for this. The group of five were treated in a more precise manner. They were lined up against a wall. They could hardly walk and some of them were partially led there. They stood against the wall, some of them already collapsing. Twenty men lined up and shot them. A Sergeant took command and organized the soldiers, who in fact did the shooting when he ordered “fire.”³³

The wife of Werner Möller, one of the dead men, lamented that death at the hands of a firing squad would have been far milder than what her young husband endured during the final moments of his life. She later claimed that his body had only one gunshot wound, in its upper left side. The left side of his chest however had a striking knife wound, which she thought had been caused by stabbing by bayonet. There was also a major wound on the left side of his neck and the lower left side of his face had collapsed to the point that his ear had almost fallen off. She added that after her husband was killed, his body was robbed. She said that by the time she had found his body, he was missing his shoes, wallet, watch and hat.³⁴

Franz von Stephani was accused of ordering the captives’ execution. He denied this. He was, however, willing to admit that once the men lay dead he might have said something like “they have forfeited their lives.”³⁵ Although it was never established who carried out the beating, it is most likely that the captives’ assailants included soldiers who had participated in the assault on the *Vorwärts* building as well as younger junior officers who were present in the Garde-Dräger barracks and joined in the violence. One witness specifically identified the younger soldiers as using whips to strike the captives.³⁶ No one was ever sentenced for the killings.³⁷

32 *Prussian Parliament B*, Helms testimony 5 May 1919, 86.

33 *Ibid.*, 87.

34 Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereafter BArch Berlin) SAPMO NY 4131/27 (Personal Papers of Emil Eichhorn) Bl.122-137: “Die Ermordung der Vorwärts-Parlamentäre“ by Eugene Fernbach (father of Wolfgang Fernbach), here Bl.123. and Bl.132.

35 *Prussian Parliament B*, von Stephani 3 July 1919, 131.

36 BArch Berlin-SAPMO NY 4131/27 (Eichhorn Papers) Bl.122-37: “Die Ermordung der Vorwärts-Parlamentäre“ by Eugene Fernbach, here Bl.134-5. See also the discussions in *Prussian Parliament B*, 21 May 1919, 4 June 1919; 3 July 1919, 112-45.

37 Emil Julius Gumbel, *Vier Jahre politischer Mord* (Berlin, 1922), 9-10.

In the immediate aftermath to the assault, most commentators didn't care about the atrocity.³⁸ Newspapers praised the assault soldiers. Their headlines announced that their success was the "victory over terror" (*Berliner Morgenpost*), "the end of Spartacist rule" (*Vorwärts*), the "victory of order" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*), "Liebknecht's defeat" (*Frankfurter Zeitung*) and the "liberation" of Berlin (*Reichsbote*).³⁹ The Berlin correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* wrote that "the liberation of the capital from the terror of the Spartacist league and its friends, the Independents," felt like when "one wakes up after a terrible dream."⁴⁰ By the time readers of southern Germany's most important pre-war liberal newspaper read his words, the nightmare for the families of the men killed in the Garde-Drögoner barracks had only just begun.

Just hours after the men had been killed, in short succession, two soldiers turned up unexpectedly at the home of Alice Fernbach on Grunewaldstrasse. They had most likely been sent there to tell her the news that her husband, Wolfgang Fernbach was one of the seven men brutally killed in the Garde-Drögoner barracks that morning. Fernbach was from an assimilated German-Jewish family.⁴¹ They had met and married in 1912 and had previously lived in London, where he worked as a newspaper correspondent for *The Financier and Bullionist*.⁴² Since then they had become the parents of two young children — one of whom was not yet five years old.

Wolfgang Fernbach was of weak stature and poor health — he had initially been rejected by the German military in 1914 before he was called up in November 1915 only to be discharged on the grounds of poor health nine months later. While a serving soldier, he joined in the underground activities of the Spartacist league.⁴³ A committed activist, in November 1918, it is quite likely that he was among the men who accompanied Ernst Meyer to occupy the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* and produce the first two issues of the *Rote Fahne* newspaper.

38 During the immediate aftermath to the assault, it was relatively easy for the government's supporters to ignore the Garde-Drögoner barracks atrocity. In the aftermath to the assault on 11 January, contemporaries' reactions to events in the barracks were subsumed within a much broader wave of atrocity accusations and counter-accusations, some of which circulated as rumors and many of which later turned out to be untrue.

39 "Der Sieg über den Terror," *BM* Nrs. 6–13, 13 Jan. 1919; "Das Ende der Spartacus-Herrschaft," *Vorwärts* Nr. 22, 13 Jan. 1919; "Der Sieg der Ordnung in Berlin. Die entscheidenden Ereignisse [Berlin 12 Jan. Priv. Tel.]," *FZ* 13 Jan. 1919 MA; "Liebknechts Niederlage," *FZ* 13 Jan. 1919 AA; "Der Zusammenbruch der Spartakiden," *Reichsbote*, 11 Jan. 1919 AA; "Berlin von dem Joche der Spartakiden befreit," *Reichsbote*, 13 Jan. 1919 MA; "Das Ende der Spartakus-Herrschaft in Berlin," *DZ* 13 Jan. 1919 MA.

40 "Berlin. 13 Jan. [Priv. Tel.]," *FZ* 13 Jan. 1919 AA.

41 His father Eugen had quit Judaism shortly after Wolfgang was born but Wolfgang had briefly flirted with Zionism and his sister had even married a Russian Zionist — much to their father's dismay.

42 Fernbach, "Memories of Spartacus." Fernbach's appearance may have been a factor; in 1910 he was subjected to anti-Semitic insults. However, I have come across no indication that Fernbach's Jewish background was referred to at the point of his killing.

43 He was involved in the printing of Rosa Luxemburg's Junius Pamphlet, the Spartacist letters, and former German ambassador to London, Prince Lichnowsky's controversial memoir, *Meine Londoner Mission*, in which he blamed the German government for the origins of the war.

By January 1919, the occupation of the *Vorwärts* building presented this young idealist with a new chance. Wolfgang Fernbach went there determined to help produce a new Communist newspaper: “*Der Rote Vorwärts*.” He also went there fully aware that the decision might cost him his life. He carried a short letter on his person that instructed its finder to inform his wife Alice if they should find it while searching his body.

The morning after she learnt that her husband had been killed Alice Fernbach went with Wolfgang’s parents, as well as her own father Wilhelm Sabor, to the Garde-Drögoner barracks. They were hoping to find out what happened to Wolfgang during the final hours of his life, and probably praying to discover that the soldiers’ messages the previous day were untrue. In the barracks, at the request of Wolfgang’s father Eugen, he and Alice’s father were brought to the stables where the bodies of the dead men were lying outstretched on the ground. According to Eugen’s account, all of the dead men had been robbed of their valuables and they were missing their shoes. None of the officers present were willing to tell them what had really happened the previous day.

On 16 January, Eugen and Alice Fernbach returned to the barracks once again. This time an officer told them to write to Major von Stephani — having avoided them during their first visit, von Stephani was now back in Potsdam. On 17 January Eugen Fernbach wrote to Stephani but he signed the letter in the name of Alice Fernbach. He pleaded with von Stephani to inform the family of what really happened to his son. When Stephani failed to reply he sent another letter in his own name on 13 February. Unlike his first letter, the second was sent as a registered letter (*Einschreiben*). It included the additional goading comment that no “man of honor” could refuse to inform a family faced with such a desperate situation.

Von Stephani answered in two letters, dated 9 and 13 February 1919. The first, addressed to Wolfgang’s wife Alice expressed his regret at her and her children’s loss. But both letters were adamant that Wolfgang and the other six men had been caught with weapons and been in the possession of the hated “dum-dum-bullets” — soft-nosed bullets used for target practice which were despised by soldiers in all armies during the First World War because of their horrific impact upon the human body (soft-nosed bullets have a more destructive impact upon the body than regular ammunition). Von Stephani later

repeated the same claim before the Prussian Parliament and at the start of March 1919, he and Count Westarp — the main suspects behind the atrocity — even went as far as completing an official complaint with the police against the seven dead men for murder and attempted murder.⁴⁴

His letters to the Fernbach family expressed regret at their loss. But he was in no way repentant about who was responsible for Wolfgang's death. On 16 January 1919 — the same day that Alice and Eugen Fernbach paid their second visit to the Garde-Drögoner barracks — Stephani was one of the chief mourners at the funerals of the government soldiers killed during the assault. The families of the dead men were present, as were representatives of the Mosse, Buxenstein and *Vorwärts* publishers as well as members of the Social Democratic Party and significant numbers of local people in Potsdam.⁴⁵ The men who were laid to rest that day were foremost in his mind when he wrote to the Fernbach family. In his second letter he told them that the soldiers killed during the assault on the *Vorwärts* building also had families who were now desperately grieving. In both letters he stated that the sole blame for all of the deaths lay with the leaders of the Spartacist league. In May 1919, in front of the Prussian Parliament, von Stephani made references clearly blaming Rosa Luxemburg for the loss of life — although he did not mention her by name.

After burying *their* victims together, it was unlikely that the *Vorwärts* newspaper and its SPD party colleagues in the government would listen to Fernbach and the many others who spoke out against the treatment of the first seven prisoners killed by Freikorps soldiers in 1919. Moreover, there could be no justice for the Fernbach family because the atrocity was part of a powerful political battle about the meaning of the uprising and the legitimacy of Friedrich Ebert's government's decision to use military force, including artillery fire, to bring it to an end. This political debate has continued to influence how the January Uprising has been understood right up until today.⁴⁶ It pits supporters of the Social Democrats against their critics who view the level of force used against the rebels as having been unnecessary. In 1919 these two camps were divided along similar lines. The government's supporters saw the rebellion as an atrocious act that was deserving of punishment, while their critics understood the Garde-Drögoner barracks atrocity as the outcome of a terrible government policy that betrayed the tradition and history of the German working class.⁴⁷

44 *Prussian Parliament B*, von Stephani testimony 21. May 1919, 122–7. See also GStA PK Rep.84a (Justizministerium) Nr. 11759 Bl.51–51RS: Reinhard letter to state prosecutor Weissmann 3 March 1919; GStA PK Rep.84a (Justizministerium) Nr. 11759 Bl.52–52RS: Anzeige gegen die bei der Erstürmung der "Vorwärts" gefangen genommenen Personen gegen Mordes und Mordversuchs (vom 16.I.1919).

45 "Beisetzung der "Vorwärts" Opfer," *Vorwärts* Nr.25–28, 16 Jan. 1919.

46 Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Blick zurück und in die Zukunft. Die Sicht auf die „Novemberrevolution“ 1919 bis 2018 und mögliche Perspektiven einer kritischen Revolutionshistoriographie," *Sozialgeschichte Online* 23(2018): 107–165. See also Wolfgang Niess, *Die Revolution von 1918/19 in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung. Deutungen von der Weimarer Republik bis ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2013).

47 On the idea of atrocity as a "culturally constructed and historically determined category," see Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914*, 430.

A taboo had been broken. It was the first time that prisoners were killed during the Revolution of 1918-19. Instead of condemning the atrocity and punishing the perpetrators, the government, led by Friedrich Ebert, Philip Scheidemann and Gustav Noske, and its supporters continued to defend the conduct of soldiers and blame the Spartacists for *all* of the violence. For them, the assault on the *Vorwärts* had served its purpose: it had sent a message that the government was determined to maintain its right to rule and prevent “Russian conditions” in Germany. For large parts of the audience to this violence, it was reassuring to know that the government had “more machine guns than Liebknecht.” Three weeks later Max Weber famously defined the state as the holder of the monopoly of physical force.⁴⁸

The role of *Vorwärts* editor Friedrich Stampfer (after whom the street in front of the Social Democrat’s Party headquarters is named today) was especially controversial. In December 1918 Stampfer’s editorials had made him particularly disliked among parts of the radical revolutionary left. On 11 January, he accompanied the assault soldiers during their operation at the *Vorwärts* building. Later he described seeing dead bodies — one of whom he described as looking Russian — in the rubble. In the Dragoon barracks he was shocked to witness a group of soldiers preparing to execute a female prisoner. He intervened and demanded that no further prisoners be killed. But publicly he refused to admit that the atrocity had taken place.⁴⁹

IV. The violence continues: The suppression of Berlin’s March Uprising.

There was no cooling of passions. On 3 March 1919 Berlin’s workers went on strike. The decision to strike was made by delegates elected to represent workers at a general assembly of Berlin’s workers’ councils on 3 March 1919.⁵⁰ It was at first supported by an uneasy coalition of Berlin based Independent Socialists, Communists, and some Social Democrats, who in turn placed the strike’s leadership in the hands of Berlin councils’ *Vollzugsrat*.⁵¹ Even though it was termed a “general strike,” it did not bring a stop to the city’s electricity, gas, and water supplies, and Berlin’s emergency and security services also continued working.⁵² Gustav Noske’s response was immediately clear. He declared a state of emergency in the capital and ordered its military occupation. For Noske, a hard response to the strike was an opportunity to demonstrate the state’s power.

48 Max Weber, “Politik als Beruf,” in id., *Geistige Arbeit als Beruf. Vier Vorträge vor dem Freistudentischen Bund*. Zweiter Vortrag. (München, 1919), http://www.deutschetextarchiv.de/weber_politik_1919, accessed September 5, 2019. See further Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber. A Biography*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Cambridge, 2011), 514-518.

49 Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 218-226.

50 Gerhard Engel, Bärbel Holz and Ingo Materna, eds., *Groß-Berliner Arbeiter und Soldatenräte in der Revolution 1918-19* (3 Vols.), (Berlin, 1993-2002).

51 Müller, *Geschichte*, 662-663.

52 ‘Frankfurt, 4 März’, *FZ* Nr.170, 4 March 1919 AA.

The strike quickly escalated into an armed uprising. The first shots were fired in the vicinity of the Alexanderplatz where there was rioting and shops were plundered. During the night of 5-6 March the first skirmishes transformed into an out-and-out battle. Later accounts produced conflicting explanations for the origins of this fighting. Supporters of the government explained it as the first act in a pre-planned uprising. The strike leaders, including the revolutionary shop steward Richard Müller, blamed it on the work of *agents provocateurs*.⁵³

Regardless of whether the rising was planned or not, once the fighting started, what happened in Berlin was a rebellion. Armed workers tried to break into police precincts to seize weapons. After they were defeated at the Alexanderplatz, the rebels retreated into the city's east, where there was intense fighting in the area between the Spree river and the Große Frankfurter Straße, and around Warschauer Brücke and Schlesischer Bahnhof (today Ostbahnhof). Rebels also built barricades along Landsberger Allee. The soldiers who followed them fired artillery (first 12 cm, and later 7.5 cm shells). On the ground their soldiers used machine-guns, flamethrowers and mortars. In the air, they dropped bombs and strafed housing blocks with gunfire, causing the first civilian casualties as a result of aerial bombardment in the German capital in the twentieth century.

The propaganda war was equally intense. On 9 March it reached a new key when the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag* (the *Bild Zeitung* of 1919) reported that enemy rebels had brutally murdered as many as 150 police in Lichtenberg.⁵⁴ The news came straight from the communications office of the Guard Division.⁵⁵ It was untrue. But just like the crisis of facts that has empowered the rise of populism in today's world, in March 1919 the truth mattered little. The first reports led to a wave of demands for unrestricted violence against Spartacism, and Noske was widely supported when on 9 March 1919 he declared: "the gruesomeness and bestiality of the Spartacists fighting against us forces me to issue the following order: every person who is encountered fighting against government troops with a weapon in hand is to be immediately shot." Within three to four days, at least 177 and possibly more than 200 people were executed.⁵⁶

The order legitimized a series of atrocities. Two Russian prisoners of war were beaten to a pulp in the courtyard of Moabit prison just hours after the soldiers learnt of Noske's proclamation. Another twenty-nine men were executed after they were lured to the courtyard of a building in the Französische Straße. At night on the Schillingbrücke

53 See the Independent Socialist publication: *Die Wahrheit über die Berliner Straßenkämpfe*, 6; and in Richard Müller, *Eine Geschichte der November Revolution*. 3 Vols: Vol. 1: *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*; Vol. 2: *Die November Revolution*; Vol. 3 *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1924 & 25, 2012 reprint), 663, 680-81.

54 As reported in: "Sofortige standrechtliche Erschießung [Berlin. 9 März]," *Deutsche Zeitung* Nr. 105, 10 March 1919 MA. See also Wolfram Wette, *Gustav Noske*, 421.

55 "Die Wahrheit über Lichtenberg. Die totgegläubten Beamten wieder im Dienst," *Berliner Morgenpost* Nr. 72, 13 März 1919; "Frankfurt, 15 März," *Frankfurter Zeitung* Nr. 201, 15 März 1919 Evening edition.

56 Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 257-58.

soldiers carried out executions and dumped the bodies into the Spree River. Elsewhere in the eastern part of Berlin, a small number of children were shot in their homes after government soldiers accused them of participating in the rebellion.⁵⁷

The Social Democratic *Vorwärts* newspaper was certain of its moral superiority. It described the dead as the “downright characters that one finds only too often in the lines of the *Spartakusbund* which is built on impoverishment. Even when they are dead, anger, hatred and despair is written on their faces.”⁵⁸

Conclusion

For many historians, the violence of the revolution of 1918-19 was the product of a wartime process of brutalization that gripped Germany during the course of the First World War. This interpretation, first famously advanced by George Mosse, however misses some crucial points. For a start, most veterans of the conflict rejected violence.⁵⁹ Moreover, as we have seen in the case of the shooting at the Sparkasse in Kiel, in November 1918 there was considerable potential for de-escalation. The closer we examine the course of violence during the winter of 1918-19, the more questionable a linear idea of brutalization from the trenches to Berlin becomes. Instead, the violence of the revolution was a product of a mix of factors. For some actors, particularly former officers or adolescent males denied their wartime experience of violence, the revolution did create circumstances for them to carry on the violence of wartime — albeit with a victorious outcome. But for many more, the process behind the radicalization of violence was a result of the conditions of the revolution itself.

Moreover, a further criticism of the brutalization thesis is that it forgets that in 1919 the deaths of civilians at the hands of pro-government soldiers was contested. German society in 1919 was not so indifferent to the deaths of German women, children and civilian males that society could easily accept the deaths of civilians. Instead, during the winter of 1918-19 political elites and the media developed a new set of ideas about why this violence was necessary. The core of these ideas suggested that the people being killed were no longer really human, that they were “beasts in human form.”

The dehumanizing processes that made this possible were driven by panic, fears of invasion, and fears of a repetition of the Russian civil war on German soil — summed up shorthand as “Russian conditions,” as

57 Jones, *Am Anfang war Gewalt. Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19 und der Beginn der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 2017), 265-275.

58 “Totenschau,” *Vorwärts*, Nr.126, 10 March 1919 MA.

59 On the brutalization thesis see Mark Edele and Robert Gerwarth, eds., “The Limits of Demobilization: Global Perspectives on the Aftermath of the Great War,” *JCH* 50:1 (2015): 3-14. Classic works in favor of brutalization include: George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990); Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: the Holocaust, industrial killing, and representation* (New York, 1996). Its critics include Dirk Schumann, “Europa, der Erste Weltkrieg und die Nachkriegszeit: eine Kontinuität der Gewalt?” *JMEH* 1 (2003): 24-43; and Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany, 1914-1923* (Oxford, 2007).

well as older fears of an out-of-control *Lumpenproletariat* rising up to take control of large cities.⁶⁰ Alongside these imaginaries of terrible futures that might be about to happen, the radicalization was also driven by the very real dangers of rebellion and the radical language used by the Communist leaders. No political group comes out of this era looking particularly good.

The desire of officers and soldiers to take revenge upon revolutionaries also mattered. But it should not be overemphasized — as is the case in Volker Weidemann's book *Träumer*.⁶¹ Personal acts of vengeance were only possible because of political and military structures that demanded a display of force from the state. Noske's execution order, first introduced because of fake news in eastern Berlin, was reintroduced for operations against Munich. It was accompanied by dozens of other military commands instructing officers and soldiers to use maximum force and show no mercy to their enemies. That key actors, including representatives of Social Democracy and liberalism, supported these measures was one of the great tragedies of the German Revolution of 1918-19.

60 On fears of "Russian conditions" in Germany see Mark Jones, "Scripting the Revolution: 'Russian Conditions' and the German political imagination in 1918 and 1919," in John Steinberg, Steve Sabol, Alexander Marshall, eds., *Arc of Revolution*, Vol. 4 of the series *Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914 — 1922: The Centennial Reappraisal* (Bloomington, in print).

61 Volker Weidemann, *Träumer. Als die Dichter die Macht übernahmen* (Cologne, 2017).

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DID SEX BRING DOWN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC?

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German fascism was a moral abyss. The darkness of that chasm overwhelms the catastrophe that came just before it, dwarfing the significance of German democracy's collapse between 1930 and 1933. Yet the Weimar Republic's fall was a catastrophe, one of the history of democracy's most unnerving. It brought the world to the edge of the abyss. Had the Republic survived, even as a semi-autocracy with a right-leaning head of state, there would have been no fascist dictatorship. Think what would have happened had Heinrich Brüning remained chancellor, or even if Kurt von Schleicher had.

The historical profession, therefore, ought to be able to say with some confidence why the Weimar Republic fell. Historians have spilled a lot of ink on the problem. We now have a pretty good idea of what went wrong and why. Yet, we are still piecing together some important parts of the story. One of those parts is about sex. Many people think that sex had something to do with the Weimar Republic's collapse. This might surprise some readers. Sex has a history, but often, too often, professional historians do not relate the history of sex to major, "old-school" historical questions. When it comes to the Weimar Republic, however, they do. This delighted me as a graduate student. I had begun to study history because I wanted to study the history of sex. To find it front-and-center in a major debate, one that had been going on for decades, about one of the most profound questions in modern European history — why fascism came to power — was inspiring. The idea that sex helped bring down the Republic seemed to justify the study of the history of sex, which was often pushed to the margins of the history profession.

Yet sex did not bring down the Weimar Republic. Sex and the politics of sex were, nevertheless, important. The history of sexuality is a valid field of study. It does shed new light on the Republic's collapse and on fascism — not, however, for the reasons we had assumed.

I. The Kit Kat Club theory

Historians have been blaming sex for the Republic's fall for a long time. Just after the end of the Second World War, illustrious West German historians rushed to explain the cataclysmic sequence of

events between 1918 and 1945. They pointed to sex as an explanation for what had gone wrong — that is, why Hitler had come to power. Thus in his 1948 book *Europa und die deutsche Frage* the conservative historian Gerhard Ritter wrote that the Weimar Republic had destroyed authority, thus unleashing “cultural decay, lack of [religious] faith, and moral nihilism” — this was a reference, among other things, to the Weimar era’s relatively progressive, left-leaning sexual politics. According to Ritter, it was only in this “atmosphere” of moral nihilism that “the sudden expansion of the Hitler cult into a mass party is comprehensible.”¹ Because Ritter was one of early postwar West Germany’s most prominent historians,² his interpretation was highly influential.

Ritter’s idea was that the Weimar Republic’s relative toleration of sexual diversity amounted to moral nihilism, a revolt against moral authority that opened the door for even more immorality, namely, fascism. In his view, fascism represented a rejection of Christian moral values, such as the condemnation of murder. Moreover, fascism’s rejection of the Christian injunction against taking human life and its rejection of Christian sexual morals were of a piece. Living as most of us do, thankfully, in a different time, it can be difficult to remember that, not too long ago, many people saw homosexuality and murder as related moral violations.³ Another prominent historian, Friedrich Meinecke, made the same point in a similar book.⁴ These historians were not the only people who hit on this explanation for Weimar’s fall. One can trace it in popular culture, too.

To an American audience, perhaps the best example of this long-lived explanation for Weimar’s fall is Bob Fosse’s 1972 film *Cabaret*. One of the pleasures of watching *Cabaret* for someone with an interest in German history is that it paints a very stark portrait of what Ritter described: the sexual immorality of Weimar feeding the immorality of fascism. The cabaret in the film, the Kit Kat Club, is home to gender-bending and sexual transgression — heterosexual transgression, often. Joel Grey’s character, the Master of Ceremonies, presides over the Kit Kat Club. He cross-dresses and sings about the pleasures of three-way relationships. To American critics in 1972 the Master of Ceremonies was, as Terri Gordon writes, an embodiment of “the decadence and decline of an increasingly corrupt society” or, perhaps, a Hitler-figure, “luring the audience into blind complacency.”⁵ That is, critics linked his sexual and gender rule-breaking to fascism, which makes sense — the film’s plot makes the same link.

1 Quoted in Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto, 2015), 10.

2 On his reputation see for example Andreas Dorpalen, “Historiography as History: The Work of Gerhard Ritter,” *The Journal of Modern History* 34:1 (1962), 1-18: 1.

3 For context on the medieval Church’s conflation of sodomy and murder see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC, 1999), 62-3.

4 See Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 194-195.

5 Terri J. Gordon, “Film in the Second Degree: “Cabaret” and the Dark Side of Laughter,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152:4 (2008), 440-465: 461.

Watching *Cabaret*, one watches the Kit Kat Klub transform from anti-fascist to pro-fascist. At first, the Master of Ceremonies makes fun of Hitler, and an SA man is kicked out of the club. Yet, there is no guarantee that this antifascism has any legs. Although no one comes out and says this, the film implies that the people of the Kit Kat Club have no moral norms. As time goes on, the Kit Kat Club abandons anti-fascism. The Master of Ceremonies sings an antisemitic song (“If You Could See Her,” the gorilla number).⁶ He dances cross-dressed in a chorus number where the corset-clad kick line transforms itself into a phalanx of goose-stepping soldiers.⁷ In the film’s final scene, the Master of Ceremonies tells the audience that the beauty of the cabaret will help them forget their troubles, and the camera pans to show us that now, SA men are in the audience. To put it bluntly, it’s “debauched Germans into Nazis.”⁸

Why did so many people think Weimar’s sexual and gender “disorder” dovetailed with the moral disorder of fascism? One reason is that the Weimar Republic’s founding ushered in a sexual revolution. Or, at least, in the years just after the First World War, a lot of Germans believed that they were living through a sexual revolution and that the Republic had something to do with it. From left-leaning “new women” to septuagenarian Protestant morality crusaders, a host of authors in the early 1920s described how the war and the new democracy had overturned nineteenth-century mores.⁹

Another reason is that the Republic did transform Germany’s laws about sexuality in the media, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution, and even abortion. Censorship became much less strict than it had been under the Kaiser, even though Imperial Germany had already been lax in censoring discussions of sexuality in print.¹⁰ In 1926, the Reichstag reformed the abortion law. Though it did not legalize abortion on demand, it did make getting an abortion a misdemeanor crime and lower possible jail sentences to just a day. The following year, a Reichsgericht decision allowed abortion for medical reasons with a doctor’s approval. An ambitious law on sexually transmitted diseases passed in 1927.¹¹ Its aim was to launch a modern, scientific state response to the public health dangers posed by syphilis and other infections. Among other things, this new law also deregulated women’s sex work (previously, female sex workers had been strictly controlled by police and other authorities). It was now legal for women to sell sex in Germany free from police oversight. The Reichstag’s penal reform committee was in the midst of

6 On “If You Could See Her” see Gordon, “Film in the Second Degree,” 460 and following.

7 Thanks to Geoffrey Giles for catching my prior sartorial confusion here: see Geoffrey J. Giles, “Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis by Laurie Marhoefer,” *Canadian Journal of History* 51:3 (2016), 606-608: 607.

8 Paraphrasing Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

9 See Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 26 and following.

10 See Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York, 2015); Gary Stark, *Banned in Berlin: Literary Censorship in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York, 2009).

11 On this law see among others: Michaela Freud-Widder, *Frauen unter Kontrolle: Prostitution und ihre staatliche Bekämpfung in Hamburg vom Ende des Kaiserreichs bis zu den Anfängen der Bundesrepublik* (Berlin, 2003); Julia Roos, *Weimar through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women’s Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-1933* (Ann Arbor, 2010); for a more complete review of studies of the law see Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 83; 251-252.

the mammoth task of re-writing the entire criminal code.¹² In 1929, it reached article 175 of the penal code, the sodomy law, and voted to strike it from the law code.¹³ Though the vote never took on the force of law, because the entire effort to revise the penal code failed, it was a powerful symbol.

The problem with *Cabaret*, Ritter's interpretation, and all the other versions of what we might call the "Kit Kat Club theory" is that, although these reforms were progressive, they cannot fairly be described as "moral disorder." They were, in fact, quite orderly. At the time they were passed, some people, especially on the far right, claimed they were signs of moral disorder. But many Germans — probably most Germans — did not think that these reforms amounted to disorder. Instead, what they saw before them was a new order: a modern, scientific approach to gender and sex. The idea of a new state response to sexuality, often framed in terms of public health, had broad appeal. Even the Catholic Center Party voted for the 1927 law on sexually transmitted diseases, although Center Party members later claimed parts of the law hadn't worked and called for revisions.

With *Cabaret* looming over us, it is hard to forget just how bourgeois and respectable the Weimar moment was. The Republic's reforms were pretty mild compared to, say, the reforms of the late 1960s and 1970s. They were mostly in keeping with prevailing bourgeois norms of gender and sexuality. Although Weimar Germany had its pockets of "decadence" like the Kit Kat Klub, the prevailing trend was bourgeois respectability. Magnus Hirschfeld, for example, the world-famous leader of Germany's homosexual emancipation movement, wanted to strike down the sodomy law, article 175, which criminalized sex between consenting adult men. He also wanted the world to recognize that many homosexual men and women were upstanding citizens. While those were radical demands at the time, Hirschfeld did not want to overturn the social norms of gender and sex completely. He was a reformer, not a revolutionary. For instance, he did not want homosexuals to acknowledge their homosexuality in public. By the way, doing that in the 1920s was called "self-denunciation" — the term itself is a reminder of the heavy stigma and legal risk involved in what would much later be called "coming out."¹⁴ Hirschfeld did not want people to come out. He was not "out." He also did not want legal protections for same-sex relationships. When Hirschfeld wrote about homosexuals and marriage, he did not write about same-sex marriage. Rather, he argued that because homosexuals were nature's

12 On this see also Richard F. Wetzell, "Introduction: Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany," in Richard F. Wetzell, ed. *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany* (New York, 2014), 1-28: 7-11.

13 On the penal code reform committee's vote against Paragraph 175 see the committee's proceedings, reprinted as "Die Verhandlungen des Strafrechtsausschusses des deutschen Reichstages über die Strafbarkeit der Homosexualität," *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 24, September/October 1929, 176-191 and "Deutscher Reichstag: Beratungen des Strafrechtsausschusses des Deutschen Reichstages über den §297 des Amtlichen Strafgesetzentwurfs," *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 26 December 1929/January 1930, 209-223. See also Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 112-145.

14 Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 7.

way of containing and neutralizing hereditary degeneration, they ought not to get married to people of the opposite sex, because if they had children those children would probably be degenerate.¹⁵ When a colleague of Hirschfeld's suggested creating a mass movement of openly homosexual people, Hirschfeld dismissed the notion.¹⁶ Hirschfeld probably would have enjoyed catching a show at the Kit Kat Klub (though not the antisemitic gorilla number or the Reichswehr kick line number). He would have been disgusted, however, by the suggestion that the Kit Kat Klub typified the homosexual emancipation movement.

A second small but vivid example of just how respectable the Weimar Republic's gender and sex radicals were was unearthed by the historian Katie Sutton. Trans activists admonished trans women to dress respectably. They ought to take care to look bourgeois and demure in public, by, for example, avoiding costume rings and big showy earrings.¹⁷ In short, the historical reality was nothing like the sexy, dangerous Weimar Republic that is so fun to watch in *Cabaret*, nor was it anything like the Pride Parades and radical homosexual politics of the 1970s. To be sure, persistently but politely demanding the repeal of the sodomy law was radical and shocking at the time. But, by post-1970s metrics, Weimar-era homosexual emancipation was a little boring.¹⁸

The other problem with the idea that sex destroyed the Weimar Republic is a problem of evidence. If sexual politics did help to bring down the Republic in a major way, we would be able to see the traces of that causal chain in the historical record. I'm not convinced that we do, and I've looked in many places.¹⁹ One can run a quick check for accuracy on the Kit Kat Klub theory. If sexual immorality led into fascism, a substantial number of people with progressive views of sexual politics in Weimar must have backed the fascists. Nothing remotely like that happened. Progressives hated the fascists, and vice versa. It was mostly right-of-center people who came around to the fascist cause. Many reformers who pushed for new laws on prostitution, abortion, and homosexuality quickly fled into exile in 1933.²⁰ Hirschfeld left Germany in 1930 to give lectures in New York City. To his great sadness, he never returned. What kept him away was a well-founded fear that the Nazis would murder him. Both before and after 1933, on many issues, the fascists were not sexual progressives; fascism in power was very much its own beast, neither fully rejecting what had happened in the Weimar era nor fully embracing

15 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Weltreise eines Sexualforschers* (Brugg, 1933), 307; on Hirschfeld and homosexuals and marriage see also my forthcoming book on Hirschfeld's politics of antiracism and eugenics. Some good resources on all things Hirschfeld are Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld und seine Zeit* (Berlin/Boston, 2017); Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld: The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement*, trans. Edward H. Willis (New York, 2014).

16 Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 6-7.

17 Katie Sutton, "'We Too Deserve a Place in the Sun': The Politics of Transvestite Identity in Weimar Germany," *German Studies Review* 35:2 (2012), 335-354: 342.

18 By calling it "boring" I do not mean to hide the movement's more sinister impulses, which were often directed towards sex workers. See Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 207-209.

19 For a much fuller account of this research see Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 174f.

20 Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 200; Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (Oxford, 1997), 136 and following.

it. Regarding homosexuality, let us note that the Nazi regime carried out modern history's bloodiest persecution of gay men.²¹

II. The backlash thesis

21 Readers interested in Nazi persecutions of gay men might consult some of the following books and articles: Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesüht* (Paderborn, 2002); Stefan Micheler, *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder der "Anderen": Männer begehrende Männer in der Weimarer Republik und der NS-Zeit* (Konstanz, 2005); Günter Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust? Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London, 1993); Geoffrey J. Giles, "The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler's SS and Police," in Dagmar Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German Fascism* (New York, 2005), 256-290; id., "The Institutionalization of Homosexual Panic in the Third Reich," in Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 233-255; id., "A Gray Zone among the Field Gray Men: Confusion in the Discrimination against Homosexuals in the Wehrmacht," in Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth, eds., *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New York, 2005), 127-146; id., "The Most Unkindest Cut of All: Castration, Homosexuality and Nazi Justice," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (1992): 41-61; id., "Legislating Homophobia in the Third Reich: The Radicalization of Prosecution against Homosexuality by the Legal Profession," *German History* 23, no. 3 (2005): 339-354; Alexander Zinn, *Aus dem Volkskörper entfernt? Homosexuelle Männer im Nationalsozialismus*

There is a second, more formidable theory of how sex brought down the Republic, and it directs researchers to much more likely places in the archive to identify signs of that causal chain in action. What I will call the "backlash thesis" argues that conservatives were frustrated and alarmed by the Weimar Republic's sexual libertinism and legal reforms. Those anxieties boiled up into a strong counter-reaction, a backlash. Conservatives rose up against the Republic in order to save traditional morality. The Nazis' promise to clean up Weimar brought conservatives over to their side, so that Hitler could ride to power on a wave of reaction against sexual liberation. Historians have pointed to different ways in which this supposedly happened. While some argue that frustrated conservatives jumped on the fascist bandwagon because of sexual politics, others contend that a backlash against sexual liberation drove people who had been democrats to embrace authoritarianism, though not necessarily Nazism. In particular, historians have pointed to conservative anxiety about homosexuality, divorce, lax censorship, and prostitution.²²

The backlash thesis is a much more recent invention than the Kit Kat Klub theory, and it is much more promising. After all, many conservatives were indeed upset about Weimar-era reforms and libertinism. Although Weimar's popular image today is one of experimental art and left-wing politics — Marlene Dietrich in the *Blue Angel*, Fritz Lang's movies, Max Beckmann's paintings — most of the adults alive at the time were not cabaret singers. A big slice of the Weimar-era electorate was rather right-of-center when it came to sex and gender. If one looks just at "morality" issues, about a third of the electorate was voting for parties that were conservative: the DNVP (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei* or German National People's Party), the right-liberal DVP (*Deutsche Volkspartei*, German People's Party), and the Catholic Center Party. In 1932, the Nazis would garner about a third of the national vote, but no more.

(Frankfurt am Main, 2018). For a more complete review of this large literature see Laurie Marhoefer, "Lesbianism, Transvestitism, and the

Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939-1943," *The American Historical Review* 121:4 (2016): 1167-1195: 1171.

22 For a review of scholarship that argues for backlash, see Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 176-177.

Yet if the Nazi Party did ride to power on a backlash against sexual progressivism, one would expect the Nazis themselves to be aware that they were riding on a backlash and to make propaganda that stoked it. After all, the fascists are famous for their savvy propaganda. Yet — and this surprised me when I went to the archives to research backlash — they did not. The Nazi Party's two largest newspapers, *Der Angriff* and the *Völkischer Beobachter*, for instance, in the period when the Nazis began to win a significant share of the vote, that is, 1930 and afterwards, rarely mentioned sexual politics. When they did, the mentions were often vague and embedded within long lists of other grievances. In a 1932 article, for example, Joseph Goebbels blasted the Social Democrats for fomenting class warfare, wrecking the economy, taking land from farmers, destroying the army, losing the First World War, signing the Versailles treaty, attacking the middle class, supporting the Young Plan, mocking religion, and "corrupt[ing] public life, poisoning the *Volksmoral* ... betray[ing] the youth to the poison of demoralization" and "destroy[ing] family life."²³ This passage and many others like it show that the Nazis do not seem to have thought that sexual politics was an especially powerful message for them. They did not play it up. To be sure, it was present, but it was not as front-and-center as the backlash theory predicts. There are similar articles in the Nazi press at the same time that list many reasons why the Weimar Republic ought to be overthrown but do not mention sexual politics at all.

Moreover, as Goebbel's very long list demonstrates, the Nazis did not campaign against specific legal reforms that the Republic had implemented, such as the 1927 law on prostitution and venereal disease or the 1929 vote against the sodomy law. (Nor did other parties, for that matter.) Had popular discontent about those reforms been red-hot, and had the Nazis been well-poised to capitalize on that anger, surely they would have done so. But although they did position themselves as conservative on sexual-political issues, they did not make a singular and loud appeal about sexual politics. The Nazis themselves do not seem to have believed they were uniquely suited to benefit from conservative unhappiness about Weimar-era sexual progressivism.

In fact, it is easy to see why they did not. Despite the image of sexual conservatism cultivated by the Nazi press, after the spring of 1932 the Nazi Party was associated in a very public way with Weimar-era

²³ Joseph Goebbels, "SPD—Schamloseste Partei Deutschlands," *Der Angriff* 5 July 1932.

sexual progressivism, in particular with male homosexuality. In 1932, an ally of the Social Democrats revealed to the public that a leading Nazi — Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA — was quietly homosexual by publishing a clutch of Röhm’s letters to a friend in a pamphlet. In the letters, Röhm discussed his desire for other men frankly and without shame. For those who missed the pamphlet, Röhm’s sexuality got frontpage attention a short time later, in May of 1932, when one of Röhm’s lieutenants happened to run into the man who had edited the pamphlet in the café in the Reichstag building. Röhm’s henchmen attacked the publisher and beat him. The police came, rescued the publisher, and shut down the Reichstag. Several Nazis went on trial for the beating. As a result of national newspaper coverage of this altercation, millions of people found out what Röhm had long sought to conceal from the public and most of his fellow Nazis: that he considered himself a homosexual and had been having discrete affairs with other men. Röhm’s secret became so widely known that when Hitler had Röhm killed in 1934 and the Nazi-controlled press reported that Hitler had been shocked to discover Röhm’s homosexuality, people saw right through the pretense. The Social Democrats in exile reported that many people commented that in fact, Hitler — and everyone else — had known of Röhm’s homosexuality since 1932.²⁴ Röhm’s private life did not mesh well with the Nazi Party’s rabidly anti-gay stand; the party advocated, literally, drowning homosexuals in bogs.²⁵

Thus, in the early 1930s the Nazi Party was publicly tainted by male homosexuality. This is in part why the Kit Kat Klub theory thrived for decades. This taint also explains why the NSDAP would not try to claim to be the party best suited to clean up immorality and would, instead, keep relatively quiet about sexual politics. The Nazi state’s 1933 crackdown on public queer and transgender cultures also has to be understood in this context. By burning Magnus Hirschfeld’s library in public and by shutting queer and transgender bars and magazines, the regime was beating back the litany of accusations by Communists and Social Democrats that fascists were homosexuals and vice versa.

III. A naturally occurring experiment

Yet the story of the dramatic upswing in the Nazi vote is not the whole story of how Weimar fell. There is a separate process that played out around the same time. In 1930, when a coalition government led by the Social Democrats fell, the Republic’s duly elected

24 *Deutschland-Bericht der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Salzhausen, 1980 [1934]), 200-201.

25 On how Röhm squared his fascism with his queerness see Laurie Marhoefer, “Queer Fascism and the End of Gay History,” <http://notchesblog.com>, June 19, 2018.

president, Paul von Hindenburg, refused to let new elections take place. Instead, he used his legal authority to depute a politician from the Catholic Center Party, Heinrich Brüning, to serve in the chancellorship independent of the parliament. This was the beginning of the end of democracy.

The attack on the democratic system by conservatives who were not fascists is a crucial part of the tragedy of the Weimar Republic. Recent books on Weimar rightly blame people like President Hindenburg and his advisors for gutting the democracy, even if they did not want a Hitler dictatorship.²⁶ Did sexual politics have anything to do with this? Some historians argue that it did. My own research, however, has shown that there is no evidence that right-of-center politicians, police officers, and bureaucrats were powerfully, primarily motivated by sexual-political issues, and that those concerns drove them to authoritarianism. To be sure, conservatives did care about combating “immorality”; many — though not as many as one would suspect — did not like the Weimar-era reforms on sexuality. Conservatives knew that one benefit of a right-wing dictatorship was that it would afford an opportunity to roll some of these reforms back. Once Hitler was in power, some conservatives praised him for rolling back some of those reforms. Before 1933, however, sexual politics were not a primary motivator for these important players. Absent sexual politics, the key right-wing authoritarians like Hindenburg and Franz von Papen would have acted just as they did. This is true as well for the more moderate opponents of fascism who fell in line, such as the Catholic Center Party. Their primary motives lay elsewhere.

Franz von Papen is probably the worst remembered, most responsible person in the tragedy of the Republic’s fall. An archconservative Catholic aristocrat, he attached himself to President Hindenburg and helped Hitler get the chancellorship. Von Papen and others sought a right-wing authoritarian regime, not the fascist one that they inadvertently helped to create. Von Papen thought he could use Hitler as a puppet and rule from behind the scenes. Conservatives like von Papen needed the Nazi Party’s support because they had no large popular backing of their own. The old conservative party, the DNVP, was hemorrhaging votes — to the fascists. In the high-turnout July 1932 elections the DNVP vote shrank to 5.9 % and the NSDAP became the Reichstag’s largest party, winning about 37% of the popular vote.

²⁶ Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, 2007); Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy: Hitler’s Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic* (New York, 2018).

Von Papen is of interest to our argument because he is a good example of just what role sexual politics played in far-right authoritarianism in the Republic's twilight moment. Prior to Hitler's appointment, von Papen was briefly chancellor. He used the emergency dictatorial powers imbued in that office to illegally take over the government of Prussia, Germany's largest province, which had been run by a democratically elected coalition of Social Democrats and Catholic Center Party politicians. (This is known as Papen's "coup" against the Prussian provisional government, the so-called *Preußenschlag*, remembered today as a major step on Germany's path away from democracy). Papen's short reign as Chancellor and as the unelected head of Prussia offers a naturally occurring experiment about what right-wing authoritarians who were busy taking the democracy apart wanted to do about sex. Papen had a chance to roll back the Weimarer reforms. If doing that would garner him public support, he had a strong motive to do it.

However, Papen did not do it. While he and his subordinates did try to fight "immorality," the steps they took to do that were surprisingly minor and tentative, at least compared to what the backlash thesis predicts. Under Papen, the state of Prussia mandated that if men and women were going to swim together in public, they had to wear bathing suits, and those suits had better not be skimpy.²⁷ This bathing suit order was quickly dubbed the "crotch decree (*Zwickel-Erlass*)" by its critics and was an object of much hilarity in the left-of-center press and foreign press.²⁸ (Catholic bishops had been complaining for years about skimpy bathing suits; indeed, swimwear designs changed dramatically between 1900 and the 30s.) The Prussian police under Papen also shut down Adolf Koch's controversial school of naked gymnastics.²⁹

What's even more interesting than these attempts to make residents of Prussia wear clothing in public is what Papen's regime there did not do, and what moreover he did not do as Reich Chancellor, though that post empowered him to hand down decrees without the parliament's approval. Papen did not issue a general ban on women selling sex on the streets, even though police chiefs in a few cities did so while he was in power. Under Papen's Prussian regime, the provincial Interior Ministry did try to use the obscenity law to crack down on homosexual magazines and other media with sexual content; the courts however resisted and the homosexual press remained in business.³⁰ In sum, the rollbacks were mild. They were not heralded with

27 Preußisches Innenministerium an die Polizei, 30 September 1932, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz HA I. Rep. 84a Nr. 8101 Bd. X, 212.

28 Jens Dobler, *Zwischen Duldungspolitik und Verbrechensbekämpfung: Homosexuellenverfolgung durch die Berliner Polizei von 1848 bis 1933* (Frankfurt a.M., 2008), 534; Sybille Steinbacher, *Wie der Sex nach Deutschland kam: Der Kampf um Sittlichkeit und Anstand in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (München, 2011), 38-39.

29 See Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz HA I. Rep. 84a Nr. 8101 Bd. X, 178-216.

30 See Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 185-6.

great fanfare, nor were they met by a huge outpouring of support for von Papen, who remained markedly unpopular, even with his fellow political Catholics in the Center Party.³¹

From his position as Reichskommissar of Prussia, von Papen appointed an archconservative police chief in Berlin, Kurt Melcher, who attempted another kind of rollback: he threatened not to renew the permits held by gay, lesbian, and transgender clubs in the Mitte neighborhood to host dance parties. That is, he announced that he would refuse to renew their permits to hold dance parties when the permits expired. He did not try to shut the clubs; he just tried to stop the dancing.

In a memorable example of how broadly accepted the idea of homosexual emancipation had become by late Weimar, the gay rights movement erupted in outrage and demanded that Melcher reverse himself. He refused. He did however pen a remarkable letter to gay rights advocates; one of the gay magazines printed it. In the letter, Melcher insisted that pulling the dance party permits was “in no way” a restriction of “the rights of same-sex orientated people” or their clubs. The clubs in question were welcome to have dances, he wrote, but they had to make sure they were discrete events open only to some people, not advertised to the public, so that “the events do not cause a sensation among sexually normal people or offend sexually normal people.”³² So here, a far-right police figure with authoritarian leanings who worked for the archconservative Catholic von Papen, who shortly after this gave Hitler a major leg-up into dictatorial power, acknowledged that “same-sex orientated people” had “rights.” The canceling of the dance party permits for Mitte’s queer and transgender clubs was not a good sign. But it was not the crackdown one would expect if people like Melcher and von Papen were motivated by a backlash against the moral permissiveness of the Weimar Republic.

There was no backlash against “immorality.” Something more complex happened. To be clear, I am not arguing that sexual “immorality” was not important to many right-of-center voters. It was. It was likewise important to the conservatives who hijacked the government beginning in 1930. What I am arguing is that it was not of extreme importance to them. In other words, the backlash thesis greatly overestimates how influential sexual politics was. It was not a *primary cause* of the Republic’s fall, or even a secondary cause. The reforms of Weimar did not upset *enough* people *enough* to bring down

31 On this see Larry Eugene Jones, “Franz von Papen, the German Center Party, and the Failure of Catholic Conservatism in the Weimar Republic,” *Central European History* 38 (2005): 191-217.

32 Quoted in Paul Weber, “Moral gehoben werden soll!” *Die Freundin* 12 October 1932; see also Marhoefer, *SWR*; Dobler.

the democracy. They did not come close. In fact, by the early 1930s, even people like Melcher were willing to grant that homosexuals had rights. This was a far cry from the prevailing view of homosexuals a few decades before, which was that they were either mentally ill or utterly depraved. Readers interested in a fuller version of this argument, including a detailed look at the Catholic Center Party in the 1930s, will find it in my 2015 book, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*.

IV. Conclusion

The story of Weimar's collapse is scarier than it would be if we could just point to backlash and go home. The Republic was, in some respects, quite stable. Surprisingly, one area in which Weimar was stable was sexual politics. A remarkably diverse range of political actors found compromise on several contentious sexual-political issues. A right-liberal politician of the German People's Party cast the deciding vote against the sodomy law in 1929. The Catholic Center Party backed the 1927 law on prostitution and venereal diseases. When leftists revealed Röhm's homosexuality in the press, even some conservative newspapers came to his defense, arguing that a man's private homosexuality was not a public political question. There was widespread support for what I call the "Weimar settlement on sexual politics," an interrelated set of compromises that, if not loved by all parties, satisfied all parties sufficiently, so that by the early 1930s most sexual-political issues were not all that heated anymore. The settlement was that the Republic would tolerate some kinds of non-normative sexuality — female sex work, some kinds of homosexuality, some media with sexual content — as long as it remained hidden from the general public and, in the case of homosexuality, curtailed in a small adult sub-population. On the one hand, the settlement reflected general agreement that most citizens were able to make good choices regarding their own sexual expression and therefore did not need the police or the churches to tell them what to do. On the other hand, the settlement meant state management for people who made choices that were considered beyond the pale. One example of this was welfare detention for women who refused to stop selling sex on the street; another example was the planned crackdown on male sex work, a crackdown that most homosexual emancipation activists supported. Even leftists often used the language of degeneration and mental disability to distinguish the small group of incorrigible sexually disordered people who needed to be constrained.³³

33 Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 90-106; 123-128; 138-140.

Why did the Weimar Republic fall? As we learn more about Weimar we come back to older explanations. The Republic was not doomed from the start. It lasted longer than most of the eastern and central European democracies founded after World War I. It was not a society deeply riven by divisions writ large. It was, rather, riven by certain divisions over particular issues, above all those that were economic. It is not a coincidence that the Republic's crisis began in earnest in 1930, when the Great Depression hit. Hitler rode to power on a politics of resentment, of economic distress, of fervor for right-wing authoritarianism. He could only do so because at the same time, conservatives such as von Papen and Hindenburg were hollowing out the democracy from the inside, trying to set up their own dictatorship for their own reasons. Aside from a *specific crisis* in 1930-32, the Weimar Republic was a stable democracy, a system wherein people with very different views on sex and gender negotiated some surprising compromises — such as the idea that homosexuals can live in peace and even have dance parties, so long as they are discrete. This is striking because just a few years later, the German government, under Hitler, murdered thousands of people for the “crime” of consensual adult homosexual sex. The lessons of Weimar, then, are that the politics of sex can turn very quickly, and that democracies are fragile. They can fall fast.

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CITY STREETS AND CIVIL UNREST: THE COSTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE WEIMAR AND NAZI ERAS

Molly Loberg

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There are so many reasons to talk about the Weimar Republic right now. 2019 marks the centennial of the foundation of the Weimar Republic. Anniversaries provide a natural moment for reflection. There is also a sense of urgency. Newspapers and magazines regularly feature commentary from scholars, journalists, and politicians who draw comparisons between the early 1930s and our current moment. At universities, students are eager to discuss and debate such comparisons. As historians of the Weimar Republic, we cannot greet this surge of interest in our field with unqualified enthusiasm. It means that we are living in difficult and uncertain times.

Yes, there are many specific reasons to discuss the Weimar Republic right now. Yet, I would argue that the topic should never fade too far from view. It should remain with us both in times of apparent stability and obvious fracture. For historians, I can think of no more important case study in the collapse of a liberal democracy. And, as citizens, this should be part of our general civic knowledge. First, the collapse of the Weimar Republic is important because of the type of society in which it occurred: in the most powerful industrialized economy on the European continent, in a highly educated society, and in a place where citizens had demanded democracy for decades and won. Second, the Weimar Republic is important because, before its collapse, it demonstrated resilience. The Republic survived for fourteen years despite significant threats. It staved off the authoritarian turn longer than some of the other republics that arose and succumbed in the aftermath of the First World War. Finally and above all, the Weimar Republic is important because of the catastrophic consequences of its collapse: brutal dictatorship, world war, and the Holocaust.

Of course, I am hardly the first person to emphasize the Weimar Republic's importance as a topic of study.¹ This is particularly true for the Republic's final years. This era, the late 1920s and early 1930s, was the first to draw the attention of historians. The topic of collapse formed the foundation of the field. Indeed, these inquiries began in

1 For historiographical overviews: Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. P.S. Falla (London, 1988); Ian Kershaw, ed., *Weimar: Why Did German Democracy Fail?* (New York, 1990); Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 629-656; introductions by Kathleen Canning and Eric Weitz, "Culture of Politics—Politics of Culture: New Perspectives on the Weimar Republic," Special Issue, *Central European History* 43 (2010): 567-591.

the 1950s when historians were writing the history of living memory. Scholars identified these as the most consequential questions: How much agency did officials have in the final years of the Republic to avert collapse and dictatorship? Could its leaders have made different choices, other than declaring economic austerity and executing emergency powers? Would they have? To put it another way: Did the Republic succumb or was it murdered?

By the 1960s, the focus of historical debate shifted from the final years of the republic to its first years. This shift generated a new set of questions: Did the Weimar Republic ever have a chance to begin with? Was there a fatal flaw at the beginning that brought it down in the end? And which one? Historians advanced several possible contenders: a constitution that granted excessive emergency powers to the president, a proportional voting system that nurtured fringe politics, concessions to anti-democratic forces, and the use of violence as a convenient rather than necessary solution to insurgency. Yet, while historians shifted the chronology of their research to the beginning, their conclusions were still very much about the Republic's end. To use a theater metaphor, the question was: Which gun introduced in the first act went off in the third?

In the decades since the 1960s, almost every major scholar of twentieth-century Germany has weighed in on these debates and offered their explanation for why and how Weimar ended. It is a privilege to work as a historian in this field because of the richness, nuance, and depth of our colleagues' and predecessors' work. So much so that the level of scholarship can feel overwhelming or even intimidating to new scholars entering the field. When I began my research as a graduate student, I shied away from investigating and intervening in the well-established debates about the collapse of the Weimar Republic, partly out of caution and partly out of enthusiasm for new themes. Historians of Germany began to contemplate consumer culture as a meaningful topic of research only during the 1990s.² By contrast, studies of consumer culture had provided a significant focus for historical research on France, Britain, and the United States already since the early 1980s. These studies centered on questions such as: How did consumerism become a transformative and pervasive force in the modern world? How did it reshape economies, relationships in society, urban landscapes, and even notions of the self? As I began my dissertation, I aimed to transpose these questions to the study of Berlin, particularly to the iconic sites that heralded mass consumer

2 Hannes Siegrist, Hartmut Kaelble, and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Europäische Konsumgeschichte: zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997); Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Régimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History," *German History* 19 (2001): 135-161; Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, "In Pursuit of Happiness: Consumption, Mass Culture, and Consumerism," in *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2002), ch. 10; and Paul Lerner, "An All-Consuming History? Recent Works on Consumer Culture in Modern Germany," *Central European History* 42 (2009): 509-543.

culture: opulent department stores, alluring advertisements, electrified boulevards, and exotic movie palaces. This approach seemed to fit well with calls from scholars in my chosen field to broaden the study of the Weimar Republic through alternative narratives and to expand cultural history beyond the doomed avant-garde.³

And yet, the deeper I delved into the sources, the more I found myself in a different place than I had intended: immersed in revolution, discontent, and violence. Bullets and bricks shattered the department windows and exposed them to looting. Rival election posters blotted out the alluring advertisements. The electrified boulevards and exotic movie palaces became the scene of demonstrations and riots. In other words, the sites of consumption that I had meant to study changed before my eyes as they became embedded into a much more complex and contentious urban landscape.

The inescapability of civil unrest when chasing stories about consumer culture revealed to me something both about the practice of historical research and the history of the Weimar Republic. If I had gone to the sources looking for violence, crisis, collapse, and had found it, this would have offered one kind of confirmation of the centrality of these narratives for the Weimar Republic. But it is a deeper kind of confirmation when you are not searching for these elements and find them nonetheless. It means that they are not simply significant but rather inescapable.

In the essay that follows, I will bring together narratives of consumer culture and political collapse. First, I will focus on violence in the late Weimar Republic. But rather than violence against people, such as the familiar street brawls between the Communists and Nazis, I will highlight violence against property. With examples like these, we see politics intrude, in often shattering ways, into the mundane activities of daily life, thus revealing the breadth and depth of societal fracture. I will then situate this violence within the larger context of the urban history of the Weimar Republic to show how struggles over Berlin's streets — the scramble to occupy space and attention — affected how people understood the times in which they lived, in other words: how perceptions of crisis formed and why they mattered. Finally, I will conclude by suggesting how the lived experience of the Weimar Republic — the “lessons learned” — shaped both Nazi uses of the city, particularly Nazi attacks on so-called Jewish commerce, as well as the strategies that Jews used to defend themselves.

3 Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic and the Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York, 1993); Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?” For more recent articulations of this position, see Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York, 2010).



Figure 1. An evening on Kurfürstendamm, 1929.
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I. Violence in the commercial sphere

A good example of the collision of political violence and everyday consumption practices was the Kurfürstendamm Riot of September 12, 1931.⁴ It began as a typical autumn evening on Berlin's west side. Moviegoers bought their tickets. Tourists enjoyed cake

and coffee at cafes. Young couples strolled down boulevards illuminated by neon advertising. Suddenly, as many as one thousand SA men converged on the entertainment district. They marched through the streets for nearly an hour, smashing windows, tables, and chairs at cafes and restaurants. They assaulted roughly forty pedestrians, customers, and patrons. At first, many witnesses mistook them for Communists because the young men were dressed in regular street clothes and not uniforms. But eventually the rioters' chants, cursing Rosh Hashanah and calling for Jewish injury and death, revealed them as Nazis. While the neon lights and bright display windows of the commercial district made a night rally possible in the first place, the illumination also allowed witnesses to recognize and identify Berlin's SA leader, Wolf-Heinrich von Helldorf, as he gave instructions from a slow-moving car.⁵

The Kurfürstendamm Riot took place within a broader context of civil unrest in the late years of the Weimar Republic. Many of the clashes were party-political in the sense that perpetrators and victims belonged to a political party or one of the paramilitary combat leagues. Brawls and assaults happened in obvious political spaces, outside city hall or speech venues. The Nazis or the Communists were the usual suspects.⁶

But parallel to this overt political violence against people, there was also a surge in attacks on commercial sites. This violence targeted property. Berlin, for instance, experienced an unrelenting wave of looting in the early 1930s. The looting did not erupt within the

4 I discuss this contested landscape in greater depth in my book *The Struggle for the Streets of Berlin: Politics, Consumption, and Urban Space, 1914-1945* (Cambridge, 2018).

5 Case file: Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB) A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 20.

6 Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (Cambridge, 1983).

context of demonstrations. Rather groups of young men would enter stores and ransack them in broad daylight. Sometimes they smashed, sometimes they just grabbed things. Grocery stores, particularly chains, were the main target. Police suspected a Communist conspiracy behind the looting, but they could find little direct evidence of this. Instead, the evidence was circumstantial, based on the age and gender profile of the perpetrators, mostly young and male, as well as their presumed unemployed status. Few looters were ever caught. Instead, they emerged from and disappeared back into busy streets. Police complained that the streets, particularly in working-class neighborhoods, cloaked the perpetrators and foiled pursuit.

Cases like these remind us that while historians have given much attention to political violence against human targets in the Weimar Republic, property crime was actually far more pervasive. There are, of course, good reasons to focus on assassinations, attempted coups, and gang fights since this kind of political violence helps us to compare the Weimar Republic to other revolutionary examples, such as the French and Russian revolutions.⁷ It allows us to compare the Republic to its successor, the Nazi regime, since violence against human targets was perhaps the most salient characteristic of the Nazi dictatorship. Some historians have gone so far as to argue that political violence should be understood exclusively as violence against people. I would argue, however, that property crime during the Weimar Republic reached such a scale that it must be understood as political violence, in terms of motive, opportunity, or effect. From the end of the First World War, rates of property crime rose and peaked in 1923 at three times the prewar level. Statistics included the raiding of farmers' fields and warehouses, pillaging of weekly markets, and the mass shattering and looting of shop windows that struck entire cities and towns. In 1920, debates in the National Assembly estimated property damage from civil unrest during the previous year as anywhere from 1 to 17 billion Marks. After a brief falling off period in the mid-1920s, the property crime rates climbed again dramatically with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Retail thefts, for example, doubled.⁸

Taken individually, some incidents resembled "normal crime," that is, vandalism, theft, arson. Taken together, however, crime on this scale could not be separated from either economics or politics. Property crime gives us a street level view of the Weimar economy. These crimes depended on particular circumstances, such as spiraling

7 For discussions of political violence, see: Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic: The Fight for the Streets and the Fear of Civil War, 1918-1933*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York, 2009); Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (Cambridge, 2016);

8 On crime statistics: Peter Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft ohne Verbrecher: Konzeptionen und Praxis der Kriminalpolizei in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 1996), 28-42; Elsa von Liszt, "Die Kriminalität der Jugendlichen in Berlin in den Jahren 1928, 1929, 1930," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft* 52 (1932): 250-271. Debates on damages from civil unrest: 175. Sitzung, April 29, 1920, *Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung* (Berlin, 1920), 5615.

prices or spiraling unemployment. Moreover, the commercial sphere was riddled with hostility between rival businesses as well as between retailer and customer, both of whom felt exploited by the other.

Property crime also flourished in the context of an overburdened police force that had no strategies to deal with widespread economic desperation or political instability. The police seemed unable or reluctant to conceptualize crime in structural terms. Yet, even if they had, such a problem exceeded their capacities. Depression-era Berlin was a city with 130,000 unemployed young men, who loitered on corners, in courtyards, and in the parks of the city. Which one or group of them posed an actual threat? And what kind? These questions roiled the different detective divisions of the police department. Moreover, the police had tense relations with the public, who accused them of various failures including excessive force, political partisanship, and cowardly inaction.

The inability of security forces to curb property crime, in turn, had substantial political effects as this undermined government authority and legitimacy. In the early 1930s, “latent civil war” became a popular phrase. Politicians deployed it to describe clashes between parties, either in parliament or in the street. Depending on their position along the political spectrum, commentators used the phrase either to criticize the government or to argue for an expansion of its powers. Others, however, used the term “latent civil war” to describe a different experience: shopkeepers used it to encapsulate their experiences of lootings, vandalism, aggressive begging, and menacing boycotts. The Central Association of Retailers wrote the Ministry of the Interior: “The fight over political views runs riot in the streets and in the shops adjacent to them.” They spoke of an atmosphere of fear that caused “incalculable damages not just for retailers but for the entire economy.”⁹

Shopkeepers had limited recourse against attacks. In the early Weimar Republic, they developed techniques to respond to moments of extreme civil unrest. They quickly closed, pulled down heavy iron shutters over their windows, and fled the area. As Betty Scholem wrote to her son Gershom, the renowned philosopher, in 1923, “At the slightest sign of a gathering crowd, all shops immediately close their shutters.”¹⁰ When they anticipated ongoing turmoil, retailers invested in riot insurance plans.¹¹

Such strategies could not work indefinitely. The modern shop design and retail practices that had emerged in the late nineteenth century — during a period of relative economic stability and

9 Correspondence, August 1932, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BArch) R 3101/13859.

10 As quoted in Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg, 2007), 72.

11 Gerald Feldman, “Civil Commotion and Riot Insurance in Fascist Europe, 1922-1941,” *Financial History Review* 10 (2003): 165-184.

peaceable streets — had aimed at making mass retail alluring and accessible; but they also made it vulnerable. Display windows stoked consumer desire; but glass provided a very fragile and expensive barrier. Piles of abundant goods beckoned to passersby, whether they had the means to buy them or not. The anonymity of chain stores facilitated higher profits for owners, cheaper prices for customers — but also easy escapes and failed identifications for looters.

All of these commercial innovations took civil order for granted. But what to do in a time of civil unrest? Shops could not survive for long with locked doors or shuttered windows. Moreover, in a depressed economy, retailers urgently needed to stoke consumer desire not deter it. The costs — in terms of security investments, damages, stolen goods — fueled shopkeepers' resentments against government security forces. If the police could not suppress violence in broad daylight, what purpose did they serve? Because of their own precarious financial position, retailers felt entitled to more help from the state not less. They wanted the police to fully occupy and control the streets. If the police failed to preserve order and protect property, shopkeepers wanted the state to compensate them financially for their losses. At the same time, there were few political alternatives that held appeal for discontented retailers. The Nazis, for instance, might promise law and order but they also vilified department stores, retail chains, consumer cooperatives, and Jewish businesses of any size and type. Furthermore, Nazi activists also smashed windows, vandalized buildings, and harried crowds in shopping districts.

Analyzing attacks on commercial sites adds an important dimension to our understanding of political violence in the Weimar Republic. It shows how violence might strike in the midst of everyday life and ordinary routine: while people were shopping, going to a movie, eating in a restaurant, or doing business. A radical party member might reckon with confrontation, even seek it out in the way that an ordinary customer, pedestrian, or retailer would not. For many ostensibly apolitical citizens, this kind of disorder and violence felt more unfamiliar, disconcerting, and uncontrollable. It was a clearer sign of social collapse because it blurred the boundaries between politics and everyday life.

II. Perceptions of crisis

How had commerce, consumption, and politics become so intertwined in the streetscape of the Weimar Republic? At the core of my

work, I argue that both mass politics and mass consumption experienced their true breakthrough moment during the interwar period. By “breakthrough,” I mean multiple definitions of the word: sudden dramatic development, elimination of previous obstacles, and, most importantly, impact. Furthermore, urban space, particularly city streets, unleashed and entangled these forces on an unprecedented scale and to far-reaching and unanticipated effect. Streets became the most consequential mass medium of the era, functioning as both a place of expression and a site of reception at the same time. Unlike print, film, or radio, the street’s potential audience was not limited by price, taste, or political orientation.

Several factors caused this transformation. The Weimar Constitution opened up public space to political expression as never before. Citizens seized urban space in ways that both preceded and exceeded the freedoms granted by law. The Republic’s citizens saw public space as theirs. They believed that space had the power to serve both their political and economic goals. And they claimed it as a democratic right.

In doing so, Berliners transformed the appearance of the capital city. Streets were saturated with expression: walls, fences, and even shop windows were papered over with advertisements and campaign posters. Expression also flowed through the streets in the form of demonstrations, motorcades, and spectacles. Individuals and groups seized space for varied reasons as partisans and as entrepreneurs. They perceived a more liberated society and sensed opportunity in this. Of course, political parties and combat leagues such as the republican *Reichsbanner* and the conservative *Stahlhelm* laid claim to the streets — but so did sport and singing groups, dog enthusiasts, gardening clubs, automobile and motorcycle associations, and legions of advertisers. Over 5,000 open air events took place in Berlin in 1928 alone.¹²

At the same time, space was limited and the attention of urban dwellers even more so. As a result, Berliners used increasingly aggressive tactics to claim space and demand attention. A journalist in 1919 described the scramble. He witnessed the same choice spot near the Friedrichstrasse station pasted over 12 times in an hour, with dance halls advertisements blotting out anti-Bolshevik broadsides.¹³ To literally rise above the cacophony of signage, advertisers and partisans brought ladders to reach upper stories or overpasses. They scratched off or painted over the texts and images of rivals. When party activists went out at night on campaign, they brought brass knuckles, screwdrivers,

12 See permit applications: LAB A Pr.Br.Rep. 030, Nr. 18638-18651; LAB A Pr.Br.Rep. 030, Nr. 7488-7490.

13 Max Poculla, “Was sagen Sie dazu?” *Die Reklame*, April 1919, 65-66.

and knives. By the 1932 presidential campaign, they brought petroleum and set advertising columns on fire.

The competition for attention pushed commercial advertising and political campaigning to innovate rapidly: texts shrank, imagery intensified, spectacles disrupted urban movement and routine. Torchlight parades, later a favorite of the Nazis, were so popular with sports clubs that the police instituted special regulations to prevent fires and traffic jams.¹⁴ Political parties and commercial advertisers borrowed techniques from each other. The key point is that they learned these techniques in the streets.

As an unintended consequence of such intense demand, streets broadcasted not the single message of any one party or company but rather the fractures of society. When historians analyze any poster of the period, we would do well to remember the context of competition in which it appeared: the shared and contested urban geography. An election poster did not appear in a vacuum but rather as part of an unintentional, conflicted collage. A 1932 billboard to elect Hitler appeared next to one for Hindenburg and below a toothpaste advertisement promising white teeth. Moreover, this signage hovered above one of Germany's busiest and most dangerous intersections, the Potsdamer Platz. There 300,000 pedestrians crossed everyday through a spinning centrifuge of automobiles, streetcars, motorcycles, bicycles, and even horse carts.

This leads to the question of how police and other government authorities responded to this outpouring of expression, whether they endorsed, tolerated, or condemned it. The answer is more complex than we might expect. On the one hand, government authorities instituted martial law at moments of acute civil unrest. Various bans on expression were in effect in Berlin for 43% of the Weimar era.¹⁵ On the other hand, there were also efforts within the Berlin Police force, particularly in the mid-1920s, to adopt a more democratic stance, to put down the saber and the gun, and to pick up the fire hose and tear gas bomb instead. Police described these as “gentler” means that



Figure 2. NSDAP election poster, 1932.
© Bundesarchiv.

¹⁴ Kurt Schönner and F. Janich, *Der kleine Ratgeber im Wahlkampf für Versammlungen, Druckschriften, Plakate* (Berlin, 1930), 9; “Die Aufsicht bei außerordentlichen Festzügen.” LAB A Pr.Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 18638-18651.

¹⁵ Marie-Luise Ehls, *Protest und Propaganda: Demonstrationen in Berlin zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 1997), 226.



Figure 3. Election posters on Potsdamer Platz, March 1932. © Bundesarchiv

better suited a republic. Moreover, in this period of rising speeds and increasing urbanization, the Berlin Police developed principles of traffic regulation. These aimed not only to promote public safety but also to contain public expression. These new methods of regulation, however, were more costly than

naked authoritarian techniques, that is, they required more police to issue permits and map parade routes, to monitor demonstrations and direct traffic, and to erect cordons and protect protestors from the opposition. Police cited cost as a key factor limiting their commitment to free expression. At the same time, the political and commercial groups who gravitated to Berlin's streets did so for the sake of visibility and attention, which they saw as a matter of success, even survival. By inserting themselves into traffic, they found ready-made crowds. Causing a traffic jam was a sign of success.

A kind of cat-and-mouse game, therefore, unfolded in urban traffic. Police imposed greater restrictions. These restrictions had the unintended effect of quite literally blurring the boundary between politics and commerce and, in doing so, embedding politics more deeply into the urban framework and daily life. For example, after a 1920 demonstration in front of the Reichstag and the ensuing clash with police ended in forty-two fatalities, lawmakers established a "No Protest Zone" around Berlin's government district. After the imposition of the ban, protestors would march full force toward the border of the banned zone and then scatter just before they transgressed it. They rode on the back of open trucks, so that if stopped, they could dispute the letter of the law on the grounds that they were riding not marching. Furthermore, groups demanded and were granted the right to demonstrate through business and residential districts instead.

As a result of geographic restrictions on protests, economic critiques moved to the foreground. The scene of a protest had to make sense. Communists marched through the streets of Berlin's western part to draw attention to class inequalities. The Nazis menaced the same streets to expose the alleged Jewish infiltration of the capital. When police suspended the right to demonstrate altogether, protestors reacted with "flash demonstrations." A crowd would form, agitate, and disperse before the police could intervene. Increasingly frustrated by the limits of peaceable methods of crowd control, police turned to military tactics and equipment such as armored vehicles. The consequences were deadly.¹⁶

Because of growing fervor and restrictions, political action became more de-centralized, unpredictable, and, at the same time, more interwoven into the fabric of everyday urban life. This helps us to better understand the background of riots and looting in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It also explains why retailers in 1932 asked police to dramatically expand the "No Protest Zone" to encompass the city's shopping districts, that is, to depoliticize the streets for the sake of commerce.

This analysis leads me to two methodological and historiographical observations. First, for decades historians have called for the integration of political and cultural narratives of the Weimar Republic. Even in synthetic works, however, these topics most often appear individually, as separate book chapters. Streets and other urban spaces, I would argue, provide an easy focus for this kind of integrated analysis in no small part because of the types of people who move through them and how they moved through them: partisans, police, government ministers, disgruntled citizens, lawyers, lobbyists, shopkeepers, customers, journalists, academics, novelists, painters, and photographers, and so on. These Berliners in the 1920s and 1930s did not divide their actions and perceptions into neat and distinct categories, nor do urban dwellers in general.

Second, in recent years scholars such as Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf have criticized the term "crisis" and the role it has played in Weimar historiography.¹⁷ Historians, they argue, have often treated crisis as a fact or a catch-all explanation for the collapse of the Republic, and have therefore often neglected the passionate supporters of the Weimar Republic as well as its promise and resilience. To be sure, this is an important corrective. We should not understand "crisis" as a simple fact or easy explanation. And yet, the perception

16 Actions against demonstrators around May Day 1929 resulted in at least 198 injured and thirty-three dead.

17 Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf, eds., *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik: zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt, 2005).

of crisis was ubiquitous during the period. This leads to a slightly different question: How did perceptions of crisis form? In Berlin, struggles over urban space connected and magnified impressions of fracture. These impressions were visible and physical. Moreover, the very breakdown of distinctions between politics, commerce, and consumption fed the sense of social collapse and a sense that nothing remained untouched by politics.

III. Lessons of the Weimar Republic in the Nazi era

By looking at lived spaces, we answer the question not just of what caused fracture, but how people experienced it and what they learned from the experience. Without the pre-history of property crime and the perception of crisis during the Weimar Republic, it is hard to understand the methods that the Nazi regime used to attack so-called Jewish commerce. It is perhaps even harder to recognize and comprehend Jewish strategies for self-defense.

In his 1932 memoir, Joseph Goebbels emphasized the significance of urban space. “The street,” Goebbels wrote, “is now the primary feature of modern politics. Whoever can conquer the street can also conquer the masses, and whoever conquers the masses will thereby conquer the state.”¹⁸ And Goebbels went on to attribute the growing success of the Nazi party to the effective use of urban space. But it is important to note that the Nazis did not build the stage for their political performances, nor did they invent the tools of mass communication. These had already taken shape in the context of monarchy, liberal democracy, and market-based capitalism. For actions like the April 1, 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses, the new Nazi regime drew upon the standard advertising techniques of posters, motorcades, and sandwich-board men. They mobilized the existing commercial infrastructure of the city such as display windows and advertising columns. They relied on established patterns of moving and looking in the city to reach the crowds. Because the Nazis used streets as a form of mass media, these messages reached a much wider circle than the party faithful who might attend a rally or read a party newspaper such as *Der Angriff*. The strategy of attracting attention by inserting politics into spaces not intended for those purposes was a lesson learned from the Weimar Republic.

But using such strategies of political messaging presented an inherent danger because these strategies recalled the disorder of the Weimar Republic and potentially disrupted the economy. For this

18 Joseph Goebbels, *Kampf um Berlin, I. Der Anfang 1926-1927* (Munich, 1932), 86.

reason, high-ranking Nazi officials called for the boycott but set strict guidelines. The order forbade SA men from breaking windows, looting, or forcing closures. Because the national and international spotlight fell more brightly on Berlin, activists followed these orders more closely in its main shopping districts and thoroughfares than in its immigrant neighborhoods or

outside Berlin, in the provinces. One of the more unsettling findings of my research is that the broader public often seemed to react more negatively to violence directed against property than against people. This seems to have been the case for a variety of reasons. In cases of violence against persons, many bystanders seem to have felt hostility, resentment, or apathy toward the victims. In cases of violence against property, by contrast, many bystanders responded as consumers by disapproving of the waste of resources, particular in times of want, scarcity, or rationing.¹⁹ Furthermore, middle-class observers expressed a general discomfort with displays of disorder. Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, for example, felt no squeamishness about expropriating Jewish property after the 1938 November pogrom, which destroyed some 8,000 shops. When describing the visual impact of wreckage, however, he wrote: "The smashed panes of shop windows offended my middle-class sense of order."²⁰ As this quote illustrates, property damage was more visible to the general public, lingered for a longer period, and provoked more grumbling than violence against persons. It should come as no surprise perhaps that after the pogrom the regime quickly passed special laws like the November 12 "Decree for the Restoration of the Appearance of the Street around Jewish Businesses," which required Jews to pay for the damages wrought upon them and to remove the evidence of the pogrom.

True, the Nazi regime took full advantage of its singular right to occupy and use the streets. The flagrant disregard for previous



Figure 4. Vandalized Jewish-owned shops after the November pogrom, 1938. © bpk / Karl H. Paulmann.

¹⁹ See SOPADE reports on public violence in 1935 and 1938, for example, *Deutschlandberichte* (Frankfurt a. M., 1980).

²⁰ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York, 1970), 111.



Figure 5. Torchlight parade celebrating the anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, 1939. Photo by Heinrich Hoffmann. © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München/Bildarchiv

restrictions on demonstrations, including traffic and fire codes, added to the drama of the torchlight parade through the Brandenburg Gate and down Unter den Linden that was organized to proclaim Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933. Anniversary celebrations repeated the effect. At the same time, many

of the regime's interventions into urban space projected consumer abundance and harmony rather than raw politics. Examples included public spectacles of consumption and leisure, such as Christmas Markets and the 1936 Olympics, which involved substantial collaboration between merchants and the government. In short, the Nazi party learned lessons from the Weimar Republic about how to channel violence, contain its impact on public space, and construct an appealing façade for the regime.

By the time of the April 1933 boycott, Jewish shopkeepers had already suffered a period of persistent insecurity. Like other retailers, many held memories of the acute disturbances and massive damages of the early Weimar Republic. All shopkeepers, whether Jewish or not, had learned that they could not rely on neighbors, crowds, or even police for help at such times. But even during the Weimar Republic, antisemitism played a role both in attacks and failed protection. During the 1923 hyperinflation, for example, a riot took place in north-east Berlin that targeted Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. As the violence spread from the streets to surrounding shops, some retailers posted signs reading "Christian Business" to distinguish their display windows from those of the presumed "Jewish" businesses around them. Moreover, in the aftermath, police officers were accused not only of failing to stop the riot but also of arresting and abusing Jewish veterans who had rushed to the scene to shield victims from attack. Already during the Weimar Republic, police had a mixed record regarding both protecting retailers and responding to

antisemitism. In February 1933, Hermann Göring deputized the SA as auxiliary police. Therefore Jewish shopkeepers certainly did not trust government declarations that the April boycott would remain an “orderly action.”

Jewish shopkeepers had learned lessons during the Weimar Republic about how to cope with civil unrest and applied these in response to the 1933 boycott. Many closed their doors, drew iron shutters down over the windows, and waited for the boycott to end. In other words, they treated it as another period of emergency. They were not unprepared. But the lessons and the historical comparisons were insufficient for coping with the changing circumstances, namely, a regime that viewed violence as redemptive when used against outsiders to the so-called “racial community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and that professed long-term goals of expulsion and elimination. Jewish shopkeepers might weather temporary civil unrest, but they could not survive the new regime.

IV. Reconsidering the Weimar Republic

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the title of the lecture series (and this *Bulletin* Forum), “The Weimar Republic Reconsidered.” I see great value in returning to central narratives even as we engage with them from new angles, in other words, to reconsider rather than reinvent the field.

First, I have pointed out the importance of political violence as a category but proposed a broader understanding of it. We have perhaps wrongly assessed levels of tolerance for violence. Weimar reveals a much lower threshold of tolerance for violence against property and a higher one for violence against people. This is a disturbing revelation.

Second, my research focuses on Berlin, the iconic place of Weimar cultural history. And yet, the Berlin that I write about feels unfamiliar. It was not just the site of glitz, glam, and avant-garde. Its streets were not only populated by flaneurs like Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Franz Hessel. It was not merely a metaphoric or discursive space. Instead Berlin’s streets beckoned with voice and power. Many claimants crowded into them. Diverse governments tried to tame them. Berlin had a unique status for observers both foreign and domestic, because it was seen as the bellwether of the nation, of democracy, and of modernity.

What does this mean for us today? Berlin's interwar streets reveal to us that in a modern, highly connected, and centrally organized society almost every social structure can be turned toward an authoritarian purpose. These potentialities exist in something as mundane as traffic regulation, which was used to limit and contain protests in the Weimar period. In the 1930s, the Nazified police force harassed Jews with petty and heavy-handed enforcement of traffic laws to compel them to emigrate. Berlin's streets remind us that authoritarian tendencies and potentialities are often latent and invisible. And this history also reminds us how easily the temptations and tactics of authoritarianism can manifest themselves when a society's commitment to democracy or equality weakens. Because, as the Weimar Republic shows us, neither of these values is easy to attain, much less preserve.

Finally, I would like to note that I did not start my research with these central narratives about instability, violence, and collapse — but this is where my work took me. This is part of the unsettling effect of studying the Weimar Republic. We end up telling a particular story not because of the questions we pose to the past, but because of the questions that the past poses to us. The questions posed by the Weimar Republic remain among the most significant for life in a modern, democratic society.

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INVENTING INTERWAR DIPLOMACY: WHY THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC WAS REPRESENTED BY SOCIALISTS, CONSERVATIVES, AND WOMEN AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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Every September during the 1920s and 1930s, delegations from around the world converged on Geneva to attend the Assembly of the League of Nations. This annual gathering transformed the Swiss city: crowds of people filled the streets speaking a multitude of languages, the worldwide press crowded into the city's salons, and motorboats crisscrossed Lake Geneva to the luxurious hotels where diplomats took up residence.¹ Foreign ministers and even the occasional prime minister or chancellor served as delegates alongside ambassadors and specialized envoys, some of whom were women. This cast of characters would seem familiar to twenty-first-century diplomats. However, when considered alongside our professionalized diplomatic corps of the present, the elected parliamentarians milling around as national delegates, substitute delegates, and technical advisors in interwar Geneva seem out of place. Even more surprising from our vantage point, a number of these legislators came from opposition parties, appointed as national delegates by governments that they themselves opposed.² Having members of the United States Congress, especially Democrats, wandering around the halls of the United Nations representing Donald Trump's administration seems absurd to us, but during the interwar years the practice of using opposition politicians as diplomats was common. This article will examine interwar innovations on the international diplomatic stage by focusing on the German experience joining the League of Nations and dispatching delegates to the League's Assembly.

Narratives of failure and collapse have long dominated the historiographies both of Weimar Germany and of the League of Nations. Historians of interwar Germany have wrestled with accounts that read Weimar as the prologue to the Third Reich or as the final stepping stone of a *Sonderweg* that started in the nineteenth century and ran to the horrors of the Holocaust. Detlev Peukert worked to pick up the pieces of a post-*Sonderweg* historiography in his path-breaking 1987 book *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* by

1 "Aus meinen Erlebnissen beim Völkerbund," n.d., N 1626/3, Nachlass Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

2 "List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes," League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>; First Assembly of the League of Nations, "Official Guide and List of Members of Delegations" (Offices of the Secretariat: Geneva, 1920).

rescuing Weimar from these master narratives of failure and arguing that the period was marked by experimentation with modernity that should be explored on its own terms. Peukert highlighted the paradox of Weimar — “the hopeful picture of avant-garde cultural achievement and the bleak picture of political breakdown and social misery” — so he constructed a narrative that recognized the enduring contradictions of Weimar while appreciating its role as a laboratory in providing open-ended answers to the issues of modernity.³

Peter Fritzsche’s superlative 1996 review essay “Did Weimar Fail?” summed up post-Peukert scholarship on Weimar Germany as a “disavowal of the master narrative of the Republic in the name of the eclectic experimentalism of Weimar.” Fritzsche moved past Peukert’s fixation on Weimar’s dualism to draw the logical conclusion that since “historical actions appear more indeterminate and open-ended,” the Third Reich was also a “legitimate, if extreme, outcome” of the Republic’s freedom and experimentation.⁴ Fritzsche himself saw the roots of a National Socialist consensus emerging during the republican years, and he turned to continuities beyond 1918 or 1933 to reframe the question of Weimar’s failure.⁵ Other historians including Nadine Rossol have been wary of treating Weimar as merely the “antechamber of the Third Reich,” but all of these innovative historians have been keen to rescue Weimar from older historiographies of fragility and collapse.⁶

Another institution trapped in historical narratives of failure was the League of Nations. Both the League and the entire postwar international settlement brought about by the Paris Peace Conference have been seen as doomed from birth. Woodrow Wilson himself set up this narrative of failure when he campaigned for the League by promising it would bring peace: “I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war if the nations of the world do not concert the method by which to prevent it.”⁷ The League was Wilson’s solution to prevent war, and by his metric, the League failed. However, like Weimar scholarship of the last few decades, scholars have recently turned to reconsider the bad reputation that has tarnished the League and interwar diplomacy more broadly. Historians including Patricia Clavin and Susan Pedersen have focused on the League’s involvement in promoting economic development and in unwinding empires through mandates.⁸ Scholars such as Glenda Sluga and Mark Mazower have written the League into much longer narratives of internationalism and global

3 Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York, 1993), xiii.

4 Peter Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 3 (Sep 1996): 631.

5 Benjamin Ziemann and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, “‘Machtergreifung’. The Nazi Seizure of Power in 1933,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 3 (Sep 2013): 326.

6 Anthony McElligott, *Weimar Germany* (2009), as quoted in Nadine Rossol, “Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles, and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926-1936,” *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (Dec 2010): 616.

7 Woodrow Wilson, “Appeal for Support of the League of Nations,” accessed August 7, 2019, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww40.htm>.

8 Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford, 2013); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015).

governance that understand the organization in a longer context that looks beyond the supposed failure of preventing the Second World War.⁹ Scholars of interwar internationalism, therefore, have taken similar historiographical steps as historians of Weimar: reevaluating an overarching narrative of failure by looking for continuities beyond the bookmarks of catastrophic world wars.¹⁰

This article will bring together an interest in the Weimar Republic with the world of international interwar diplomacy, both historiographies that are currently very much in flux. Although Weimar historians are often less inclined to ask research questions that look beyond the borders of interwar Germany, Weimar scholarship tends to emphasize the rich world of experimentation during the 1920s and 1930 more so than historians of the interwar global arena.¹¹ The historiographic rescue of the League of Nations has been to put it in dialogue with late nineteenth-century internationalism or the work of the United Nations; however, the interwar years were also replete with new ways to think about diplomacy.¹² There was interwar flirtation on the international stage with the principle that diplomats and delegates should represent the people, who were seen as sovereign in more countries than ever before. Some countries explored dispatching the people's representatives — elected parliamentarians — to international conferences, which this article will explore in depth.¹³ This contribution will take a page out the Weimar historians' commitment to explore interwar "eclectic experimentalism" on its own terms in considering how interwar Europe's diplomats also experimented with new forms of diplomacy and representation.¹⁴

I. Interwar diplomatic experimentation: The Assembly of the League of Nations

The First World War was the moment when the "old diplomacy" — secretive, behind-the-scenes negotiations led by aristocratic plenipotentiaries — faltered. Nineteenth-century practices in which noble diplomats represented princely houses and honed their skills traveling between Europe's royal courts had failed to prevent a cataclysmic world war. By 1918, a nascent "new diplomacy" was gaining traction. This was to be open, public, and directed by democratic officials through "direct conferences of statesmen or political leaders, as opposed to negotiation by professional diplomats."¹⁵ This world of interwar summits and assemblies was a dramatic break from the prewar diplomatic past, in that diplomats were to be democratically

9 Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York, 2013)

10 Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, 2002).

11 See, for example, a recent conference report on Weimar historiography where only one panel touched on transnational topics: Sebastian Schäfer, "Tagungsbericht: Die Weimarer Republik als Ort der Demokratieggeschichte," *H-Soz-Kult*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-8381>.

12 Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017).

13 Mai'a K. Davis Cross, *The European Diplomatic Corps: Diplomats and International Cooperation from Westphalia to Maastricht* (New York, 2007); Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its evolution, theory and practice*, 2nd edition (London, 2011).

14 Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?," 631.

15 Davis Cross, *The European Diplomatic Corps*, 106.

accountable, if not elected politicians themselves. Within this new diplomatic system, the League of Nations marked the most radical break with the old order. On paper, the League was to embody open, democratic Wilsonian diplomacy in the form of a transparent international organization dedicated to peace.¹⁶

Within the League system, the organization's Assembly was at the forefront of advancing new trends in diplomacy, pulling private negotiations into public view and channeling the "organized opinion of mankind" into international decision-making.¹⁷ The League's Covenant laid out the power and structure of the Assembly before any other part of the organization. However, the Covenant was also exceptionally vague, specifying only that the Assembly would be made up of representatives of each member state, that each member could cast only one vote, and that the Assembly could "deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the world."¹⁸ In fact, the Covenant did not even specify how often the Assembly was to meet, and some negotiators in Paris imagined that it would only come together once every four years. The Assembly eventually adopted a rhythm of meeting annually, usually in September, which mirrors the practice the United Nations General Assembly follows today.¹⁹

The League's Assembly never gained a central role in the minds of contemporaries, especially since its powers were circumscribed compared to the smaller Council.²⁰ Nevertheless, sessions of the Assembly did serve as a backdrop for moments of highly publicized political drama at the League, including Emperor Haile Selassie's 1936 speech to the international community decrying the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.²¹ Woodrow Wilson had earlier argued that the Assembly was to be "the forum of opinion, not of action ... it is the body where the thought of the little nation along with the thought of the big nation is brought to bear upon those matters which affect the peace of the world ... The assembly is the voice of mankind."²² Since the Assembly was supposed to be the premier international debating society designed to sway global public opinion, who could be better as delegates than parliamentarians, national politicians experienced in debating and shaping a country's public opinion? A number of countries adopted this view and dispatched elected national politicians to the annual meetings of the Assembly.

From the first convocation of the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1920, national delegations were heterogeneous. Delegates,

16 Hamilton and Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy*, 163.

17 *ibid.*, 163.

18 Frederick Pollock, *The League of Nations* (London, 1920), 190.

19 Michel Marbeau, *La Société des Nations: Vers un monde multilatéral, 1919-1946* (Tours, 2017), 67-69; Margaret E. Burton, *The Assembly of the League of Nations* (Chicago, 1941), 47.

20 C. Howard-Ellis, *The Origin and Structure & Working of the League of Nations* (Boston, 1928), 127.

21 "Summary of the Ethiopian Emperor's Address to the League," *New York Times*, July 1, 1936, <https://www.nytimes.com/1936/07/01/archives/summary-of-the-ethiopian-emperors-address-to-the-league.html/>

22 Woodrow Wilson, "Address at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium in San Francisco, California," 17 Sep 1919, The American Presidency Project, accessed 20 February 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=117386>

substitute delegates, and special technical advisors included everyone from governmental ministers to famous professors, leaders of the opposition, appointed senators, and backbench legislators. There were roughly three types of delegations: those led by ambassadors, those dominated by governmental ministers, and those that incorporated parliamentarians. In this breakdown, the ambassadorial delegations represented the more traditional form of diplomacy spearheaded by professional diplomats and foreign service officials, the ministerial delegations put representatives of the national executive at the forefront, and delegations that included parliamentarians were underpinned by a belief that legislators had a role alongside the sitting government in the conduct of foreign policy. Of course, these are not rigid categories; ministerial delegations often included ambassadors and parliamentary delegations were sometimes led by a foreign minister, but these categories are nonetheless useful in tracking change over time in who attended the League's Assembly as official delegates.²³

Focusing specifically on the composition of the forty-one national delegations dispatched to the First Assembly in November 1920, slightly less than a majority — the delegations of twenty countries in total — consisted of special envoys, ambassadors, or other national representatives. All of these ambassadorial delegations in 1920 represented countries outside Europe and were generally made up of special envoys or diplomatic staff who were already based on the continent. These were delegations of convenience that avoided the expense and time of long sea voyages for delegations attending the League's Assembly. In the second category of delegations, there were those that prominently included current or former government ministers. Nine countries sent such ministerial delegations to the First Assembly. These delegations were closely associated with the government in power in their home country and were dominated by foreign ministers. These ministerial delegations amounted implicitly to a vote for diplomacy dominated by the country's executive, spearheaded by leading national statesmen. Thus, twenty-nine of the delegations to this first League Assembly were composed similarly to how delegations to the United Nations or to international conferences look today; they were made up primarily of foreign ministers, ambassadors, and special envoys.²⁴

However, twelve delegations to this first assembly of the League of Nations included current or former parliamentarians. Among the parliamentary delegations to the First Assembly, four included

23 "List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes," League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>

24 World Peace Foundation, "The First Assembly of the League of Nations," *A League of Nations IV*, no. 1 (Feb 1921), 203-205; First Assembly of the League of Nations, "Official Guide and List of Members of Delegations" (Offices of the Secretariat: Geneva, 1920); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, "List of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs Since the Forming of the First Government in 1811," last modified 23 Sep 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/diplomatic-tradition/ministers-through-history>.

politicians from political parties not represented in the national government at the time. In a parliamentary system, a sitting government is challenged by an opposition, so a strong indicator of a belief in parliamentary involvement in diplomacy was a national government appointing members of its own opposition to represent the country abroad. For example, the French delegation included two former prime ministers who were then serving in the French parliament, one as the president of the French senate and the other as a deputy. Both men had been active in diplomacy at the League of Nations previously, but officially their political parties were not supporting the conservative National Bloc government then in office in Paris. The British delegation to the Assembly included a Conservative, a Liberal, and a Labour MP, although the Labour Party had withdrawn from the governing coalition earlier in 1920. The 1920 Danish and Swedish delegations had been expressly created to include as wide a political spectrum as possible. The Danish delegation boasted parliamentarians from two left-wing parties that were not represented in the sitting conservative Danish cabinet. The Swedish delegation included two once-and-future prime ministers — one socialist and one conservative — as well as a liberal and an aristocrat, all of whom traveled to Geneva while a caretaker government without party-political backing ruled in Stockholm.²⁵

During the course of the early 1920s, there was a general trend towards more and more Assembly delegations including parliamentarians.²⁶ As we have seen, in 1920, twelve nations — or almost 28% of the total League membership — sent delegations that included parliamentarians to the League’s Assembly.²⁷ By the 1925 Assembly, twenty-three countries, or over 43% of the total League membership sent delegations that included legislators. Unlike the 1920 Assembly, by the 1925 Assembly, parliamentarians or former parliamentarians came from much farther afield; some legislators traveled all the way from Cuba, Venezuela, and Uruguay to Geneva.²⁸ However, over time, the practice of using parliamentary delegates lost steam among League members. The compilers of the League of Nations’ annual list of Assembly delegates did not always include the most robust job descriptions for each delegate, but it is nevertheless clear that by 1932, only twelve of fifty-eight members of the League dispatched parliamentary delegates who were not simultaneously ministers. Moreover, far fewer of these parliamentary delegations included politicians who represented the opposition. In 1932, for example, only the Norwegian and Danish delegations still included opposition

- 25 World Peace Foundation, “The First Assembly of the League of Nations,” *A League of Nations IV*, no. 1 (Feb 1921), 203-205; First Assembly of the League of Nations, “Official Guide and List of Members of Delegations” (Offices of the Secretariat: Geneva, 1920).
- 26 Burton, *The Assembly of the League of Nations*, 98.
- 27 World Peace Foundation, “The First Assembly of the League of Nations,” 203-205.
- 28 Booklet “List of Delegates and Members of Delegations (revised),” Geneva 1925, M3609/1, National Archives of Australia-Canberra.
- 29 *Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations: List of Delegates and Members of Delegations (Revised)*, (Geneva, 1932); “Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Geneva, September 26 - October 17, 1932,” League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/13thordinaryassemb.htm>; List of Delegates and Members of Delegations (Provisional), Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations, 1932, N 1310/163, Konstantin Freiherr von Neurath, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz.

politicians.²⁹ Ultimately, this interwar experiment in parliamentarian-diplomats fizzled out within a few years, leaving us a diplomatic world dominated by responsible ministers and foreign service officials rather than elected representatives of all political persuasions.

II. The domestic roots of foreign policy: Stresemann opts for parliamentarians

The Covenant of the League of Nations took up the first 26 articles of the Treaty of Versailles that Germany signed to bring an end to the First World War. However, the new German republic was not a founding member of the League. Initially ostracized by the former Entente countries, Germany turned to the east and opened up to another diplomatic black sheep, Soviet Russia, through the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo. German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann then pushed for Germany to rejoin the European diplomatic world now centered in Geneva, petitioning to join the League for the first time in 1924. Germany's demand for a permanent seat on the League's Council and pushback from former Entente powers meant that Germany's membership was delayed for two years. The Locarno treaties finally paved the way for Germany to join the League in 1926.³⁰

As Germany's admission to the League appeared on the horizon, the German Foreign Office readied proposals on the delegation the country would dispatch to the 1926 League Assembly. This was to be Germany's official debut at the biggest event on the international diplomatic calendar, so the Foreign Office poured time and energy into the proposals that officials drafted for the foreign minister. The League's Covenant limited each state to three official delegates, but the Assembly's rules permitted three substitute delegates and an unlimited number of technical advisors. Substitute delegates and technical advisors could, however, represent their country in the Assembly's committee meetings.³¹ Since committees met simultaneously, many countries sponsored large delegations so they would be represented in the Assembly's six major committees and any specialized commissions.³² When the Foreign Office proposed potential delegation members for Germany's first appearance at the League, the goal was to have one main delegate and one expert assigned to each of the Assembly's six committees, so the delegation had space for twelve members, supported by a whole entourage of typists, translators, and support staff.³³

Bureaucrats at the German Foreign Office drew up three lists of proposed delegates to send to Geneva, and each list represented a

30 For an overview of this diplomatic history, see Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (New York, 1978), 498-533.

31 Burton, *The Assembly of the League of Nations*, 96-97.

32 Marbeau, *La Société des Nations*, 68.

33 Aufzeichnung betreffend die Zusammenstellung der deutschen Delegation für die Bundesversammlung 1926, R 96940, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin.

different way to think about who should represent Germany abroad. The first list was “selected purely on the basis of one’s portfolio and primarily takes into consideration the topics that will presumably be addressed [in the individual committees].” This list privileged professional bureaucrats and diplomats at the Foreign Office who specialized in a specific topic. The proposal was that consuls would be sent to some committees, the state secretary to another, and the foreign minister would lead the delegation; this plan was in the style of ministerial delegations that other countries dispatched to the League Assembly. This is the type of delegation we see most in our world today, and perhaps the prominent place that the Foreign Office civil servants gave this proposal in their presentation to Stresemann hints that this was their preference.³⁴

The two other proposals attempted to incorporate “as much as possible all parties, including the parties just to the right and left of the government that are not in the cabinet.” One list included only the foreign minister and members of the Reichstag who represented the governing parties, along with the conservative German National People’s Party (DNVP) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which were not in the cabinet at the time. Another list from the Foreign Office tried to balance party politics with incorporating cabinet members and included government ministers based on their party affiliation, alongside token representatives from the conservative DNVP and the socialist SPD; unlike the first two proposals, this list put forward an exclusively ministerial delegation ditching both professional diplomats and parliamentarians.³⁵

In the end, Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann went with the most parliamentary delegation to the League Assembly that was possible; he invited parliamentarians rather than ministers to Geneva. The minutes of the German cabinet show very little engagement with this appointment of delegates. In the cabinet discussion, one minister asked that an expert from his ministry be added to the team, but then the minutes simply record: “The *cabinet* accepts the recommendations of the Foreign Office.”³⁶ The decision had essentially been left up to Stresemann, who did not explicitly lay out his reasoning for the whole cabinet. After the Assembly, a state secretary reported back to the cabinet: “the composition [of the delegation] was a particularly good one, especially because of the particular connections and relationships in Geneva, where it is not only the politics of ministers that matter, but issues are worked back and forth through

34 Aufzeichnung betreffend die Zusammenstellung der deutschen Delegation für die Bundesversammlung 1926, R 96940, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

35 Aufzeichnung betreffend die Zusammenstellung der deutschen Delegation für die Bundesversammlung 1926, R 96940, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

36 Günter Abramowski, ed, *Akten der Reichskanzlei: Die Kabinette Marx III und IV*, Band 1 (Boppard am Rhein, 1982), 184.

journalists, deputies, parliamentarians, [and] friends of the individual delegations. It was shown to be highly useful also to have German parliamentarians there.”³⁷ Access to this informal diplomatic world in which parliamentarians participated could have been one reason for Stresemann’s decision to go with a parliamentary delegation, or perhaps he wanted to follow the precedent set by countries like Sweden, Denmark, and France, which often dispatched a number of parliamentarians from the leading parties.³⁸

Stresemann’s decision to build a Reichstag-heavy delegation also conveniently made him the most influential delegate, since he was the only member of the German cabinet in Geneva. This delegation thus centralized control of foreign policy around Stresemann, rather than ceding power to other ministers. Any professional diplomats who went to the League served in Stresemann’s ministry, and the parliamentarians were only amateur diplomats unable to challenge his expertise or authority. In subsequent yearly reports to the cabinet, Stresemann continued to echo the benefits of a mixed German delegation that included parliamentarians: “in comparison to the delegations of other Great Powers [Germany’s] was assembled particularly well.”³⁹ It just so happened that having members of the Reichstag from various parties as his fellow delegates bolstered Stresemann’s own control of the delegation and German foreign policy.

III. German parliamentarians as delegates in Geneva and mounting domestic criticism

Dispatching members of the Reichstag rather than ministers or professional diplomats to the League of Nations encountered pushback in Germany as soon as the delegation took up its work in 1926. The Bavarian state representative in Berlin communicated to the Chancellery that “[s]ending parliamentarians to Geneva has brought about concern in a number of circles in Bavaria that surprisingly enough has not yet been expressed in the [national] press.” This report mentioned principled constitutional opposition in Bavarian newspapers to “entrusting parts of the Reichstag with the roles of the executive.” The state government also took a hard line against the “fusion of the legislature and executive.” The Bavarian official pointed out that the other republican legislative body, the Reichsrat, in which the German states were represented, had not been included in the delegation to Geneva.⁴⁰ The self-interested implication was that members of the Reichsrat — which would likely include a Bavarian — should have been considered if the cabinet insisted on sending legislators.

37 “[Genfer Verhandlungen.]” in “Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik” online, accessed 20 Sep 2017, http://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/ma3/ma31p/kap1_2/kap2_83/para3_1.html

38 Burton, *The Assembly of the League of Nations*, 98.

39 “Bericht über die Genfer Völkerbundstagung” in “Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik” online, accessed 20 Sep 2017, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/ma3/ma32p/kap1_1/kap2_72/para3_1.html

40 R 43-I/2242, Bl. 304–305 quoted in “Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik” online, accessed 21 Sep 2017, http://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/ma3/ma31p/kap1_2/kap2_83/para3_1.html

The decision to dispatch parliamentarians was also opposed by elements within the German political parties asked to contribute members to the Assembly delegation. When Stresemann's Foreign Office approached the polyglot history professor and DNVP Reichstag member Otto Hoetzsch to serve as a substitute delegate and as Germany's lead representative on the League's budget committee, the DNVP's chairman reached out to the Foreign Office directly with a general argument against parliamentarians going to the League at all. The DNVP leader enumerated current political disagreements with the cabinet's policies and objected to sending Hoetzsch or any other parliamentarian to Geneva to support the standpoint of a cabinet in which the party was not represented.⁴¹ Within a year, in 1927, the DNVP's principled objection to sending parliamentarians to Geneva evaporated, since by then the DNVP had joined the German cabinet. Hoetzsch, who had been asked not to go to the League by the party leadership in 1926, showed up in person at the Foreign Office in June 1927 to express his committee preferences for the upcoming Assembly.⁴² Soon thereafter, the DNVP party in the Reichstag approved Hoetzsch's attendance.⁴³ The following year, however, the DNVP once again refused to send a delegate to Geneva. Elections in May 1928 dealt a blow to the party and brought a grand coalition under a socialist chancellor to power. The DNVP was again excluded from the government, and when the Foreign Office approached a DNVP politician about attending the Assembly in 1928, he refused.⁴⁴ Attendance at the League's Assembly by a conservative DNVP parliamentarian was thus wholly contingent on whether the party was in government or not. The DNVP's objections were couched in principled terms, but in reality, political participation in the cabinet determined their willingness to dispatch someone to Geneva.

Unlike the DNVP, the SPD sent a representative to the League's assemblies starting in 1926, even when the socialists were not represented in the German cabinet. The socialist who consistently attended the Assembly was Rudolf Breitscheid.⁴⁵ Breitscheid came from a liberal middle-class background, studying in Marburg, joining a *Burschenschaft*, completing a dissertation on colonial economics, and then working as a liberal journalist during the waning years of the Kaiserreich. After pitched arguments within the Wilhelmine liberal political camp, Breitscheid turned his back on the liberals to join the Social Democrats during the First World War. During the Weimar years, he was actually much more oriented towards the left flank

41 Fritz T. Epstein, "Hoetzsch, Otto" in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 9 (1972), [https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118838180.html#ndbcontent;Westarp to AA, likely Bülow, 26 Aug 1926, R 96940, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin](https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118838180.html#ndbcontent;Westarp%20to%20AA,%20likely%20B%C3%BClow,%2026%20Aug%201926,%20R%2096940,%20Politisches%20Archiv%20des%20Ausw%C3%A4rtigen%20Amts-Berlin).

42 Bülow, Aktennotiz, 1 Jun 1927, R 96941, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin.

43 Hoetzsch to Stresemann, 28 Jul 1927, R 96941, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin.

44 Lindeiner-Wildau to Schubert, 22 Aug 1928, R 96942, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin.

45 "List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes," League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>

of the SPD. Breitscheid rose through the ranks of the parliamentary party and became an important foreign policy spokesman for the SPD.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the biggest socialist opponent of sending parliamentarians to the League was Rudolf Breitscheid himself, who protested against the practice every year. Breitscheid's concern was that the socialists were being



used as fig leaves by conservative governments and got little in return. Breitscheid's objections to sending parliamentarians to Geneva gained traction within the SPD in 1927, and Foreign Minister Stresemann personally reached out to the SPD's leadership to argue that the socialist participation was crucial for German foreign policy success: "Precisely because at this very moment as we await important decisions, the Social Democrats staying away [from Geneva] could be easily used by the French right to draw certain conclusions." Stresemann invoked the famous historian Leopold von Ranke: "For this very important conference, let the phrase 'primacy of foreign policy' [*Primat der Außenpolitik*] guide your decisions."⁴⁷ With lofty language, Stresemann called on the SPD to cast aside domestic political concerns and select someone to attend the Assembly.

Stresemann's letter was discussed at a meeting of the SPD's party leadership. Breitscheid was not in Berlin to make his case opposing his own appointment as a League delegate, but the party leaders considered Breitscheid's objections and rejected them. The SPD's two main arguments for continued participation at the League were

Figure 1. Rudolf Breitscheid (center) and two French socialist politicians in conversation during a League of Nations Assembly session in Geneva (September 1928). Private conversations and behind-the-scenes deals were a feature of interwar diplomacy in Geneva, and elected parliamentarians had access to different international networks than foreign ministers or professional diplomats.
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46 For more on Breitscheid, see William Smaldone, *Confronting Hitler: German Social Democrats in Defense of the Weimar*

Republic, 1929-1933 (Lanham, MD, 2009), 48-69, and Peter Pistorius, "Rudolf Breitscheid, 1874-1944:

Ein biographischer Beitrag zur deutschen Parteiengeschichte," PhD diss., (Universität zu Köln, 1970).

47 Gustav Stresemann to Müller, 30 Jul 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

rooted in party-political concerns. The first was the fear that if the SPD did not send someone to Geneva and negotiations were unsuccessful, the conservative German cabinet would blame the lack of progress on the SPD's absence. Second, the SPD leaders looked to the efforts of Dutch socialists to encourage the conservative Dutch government to send Dutch social democratic politicians to the League Assembly. Breitscheid's presence at the League would strengthen the Dutch claim by showing that opposition socialist politicians attended and performed their duties well at the League Assembly.⁴⁸ Despite the SPD party leadership's decision to continue sending a socialist German parliamentarian to the League, Breitscheid did not let the issue rest; behind the scenes, he continued raising objections to sending parliamentarians who were not from the governing coalition to the League. Publicly, however, Breitscheid acquiesced to the SPD leadership's decision.⁴⁹ Confirming his attendance at the League Assembly one year, he wrote to the state secretary in the Foreign Office: "As a good soldier, I must obey and push aside my reservations about which you already know."⁵⁰

In practical terms, what did it mean for Germany to send a delegation of parliamentarians to Geneva for the Assembly? Why did the DNVP and Rudolf Breitscheid of the SPD find it so repugnant? Officially, German parliamentarians were considered substitute delegates. Because the number of full delegates to the Assembly was restricted to three, the German Foreign Office ensured the three main delegates were the foreign minister and two high-ranking bureaucrats. Parliamentarians were substitutes, but they still had a role to play as the lead German representative in Assembly committee meetings. However, not being full delegates seemed to some parliamentarians to be a slight.⁵¹

During the twice-daily German delegation meetings in Geneva for discussing common positions on Assembly business, the members of the Reichstag were presented with a draft proposal or position that had been worked up in advance by the Foreign Office. Breitscheid complained that the parliamentarians often lacked any information on the process of how these positions were developed. The German delegation was also not always unanimous in its decisions; however, the foreign minister had the upper hand, since the two leading civil servants from the Foreign Office were the only other full delegates. "Both civil servant delegates felt like subordinates in the delegation meetings and did not express opinions that diverged from those of their superior."⁵² This set-up meant that the foreign minister had a

48 Abschrift: Müller to Breitscheid, 3 Aug 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

49 Breitscheid to Müller, 8 Aug 1927 and Müller to Breitscheid, 10 Aug 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

50 Breitscheid to Schubert, 3 Aug 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

51 Letter from Breitscheid, n.d., NY 4126/23, Nachlass Paul Levi, SAPMO, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

52 "Aus meinen Erlebnissen beim Völkerbund," n.d., N 1626/3, Nachlass Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz; Letter from Breitscheid, n.d., NY 4126/23, Nachlass Paul Levi, SAPMO, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

set bloc of three full delegates loyal to him. The SPD made clear in advance that “by agreeing to participate in the delegation we are, of course, not taking responsibility for the politics of the cabinet.”⁵³ However, Breitscheid pointed to this rigged system, with the foreign minister’s viewpoint determining the positions of the civil servants and thus the entire delegation, as an example of how parliamentarians were co-opted into the government’s standpoint.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, Stresemann complained that the parliamentarian delegates did not always present a united public face for the entire delegation. When Breitscheid was asked to comment on the news of the day by journalists during the Assembly in 1927, he “expressed himself critically to others outside the delegation”; Stresemann characterized this as “unfortunate,” emphasizing the importance on presenting a united front to the outside world.⁵⁵ Both Breitscheid and Stresemann’s own characterizations of the delegation reveal that it was not as united or uniform as the German Foreign Office had hoped.

Nevertheless, having German parliamentarians attend the League of Nations Assembly meant that the Reichstag’s political parties were keyed in to what was happening diplomatically. For instance, Breitscheid once wrote directly from the Hotel Métropol in Geneva to the socialist leadership in Germany about a curious conversation he had with Aristide Briand, the French foreign minister. Breitscheid had met privately with Briand for about 45 minutes, and Briand expressed the opinion that “if you in Germany had a left-leaning, democratic government, the Rhineland issue would be solved in three months.” Essentially, Briand offered to end the French military occupation of the Rhineland if Germany changed its political direction. This was a concession Foreign Minister Stresemann had been trying to win from Briand for some time and one that might benefit the SPD’s standing in German politics. Rather than capitalizing on this information for an internal party-political reason, Breitscheid dutifully communicated the conversation to Stresemann, who used this knowledge as a starting point for a future negotiation with the French. However, Breitscheid also wrote from Geneva to the SPD to keep his socialist parliamentary colleagues in the loop.⁵⁶ Parliamentarians’ participation at the League Assembly tied a political party more closely to the cabinet’s diplomatic approach — something Breitscheid objected to — but it also meant that political parties were kept well informed and personally involved in Germany’s foreign policy.

As happened in this private conversation with Aristide Briand, a delegation of parliamentarians could help open diplomatic doors

53 Abschrift: Müller to Breitscheid, 3 Aug 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

54 Letter from Breitscheid, n.d., NY 4126/23, Nachlass Paul Levi, SAPMO, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

55 “Bericht über die Genfer Völkerbundstagung,” “Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik” online, accessed 13 Jun 2019, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/ma3/ma32p/kap1_1/kap2_72/para3_1.html

56 Breitscheid to Müller, 8 Sep 1927, N 2200/2, Nachlass Hermann Müller, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

for German foreign policy. However, Breitscheid never let up on his criticism that serving in a delegation representing a cabinet of which he was not a member meant that he lost too much political freedom: “The parliamentary members [of the delegation], who in the end cannot completely forget their own party affiliation, sometimes end up in all the more difficult and possibly desperate situations if they are not informed from the very beginning about all the details of an initiative. If we do not simply want to be reduced to being the mouthpiece of official government policy, there will always be differences [in our actions].” Breitscheid was especially worried about the balancing act required of parliamentarians as diplomats: “If he [a parliamentarian-delegate] only parrots the official line of the bureaucrats or of the delegation in his many private conversations, he just becomes a robot. If he expresses independent points of view, then there is always the danger of being portrayed as a dangerous obstructionist.”⁵⁷

The question of whether or not to continue sending German parliamentarians to Geneva was discussed in the cabinet after Stresemann’s death in 1929 and again after a conservative minority government took over from the grand coalition in 1930. The cabinet records reflected growing concern about sending parliamentarians to the League, and ministers mused about transitioning to sending only cabinet representatives.⁵⁸ In the end, however, the German government abandoned sending parliamentarians to the Assembly only in 1931 when Rudolf Breitscheid finally persuaded the SPD to refuse to send a German socialist to Geneva. Breitscheid’s persistence paid off, and he successfully convinced his socialist colleagues that it was impossible for him to represent the German cabinet’s position on a customs union with Austria at the League Assembly. The SPD backed Breitscheid’s position, and the party also rejected the government’s suggestion of at least sending a Social Democrat to Geneva among the technical advisors. Breitscheid helped torpedo the entire delegation’s make-up when he pointed out to the Foreign Office that if the government sent parliamentarians only from right-wing parties, without any socialists in the delegation: “Domestically and abroad, one would get the impression that the government was making a concession to the right, or that it wanted to orient itself towards the right.”⁵⁹

As a result, less than a week after Breitscheid announced that no socialist would go to the League, the German foreign minister decided “not to include parliamentarians or former parliamentarians in the

57 Letter from Breitscheid, n.d., NY 4126/23, Nachlass Paul Levi, SAPMO, Bundesarchiv-Berlin-Lichterfelde.

58 Vermerk, 9 Oct 1930, R 96944, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

59 Aufzeichnung „Ganz geheim!“, 6 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

delegation to Geneva.”⁶⁰ Several lawmakers who had been planning to attend the Assembly were abruptly told that they were no longer needed. One of these rebuffed parliamentary delegates, Thusnelda Lang-Brumann of the conservative Bavarian People’s Party (BVP), took to the radio to speculate about the reason she thought the government was not sending parliamentarians to the Assembly: “[The Chancellor] seems to think that parliamentarians can pursue their own political goals in Geneva.”⁶¹ When read beside archival evidence about Breitscheid’s opposition to the practice of sending parliamentarians to Geneva, Lang-Brumann’s comments did not capture the whole situation. In fact, Breitscheid and others’ disappointment that they were unable to pursue their own political goals in Geneva and were instead too closely tied to the standpoints of the government led to the SPD finally pulling the plug on the practice of using members of the Reichstag as diplomats. Although other countries, including France, continued sending parliamentarian-dominated delegation to Geneva until the eve of the Second World War, Germany elected to stop sending legislators in 1931, in large part because of the party-political objections of the SPD, mixed with the specter of a foreign policy disaster if only right-wing parliamentarians attended.⁶² Thus, domestic political issues in the early 1930s determined the composition of the German delegation far more than international political concerns.

III. Women’s organizations and female parliamentarians at the League of Nations

Just as nineteenth-century aristocratic norms in diplomatic practice were giving way to new ideas of who should represent the nation on the international stage, the interwar years marked a moment of transition for women in politics throughout large parts of Europe. Movements for women’s suffrage gained steam during the First World War, and there was a rapid expansion of voting rights for women in the wake of the conflict. Postwar elections in Central Europe in particular brought a surprisingly large number of women to political office. However, the interwar expansion of political participation for women was not universal. Although German women, for instance, made great political strides forward, on the other side of the Rhine French women could not even vote, much less serve in parliament.⁶³

When women entered national political life following the First World War, there was a similar push for them to take an active role on the

60 Bülow to Geheimrat von Kamphövener, 12 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts-Berlin.

61 “Aus meinen Erlebnissen beim Völkerbund,” n.d., N 1626/3, Nachlass Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz.

62 “List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes,” League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>

63 “France marks 70 years of women’s voting rights,” France 24, created 21 Apr 2014, <http://www.france24.com/en/20140421-france-womens-voting-right-anniversary>

international stage. An organized transnational women's movement, largely spearheaded by wealthy Anglo-American women, had existed since the end of the nineteenth century and pushed for an expansion of women's participation in the new international institutions of the interwar years.⁶⁴ In 1919, a legal guarantee regarding women's political participation was written into the Covenant of the League of Nations. After the first draft of the treaty had not mentioned women at all, representatives from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and the International Council of Women lobbied the Allied leaders to include guarantees regarding women's participation in League institutions directly in the Covenant.⁶⁵ In the end, their activism paid off, and Article 7 in the Covenant was explicit: "All positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women."⁶⁶ One international women's activist called Article 7 "women's great charter in the League."⁶⁷ Practically speaking, however, this article did not bring about the millennium. Although Dame Rachel Crowdy took the helm of the League's social issues section and made history as the first woman to lead a major department of the Secretariat, she was also the only woman who did this.⁶⁸ While many women were appointed to the League's civil service section, they were often clustered in clerical positions or jobs associated with "women's issues," reflecting the gendered expectations of the day.⁶⁹ Although no woman ever held a seat on the League's Council, over time, there was movement towards reserving seats and positions for women at various multilateral conferences hosted by the League of Nations.⁷⁰ This trend of including more women in the work of the League was not brought about by male politicians intuiting that the spirit of the age was turning in favor of women's political participation but came about because of the constant pressure of organized national and international women's groups on governments and political leaders.

The very first League Assembly included three women—Anna Bugge Wicksell of Sweden, Kristine Elisabeth Bonnevie of Norway, and Henni Forchhammer of Denmark. Anna Bugge Wicksell was a Norwegian-born Swedish lawyer who later served as the first woman on the League's Permanent Mandates Commission. Kristine Bonnevie was a Norwegian biologist and the country's first female professor; she also served a term in the Norwegian Storting before going to Geneva as a delegate in 1920. Both Wicksell and Bonnevie served as substitute delegates; Henni Forchhammer was officially a "Technical Advisor on Women's Questions" for the Danish delegation.

64 Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, "Rethinking the History of Internationalism" in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds. (Cambridge, 2017), 4-5; Deborah Stienstra, *Women's Movements and International Organizations* (New York, 1994), 48-61.

65 Margery Corbett Ashby, "Preface," in D.M. Northcroft, *Women at Work in the League of Nations* (London, 1924), 1.

66 "Frauen im Völkerbund" Manuscript, n.d., N 1626/3, Thuseld Lang-Brumann, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz; Burton, *The Assembly of the League of Nations*, 98.

67 Ashby, Preface, 1.

68 "Crowdy, Dame Rachel Eleanor (1884-1964), social reformer," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed on July 29, 2019, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/unr.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32647>.

69 Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997), 215.

70 On reserving seats at conferences for women, see League of Nations, *Official Journal* (April 1927), 388-389; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 215.

Nevertheless, Forchhammer was the first woman to speak to the Assembly, delivering an address on the trafficking of women and children. These three Scandinavian women returned to the Assembly in 1921 and were joined by the Romanian substitute delegate Elena Văcărescu/Hélène Vacaresco. Văcărescu was a French-educated poet from a wealthy Romanian aristocratic family who lived in Paris. Her presence at the League was particularly surprising, since women did not even have the right to vote in Romania until later in the 1920s.⁷¹ However, like her Scandinavian colleagues, Văcărescu became a perennial figure at the League's Assembly.⁷²

The women at the League of Nations, including those who were not parliamentarians, often attended the Assembly because of domestic political machinations that were similar to those that brought elected parliamentarians to the League. Once a woman had attended the Assembly on behalf of her country, a precedent was set, and that spot in the delegation virtually became reserved as a women's seat. Sometimes, as in the case of the earliest female delegates to the League Assembly, the same women were appointed to the Assembly year after year. This is similar to Rudolf Breitscheid becoming the German cabinet's go-to socialist to send off to the League every autumn. However, some countries wanted to send a different woman to the League each year; this practice was followed by Australia and the United Kingdom, both of which included one woman in their delegations starting in 1922.⁷³ Dispatching a female delegate to the Assembly became such standard practice, that when the British foreign secretary wrote in 1936 to the prime minister enumerating which ministers should be sent to Geneva in the British delegation to the League Assembly, he concluded: "In addition, there will have to be one woman delegate, who would normally be a Member of Parliament."⁷⁴

In Germany, domestic pressure played the biggest role in determining which women would represent the country at the League. In 1926 — Germany's first year in the League — one woman was among the technical advisors dispatched to Geneva, almost by happenstance. This official was Gertrud Bäumer, one of the few high-ranking female civil servants who served as a department head in the German ministry of the interior. Bäumer had founded German women's organizations, edited feminist publications, and was the longtime partner of Helene Lange, the doyenne of the German women's rights movement. In 1926, Bäumer was sent to the League of Nations Assembly to work with Rudolf Breitscheid as the expert advising him

71 Northcroft, *Women at Work in the League of Nations*, 2-9.

72 Constantin Jordan, "Hélène Vacaresco à la Société des Nations: autour d'une correspondance privée des années 1926-1927," *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 10, no. 2 (2010): 287-309, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-446699>

73 Memo "LEAGUE OF NATIONS ASSEMBLY", n.d., A 981 / LEAGUE ASS MISC 1, National Archives of Australia-Canberra; Women Representatives of Commonwealth of Australia at Assembly of the League of Nations, n.d., A 981 / LEAGUE ASS MISC 3, National Archives of Australia-Canberra; "List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes," League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>

74 Anthony Eden to Prime Minister (Stanley Baldwin), 15 June 1936, FO/954/14B, pp. 553-556, National Archives-Kew.

in the Assembly committee on humanitarian issues. As a technical expert, Bäumer took part in the meetings of the committee but not in the private discussions of the German delegation. Most importantly, however, Bäumer was not only a bureaucrat; she was also a member of the Reichstag for the left-liberal German Democratic Party (DDP).⁷⁵

When Bäumer returned to Germany after the 1926 Assembly that she had attended in her capacity as a bureaucratic expert, she put on her politician hat for a frank discussion with DDP members. In this conversation, Bäumer directly criticized German policy at the League, expressed skepticism about representatives from other countries, and accused some of the Assembly committees of dilettantism. When Bäumer's criticisms were made public, rather than treating her like a fellow parliamentarian and colleague, Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann challenged her as a subordinate bureaucrat, complaining to her civil service superior at the ministry of the interior and asking him to raise these concerns formally with Bäumer.⁷⁶ Stresemann's anger explains why Bäumer was not invited back to the League in future years and illustrates the tension that could emerge in dispatching civil servants as delegates. For 1927, someone else needed to be found to serve in the social and humanitarian committee, where — as a result of the gendered expectations of the period — women were most often assigned.⁷⁷

Bäumer's fall from Stresemann's good graces coincided with the Bavarian state government's previously mentioned opposition to sending parliamentarians to the League of Nations.⁷⁸ This confluence of events led to Thusnelda Lang-Brumann taking Bäumer's spot in the humanitarian committee. Lang-Brumann was a teacher, had been active in Munich's city politics, and was a member of the conservative Catholic regional Bavarian BVP party. She seemed perfect for the German Foreign Office in 1927: she was a woman, she was not Gertrud Bäumer, she was a member of the Reichstag, and she was Bavarian. Even though the BVP represented only a small part of the governing coalition, adding a BVP member of the Reichstag would curry favor within the parliamentary party and would hopefully allay the concerns of the Bavarian state government.⁷⁹ Adding another female member of the Reichstag seemed necessary, since Bäumer attended the previous year and inadvertently set the precedent that at least one woman should be included in the delegation. After Lang-Brumann attended the Assembly and learned the ropes in Geneva in 1927, the Foreign Office kept reappointing her, and most of the other

75 Stresemann to Dr. Külz, 23 Oct 1926, R 83524, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin; Ingrid Sharp, "An Unbroken Family?" Gertrud Bäumer and the German Women's Movement's Return to International Work in the 1920s," *Women's History Review* 26, no. 2 (2017): 245-261, <https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1080/09612025.2016.1181337>.

76 Stresemann to Dr. Külz, 23 Oct 1926, R 83524, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

77 Northcroft, *Women at Work in the League of Nations*, 5.

78 See, R 43-1/2242, Bl. 304-305 quoted in "Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik" online, accessed 21 Sep 2017, http://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/ma3/ma31p/kap1_2/kap2_83/para3_1.html

79 Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, Datenbank der deutschen Parlamentsabgeordneten, accessed 2 Feb 2018, <http://www.reichstag-abgeordnetendatenbank.de>.

parliamentary delegates, almost out of inertia, for each subsequent Assembly.⁸⁰

Beginning in 1930, however, German women's organizations started pushing back against Lang-Brumann, hoping that another German woman, who was more active in the world of liberally-minded German women's organizations, would take her place. Gertrud Bäumer, whom Lang-Brumann had replaced at the League, was very active in these national and international women's organizations. Bäumer reported to a German diplomat in 1930 that at an international women's association meeting there was a debate on a draft resolution "that the [national] associations attempt to ensure that their governments dispatch female delegates to the League of Nations who are experts." Bäumer and the other German women at this meeting took the resolution to be directed against Lang-Brumann and fought hard to convince the association not to pass it.⁸¹ However, the fact that Bäumer reported this failed resolution to a German diplomat, knowing that her message would be recorded and sent to the Foreign Office, suggests that she and German women's organizations already had Lang-Brumann in their sights and wanted her replaced with a woman more active in the German women's movement.

When the foreign minister finally decided to end parliamentarians' participation in the League Assembly "due to general political concerns" in 1931, this provided the Foreign Office with the opportunity to find someone other than Lang-Brumann for the delegation.⁸² The Foreign Office's state secretary asked bureaucrats to reach out to the German women's organizations for a list of potential delegates to the League, and five women's names were passed along to the Foreign Office.⁸³ Because parliamentarians were not being dispatched to Geneva anymore, "an old desire of the women's organizations to select a person from their ranks [as a delegate] could be easily fulfilled. Earlier we were unable to accommodate the wishes of the women's associations."⁸⁴ Accordingly, the Foreign Office appointed Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, who was active in the German Association of Women Academics but had no political party affiliation.⁸⁵

One is tempted to agree with the German women's organizations that Lang-Brumann was a token female parliamentarian sent to the League because she checked a number of political boxes at the right time. However, this does not do justice to Lang-Brumann's commitment to her work or to her pioneering position as a woman at the League of Nations. Her devotion to internationalism and to the

80 "List of Assembly Delegates and Substitutes," League of Nations Photo Archive, last modified October 2002, <http://www.indiana.edu/~league/>

81 Excerpt from letter from Generalkonsul Völckers, 29 Apr 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

82 von Kamphoevener to Lang-Brumann, 14 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

83 Konzept, v. Kamphoevener to Staatssekretär, 13 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

84 Bülow to Reichsminister, 13 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

85 Konzept, v. Kamphoevener to Staatssekretär, 13 Aug 1931, R 96945, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-Berlin.

League is evident in her papers, where there is an unsigned manuscript entitled “Frauen im Völkerbund” (Women at the League of Nations) in which someone wrote caringly about all the female delegates at the League — from Scandinavia to Australia — and especially highlighted Lang-Brumann’s work in Geneva. Lang-Brumann also gave a rare radio interview about attending the League Assembly, the transcript of which is preserved in the archive.⁸⁶ Lang-Brumann took her role at the League seriously, despite the machinations at a party-political level that pushed her into the role as a convenient Bavarian woman in 1927 and eventually ushered her off the stage in 1931.

Conclusion

In the wake of the First World War, the world of international diplomacy was in flux, and many countries used this freedom to bring new groups onto the global stage. Rather than stuffy, unelected aristocrats, democratically empowered ministers traveled to foreign capitals for negotiations. Men and women who were elected parliamentarians traveled to Geneva to represent their countries at the annual Assembly of the League of Nations. Liberal female activists who had long built international connections to advocate for women’s suffrage were appointed as specialists for multilateral conferences. During the 1920s in particular, there was an obvious international trend towards appointing more and more non-traditional diplomats to national delegations at the League of Nations. This was undoubtedly part of an interwar *Zeitgeist* encouraging experimentation on the international stage. This is analogous to the experimentation in politics, culture, and society that historians of Weimar have studied in recent decades.

However, as is evident in this German case, the underlying causes for these international delegate appointments were rooted far more in domestic political contexts than in copying the decisions of other countries. The historian Norbert Götz has explored the Scandinavian delegations to the League of Nations, which also included both parliamentarians and women starting with the First Assembly of the League. Götz identifies a “coincidence of institutional similarities” challenging the contemporary idea of a progressive “Nordic model” of international diplomacy. The Danish decision to send an opposition parliamentarian to the League was designed to tamp down opposition objections that the government was too pro-German, and pushback

86 See the folder N 1626/3, Nachlass Thusnelda Lang-Brumann, Bundesarchiv-Koblenz.

in the Norwegian Storting led to parliamentarians attending the League from Norway.⁸⁷ What Götz discovered in Scandinavia was true in Germany too. The politics of the early 1920s that led to delegations made up of parliamentarians and including women resulted from immediate domestic political concerns. These decisions then set national precedents about the composition of diplomatic delegations in the future. There was never a universal model that demanded dispatching parliamentarians or women to the League, but there was a certain path dependency for delegation composition after women or elected parliamentarians had been appointed one year.

On the whole, this article has not highlighted ideological arguments for including parliamentarians in national delegations on the international stage. The same can be said for principled debates about why women — either elected politicians or from the organized women's movement — should represent their countries. Perhaps to the chagrin of historians of political thought, the German bureaucrats deciding who to dispatch to Geneva did not consider robust theoretical arguments about who should represent the nation abroad at any length, at least they did not write memos about these concerns. Of course, these overarching ideas are implicit in any slate of delegates put forward for an international conference. Should delegations be dominated by the executive in the form of cabinet ministers, or should they give voice to the parliamentary opposition, or should they do both as Stresemann's delegations did at the League of Nations? In our diplomatic present, these questions have been answered in favor of the executive, supported by a professional diplomatic corps. During the 1920s and 1930s, that conclusion was not foreordained. There was an interwar flexibility that enabled unlikely men and women to join the ranks of official diplomats and delegates. The fact that domestic *Realpolitik* determined who those people would be does not diminish the innovation and experimentation during this period.

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87 Norbert Götz, "Blue-eyed angels' at the League of Nations: The Genevese construction of Norden," in *Regional Cooperation and International Organizations: The Nordic model in transnational alignment*, eds. Norbert Götz and Heidi Haggren (London, 2009), 30-32.

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY: WEIMAR AND BEYOND¹

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I. The critique of the “Whig interpretation” of history and the crisis of democracy

Many interwar historians, not least in Germany, have portrayed Britain as a haven of stability, the highest stage of liberal order, and the paragon of supreme parliamentary democracy that withstood the assaults of those times.² Britain serves as the counter-image to weak and failed continental democracies, in particular the Weimar Republic. Such views have obvious consequences for interpretations of the opportunities and challenges of Weimar democracy. In fact, however, both the narrative of stability and the idea of supratemporal, unshakable political models are in doubt if political and intellectual interwar Britain is given the merit of closer attention. Historical coincidence brought about the convergence of both aspects at the height of the crisis. British historian and philosopher of history Herbert Butterfield dated the conclusion of his famous criticism of the *Whig Interpretation of History* to September 1931.³ On September 19, Britain suspended the partial gold convertibility of its currency. By late August, the Labour government had collapsed. After consultations with party leaders, King George V appointed the “National Government” of representatives of all parties, “his government in a way that was not true of any other administration.”⁴ Until 1945, great coalitions, crisis and war governments governed Great Britain, as they did from 1915 to 1922.⁵

The political crisis management went hand in hand with intellectual crisis reflection. In the fall of 1931, liberal author Leonard Woolf of the Bloomsbury milieu and conservative Eustace Percy, minister in Stanley Baldwin’s cabinet, asked the BBC’s mass audience every Thursday evening “Can Democracy Survive?”⁶ The pluralism theorist, socialist thinker and Labour politician Harold Laski also noted that democracy was in crisis. In April 1931 he spoke of “how near our feet lie to the abyss.”⁷ He diagnosed the dissolution of political conventions: “It is obvious that any view which places confidence in the power of universal suffrage and representative institutions, unaided and of themselves, to secure a permanently well-ordered

1 This essay is a revised and abbreviated English version of an article first published in German: Tim Müller, “Von der ‘Whig Interpretation’ zur Fragilität der Demokratie: Weimar als geschichtstheoretisches Problem,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 44 (2018): 430-465.

2 See Horst Möller, *Europa zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Munich, 1998), 13; 134.

3 Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* [1931] (New York, 1965), vi.

4 Martin Pugh, “Hurrah for the Blackshirts!” *Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2006), 241; 315 f. All emphases appear in the original text.

5 See for example Pugh, “Hurrah for the Blackshirts!”; idem, *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867-1945* (Oxford, 2002); Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age. Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009); Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People. England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010); Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999); idem., *National Crisis and National Government. British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992).

6 See for example *The Radio Times*, September 25, 1931, 754; December 11, 1931, 874; Leonard Woolf and Lord Eustace Percy, “Can Democracy Survive?,” in Mary Adams, ed., *The Modern State* (London, 1933), 15-162.

7 Harold J. Laski, *Democracy in Crisis* [1933], (Chapel Hill, 1935), 9.

8 Laski, "The Present Position of Representative Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 26 (1932): 629-641, here 629 f. and 639-641.

9 On crisis, its perception and strategies for reform, also see Helen McCarthy, "Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture between the Wars," *Historical Journal* 55 (2012): 221-238; idem, "Parties, Voluntary Associations and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain," *Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 891-912; John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses. Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London, 1992); Michael Freedman, *Liberalism Divided. A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* (Oxford, 1986); Ben Jackson, *Equality and the British Left. A Study in Progressive Political Thought, 1900-64* (Manchester, 2007); Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning. The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997); Laura Beers, Geraint Thomas, eds., *Brave New World. Democratic and Imperial Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2012).

10 On his conservative political leanings, see Martina Steber, "Herbert Butterfield, der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft," *VfZ* 55 (2007): 269-307; Michael Bentley, *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield. History, Science and God* (Cambridge, 2011); C. T. McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield. Historian as Dissenter* (New Haven, 2004).

11 Butterfield, *Whig Interpretation*, 5-7.

commonwealth is seriously under-estimating the complexity of the issue." The attractiveness of democracy was due to the coincidence of quite special conditions. Yet "the conditions of this success ... depended upon the increasing economic returns of America and the imperialistic exploitation of the colored peoples." In this crisis, Great Britain hardly differed from other democracies: "Representative democracy, at this stage, is, briefly put, asked to solve the problem by paralleling the political equality it achieved with a similar economic equality." Whether such a way out of the existential crisis would be found remained unclear: "It is as yet difficult to scan the horizon of politics and discern there hope that this will be the case."⁸ Irrespective of whether the crisis was argumentatively aggravated or defused, socialist, liberal and conservative intellectuals and politicians found that the traditional conceptual instruments were no longer sufficient to grasp the present. Their horizon of expectations did not rule out the end of democracy; there was a widespread call for a transformation of democracy.⁹

Britain was neither seen as particularly stable, nor was the idea accepted that clear-cut political judgments could be made from a position of progress that seemed convinced of its own superiority: It was at this moment that Butterfield's historical-theoretical intervention appeared. With his critique of traditions of complacency, he found himself in a cross-partisan intellectual society.¹⁰ In the historiographical tradition that he dissected, narratives of progress were predominant. Butterfield considered the tendency to divide the actors of history into "the friends and enemies of progress" according to the standards of the present day — whether the self-aggrandizement of the present occurred through appropriation or through the devaluation of history — to be the most persistent obstacle to historical research. It was so deeply rooted, he wrote "that even when piece-meal research has corrected the story in detail, we are slow in re-valuing the whole and reorganizing the broad outlines of the theme in the light of these discoveries." This epistemological weakness led to the creation of "the large story on the same pattern all the time." But before the critic could become too sure of his cause, Butterfield self-critically recalled the constraints of historical narrative: "There is a tendency for all history to veer into Whig history."¹¹

II. The postwar master narrative and Weimar democracy

Butterfield brings to light a problem that has been given little consideration in historical controversies: Weimar is not only a historical, but also a historical-theoretical or "metahistorical" problem. As obvious

as this insight is for a theoretically enlightened historian,¹² one would like to see an intensification of historical-theoretical reflection in Weimar debates whose controversial questions revolve around primarily political conflicts of interpretation.¹³

If there is a Whig interpretation of German postwar history — and that is the progress or success story against which the Weimar Republic must assert itself¹⁴ — then there are consequences for the representation of Weimar democracy. This becomes evident in the classic pattern of interpretation par excellence — the *Sonderweg* — which no Whig interpretation of the history of German democracy can do without.¹⁵ The “special path,” that “paradigm lost,”¹⁶ seems to have long since become obsolete and yet it is not. The omnipresence of *Sonderweg* elements in popular, artistic, literary, and mass media representations is beyond question. In the recently celebrated series “Babylon Berlin,” a leading German medium recognizes the “longing for death and totalitarian twilight of the Weimar Republic.”¹⁷ But current contributions can also be found in research that formulate explicit theses of a German special path.¹⁸ However, the problem does not only concern explicit narratives of a special path. Thomas Welskopp calls the special path a continuing “meta-narrative” pursuing the narrative strategy of the “construction of ‘ideal’ courses

12 As examples of the extensive literature on this topic, see Reinhart Koselleck, “Über die Theoriebedürftigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft,” in id., *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt, 2000), 298–316; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973); Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, 1994); for more recent studies: Martin Baumeister et al., eds., *Die Kunst der Geschichte. Historiographie, Ästhetik, Erzählung* (Göttingen, 2009).

13 Among the exceptions and inspirations for this article are Benjamin Ziemann, “Weimar Was Weimar. Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the

German Republic,” *German History* 28 (2010): 542–571; Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik. Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich, 2008).

14 On the political necessity of a Whig interpretation see Andreas Wirsching, “Krisenzeit der „Klassischen Moderne“ oder deutscher „Sonderweg“? Überlegungen zum Projekt Faktoren der Stabilität und Instabilität in der Demokratie der Zwischenkriegszeit: Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich,” in Horst Möller and Udo Wengst, eds., *50 Jahre Institut für Zeitgeschichte. Eine Bilanz* (Munich, 1999), 365–381, here 381; idem., “Verfassung und Verfassungskultur im Europa

der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in Christoph Gusy, ed., *Demokratie in der Krise. Europa in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Baden-Baden, 2008), 371–389, here 388.

15 A connection between the critique of the British Whig interpretation and the critique of the German *Sonderweg* is made by Arnd Bauerkämper, “Geschichtsschreibung als Projektion. Die Revision der „Whig Interpretation of History“ und die Kritik am Paradigma vom „deutschen Sonderweg“ seit den 1970er Jahren,” in Stefan Berger et al., eds., *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-englischen kulturellen Austausch* (Göttingen, 2003), 383–438.

16 James J. Sheehan, “Paradigm Lost? The „Sonderweg“ Revisited,” in Gunilla Budde et al., eds., *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006), 150–160, here 155. Despite all the differences, these interpretations showed a similarity that, according to Sheehan, justify describing them as a *Sonderweg* narrative in a broader sense.

17 Spiegel Online, October 13, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/babylon-berlin-von-tomykwer-serienmeisterwerk-ueber-die-weimarer-republik-a-1170044.html>.

18 For example, see Volker Berghahn, “Political Democracy and the Shaping of Capitalism pre-1914 America and Germany,” in Paul Nolte, ed., *Transatlantic Democracy in the Twentieth Century. Transfer and Transformation* (Berlin, 2016); Hartmut Spenkuch, “Vergleichsweise besonders? Politisches System und Strukturen Preußens als Kern des „deutschen Sonderwegs“,” *GG* 29 (2003): 262–293; Helmut Walser Smith, *Fluchtpunkt 1941. Kontinuitäten der deutschen Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 2010); Thomas Mergel in “Roundtable. „1933“ Eighty Years On,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14 (2013): 431–448, here 437.

as a story board.” Even “far-reaching revisions of empirical assumptions” — reminiscent of Butterfield — could neither change the overall interpretation nor trigger theoretical “self-reflection.”¹⁹

This proves to be true when it comes to democracy. The idea of a Western success story of democracy, in which German history also participated after 1945,²⁰ is the core of the Whig interpretation. This systematic methodical distortion may also be due to political intentions,²¹ but at the same time, it results from narrative constraints, because in this way, in the words of Dieter Langewiesche, “the history of deficits and the staggered liberation from them over time” can be told simultaneously.²² An interpretation that thinks of normality and crisis together without elevating and celebrating the respective present and incorporates the possibility of catastrophe into normality²³ seems to be too narratively challenging.

It is part of the Whig narrative of the Western and Federal Republic’s success story to order German history before 1945 according to the pattern of lacks and lags, of deficits and delays on the way to a democracy — defined as non-deficient and not delayed.²⁴ This is a theoretically and empirically extremely problematic approach, to which David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley objected early on.²⁵ The social-theoretical argument²⁶ has been extended to include global history, combined with a call for self-reflection beyond

19 Thomas Welskopp, “Identität ex negativo. Der „deutsche Sonderweg“ als Metaerzählung in der bundesdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft der siebziger und achtziger Jahre,” in Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen, 2002), 109–139, here 130, 135 f., 137 f.

20 See for example Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglättete Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 2007).

21 See Sebastian Ullrich, *Der Weimar-Komplex. Das Scheitern der ersten deutschen Demokratie und die politische Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2009), 536–613; Koselleck, “Deutschland – eine verspätete Nation?,” in id., *Zeitschichten*, 359–380, here 376; Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural. An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York, 2012), 248.

22 Dieter Langewiesche, “Der „deutsche Sonderweg“. Defizitgeschichte als geschichtspolitische Zukunftskonstruktion nach dem Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in Horst Carl et al., eds., *Kriegsniederlagen. Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 2004), 57–65, here 58.

23 See Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1987), 11; 270 f.; id., *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen, 1989); Frank Bajohr et al., eds., *Zivilisation und Barbarei. Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne* (Hamburg, 1991); Peter Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?,” *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 629–656; for more recent studies: Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf, eds., *Die Krise der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt, 2005); Tim B. Müller and Adam Tooze, eds., *Normalität und Fragilität. Demokratie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*

(Hamburg, 2015); Andreas Braune and Michael Dreyer, eds., *Republikanischer Alltag. Die Weimarer Demokratie und die Suche nach Normalität* (Stuttgart, 2017).

24 Ian Kershaw states that there was a path of “normal modernization,” which the Federal Republic eventually pursued: Heinrich August Winkler, ed., *Die deutsche Staatskrise 1930–1933. Handlungsspielräume und Alternativen* (Munich, 1992), 290 f. See Nils Gilman, *Mandarin of the Future. Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, 2003); Detlef Pollack, “Modernisierungstheorie – revised. Entwurf einer Theorie moderner

Gesellschaften,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 45 (2016): 219–240.

25 See David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History. Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1984).

26 See for example Randall Collins, “German-Bashing and the Theory of Democratic Modernization,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 24 (1995): 3–21; George Steinmetz, “German Exceptionalism and the Origins of National Socialism. The Career of a Concept,” in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds., *Stalinism and Nazism. Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge, 1997), 251–284.

the boundaries of Eurocentric perspectives and concepts. Dipesh Chakrabarty formulates a convincing objection to the hegemonic Western view, which interprets the other “in terms of a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into ‘inadequacy,’” and pleads for the perception of “plenitude” and “creativity.”²⁷

Lacks and lags in the history of Weimar democracy often result from a nation-centered perspective. Here are a few examples: In contrast to the critical view of German history, which must reveal its “democratic balance,” the history of democracy of Western reference cases is still presented today as an unproblematic history of progress.²⁸ In contrast to England and France, where the right to vote came much later, the history of the women’s movement and women’s suffrage, for example, serve as evidence of German democratic deficits²⁹ regardless of the research that describes Germany as a typical case.³⁰ In a German-American comparison, “universal white manhood suffrage” is recognized as “good progress towards greater democratic participation” in the United States while racism is ignored as a dying relic of a pre-democratic era.³¹ But slavery, racism, segregation, legal inequality and violence were an inseparable component of American democratic history, the virulence of which did not diminish in the nineteenth century.³² According to Laura F. Edwards, the stop-and-go process, in which racist violence and exclusion were repeatedly extended,³³ was even constitutive for American democracy: “White men were constituted as freemen through their rights over those without rights.”³⁴

27 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 32; 35. For a similar rejection of the idea of temporal lags, see Koselleck, *Deutschland — eine verspätete Nation?*, 362 f.; see Olsen, *History*, 246-249.

28 Spenkuch, *Vergleichsweise besonders?*, 280; see *ibid.* 270-273.

29 See for example Jad Adams, *Women and the Vote. A World History* (Oxford, 2014); Ingrid Sharp, “Overcoming Inner Division. Post-Suffrage Strategies in the Organised German Women’s Movement,” *Women’s History*

Review 11 (2013): 1-18; Angelika Schaser, “Zur Einführung des Frauenwahlrechts vor 90 Jahren am 12. November 1918,” *Feministische Studien* 1 (2009): 97-110.

30 See for example Gisela Bock, “Das politische Denken des Suffragismus. Deutschland um 1900 im internationalen Vergleich,” in *idem, Geschlechtergeschichten der Neuzeit. Ideen, Politik, Praxis* (Göttingen, 2014), 168-203.

31 Berghahn, *Political Democracy*, 20 f.

32 See for example Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom.*

The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 2003); Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic. An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery*, ed. Ward M. McAfee (Oxford, 2001).

33 See for example Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself. The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York, 2013), 29-57; 96-129; 227-275; Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism. The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1936* (Cambridge, 2006); Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power. An American Tragedy* (New York, 2017), 184; 186-191; 207 f.

34 Laura F. Edwards, “The Contradictions of Democracy in American Institutions and Practices,” in Joanna Innes, Mark Philp, eds., *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions. France, America, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850*, (Oxford, 2013), 40-54, here 54; see for example Lacy E. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil. The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York, 2009); Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth-Century United States* (Cambridge, 2010); Glenn C. Altschuler, Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic. Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 2000); on suffrage: Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote. The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York, 2009); Hedwig Richter, *Moderne Wahlen. Eine Geschichte der Demokratie in Preußen und den USA im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2017), 71-93; 418-444; on the Civil War and democratic ideas on both sides: James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades. Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford, 1997); *idem, Battle Cry of Freedom. The Civil War Era* (Oxford, 2003).

- 35 Martin Pugh, "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!," 315; 241.
- 36 See Williamson, Baldwin, 143; 145; 203-242.
- 37 See Andreas Wirsching, Jürgen Eder, eds., *Vernunftrepublikanismus in der Weimarer Republik. Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 2008).
- 38 Gerald D. Feldman, "Der 30. Januar 1933 und die politische Kultur von Weimar," in Winkler, *Staatskrise*, 263-276, here 266; Christoph Gusy, "Verfassungsumbruch bei Kriegsende," in idem, *Demokratie in der Krise*, 15-51, here 37; Wirsching, *Krisenzeit*, 367; 377; 380 f.; see idem, *Verfassung und Verfassungskultur: the democratic beginning in 1918/19* "was ailing" from its "birth defects" (371), the late formation of a nation state was one of the reasons why the democracy failed (372 f.; 375; 388), just like the unbalanced statist tradition that differed from the "western European zone" (380-383).
- 39 See Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Lehrjahre der Demokratie. Wahlen und politische Kultur im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Stuttgart, 2009), 48 f.; 51; also see Altschuler and Blumin, *Rude Republic*; Edwards, *Contradictions of Democracy*; Joris Gijzenbergh et al., eds., *Creative Crises of Democracy* (Brussels, 2012); Jussi Kurunmäki et al., eds., *Democracy in Modern Europe. A Conceptual History* (New York, 2018); Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang, eds., *Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy* (Helsinki, 2010); Müller, Tooze, *Normalität und Fragilität*; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths. Keywords of American Politics since Independence* (Cambridge, 1998).
- 40 See Müller, "Deutschlands 'Anderssein', der 'Westen' und die Demokratie. Hugo Preuß' Weltkriegsschrift 'Das deutsche Volk und die Politik'"; in Detlef Lehnert, ed., *Das deutsche Volk und die Politik: Hugo Preuß und der Streit um „Sonnenwege“* (Berlin, 2017), 41-82.

Nor did democracy remain unchallenged in Britain after the First World War. "Whatever the reason for the failure of fascism to grow into a major movement in interwar Britain, the explanation does not primarily lie in British political culture," explains Martin Pugh. "Timing and contingencies" play the main role here, including the safety valve of the monarchy.³⁵ The example of three-term Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin shows just how difficult the path to democracy was even for moderate politicians. Baldwin saw himself as an educator for democracy, but measured democratic maturity against conservative electoral successes and declared in 1937 that the masses were not qualified for the franchise.³⁶ Similar statements by a Weimar politician would probably be seen as evidence of authoritarian tendencies that hardly qualified him as a *Vernunftrepublikaner*.³⁷

When grand masters of Weimar historiography attest the lack of "an unshakable democratic tradition and devotion," "differences in tradition," or the "absence" of a democratic inheritance, as a "deficit in Germany's political culture," due to which Weimar has deviated from the "normal path," their thinking in the categories of lacks and lags becomes obvious.³⁸ For before 1918 there were hardly any democratic political cultures to be found even outside Germany, yet democratic elements in political culture could be found in Germany just as elsewhere.³⁹ Moreover, sources that were often used to support the idea of major differences between German and "western" political traditions have recently been undergoing thorough re-readings.⁴⁰

Without the framework of lacks and lags, however, it is possible to develop intriguing questions in the history of democracy that are dedicated to transnational normality and at the same time to the fragility of the new phenomenon of democracy. These include the problem of the integration of old elites and conservative forces, which did not occur without violent tensions anywhere.⁴¹ Fascist and anti-democratic tendencies were widespread on the British right⁴² while antiparliamentarism and sympathies for fascism existed among

41 See Mergel, "Das Scheitern des deutschen Tory-Konservatismus. Die Umformung der DNVP zu einer rechtsradikalen Partei 1928-1932," *HZ* 276 (2003): 323-368.

42 See Martin Pugh, "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!"; Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travel-*

ers of the Right. British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-1939 (London, 1980); idem, *Patriotism Perverted. Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-1940* (London, 1998); Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman. Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and In-*

terwar Britain (Liverpool, 2002); idem., *Responses to Nazism in Britain 1933-1939. Before War and Holocaust* (Basingstoke, 2003); Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories. Britische Konservative im Aufstand gegen Demokratie und politische Moderne, 1929-1939* (Munich, 2012).

conservatives in Sweden or Finland; it was not until the 1930s that democratic tendencies gained the upper hand there.⁴³

The formation of a democratic conservatism was anything but self-evident. The theory of democracy emphasizes the centrality of this question for the interwar period, the dependence on conservative forces and the forms in which they were organized and able to articulate their interests. This exposed the young democracies to considerable contingency. A strong organization of antidemocratic old elites seems to have contributed to their long-term integration into democracy and reduced the likelihood of an alliance with militant-revolutionary antidemocratic movements.⁴⁴ If, however, “tradition differences” in the sense of a lack of long-term democratic traditions are ultimately offered as an explanation for the destruction of democracy, this crucial historical problem is ignored. Such readings also ignore the fact that in reaction to developments in Germany after 1933 a new reflection on democracy and dictatorship began in Western nations. Democratic self-understandings and traditions — later projected back into a *longue durée* of democracy⁴⁵ — were developed in the confrontations of those years; political options previously represented among the elites, such as anti-Semitism and racism, were now gradually more or less outlawed.⁴⁶

Time and again, up to the most recent publications, democracy is equated with an ahistorical, anachronistic norm of parliamentary democracy by which Weimar’s failures and omissions are measured.⁴⁷ Transformations of parliamentary government, for example by strengthening the executive branch or corporatist institutions, as they were often conceived and established in democracies, are thus classified as antiparliamentary.⁴⁸ The dichotomy of authoritarian and

» *Deutschland und Frankreich 1918-1933/39. Berlin und Paris im Vergleich* (Munich, 1999), 3; 7; Gusy, *Verfassungsumbruch*, 10 f.; 15 f.; 22; Jochen Hung, “The „Ullstein Spirit“. The Ullstein Publishing House, the End of the Weimar Republic and the Making of Cold War German Identity, 1925-77,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 (2018): 158-184, here 160 f.; Steffen Kailitz, ed., *Nach dem „Großen Krieg“. Vom Triumph zum Desaster der Demokratie 1918/19 bis 1939* (Göttingen, 2017). On anachronism: Marcus Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken im Krieg. Die deutsche Debatte im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2000), 112 f.

48 See Gusy, *Verfassungsumbruch*, 45; 49; Thomas Raithel, “Die Haltung von Eliten, Verbänden und Parteien. Überlegungen zur Stabilität und Instabilität parlamentarischer Demokratien zwischen den Weltkriegen,” in Gusy, *Demokratie in der Krise*, 105-121, here 116-120. — On the “compatibility” of democracy and corporatism, however, see: Werner Abelschauser, “Freiheitlicher Korporatismus im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik,” in id., ed., *Die Weimarer Republik als Wohlfahrtsstaat* (Stuttgart, 1987), 147-170; Andrea Rehling, “Demokratie und Korporatismus – eine Beziehungsgeschichte,” in Müller, Toose, *Normalität und Fragilität*, 133-153; Stefan Couperus, “Fixing Democracy? Political Representation and the Crisis of Democracy in Interwar Europe and the Netherlands,” in Gijsenbergh, *Creative Crises*, 269-290. On the subject of corporatism, in his own field of economic history, Feldman rejects the idea of a German divergence: Feldman, *30. Januar 1933*, 265.

43 See Jussi Kurunmäki, “‘Nordic Democracy’ in 1935. On the Finnish and Swedish Rhetoric of Democracy,” in Kurunmäki and Strang, *Rhetorics*, 37-82, here 38 f.; 46-49; Francis Sejersted, *The Age of Social Democracy. Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 2011), 73-78.

44 See Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy* (Cambridge, 2017).

45 See Marcus Llanque, “Die Diktatur im Horizont der Demokratieidee. Zur verfassungspolitischen Debatte der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in Gusy, *Demokratie in der Krise*, 52-85, here 57; Paul Nolte, “Jenseits des Westens? Überlegungen zu einer Zeitgeschichte der Demokratie,” *VfZ* 61 (2013): 275-301; Pugh, “*Hurrah for the Blackshirts!*”, 316-319; Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 29-57; Kurunmäki, “Nordic Democracy.”

46 See Mark Mazower, *Der dunkle Kontinent. Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2000), 155 f.

47 See Feldman, *30. Januar 1933*, 264; 271; Gerhard Schulz, “Bemerkungen zur Wegscheide zwischen parlamentarischer und autoritärer Entwicklung in der Geschichte der Weimarer Republik,” in Winkler, *Staatskrise*, 39-47; Wirsching, *Vom Weltkrieg zum Bürgerkrieg? Politischer Extremismus in »*

democratic-parliamentary rule that is widespread in research⁴⁹ does not do justice to historical “confusion,”⁵⁰ such as the authoritarian tendencies of “militant” democracies, as demanded not only by Weimar democrats,⁵¹ nor does this dichotomy reflect complex findings on the relationship between authority and democracy.⁵² There was hardly any clear alternative between democracy and an authoritarian state; rather, the transitions were fluid⁵³ and authoritarian instruments were sometimes able to enhance democratic legitimacy. Moreover, the Weimar debate about the authoritarian safeguarding of democracy was by no means specific to Germany, but was “continued in Great Britain after 1933.”⁵⁴

It is not only here that contemporary perspectives are sidelined — or distorted in favor of the overrepresented voices on the right — instead of using their heuristic potential to open up a fragile order with confusing constellations.⁵⁵ Deviating perspectives in the sources are often devalued as naïve. The interpretation of the Brüning government as a transitional regime to an authoritarian state without parties, for example, stands in contrast to contemporary perception in leading media,⁵⁶ and dating the end of Weimar democracy to 1930,

49 See Schulz, *Bemerkungen*; Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Jeremy Mitchell, eds., *Authoritarianism and Democracy in Europe 1919-39. Comparative Analyses* (London, 2002); id. eds., *Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919-39. Systematic Case Studies* (London, 2000); but also Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties*, 6.

50 Marc Bloch, *Apologie der Geschichtswissenschaft oder Der Beruf des Historikers*, ed. Peter Schöttler (Stuttgart, 2002), 168.

51 See Arnold Brecht, “Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik und die Politische Wissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Politik*, N.F. 2 (1955): 291-308; id., “Democracy - Challenge to Theory,” *Social Research* 13 (1946): 195-224, here 216-222; 224; Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century. German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, 2014), 169-210; Michael Dreyer, “Weimar als „wehrhafte Demokratie - ein unterschätztes Vorbild,” in Michael Schultheiß, Sebastian Lasch, eds., *Die Weimarer Verfassung. Wert und Wirkung für die Demokratie* (Erfurt, 2009), 161-189; Stefan Vogt, *Nationaler Sozialismus und Soziale Demokratie. Die sozialdemokratische Junge Rechte 1918-1945* (Bonn, 2006).

52 See Yves Cohen, *Le siècle des chefs. Une histoire transnationale du commandement et de l'autorité, 1890-194*, (Paris, 2013); Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 29-57; 96-129; Moritz Föllmer, “Führung und Demokratie in Europa,” in Müller, Tooze, *Normalität und Fragilität*, 177-197; Elisabeth Dieterman, “Demokratische Perspektiven in den Niederlanden der 1930er Jahre,” in *ibid.*, 421-435; Henk te Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap. Persoon en politiek van Thorbecke tot Den Uyl* (Amsterdam, 2002); Archie Brown, *The Myth of the Strong Leader. Political Leadership in Modern Politics* (New York, 2014); Anthony McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic. Authority and Authoritarianism 1916-1936* (London, 2013).

53 Karl Dietrich Bracher analyzed the “authoritarian transformation” not as a dichotomy, but as a continuum open in both directions: Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (Düsseldorf, 1984), 302 f.

54 Llanque, *Diktatur*, 75; see Stone, *Responses to Nazism*; Giovanni Capoccia, *Defending Democracy. Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore, 2005).

55 On this topic also see Eberhard Kolb, “Die Weimarer Republik und das Problem der Kontinuität vom Kaiserreich zum „Dritten Reich,”” in id., *Umbrüche deutscher Geschichte. 1866/71 - 1918/19 - 1929/33*.

Ausgewählte Aufsätze, ed. Dieter Langewiesche and Klaus Schönhoven (Munich, 1993), 359-372.

56 See “Gestaltwandel deutscher Demokratie. Eine Rückschau,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 1st, 1931, Nr. 1; Rudolf Kircher, “Der Reichskanzler,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 26, 1931, Nr. 549. Harry Graf Kessler (*Das Tagebuch, Bd. 9: 1926-1937*, ed. Sabine Gruber and Ulrich Ott (Stuttgart, 2010), 427) wrote on May 30, 1932: “Brüning stepped down today, or rather, he was dismissed by Hindenburg. [...] Today means the tentative end of the parliamentary republic.” Also see Bracher, *Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, 465.

as is customary among well-known experts,⁵⁷ is far removed from the experiences and expectations of those dramatic years.⁵⁸ This dissonance could be productively discussed in the history of democracy: What determines our judgment as to when a democracy ends?

New questions are needed to grasp more clearly the ambivalences of Weimar's democratic history, the double face of crisis and resilience, fragility and normality. This begins with talking about democracy. Some evidence of an assumed authoritarian longing can plausibly be read as proof of the self-evidence of the parliamentary system.⁵⁹ The consensus on the inevitability of democracy was so considerable that its supporters believed themselves confident of the insurmountability of democracy. German chancellor Gustav Bauer spoke in 1919 of the "invincibility" of his internationalist vision of democracy,⁶⁰ while even opponents, who were operating as mass participatory movements in democracy, sometimes rather uncomfortably embracing the concept of democracy for themselves, had to acquire democratic legitimacy.⁶¹

Even groundbreaking new research sometimes does little to counter traditional patterns of interpretation. Many studies still exaggerate

57 See Larry Eugene Jones, *Hitler versus Hindenburg. The 1932 Presidential Elections and the End of the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 2015), 5; 8; Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft* (Munich, 2008), 33; Ian Kershaw, Peter Krüger, Gerald Feldman and Klaus Schönhoven, in Winkler, *Staatskrise*, 51; S. 53 f.; Hans Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit. Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918-1933* (Berlin, 1989), 289-293; 302.

58 Among contemporaries, Arthur Rosenberg was not the only one to date the end of the republic to 1930 and characterize Brüning as a dictator (Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* [1935] (Hamburg, 1991), 79 f; 205; 207; 210.)

Being a Communist at the time, he did not represent the democratic mainstream. These assessments were also made by right-leaning middle-class sympathizers of fascism; see for example Ludwig Bernhard, "Nationalsozialismus," in Oscar Müller, ed., *Krisis. Ein politisches Manifest* (Weimar, 1932), 209-216, here 214 f. For a non-communist left-wing republican like Otto Kirchheimer, the "process of republicanism" continued in 1930 despite all criticism of the class-based state: Otto Kirchheimer, "Weimar - und was dann? Analyse einer Verfassung [1930]," in id., *Politik und Verfassung* (Frankfurt, 1964), 9-56, here 14 f.; only Papen's "Prussian action" constituted a breach of the constitu-

tion; see Riccardo Bavaj, "Otto Kirchheimers Parlamentarismuskritik in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Fall von „Linkschmittianismus“?," *VfZ* 55 (2007): 33-51.

59 Most recently, see McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic*, 179-221.

60 Tim B. Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien* (Hamburg, 2014), 74-113. On democratic confidence despite the awareness of fragility even in the "late" republic, see Ferdinand Aloys Hermens, *Demokratie und Kapitalismus. Ein Versuch zur Soziologie der Staatsformen* (Munich, 1931); "Dieser Wahlkampf," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, February, 28, 1933, Nr. 159.

61 See Koselleck et al., "Art. Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse," in Otto Brunner et al., eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart, 2004), Bd. 7, 141-431, here 382; 390-402; 407-415; Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy. Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, 2011); McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic*; Llanque, *Diktatur*, 70 f.; Michael Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft und Führererwartung in der Weimarer Republik," in Ute Daniel et al., eds., *Politische Kultur und Medienwirklichkeiten in den 1920er Jahren* (Munich, 2010), 181-204; Ralph Jessen, Hedwig Richter, eds., *Voting for Hitler and Stalin. Elections under 20th Century Dictatorships* (Frankfurt, 2011); Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism. Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York, 1990); id., *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

the violence of political conflict in the Weimar Republic, interpret it as a sign of doom, and ignore international parallels.⁶² Political community concepts are interpreted one-sidedly as authoritarian, antipluralistic and anti-liberal, as if there were no differentiated research into the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁶³

The problem is of a theoretical nature. Arnold Brecht, a top Weimar civil servant and political theorist, already regarded democracy as a “challenge to theory”⁶⁴ against the background of his experience in Weimar. Of course, contemporary theory of democracy cannot be reduced to a common denominator.⁶⁵ But not only institutions and procedures, but also contingencies, economic, geopolitical and geographical conditions play a role in explaining the functioning of democracies. There is talk today of inherent instability, democratic deconsolidation, populist and authoritarian varieties emerging from democracy. Familiarization effects allow democracies without convinced democrats to become the rule.⁶⁶ In the German historiographical debate about Weimar such problem awareness can be found almost exclusively in the work of Eberhard Kolb, who warns against “a normative concept of ‘Weimar’” as a parliamentary democracy or emphasizes the mutability of democracy, the constitutional “state of suspense.”⁶⁷

62 Most recently, see Mark Jones, *Am Anfang war Gewalt. Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19 und der Beginn der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 2017), 254, 291, 343. On the debate: Benjamin Ziemann, “Germany after the First World War – A Violent Society? Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003): 80-95; id., *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914-1923* (Essen, 1997); Dirk Schumann, *Politische Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik. Kampf um die Straße und Furcht vor dem Bürgerkrieg* (Essen, 2001); Sabine Kienitz, *Beschädigte Helden. Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914-1923* (Paderborn, 2008); Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristismus und in der deutschen SA* (Cologne, 2009); Peter Keller, „Die Wehrmacht der deutschen Republik ist die Reichswehr“. *Die deutsche Armee 1918-1921* (Paderborn, 2014).

63 See Feldman, 30. Januar 1933, 269 f.; Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*; Thomas Mergel, “Dictatorship and Democracy 1918-1939,” in Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford, 2011), 423-452, here 428; 430 f; 433; 447; for new approaches: Wolfgang Hardtwig, “Volksgemeinschaft im Übergang. Von der Demokratie zum rassistischen Führerstaat,” in Detlef Lehnert, ed., *Gemeinschaftsdenken in Europa. Das Gesellschaftskonzept „Volksheim“ im Vergleich 1900-1938* (Cologne, 2013), 227-253.

64 See Brecht, *Democracy – Challenge to Theory*, 212-217; also his earlier monograph, *Prelude to Silence. The End of the German Republic* (New York, 1944).

65 For a historical overview, see Paul Nolte, *Was ist Demokratie? Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Munich, 2012); Hedwig Richter, Hubertus Buchstein, eds., *Idee und Praxis der Wahlen. Eine Geschichte der modernen Demokratie* (Wiesbaden, 2017).

66 See Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, 2000); Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Democracy in Decline?* (Baltimore, 2015); Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay. From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (New York, 2014); Joshua Kurlantzick,

Democracy in Retreat. The Revolt of the Middle Class and the Worldwide Decline of Representative Government (New Haven, 2014); Steven Levitsky, Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York, 2018); Pippa Norris, *Democratic Deficit. Critical Citizens Revisited* (Cambridge, 2011); on the academic debate: Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln, Matthias Schündeln, “On the endogeneity of political preferences. Evidence from individual experience with democracy,” *Science* 347 (2015): 1145-1148; Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, “The Democratic Disconnect. The Danger of Deconsolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 27/3. 2016: 5-17; Cas Mudde, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds., *Populism in Europe and the Americas. Threat or Corrective for*

Democracy? (Cambridge 2013); Carlos de la Torre, ed., *The Promise and Perils of Populism. Global Perspectives* (Lexington, 2014); Dirk Jörke and Veith Selk, *Theorien des Populismus zur Einführung* (Hamburg, 2017).

67 Kolb in Winkler, *Staatskrise*, 49. Ibid., 286 he points out the “longevity of a political system” as a “factor for creating legitimacy”: “Für die Weimarer Republik kam es in der existenzbedrohenden Krise von 1932/33 auf ihr bloßes Überleben als Verfassungsstaat mit dem Offenhalten der Möglichkeit zu späterer Reparlamentarisierung an.“ On France, see Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment. Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1998).

From the perspective of democratic theory, an “unfinished democracy”⁶⁸ is a tautology: from John Dewey to Pierre Rosanvallon, the experimental, the constant further development characterizes democracy.⁶⁹ Democracy research, in the words of Adam Przeworski, is “a never-ending quest.” Weimar experts have to face the problem that in an international perspective “[d]emocracy turned out to be compatible with inequality, irrationality, injustice, particularistic enforcement of laws, lies and obfuscation, a technocratic policy style, and even a fair dose of arbitrary violence.” The history of democracy is too contradictory to be trivialized to confirm political norms: “The challenge is not just political but intellectual. It poses an entire research agenda.”⁷⁰

III. “Frequently inconsistent endeavors in flux” – history and theory

Yet this intellectual challenge not only involves the theory of democracy, but also the theory of history. Siegfried Kracauer, recently rediscovered as a historical thinker, was another Weimar contemporary. His work, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, which the émigré scholar who died in 1966 could not complete, continued his decades-long preoccupation with the proprium of the historical. It testifies to his detailed reading of Ranke, Butterfield, Marc Bloch, and numerous contemporary historians and mentions his interlocutor Koselleck by name.⁷¹ It also raises illuminating questions for Weimar research.

At one point, Kracauer discusses his own experience as a well-known author and feature editor for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in the Weimar Republic, who, when suddenly confronted with the critical research of a young American historian, recognized the “incommensurable relationship” of his Weimar experience with the image of Weimar that had become dominant in contemporary historical research since the 1960s:

Everything he had dug up so far was true to the fact, while nothing had happened the way he related it [...] all that was a matter of fluctuating opinions, agonizing doubts, and spontaneous decisions during the 'twenties would freeze into a more or less rigid pattern of trends, cross-currents, majority and minority attitudes [...] many experiences I had then undergone were obviously doomed to slip through the net of the concepts and labels he used to establish his pattern [...] He did not represent the events as I knew

68 Horst Möller, *Die Weimarer Republik. Eine unvollendete Demokratie* (Munich, 2006).

69 See Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, 1991); Pierre Rosanvallon, *La Démocratie inachevée. Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France* (Paris, 2000); id., *Democracy Past and Future*, ed. Samuel Moyn (New York, 2006).

70 Adam Przeworski, “Democracy. A Never-Ending Quest,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 19 (2016): 1-12, here 4; 7.

71 Siegfried Kracauer, *History. Last Things before the Last* [1969], (Princeton, 1995); see Stephanie Baumann, *Im Vorraum der Geschichte. Siegfried Kracauers „History – The Last Things before the Last“* (Konstanz, 2014); Sabine Biebl, “Arbeit an der Biographie. Siegfried Kracauers historisches Rohmaterial,” *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 11/4 (2017): 115-121; Till van Rahden, “Lumpen sammeln. Mit Siegfried Kracauer im Dickicht des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *HZ* 307 (2018): 319-340; Jörg Später, *Siegfried Kracauer. Eine Biographie* (Berlin, 2016).

them — events in flux and amenable to change — but conceived of them as elements of a period which was now definitely a *fait accompli*.

Kracauer reflected on the price at which a history written from the perspective of those affected by it came.⁷² Nevertheless, his concern about the teleological compulsion to which a history in broad strokes is subject prevailed.⁷³ For Kracauer, historical reality was characterized by fluidity, a chaotic multiplicity of simultaneous processes, constant change, and contingency; what happened simultaneously and was related to each other was most likely to occur “independently of one another”;

the historian’s “historical and social environment” is not a fairly self-contained whole but a fragile compound of frequently inconsistent endeavors in flux [...] Even supposing that contemporary influences were better definable than they actually are, their binding power would still be limited by the mind’s freedom to initiate new situations, new systems of relationships.⁷⁴

Such historical-theoretical reflections are not suitable for historical-political lessons of a Whig interpretation, but such a more complex understanding of historical change could enrich histories of Weimar democracy. The contradictoriness of the diversity of development, the individuality and stubbornness of people and their stories, the constant transformation of even the enduring and the long-term phenomenon must be taken into consideration. Koselleck speaks of the “absurdity of linear questions of origin.”⁷⁵ A processualist sociology such as Andrew Abbott’s,⁷⁶ in particular his understanding of historical change, which analyzes the concept of stability as an illusion (and thus points out the theoretical weakness of the way of speaking of the illusion of stability in Weimar), can offer suggestions here. This interpretation of the fragility of social order makes it possible to theoretically sharpen the question central to the history of Weimar democracy about the transformation of the “normal” crisis into the catastrophe of 1932/33: “the social process reaches a true crisis when all of its loose reproduction mechanisms accidentally happen to fail at once. Then large change can happen and can happen quite suddenly, even given relatively small actions.”⁷⁷

72 See Kracauer, *History*, 86 f.

73 *Ibid.*, 119.

74 *Ibid.*, 66 f.

75 Koselleck, *Theoriebedürftigkeit*, 308.

76 See Andrew Abbott, “Sequences of Social Events. Concepts and Methods for the Analysis of Order in Social Processes,” *Historical Methods* 16 (1983): 129-147; *id.*, *Time Matters. On Theory and Method* (Chicago, 2002), 37-63; 129-160; *id.*, *Processual Sociology* (Chicago, 2016).

77 See Abbott, 37th Annual Marc Bloch Lecture, Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, June 18, 2015, <http://home.uchicago.edu/aabbott/booksandpapers.html>.

When Kracauer insisted on “the mind’s freedom to initiate new situations,”⁷⁸ the possibility of the new in the midst of the existing references comes into view. In Reinhart Koselleck’s words, “the before and after of an event retains its own temporal quality, which can never be fully reduced to its longer-term conditions,”⁷⁹ an insight from which he concluded that the “causal genetic explanatory model” was generally called into question — explicitly with regard to what made National Socialism possible.⁸⁰ With regard to the “times of history,” Koselleck noted that history “is always about simultaneities of the non-simultaneous.”⁸¹

For Hannah Arendt, another witness, observer and thinker of this epoch, the “moral structure of Western society” had been destroyed and the “end of the bourgeois age” had occurred.⁸² What had happened could be “no longer understood within the framework of its categories” for historical and political science. This was not only about understanding totalitarian terror itself; totalitarianism had become the “stumbling block on the road toward the proper understanding of contemporary politics and society.” Mass murder, wars of aggression, imperial expansion of power, nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism were not new phenomena, but in the historical constellation since 1933 these elements, via “intermediary stages which are relatively normal and quite comprehensible,” crystallized into something unprecedented that shook all knowledge and forced the sciences to reconsider their hitherto unquestioned fundamental preconceptions.⁸³ In her book on totalitarianism, Arendt wrote “the totalitarian phenomenon can no more be explained from its elements and origins than other historical events of great significance, perhaps even less so.” National Socialism thus breaks “the continuity context of our history and the concepts and categories of our political thought.”⁸⁴

What conclusions can we draw from this for a history of democracy in Weimar? How can we avoid rationalizing National Socialism as a “relatively normal and quite comprehensible” problem explained by familiar means: “(not explained but) explained away

82 Hannah Arendt, “The Aftermath of Nazi Rule. Report from Germany [1950],” in id., *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York, 1994), 248-269, here 248; id., *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft. Antisemitismus, Imperialismus, totale Herrschaft* [1951], (Munich, 1996), 940. While the Western perspective lends itself to a critique of the categories of Western scholarship, Arendt does not ignore global phenomena of violence; see Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment. Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust* (New York, 2003), 69 f. On this and the following, see Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experience,” *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 212-236, here 224-232.

83 Arendt, “Social Science Techniques and the Study of the Concentration Camps [1950],” in id., *Essays in Understanding*, 232-247, here 232-234; see id., “A Reply to Eric Voegelin” [1953], in *ibid.*, 401-408, here 403.

84 Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge*, 946 f.; see id., “Mankind and Terror,” in id., *Essays in Understanding*, 297-306, here 302; Hoffmann, *Koselleck*, 225 f.; Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment*, 55.

78 Kracauer, *History*, 67.

79 Koselleck, “Darstellung, Ereignis und Struktur,” in id., *Vergangene Zukunft*, 144-157, here 151.

80 Koselleck, “Terror und Traum. Methodologische Anmerkungen zu Zeiterfahrungen im Dritten Reich,” in id., *Vergangene Zukunft*, 278-299, here 294-299; see idem, *Theoriebedürftigkeit*, 310.

81 Koselleck, “Historik und Hermeneutik,” in id., *Zeitschichten*, 97-118, here 101.

[...] through [...] reducing it to a previously known chain of causes and influences”?⁸⁵ How do Weimar interpretations succeed in “visualizing the distance that separates the twenties from the forties”⁸⁶ of the twentieth century? How can the history of this democracy be opened up and told in such a way that neither its elements protruding into National Socialism nor the qualitative novelty of the series of unprecedented transgression of limits that began in 1933, the escalation of violence, the transformation of values, the routinization of genocide are ignored?⁸⁷ And how does one do justice to the transnational, European dimension of the processes and phenomena without dismissing national differences, but also without short-circuiting them to exclusive explanans?⁸⁸

Studies of extremist milieus or nationalist traditions that have a transnational perspective and reflect the constitutive fragility of democracy need to include the possibility of the radically new — such as what Nikolaus Wachsmann calls the “primacy of political terror” within the first year of Nazi rule with its up to 200,000 political prisoners, accompanied by the exodus of political and intellectual elites of democracy.⁸⁹ The question of continuity is misleading when it focuses solely on pre-democratic or anti-democratic forces. Emancipative and destructive potentials, pluralistic and homogenizing tendencies of democracy collided and converged and formed constellations that were no less relevant to the question of continuity in 1933.⁹⁰

Hegemonic narratives and predominant periodizations can also be broken up by “subaltern” perspectives. This can be seen, for example, in a fleeting glance at how the majority society and state authorities deal with minorities such as the German Sinti or religious minorities as an indicator of their willingness to pluralism and the recognition of human rights.⁹¹ Here we find the tendency to place events of discrimination and marginalization of these groups in the Weimar Republic in a continuity context with the practice of persecution and annihilation under National Socialism.⁹² This contrasts with the self-interpretations of those affected, for whom a life began after 1933 that had little to do with their experience of a self-determined everyday life as German citizens before 1933, despite the traditions of Antiziganism — a time with an imperfect but not ineffective guarantee of fundamental rights and with officials and governments loyal to the

85 Arendt, Reply to Eric Voegelin, 407.

86 Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge*, 577.

87 See Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL. A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London, 2015), 82, 87, 135, 371, 427, 497, 626.

88 See William Selinger, “The Politics of Arendtian Historiography. European Federation and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,” *Modern Intellectual History* 13 (2016): 417-446; Boldt, *Deutschland*, 360, 369 f.

89 Wachsmann, *KL*, 27, 31, 78; see Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in History and Memory* (London, 2015), 87-117.

90 Inspiring despite a lack of comparisons in this area: Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*; id., *Germans into Nazis*; McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic*.

91 See Evans, *Third Reich*, 59-84; Müller, Review of: Gerhard Besier, Katarzyna Stokłosa, eds., *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2 vols. (Berlin 2013-2015). <https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-25255>.

92 See Karola Fings, *Sinti und Roma. Geschichte einer Minderheit* (Munich, 2016), 59-62; Robert P. Ericksen u. Susannah Heschel, “Introduction,” in id., *Betrayal. German Churches and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis, 1999), 1-21, here 12.

constitution.⁹³ Whether the victims were meant to be silenced by assumptions of continuity still requires discussion. The image of Weimar democracy changes fundamentally with such decisions about narrative voices and perspectives, in both directions.⁹⁴

What might a merging of the previously outlined insights into democracy and history look like? Pierre Rosanvallon encapsulates his approach to the history of democracy with his often-quoted saying that democracy does not simply “*have* a history. It is necessary to consider the more radical notion that democracy *is* a history.”⁹⁵ This approach aims to understand the history of democracy as a continued “history in the making.” It reconstructs how the “world view” of individuals and groups “has limited and structured their field of action.” In this perspective, “conceptions and ‘ideas’ [...] are material for structuring social experience” that “guide action, limit the field of the possible through the imaginable, and define the framework for controversies and conflicts.”⁹⁶

The more recent historiography of democracy, as far as its approach to the abundance of material is concerned, is currently primarily intellectual history, although its objects and sources come from a wide variety of fields. To give one example: Sociologist Austin Harrington has undertaken a reconstruction of democratic and pluralistic thinking in Germany, which in its deviation from alleged standards of “western” democracy has opened up theoretical democratic potentials. Harrington traces the thinking of German thinkers like Troeltsch as a mode of self-criticism and provincialization of hegemonic “western” discourses. Harrington reads thinkers like Troeltsch as “sensitive to the values of pluralism in cultural and historical life” and “broadly cosmopolitan,” “reminding Western European thought of its own culturally specific context of particularity.” This “peripheral” culturally pluralistic thinking thus managed to “decenter itself” out of the European intellectual traditions, as a thinking conscious of its limits, reflecting the provinciality of the “West.” At the same time, this way of thinking adhered to universal values with a “western” connotation: “Germany, in engaging constructively with Western European traditions of liberal-democratic political thought, [...] could remain open to the West and to Western universalistic concepts without copying or emulating specifically Western cultural models of institutional organization.”⁹⁷

Can the current research trends for which this example stands be reduced to a common denominator in terms of sociology of knowledge?

93 See Reinhard Florian, *Ich wollte nach Hause, nach Ostpreußen! Das Überleben eines deutschen Sinto*, ed. Jana Mechelhoff-Herezi and Uwe Neumärker (Berlin, 2012); Hildegard Lagrenne et al., *„Da wollten wir frei sein!“ Eine Sinti-Familie erzählt*, ed. Michail Krausnick (Neckargemünd, 2015); Detlef Garbe, *Zwischen Widerstand und Martyrium. Die Zeugen Jehovas im „Dritten Reich“* (Munich, 1997), 83-85; Falk Bersch, *Aberkannt! Die Verfolgung von Jehovas Zeugen im Nationalsozialismus und in der SBZ/DDR* (Berlin, 2017), 25 f.

94 See for example Jonathan Frankel, ed., *The Fate of the European Jews, 1939-1945. Continuity or Contingency?* (Oxford, 1997); Saul Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben. Auf dem Weg zu einer integrierten Geschichte* (Göttingen, 2007); idem, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the „Final Solution“* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

95 Pierre Rosanvallon, “Für eine Begriffs- und Problemgeschichte des Politischen,” *Mittelweg* 36 20/6 (2011): 43-66, here 49; also see id., *Democracy: id., Le Peuple introuvable. Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France* (Paris, 1998); id., *La Démocratie inachevée; id., Demokratische Legitimität. Unparteilichkeit - Reflexivität - Nähe* (Hamburg, 2010).

96 Rosanvallon, *Begriffs- und Problemgeschichte*, here 49 f.; 55 f.; id., “Toward a Philosophical History of the Political,” in id., *Democracy*, 59-76, here 66.

97 Harrington, *German Cosmopolitan Social Thought*, 5-7.

In view of pioneers such as Ursula Büttner and Eberhard Kolb, newer approaches cannot be considered a generational project, even if a significant number of younger researchers are included.⁹⁸ A more intrepid and perhaps irreverent approach to traditional patterns of interpretation seems to be more common in Anglophone research,⁹⁹ but the history of democracy in particular is not always the strength of Weimar research outside Germany.¹⁰⁰ Two similarities are more noticeable: on the one hand, the orientation towards political theory, namely the theory of democracy, and less towards the social science and social theory varieties that had been en vogue for years, which looks like a common process of paradigm change in the history of knowledge; on the other hand, intellectual dissatisfaction with traditional categories whose heuristic suitability has lost its evidence in the face of confrontation with a new political confusion.¹⁰¹ Changes in political experience and scientific methods seem to work together here in our time.¹⁰²

IV. Normativity matters

But how does research on Weimar that is sensitized to the historical fluidity and fragility of democracy deal with the inevitable normative questions? All too often, such approaches are misunderstood as relativistic. The opposite is true. But it is a normativity without complacency and without a narrative of unchallenged progress. Rather, at the center of such approaches are the core normative issues of our civilization.

The catastrophes of the twentieth century led Hannah Arendt or Reinhart Koselleck to reject any historical-philosophical rationalization of a coherent historical course, any idea of telos or reason in history.¹⁰³ Auschwitz does not permit “logificatio ex post.”¹⁰⁴ History is absurd, without hope of consolation.¹⁰⁵ But this understanding does not lead to the abandonment of every normative attitude. With historicist instruments, as it were, a historical thinker like Koselleck solves a problem of historicism. He points out a supratemporal norm both by reconstructing it from the normative self-understandings of past times and by asserting it against the absurdity of history as a

98 See Braune, Dreyer, *Republikanischer Alltag*; Müller and Tooze, *Normalität und Fragilität*.

99 See Ian P. Beacock, *Emotions and Political Violence in Weimar Germany. Reflections on the Political Subject* [2018]; id., *Best of All Possible Worlds? Weimar Historiography and the Paradox of Recovery*, West Coast Germanists' Workshop, University of California, Davis, March 17.-18, 2018; Eric D. Weitz, “Weimar Germany and its Histories,” *Central European History* 43 (2010): 581-591; Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties*.

100 See Gordon, McCormick, *Weimar Thought*; Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 363-365.

101 From a historical perspective, see Ariane Leendertz and Wencke Meteling, eds., *Die neue Wirklichkeit. Semantische Neuvermessungen und Politik seit den 1970er-Jahren* (Frankfurt, 2016); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); Nolte, *Jenseits des Westens?*; for examples of symptomatic texts: Heinrich Geißelberger, ed., *Die große Regression. Eine internationale Debatte über die geistige Situation der Zeit* (Berlin, 2017); Robert D. Kaplan, *The Return of Marco Polo's World. War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 2018); Ivan Krastev, *Europadämmerung. Ein Essay* (Berlin, 2017); Levitsky, Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*; Edward Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism* (London, 2017); Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy. Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

102 See Koselleck, “Erfahrungswandel und Methodenwechsel. Eine historisch-anthropologische Skizze,” in id., *Zeitschichten*, 27-77.

103 See Hoffmann, *Koselleck*, 224-226, 233 f.

104 Koselleck, “Geschichte, Recht und Gerechtigkeit,” in id., *Zeitschichten*, 336-358, here 349.

105 See Jan Eike Dunkhase, *Absurde Geschichte. Reinhart Kosellecks historischer Existentialismus* (Marbach, 2015).

fundamental precondition of human existence in general. This point is neither about genealogies of human rights ideas nor about definitions of a minimal democracy, but about a civilizational minimum as a genuinely historical-theoretical, in view of historical experience necessarily transhistorical, anthropologically fundamental condition of possible histories:¹⁰⁶ Even those who are not able to recognize in history a “rational compulsion to progressively transform the development of human power into legally secure and even more into just states,” because “our own experience blocks itself against the temptation of this hopeful and utopian interpretation of history,” nevertheless cannot completely escape this civilizing idea “because our chances of survival depend on a minimum of legal order, however much it must be won and reproduced anew from day to day.”¹⁰⁷

Histories of Weimar democracy that follow this train of thought combine historicization with the awareness of the fragility of civilization and the need to defend it, an awareness that Arendt, Brecht, Kracauer or Koselleck, all contemporaries of that epoch of catastrophes, had developed.¹⁰⁸ The assertion of a civilizing, legally protected minimum that upholds human dignity — including the dignity of minorities —, the defense of the “idea of humanity” and the freedom that constitutes humanity, became the non-negotiable line of defense against the breach of civilization and totalitarianism.¹⁰⁹ At a time when the protection of minorities seems more fragile and democracy, which has functioned for so long after 1945 as a delicately balanced system of checks and balances based on the conceptions of human dignity and fundamental rights, is once again being reinterpreted by growing forces as the tyranny of the majority, this is a decidedly normative position.

In the Weimar Republic, human rights and human dignity were regarded as the basis of legitimacy. In a political manifesto for the Brüning government in 1932, for example, those supporting the Republic formulated views that can be placed in a history of Christian human rights ideas.¹¹⁰ Georg Jellinek’s human rights history of 1904

106 While Koselleck’s position can be contextualized in its historic moment, his argument, which operates on a different level, cannot be accused of constructing a misleading genealogy of human rights since the 1970s that centers on Auschwitz or of

depriving democracy of its “political dimension” and “socio-historical dimension” for the sake of a “human rights based democracy” and shrink it to a “minimal democracy”; Marcel Gauchet, “Democracy. From One Crisis to Another,” *Social*

Imaginaires 1 (2015): 163-187, here 182; Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 6.

107 Koselleck, “Geschichte, Recht und Gerechtigkeit,” 347.

108 See Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment*; Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe. German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 2000); Dan Diner, ed., *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz* (Frankfurt, 1988); Moïshe Postone, Eric Santner, eds., *Catastrophe and Meaning. The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 2003).

109 Hannah Arendt, “Approaches to the „German Problem,” 115; id., “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility,” 131 f.; id., Reply to Eric Voegelin, 403; 408; see Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment*, 47-106.

110 See Oscar Müller, ed., *Krisis. Ein politisches Manifest* (Weimar, 1932); Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2015); Hans Joas, *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte* (Berlin, 2015).

was widely discussed, commentaries on the Weimar constitution included sections devoted to fundamental rights, the judiciary began to orient itself — albeit not always in the sense of the constitution’s authors — to the development of fundamental rights.¹¹¹ Erwin Planck, an actor of the “Prussian action” [*Preußenschlag*] of 1932, recognized that the careless handling of “the constitutional rights of others” resulted in the abandonment of the “most sacred human rights” and soon joined the resistance against National Socialism. In reaction to the events of 1932/33, Arnold Brecht in exile developed a political theory that focused on the protection of human rights, “sacrosanct minimum standards,” “humanitarian standards” which were not to be subject to majority decision-making, in order to find a way out of the dilemmas which democracies experienced in times of existential crises.¹¹²

Before that, Ernst Troeltsch, the Protestant theologian, cultural philosopher and liberal politician, had already elevated the “idea of human rights” to the center of his “cultural synthesis” of democracies after the First World War and made human rights the basis of a “European ethos.” “People” were “much more similar to each other than the theories would have it.” The “contrasts” of Anglo-Saxon-Roman and German political traditions that were exaggerated during the war were “ultimately less exclusive [...] than they seem. Both systems presuppose the idea of the autonomy of man and personality, the critical attitude against reality and tradition that the Enlightenment created.” In a universal expansion of this perspective, he described “democracy as the most difficult constitution, morally the most demanding, but also the one demanded by God, nature and humanity.”¹¹³ The recognition of historical and cultural difference on the one hand and at the same time the search for a foundation of universal values on the other hand were the problems with which Troeltsch’s “historism” book,¹¹⁴ written during the First World War and self-critical of the limits of the Eurocentric world view, also wrestled. This civilizational minimum of human dignity and human rights, familiar at that time as well as a fundamental condition of possible histories in general, is a resilient normative basis for a

111 See Roman Schnur, ed., *Zur Geschichte der Erklärung der Menschenrechte* (Darmstadt, 1964); Hans Carl Nipperdey, ed., *Die Grundrechte und Grundpflichten der Reichsverfassung. Kommentar zum zweiten Teil der Reichsverfassung*, 3 vols. (Berlin 1929-30); Gerhard Anschütz, *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 11. August 1919. Ein Kommentar für Wissenschaft und Praxis*, 14. Auflage (Berlin 1932); Gertrude Lübke-Wolff, “Der Schutz verfassungsrechtlich verbürgter Individualrechte. Die Rolle des Reichsgerichts,” in Hermann Wellenreuther, Claudia Schnurmann, ed., *Die amerikanische Verfassung und deutsch-amerikanisches Verfassungsdenken. Ein Rückblick über 200 Jahre* (New York, 1991), 411-434; Kathrin Groh, *Demokratische Staatsrechtslehre in der Weimarer Republik. Von der konstitutionellen Staatslehre zur Theorie des modernen demokratischen Verfassungsstaats* (Tübingen, 2010).

112 Brecht, *Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, 303 f; 307; id., *Democracy*, 216-222; 224; see id., “The Search for Absolutes in Political and Legal Philosophy,” *Social Research* 7 (1940): 201-228; as a principle organizing the historical narrative in: id., *Prelude to Silence*; also see Hannah Bethke, *Das politische Denken Arnold Brechts. Eine transatlantische Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2013), 236-264; 289-291; 338-342.

113 Ernst Troeltsch, “Naturrecht und Humanität in der Weltpolitik [1922],” in: id., *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 15: *Schriften zur Politik und Kulturphilosophie*

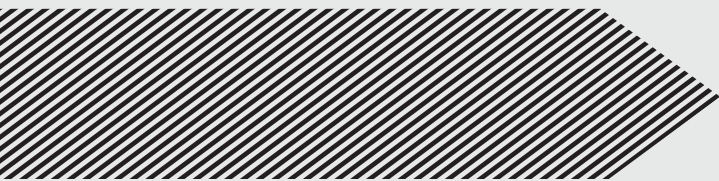
(1918-1923), ed. Gangolf Hübinger (Berlin, 2002), 477-512, here 510, 508, 505 f., 500.

114 See Troeltsch, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 16:

Der Historismus und seine Probleme. Erstes Buch: Das logische Problem der Geschichtsphilosophie [1922], ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (Berlin, 2008), 1025-1028, 1031, 1048.

history of democracy that does not sidestep the fragility of its subject nor that of its insights.

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Conference Reports

THE TRANSMISSION OF FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, 1840-1940

Workshop at the German Historical Institute, March 8–9, 2019. Conveners: Nicholas Osborne (New York Historical Society), Atiba Pertilla (GHI Washington). Participants: Joan Flores-Villalobos (Ohio State University), David Hochfelder (University at Albany, SUNY), Rachel Knecht (Brandeis University), Peter Knight (University of Manchester), Casey Marina Lurtz (Johns Hopkins University), Owen Lyons (Ryerson University), Linda Przybyszewski (University of Notre Dame), Poorva Rajaram (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Jaclyn Schultz (University of California-Santa Cruz), James Taylor (Lancaster University), Heather Welland (Binghamton University, SUNY), Michael Zakim (Tel Aviv University).

Case studies of the history of knowledge have tended to focus on almost all spheres of activity except the marketplace, while many historians of capitalism pay close attention to culture but have not focused on the specific techniques of transmitting financial practices within and across groups. Centering a workshop on the concept of financial knowledge and its transmission was intended to provide a way for historians of knowledge, and capitalism, as well as media studies scholars, to think about a variety of financial behaviors at the individual, household, or microeconomic scale, from insuring and saving to borrowing and spending, and the broad array of genres (including texts, images, and audiovisual materials) that have been used to convey this knowledge over time. The workshop brought together research examining how popular and elite discourses create bodies of knowledge which shape financial institutions, products, regulatory frameworks, and conventional wisdom. The panels covered a timespan of roughly a century and encompassed many corners of the world, from India and the Philippines during periods of British and American imperial domination to Victorian Britain and Weimar Germany to the antebellum U.S. northeast and rural southern Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century.

The workshop format grouped the twelve papers into six sessions. The discussion of each paper began with a brief statement from the author contextualizing the case study. After this summary, workshop participants spent roughly half an hour discussing the paper while the author listened in without contributing. Once this period was

over, the author addressed the most salient elements of the discussion. After each pair of papers had been discussed individually, a discussion of their common themes followed. Authors commented positively afterward that this format gave them useful leeway to efficiently address similar questions and points of interest.

In the first panel, discussion of the concept of financial knowledge began with case studies of its transmission from both the top down and the ground up. David Hochfelder's paper traced efforts by U.S. officials in the post-1898 Philippines to establish a postal savings system as a strategy to create an "Asian model" of American democracy. The paper illustrated how attempts to shape financial knowledge often are tied to specific visions of politics and morals. American administrators believed that both the racial identity they imputed to Filipinos and the overshadowing influence of the Catholic Church meant that workers were improperly oriented toward their future salvation rather than wage-labor agricultural production for export markets. Inculcating thrift was predicted to establish a new "financial morality" among the Filipino public and thereby prepare the populace for civic responsibility. This tutelary project, however, ignored preexisting savings institutions and shifted focus to children in the face of reluctance by working adults to participate. Despite such modifications, the project was far from successful (only 3 percent of Filipinos were depositors by 1930). Casey Marina Lurtz's paper examined economic life in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas at the turn of the twentieth century by analyzing *libros de conocimientos*, registers kept by municipal authorities in which private individuals voluntarily recorded small debts and other financial agreements made with other members of their community. The act of recording such transactions, Lurtz argued, was a signal of popular interest in exercising legal and political rights and not only a narrow interest in the fulfillment of contracts. Respect for the formal metaphors of mutual obligation was of greater importance than strict attention to profit-seeking; turning to a state institution was a way of reinforcing community bonds, and having a mechanism for pointing out when they had been transgressed, rather than a purely economic strategy for pursuing upward mobility.

The second panel examined linkages drawn between financial knowledge and ideas about race and the self. Poorva Rajaram's study used the history of a life insurance system developed for Indian post office workers to study the intensification of British rule in India from the

1850s onward. This was marked by the increasing use of population censuses and other tools to create knowledge about Indians and expand the scope of governable activity. One component was the development of the colonial post office, which facilitated the spread of information to all corners of the British dominion. The large bureaucracy needed to manage the postal system, in turn, created a new cadre of government employees. British authorities decided to establish a life insurance program for the post office personnel in hopes of shifting employees' loyalties away from extended-family economic structures organized around agrarian production and towards wage labor that supported a nuclear family household. At the same time, actuarial categorization defining Indians as "good," "bad," or "ordinary" often had little relationship to actual profitability but demonstrated how financial knowledge can include the use of quantitative techniques to reify cultural values (including pseudoscience). In her paper on children's financial education in the antebellum United States, Jaclyn Schultz examined the variety of strategies crafted in Sunday schools, secular institutions, and other forums. The development of a specifically American conceptualization of childhood as a distinct phase of life, Schultz suggested, depended in part on "pecuniary pedagogy": encouraging children to imagine themselves as future earners, spenders, and givers. Teaching children about the financial practice of philanthropy enabled them to see themselves as moral and powerful actors. This capacity to give was frequently coded as racial: instruction was almost always targeted towards white children (for example in schoolbook illustrations) while African-American and American Indian children were typically imagined as the targets of philanthropic projects.

In the third panel, Joan Flores-Villalobos and Heather Welland examined how individuals and institutions manage complexity in the creation of financial knowledge. Flores-Villalobos' paper examined financial management by women whose relatives were killed during the construction of the Panama Canal (1904-1914). Workers from Barbados and other Caribbean islands traveled in the tens of thousands to participate in building the canal and experienced high rates of death and injury. The paper studied how women leveraged British colonial and diplomatic authorities against American canal officials to seek compensation settlements for their relatives' deaths, illustrating how one form of financial knowledge can be methods of navigating bureaucracies to pursue material interests. Welland's paper on the development of small-sum ("industrial") life insurance in

nineteenth-century Britain examined the wide variety of pamphlets, fiction, and other didactic materials generated by this economic sector and argued that an important element in its success was its promise to provide policyholders with financial knowledge — information about interest rates, payment terms, and other specific aspects. Promoting the idea that with sufficient knowledge anyone could become an expert in deciding which financial products were appropriate for their circumstances, insurance officials suggested that part of being a responsible family member and a modern citizen was knowing how to use financial knowledge.

The papers in the fourth panel by Linda Przybyszewski and Michael Zakim examined how financial knowledge has helped to orient the self toward the market. Przybyszewski's paper took up the history of home economics and the discipline's quest to quantify the cost of social reproduction rather than treating household management as an innate set of skills women performed without need for compensation or deep mental effort. Her paper focused on guides to dressmaking as examples of this shift. In place of older systems which valued using goods until they wore out, the new discipline of home economics encouraged women to embrace the consumption of new products, use quantitative techniques to determine their most efficient uses, and move on to upgraded versions in the face of planned obsolescence. Guides to dressmaking embraced aesthetic appeal — fashion — as the framework for this reevaluation and urged women to embrace financial techniques and terminology to ensure they were both fashionable and thrifty. Zakim's paper focused on mercantile clerks in the antebellum United States whose labor created and circulated financial knowledge that delineated the burgeoning capitalist economy. Zakim suggested this era marked an important historical turning point when a self-conscious system of capitalism emerged through the creation of its foundational "product": the idea of an omnipresent, unified, and preexisting "market." This project was accomplished through clerks' work to record financial transactions and thereby make them legible for reproduction, aggregation, and broadcast distribution. The naturalization of the market as a timeless source of stability helped to create an authoritative reference point in an economic system devoted to the endless circulation of goods. Clerks came to see and value themselves as both participants and activists in the process through their own perennial quests to refashion themselves through consumption.

The fifth panel focused on professional workers as purveyors of financial knowledge. Rachel Knecht provided a study of actuaries in postbellum American insurance companies, examining both internal discussions within the profession at associational meetings and the rhetoric directed outward to potential policy holders and others. Actuaries, who were exclusively male, used tropes of disinterestedness that largely served to justify cloaking the mathematical labor (often performed by women) on which insurance corporations' calculations of their liabilities and profitability depended. Taylor's paper, set in Great Britain in the same era, focused on the "outside brokers" who acted as intermediaries between the brokers authorized to trade on the floor of the London Stock Exchange and the general public. The development of an investing public, Taylor concluded that the development of an investing public often depended on the brokers' use of media to create "a subjective market, influenced by personality, perception and emotion" rather than purely rational decisions by prosperous Britons to diversify their asset portfolios.

The sixth and final paper session examined specific genres as conveyors of financial knowledge: investment manuals and films. Peter Knight examined the growing number of publications offering advice to American stock market investors in the late Gilded Age. Financial advice and its reading, he argued, had performative effects: the genre of investment advice brought into existence the market it took for granted. In the final paper of the workshop, Owen Lyons traced the appearance of a new type of German film in the 1920s: *Börsenfilme* (stock exchange films), silent movies which typically included scenes set at stock exchanges, banks, and other financial institutions. This category of films, issued as Germany suffered the convulsions that followed the hyperinflation crisis, made the complex global market economy visible and established its cultural preeminence. White-collar financial workers, Lyons suggested, were likely among the most avid consumers of the films, whose complicated and exciting plots helped justify their labor and its importance in an increasingly financialized economy, producing "a fantasy of empowerment for a populace beset by ongoing crisis." In this case, financial knowledge could also be a tool for self-deception.

In the closing discussion, participants largely agreed that the usefulness of the term "financial knowledge" is that it allows for a distinction from the totalizing term "economic knowledge" and opens space for studying and comparing individual experiences of the economy.

The similarities in the kinds of questions raised by the widely disparate case studies indicated there is much still to be learned about the causal connections between cultural production and economic behavior and showed that financial knowledge is a pervasive but underacknowledged form of cultural knowledge.

Atiba Pertilla (GHI Washington)

THE POLITICS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND GLOBALISM IN MODERN GERMANY

Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI), March 22-23, 2019, organized in collaboration with the Leibniz Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam, and the University of British Columbia. Conveners: Rüdiger Graf (Leibniz Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam), Anne Schenderlein (GHI), Quinn Slobodian (Wellesley College), Heidi Tworek (University of British Columbia). Participants: Mario Daniels (Georgetown University), Martin Deuerlein (University of Tübingen), Sebastian Gehrig (University of Roehampton), Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University), Benjamin Hein (Stanford University), David Lazar (GHI), Clara Maier (Hamburg Institute for Social Research), Wencke Meteling (Johns Hopkins University SAIS/University of Marburg), Steven Press (Stanford University), Anna Ross (University of Warwick), Adam Seipp (Texas A&M University), James Stafford (University of Bielefeld), Lauren Stokes (Northwestern University), Heidi Tworek (University of British Columbia).

The conference centered on sovereignty as a basic concept of German history and on its relation to globalism. Whereas sovereignty is a term from the sources as well as an analytical concept, “globalism” has recently become a political slur among the far right. There was consensus among participants to treat sovereignty not as a property, but as an aspirational political and/or legal claim made under specific historical circumstances. In their opening remarks, conveners Rüdiger Graf, Quinn Slobodian and Heidi Tworek laid out the aim of the conference, which was trifold: to advance a conceptual history of German sovereignty, to explore the interrelation between sovereignty and globalism, and to show why German history (still) matters. The approach was well chosen, not least because it did not allow for any easy answers while it shed new light on Germany’s and Germans’ place in history. In contrast to two common narratives on sovereignty in the twentieth century, namely its decline and the supposed transfer of sovereignty from the nation-state to inter- or supranational organizations, the conference painted a far more complex picture by examining the history of competing and often seemingly contradictory German claims for sovereignty in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both the papers and the discussion successfully countered simplistic juxtapositions and false analogies such as “national sovereignty” versus “globalism,” or “internationalism and free trade” versus “nationalism and protectionism.”

The first panel, "The Defense of Ownership and Control in a Global Age," opened with a paper by Heidi Tworek on German communicational sovereignty in the Age of Empire. She showed how the German Reich tried to gain control of world communication by setting up its own news agency, *Wolff's Telegraphen-Büro*, first on an imperial, then on a global scale, until Wolff was restricted to German territories after World War I. Contemporaries were aware that Germany's status as a world power depended on its ability to produce, disseminate, and control news on land, at sea and in the air. Thus communicational sovereignty became multidimensional, it combined technology and business, and it aimed at national security *avant la lettre*. James Stafford focused on the German Empire, "tariff autonomy" and the "system of commercial treaties" at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Challenging two competing interpretations of German tariff policies, one economic, one political, he argued that economics had its own politics, and that legal issues played a major role in the European trade convention network. He convincingly argued that "protectionist internationalism" was by no means contradictory. Contemporaries regarded the national economy as a closed, coherent entity which could then interrelate with the world economy from a position of strength. Protectionist internationalism was a strong rationale in the quest for national sovereignty and for entry into a heavily regulated international trade order that was set up to protect the nation-state and national interests. Anna Ross took a closer look at another form of economic nationalism. Taking the case of the German legation in Spanish-occupied Tangier from 1941 to 1944, she analyzed the relationship between property and sovereignty. In order to substantiate their legal claim on property outside the German Reich, the German legation drew on their own genealogies of property ownership. As Ross pointed out, this was a common feature in property seizures during regime transitions.

The second panel dealt with "Gold, Diamonds, and Monetary Sovereignty." In his paper on the German colonial empire, Steven Press described how the diamond finds in the Namib Desert in 1908 boosted colonial sovereignty's price tag. Whereas the forbidden Diamond Zone proved a death camp for indigenous people working there, the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* as a private company made huge profits from its de facto "mining sovereignty," drawing anger from Social Democrats in the German parliament. In equations of sovereignty, commodities could have cash equivalency, but they also take on a deeper significance, as Quinn Slobodian showed in his paper on "Exit

Fantasies: Global Goldbugs and the Rise of the German Far Right.” Political commentators in Germany and elsewhere often refer to a split in the right-wing party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) between an extreme right wing and a more liberal wing. Slobodian instead hinted at the agenda behind the party’s foundation in 2013, i.e. its demand to re-establish gold as an alternative currency to the hated Euro. After the world financial crash of 2008 AfD members such as economist Peter Boehringer monetized on a growing mistrust among parts of the German population in the democratic state’s ability to manage monetary and currency issues. They advocated for gold as an exit from the Central European Bank’s “monetary socialism” (*Geldsozialismus*). In a similar fashion, right-wing thinkers for decades have railed against the egalitarian movements’ “inflationary” social demands since the 1960s. The AfD’s thinking on currency as well as immigration issues is embedded in a bleak zero-sum vision of the world, as encapsulated in the anti-immigrant slogan “the boat is full,” and curiously enough, from a politically very different angle, a similar zero-sum vision shapes the environmental discourse on “limited natural resources.”

“German Visions of Sovereignty through Decentralization” was the topic of the third panel. In his talk on globalism and sovereignty in German social sciences, Martin Deuerlein traced the discourse on interdependence from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1970s. During the nineteenth century, the discourse was predominantly progressive and optimistic, but it only referred to “civilized nations,” not colonies. As Deuerlein insisted, internationalists were not cosmopolitans. World War I abruptly ended any optimism about an interconnected world. Social scientists now diagnosed a disquieting “gap” between reality and concepts of the world. When in the 1970s the discourse on interdependence was revived, it was closely connected to a perceived “crisis of sovereignty” and “crisis of the nation-state.” Clara Maier analyzed German intellectuals’ narratives of sovereignty during the crucial decade after 1945, when Germany not only lost its sovereignty but also parts of its territory, and states were radically broken up. The occidental thinkers (*abendländische Denker*) among German intellectuals, many of whom had emigrated to the U.S. and the U.K. during the Nazi era, dissociated Prussia from Germany and accused it of colonialism against the South German states. Economist Wilhelm Röpke, whose rationale was part of a broader array of Christian Democratic thinking, denounced Prussianism as a feature of socialism. He recommended to decentralize and federalize Germany and to

liberate the economy. Under the umbrella of the emerging Cold War, it was self-congratulatory for Catholics and Protestants alike to put the blame for the “German catastrophe” on Prussia. Maier concluded that this deep ideological embedding of the Federal Republic in the post-1945 international order lost its plausibility when in 1989-91, Prussia and the German nation-state came back into focus and a new global order arose.

Rüdiger Graf opened the fourth panel on “Sovereignty in the Constraints of International Institutions” with a paper on sovereignty and the war crimes trials in Leipzig after World War I. Facing an almost universal wave of national indignation, the Allies dropped their demand that German authorities extradite the emperor and several hundreds of generals, other military personnel and high-ranking politicians. Instead they transferred the trials to the highest German court. In Germany, this was widely seen as reaffirming Germany’s status as a sovereign state, which had been severely damaged by the Paris treaties, especially article 231 (“German war guilt article”). In the end the Leipzig court convicted only a tiny fraction of those charged with war crimes, which is why some researchers consider those trials an unsuccessful precursor to the Nuremberg trials, while others argue that the German judges (at least partly) applied international criminal law. According to Graf, the trials were neither a failure nor a success. Rather the “transitional injustice” of Leipzig contributed some stability to the beleaguered Weimar Republic. How crucial it was for both German states to be legally admitted to the international community after World War II became evident in Sebastian Gehrig’s talk about “German Legal Exceptionalism: Sovereignty, National Division, and the Accession of the Two Germanies to the United Nations.” During the early 1960s, the GDR campaigned to gain admission to the UN as a backdoor to be recognized as a sovereign state. Like the Federal Republic, the GDR referred to constitutional lawyer Georg Jellinek to argue its case. In his opus magnum, “General Theory of the State” (*Allgemeine Staatsrechtslehre*, 1900), Jellinek stated that according to international law, a state needed three elements to be recognized as a sovereign state: a state territory, a state population, and state power. After giving up its claim to be the sole representative of Germany, the GDR turned to socialist constitutional law. It picked up the rhetoric of decolonization and claimed the “self-determination” of the East German population and “socialist citizenship,” a stance other socialist nations approved of. Finally, and in difference to other divided nations, both German states were admitted to the UN, though

technically they represented one state only — a single exception in the history of the UN.

The fifth and last panel, titled “Mobility and Migration as Challenges to Sovereignty,” dealt with a particularly hot topic given the so-called “European refugee crisis” and the heated migration debate in the U.S. Benjamin Hein presented on “The Migration Story and the Global Turn in German Citizenship” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The citizenship law the German Parliament passed in 1913 was based on the ethno-nationalistic principle of *ius sanguinis*. This is why some researchers attribute it to the political far-right, though Liberals and Social Democrats also voted for it, Hein argued, and ethnicity is built into any liberal constitution. He characterized Liberals and Social Democrats as “ethno-cosmopolitans” who understood migration as the essence of being German. Parts of the German discourse can be traced back to the U.S. debate on whiteness after the Civil War, when whiteness became defined more narrowly with a focus on mobility. In their fight for citizenship reform in Germany, ethno-cosmopolitans faced opposition from nationalists like Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke, who praised rootedness and “soil” and railed against cosmopolitanism. The huge success of the Social Democrats in the national elections of 1912 brought a political sea change, as Hein pointed out, and it boosted the “migration story.” The German citizenship law of 1913 did away with the requirement of residence in a German state; instead it struck a balance between the principles of national “soil” and national identity based on “Germanic mobility,” granting citizenship to six million “Auslandsdeutsche” (Germans who lived outside the German Reich). In his talk about “Sovereignty, the U.S. Army, and Everyday Life in the Federal Republic,” Adam Seipp explored what he called “modulated sovereignty.” Given that 22 million U.S. Americans lived and worked in Germany, Seipp rightly assumed that the massive U.S. military presence must have affected the way Germans experienced, redefined and renegotiated notions of their (limited) sovereignty. Taking German-American labor relations as a case in point, he described how Germans who worked for the U.S. Armed Forces lost parts of their sovereignty during the week and regained it on the weekend and how German workers and unions negotiated their rights with U.S. authorities through different historical phases, at one point campaigning: “Germany is not Disneyland!” Curiously enough, in 1990 a Bavarian court ruled that it was illegal for the U.S. Armed Forces to leave Germany and to lay off German employees.

Lauren Stokes explored German asylum politics in the jet age, or “Sovereignty at the Schönefeld Airport.” For asylum seekers from socialist countries, it was an open secret that Berlin constituted a formidable gap: fly to Schönefeld Airport, take the subway U6 from Friedrichstraße to West-Berlin, then board a plane to any destination. At its peak during the 1980s, 400,000 asylum seekers per year took this route. It was obsolete for West German authorities to treat the inner-German border as an international border in order to enforce passport controls, just as it was inconceivable to erect any physical barrier because of what they called the “wall of shame.” So police took to racial screening on the U6, forcing those they apprehended to apply for asylum in the Federal Republic. When asylum numbers grew accordingly, a desperate Ministry of the Interior negotiated with East German authorities to implement visa requirements for all Sri Lankans entering the GDR, because they were the biggest group of asylum seekers. The “Berlin gap” was closed, Stokes concluded, but a dubious racial paper wall was erected.

The teaching and study of German history is no longer a given at history departments outside of Germany. Like other European national histories, it has been sidelined due to the global turn in the discipline of history. The conference made clear why history as a discipline cannot and should not go global without keeping an eye on the national track, and it delivered compelling arguments why German history still matters long after the Holocaust and why we as historians should pay more attention to the concept and idea of German sovereignty. Conference participants convincingly treated sovereignty as a contested, flexible, multilayered, and relational concept, whereas globalism fell somewhat short.

The conference participants articulated many reasons why it is worthwhile to pursue the topic of German sovereignty and globalism: First, the topic is refreshing since it combines transnational and global angles with core questions on German territory, population, and state power — the three elements deemed necessary for sovereignty (plus international recognition as a fourth element). Second, the lens of sovereignty sheds new light on how Germans perceived of themselves, and of how Germany related to the world. It opens up a multifarious, dynamic, globally entangled German history. Third, German globalism is a huge desideratum in historical research. Which world projects came out of the German space? What was German global thinking like? Which ideas of the world

did Germans form? Furthermore, “sovereignty is a legal claim with magic power. We can’t write a history *of* sovereignty” (James Stafford), but we can write histories of how sovereignty was understood, redefined, negotiated, acknowledged, questioned, or denied. A history of German sovereignty claims and globalism can also “push back against simplistic assumptions” (Heidi Tworek) such as ‘sovereignty’ versus ‘globalization,’ ‘nationalism’ versus ‘globalism,’ or ‘good, liberal cosmopolitans and free-traders’ versus ‘bad, racially minded nationalists and protectionists.’ Moreover, “sovereignty has a different chronology than territoriality” (Benjamin Hein), which runs counter to simplistic narratives such as “neo-liberalism since the 1980s hollowed out national sovereignty.” In addition, questions of sovereignty transcend societal sub-spheres that too often in our discipline are treated separately in economic history, political history, military history, etc. The topic of sovereignty and globalism is very well suited to bring historians and histories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany back together. And finally, the topic closely relates to our moment in time.

Wencke Meteling (University of Marburg)

ENTANGLING THE PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC WORLDS: PAST AND PRESENT A SYMPOSIUM COMMEMORATING HELMUT SCHMIDT

Conference at the University of California, Berkeley, March 25-27, 2019. Co-sponsored by the GHI and the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius. In cooperation with the Institute of European Studies & Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Conveners: Sarah Behringer (GHI/Max Weber Foundation Pacific Network), Wencke Meteling (Johns Hopkins University), Sören Urbansky (GHI). Participants: Vinod K. Aggarwal (University of California, Berkeley), Ronnie C. Chang (Hang Lung Group Ltd., Hong Kong), Mario Daniels (Georgetown University), Lukas K. Danner (Miami-Florida International University/Bond University/China Foreign Affairs University/University of New Haven), Jeroen Dewulf (University of California, Berkeley), Karen Donfried (German Marshall Fund, Washington, DC), Michael Göring (ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Hamburg), Shihoko Goto (Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC), Ulises Granados (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Mexico City), Do Thanh Hai (Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam), Anna Hayes (James Cook University), Patrick Heinz (Deputy Consul General in San Francisco, German Federal Foreign Office), Merle Ingenfeld (GHI/University of Cologne), Axel Jansen (GHI), Steffen Kern (European Securities and Markets Authority / Mainz University), Simone Lässig (GHI), Manfred Lahnstein (ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Hamburg), Ann Lee (independent scholar, New York City), Richard Madsen (University of California, San Diego), Christoph von Marschall (*Der Tagesspiegel*), Matt K. Matsuda (Rutgers University), Sarah C. M. Paine (U.S. Naval War College), Eberhard Sandschneider (Free University Berlin), Ming Shi (Freelance Journalist, Berlin), Lok Sui (University of California, Berkeley), Theo Sommer (*DIE ZEIT*), Kristina Spohr (Johns Hopkins University), Peer Steinbrück (Former Minister of Finance, Germany), Amy Studdart (German Marshall Fund, Washington, DC), Rudolf Wagner (Heidelberg University), Franz Waldenberger (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo), Andrew R. Wilson (U.S. Naval War College), David Wolff (Hokkaido University, Sapporo), Wen-hsin Yeh (University of California, Berkeley).

This conference in memory of Social Democratic politician and former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1918-2015) aimed to enhance the present debate on the rise of East Asian powers and the remaking of global order. Helmut Schmidt was a pioneer among Western political leaders in foreseeing this transformation, especially China's growing

economic and political influence. He advocated for a dialogue among equals at a time when the world was still divided into “communist” and “capitalist” camps. At UC Berkeley, historians, social scientists, journalists, policy experts and former friends of Schmidt’s discussed the shift from an international order centered on the Atlantic to one in which East Asian powers and notably China have gained significant influence. In his opening keynote, “Shifting Tides,” Matt K. Matsuda explored central themes of the conference, drawing special attention to connections between different historical events and discourses surrounding “the Pacific” and “the Atlantic,” alluding to an ongoing “global shift” from an “Atlantic” past to a “Pacific” future.

The first panel addressed imperialism, decolonization, and the Cold War histories of the Pacific region. From a global perspective, Sarah C. M. Paine outlined China’s, Russia’s and the United States’ competing strategies over continental and, more importantly, maritime sovereign rights. She highlighted the role of modern maritime consumer economies for China’s newfound interest in waterways and the building of a navy. David Wolff explored the history of international relations and knowledge exchange in the Pacific region, focusing on the national level. He pointed out that several national powers on the Pacific rose to their current positions through versions of a (communist) progressivism and that decolonialization in the region was not only directed towards European or American powers, but also towards former Asian empires like the Japanese and the Chinese Empire. Wen-hsin Yeh concluded the panel by taking the audience on the *glocal* level to the Austronesian aboriginal people inhabiting Taiwan. They were at the forefront in Taiwan’s struggle to break free from Chinese influence, but their claim to continuity of heritage is a luxury for small populations living on the edge of the Pacific.

The second panel, “Atlantic Debates on Emerging Pacific Competitors,” centered on global effects of and Western responses to the Japan and China “Shocks.” Mario Daniels explored U.S. economic security policy in the high-tech sector during the last fifty years, first in response to Japan’s technological success and then to China as the most recent competitor for global economic hegemony. In both cases, U.S. economic interests were increasingly framed as national security interests as the development of new technology was increasingly outsourced to the private sector and the military became a regular customer. Amy Studdart touched on similar issues of techno-nationalism, economic concerns, and the specter of declining

global political influence prominent in transatlantic international relations. Her emphasis, however, was decidedly on current trends and prognoses, especially in light of President Xi Jinping's ambitions that China should replace the U.S. as the leading global power. Franz Waldenberger examined the "Japanese miracle" more closely from an economist's perspective, arguing how important it was for a country's successful long-term engagement in world markets that it be perceived as playing by the rules. Japan's extreme specialization, industrial policies, and imbalanced import/export ratio evoked hostile responses by major trading partners such as the U.S., which made it difficult for Japan to maintain its course in the long run. This became obvious in what is now known as the beginning of the "lost decade," the collapse of the Japanese asset price bubble in the early 1990s that led the country into a recession. The major difference between Japan's and China's search for power in international trade networks, Waldenberger concluded, is the way in which China directly and openly challenges U.S. hegemonic power.

In the conference's first roundtable on "Transformations of China Expertise in the West" Richard Madsen contemplated the role Taiwan played as a place to gain China expertise during the 1970s, since outsiders regarded it as culturally part of China and as a useful and accessible stand-in. Rudolf Wagner discussed the role of ideology in the field of Sinology during the last fifty years, explaining that the Cold War conflict had a severe impact on the discipline's direction in the sense that it influenced what research subjects were addressed. Beginning with the gradual opening of the People's Republic of China in the late 1970s, the field began to expand and specializations became more important. Madsen and Wagner agreed that increasing specialization resulted in the decline of "universalist" China experts and thereby in the loss of the "big picture." Ming Shi explored the role of think tanks in the discussion about China today. Shi is convinced that in general they are adding positively to the debate, but too often only touch on the surface of issues without taking responsibility for their policy advice. Wagner agreed with Shi and argued that scholars in the West were not just responsible for transmitting their China expertise at home but that they should also help inform the Chinese.

The following round table on "The World Economy in a Shifting International Order" shed light on China's geo-economic trajectory. Vinod Aggraval set the tone of the discussion when he stated that Western countries' optimistic expectations regarding China's

possible convergence to a capitalist economic system and then to a liberal democracy had all been disappointed. China's idea of cultural diplomacy was concerning, and the introduction of social media in China turned out to become just another tool to enforce conformist behavior among its citizens. Taking an even more critical stance towards Western illusions about and misconceptions of China, Eberhard Sandschneider criticized the West's inability to reflect on its own unrealistic expectations as the main obstacle of understanding China and predicting the country's course. All past scripts for a Chinese world order (imperialism, fascism, communism) have failed, and China remains highly suspicious of any prescriptions by Western countries including an American understanding of what constitutes responsible political behavior. Shihoko Goto stressed the different thinking about power in East and South-East Asia, especially the belief in the collective and in networks of economic dependency as a source of peace. According to Goto, these two motives play a greater role in this region than globalization and anti-globalization, which seem to be mainly Western political positions. A common concern, however, is how changes in the global economy will affect national job markets. Regarding the fact that national economic concerns and international trade are deeply interwoven, Steffen Kern highlighted the G20 process that led to a rapprochement towards China, its main achievement being a cooperation that enables an intense and regular dialogue on economic matters. Kern considered the improved communication as crucial for dealing with new types of risks and challenges in financial markets such as the rise of non-bank financial institutions, the impact of artificial intelligence on markets, and cyber security, and he pleaded that the EU maintain its role as one of the key players.

By focusing mainly on maritime spaces, participants of the round table "The Global Reach of Security Politics in the Pacific Region" addressed the question of geostrategic expansionism in times of growing nationalist movements and economic competition in the Pacific and its consequences for the world. Ulises Granados focused on the issue of China's geographically expansive policies. With the world currently witnessing a power shift in China's favor in the Pacific, China will most likely face little resistance in the South China Sea, because the regions expect to profit economically from a cooperation, while the country will meet increasing opposition by a U.S.-Japanese alliance in the East China Sea. Do Thanh Hai highlighted the importance of the South China Sea for Vietnam, for which it represents a

sort of lifeline to Japan and South Korea, whereas China perceives this maritime territory as a crucial region of geostrategic and economic importance. These conflicting interests explain why China has built an extensive naval strike force and Vietnam has begun to reach out for new allies. Andrew Wilson informed the audience about recent collisions between the American and Chinese navies in the South China Sea as both nations attempt to police this territory in order to strengthen their claims to it. Anna Hayes evoked a similar image of an emotional China “flexing its muscle,” steadily encroaching on the South China Sea. Hayes emphasized the role of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an informal strategic format between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

In the concluding round table Karen Donfried and Peer Steinbrück discussed the future of transatlantic relations in the “Pacific Century.” Donfried explained that the United States’ withdrawal from European politics had been going on for some time and that the loss of an overall pro-European position in U.S. politics can be retraced to a feeling of being “left in the trenches” in foreign affairs by their allies too many times. For this reason, Donfried stated, the current U.S. administration expects European states to show a lot more initiative in international politics. She argued that China’s rise, resulting in a relative decline in U.S. power, should have been a reason for the U.S. and Europe to bond together more closely, an opportunity which has not yet been taken up. Steinbrück in response commented on European concerns regarding changes in U.S. international policy, in particular multilateral agreements. One of the main differences in the political culture of both sides according to Steinbrück is their diverging understanding of the role of compromise for the democratic process. He warned of the game of naming, blaming, and shaming in international politics. In times of a shifting global order, Steinbrück argued, it will take more than the effort of two nations, Germany and the U.S., to prepare for the future and improve the political situation of the West.

Merle Ingenfeld (GHI/University of Cologne)

GERMAN HISTORY IN A FRACTIOUS WORLD: SECOND ANNUAL WEST COAST GERMANISTS' WORKSHOP

Workshop at the University of Southern California, April 6-7, 2019. Co-sponsored by the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington DC and the Max Kade Institute for Austrian-German-Swiss Studies at USC. Conveners: Paul Lerner (USC), Elizabeth Drummond (Loyola Marymount University), Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (UC Berkeley), Andrea Westermann, and Heike Friedman (Pacific Regional Office of GHI). Presenters: Jens Pohlmann (GHI Washington), Elena Kempf (UC Berkeley), Deborah Hertz (UC San Diego), Sheer Ganor (UC Berkeley), Sara Friedman (UC Berkeley), Sean Nye (USC), Isabel Richter (UC Berkeley); Jonathan Dentler (USC), Harold Marcuse (UC Santa Barbara), Sven Reichardt (University of Konstanz), Gloria Yu (UC Berkeley).

Like the inaugural meeting of the West Coast Germanists' Workshop in March 2018 at UC Davis, this year's meeting aimed to provide a forum for discussing key methodological and historiographic issues in the field for graduate students, recent Ph.D.s and faculty in German history, German studies and related fields. Our workshop series responds to the predicament of Germanists in the West, indeed our unique geographic challenges — our distance from Europe and from each other — and also the particular opportunities and possibilities for pursuing German history and German studies in places with abundant resources from mid-twentieth-century German émigrés and thriving German expat communities in the arts, business, and technology. The meetings are guided by the overarching inquiry into the potential benefits of our more distant gaze and the intellectual stimulation of seeing Germany and Europe from perhaps a more global or Pacific orientation.

The theme, "The Place of German History in a Fractious World," invited reflection on two growing trends in the world today, globalization and the rise of authoritarian and nationalist movements and regimes. How do these tendencies inspire and challenge us in our work as historians of Germany? Do historians of Germany and German studies scholars have a particular responsibility to engage with the return of racist and nationalist politics? What is the future of German history — indeed any national history — in an increasingly transnational profession?

We asked participants to engage with these and other questions from the perspective of their research. In other words, rather than discussing these issues generally, we wanted to see how these topics play out in specific research agendas and how they affect the framing and presentation of projects and the methodological choices we all make.

The participants discussed ten pre-circulated papers. Under the heading “Law and Rights,” Jens Pohlmann and Elena Kempf talked about their current projects situated in the present and around 1900 respectively. Pohlmann presented the setting and early stages of his study comparing the internet policy discourse in the U.S. and Germany. He had assembled digital text corpora from tech blog entries, traditional media coverage, and policy documents that should, ideally, represent different realms of the public sphere. For his analysis, Pohlmann set out to draw on digital humanities research methods such as close and distant reading and network analysis. Elena Kempf discussed the place of the international laws of war in German history using two case studies, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli’s *Kriegsrecht* of 1866 and the activities of the Militärische Untersuchungsstelle für Verletzungen des Kriegsrechts in World War I. Kempf aimed to go beyond discussing German adherence or non-adherence to these theoretically binding regulations and instead explored the interaction between the repeated applicability of the laws of war and the conflictual history of Germany from 1860 to 1918. She argued that legal scholars and state officials mobilized the laws of war in support of the German nation-state, legitimizing the formation and defense of the nation in war. In both papers, technology and law came to define and shape each other. Moreover, legal norms seemed to show a robustness that suggests some similarity with the robustness of technological infrastructure; once in place, they are meant to have staying power. The papers also showed how both infrastructure and cultural norms embedded in legal norms work to keep us from noticing their existence. Pohlmann and Kempf called for unearthing these *Selbstverständlichkeiten* and making visible the specific contexts and institutions standing behind them, such as search algorithms or political identity projects.

In a panel on “Intersected and Hyphenated Identities,” Deborah Hertz and Sheer Ganor gauged the methodological input German Jewish Studies can contribute to and take from the new emphasis on “intersectionality.” Hertz, in her “Using Intersectionality to Interpret Jewish and German History,” saw the idea of intersectionality at work

in historiography *tout court* and in Jewish-German history in particular. The notion seems to serve much the same function as historians' basic concept of contextuality does. By outlining her current research on the political affiliations of Jewish women, Hertz also highlighted what Jewish Studies has to offer for postcolonial and ethnic studies (in the U.S.). Sheer Ganor, in a complementary move, emphasized in her paper "On Either End of the Hyphen: The Entangled Belonging of German 'Others'" possible gains and new avenues for her own work by expanding the focus on Jewish diaspora studies to the broader field of migration history. In the absence of post-1960s Marxist approaches but in view of burgeoning histories of capitalism, both papers dealt with or investigated the status of economic history tools in the study of complex, multi-layered identities and the politics drawing on them.

The third panel "Art and Opposition" was on the Los Angeles (Hollywood and Compton) reception of, on the one hand, bodily if recordable art performances by German actor Conrad Veidt in the 1930s and, on the other hand, the band Kraftwerk in the 1980s' hip hop music scene. Sara Friedman explored the US audience's in Veidt; it depended as much on the universal language of silent movies as on his individual "type" as an actor — one that was easily generalized as "German." Sean Nye explained that Kraftwerk's success among the Los Angeles hip hop and gangsta rap community relied on its "sampleability" and on its drive and rhythm that made people dance. Both presenters had source materials begging for, perhaps, alternative, more-than-textual ways of writing German-American histories of popular culture. Nye invited the audience to listen to and watch song material as he developed his arguments. Friedman enhanced her narrative by intersecting larger context and complementary sources with one document of her choice: Veidt's diary of an early journey to Hollywood. Given that the diary itself was often jotted down in a dialogue-driven, film-like way, the suggestion of producing a graphic novel as an appropriate publication format seemed especially insightful.

The papers on the panel "Images, Information, Myth" also dealt with popular media. Jonathan Dentler presented research on the often paradoxical circumstances under which the necessarily international business model of the Weltbild Photo Agency achieved its aim of delivering Germans a National Socialist Weltbild or "world picture." He argued that from the perspective of world-ordering efforts such as the international regulation of telecommunications, national

aggrandizement and aggression were fractious forces. At the same time, from the perspective of national and racist attempts at ordering the world according to civilizational or racial hierarchies, cosmopolitanism and the need for international order were themselves fractious and disruptive. Harold Marcuse presented his teaching format “Researching the Provenance of Mythic History.” Today, members of an interested public can access historical information, both primary materials and the results of scholarly research, with unprecedented ease online. At the same time, they are exposed to a large number of questionable assertions and interpretations. In his teaching assignment, Marcuse has students trace historical myths and misinformation back to their origins and then retrace the paths they have taken as they are discoverable in popular conceptions about historical events today. It is noteworthy, in our context, that his sources stem primarily from the GHDI website (for the best of these student papers, see: <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/germanhistory/essays/>). With his contribution, Marcuse approached the workshop theme not only from the perspective of source critique and pedagogy, but also from the field of public history and its strengths.

In the last slot of the day, Gloria Yu inquired into the status of thinking since the nineteenth century as a reflection on what German intellectual history and the history of science could offer to an understanding of the “contemporary moment” — a much-used periodization in this workshop. In her paper, “Thinking in a Fractious World: German Intellectuals, Failures of Thought, and the Physiological Origins of a New Moral Framework,” Yu combined European intellectual history with material culture approaches of science studies in order to, for instance, reconstruct the rise of the “measurable” intelligence as a condition of thinking. As yet another example of how scholars historicized the thinking of thinkers and other citizens, she reminded the audience that just when German intellectuals like Max Horkheimer (*Eclipse of Reason*) and Hannah Arendt (*The Life of the Mind*) were questioning and reclaiming the faculty of thinking, conceptual historians started to historicize their semantic tools of critique.

What is the future of German history — indeed any national history — in an increasingly transnational profession?, the workshop organizers had asked in their call for papers. In a concluding session, participants brought forward ideas and concerns — from strengthening their “hyphenated” professional identities of being Germanists *and*

scholars of migration studies, sciences studies, or legal historians; to continuing the work of decolonizing German history; or emphasizing the instructiveness of Germany's past as a starting point for studying history.

On the second day, the group visited the recently re-opened Wende-Museum in Los Angeles. The museum has established itself as yet another important venue for West Coast Germanists. It is dedicated to East German and Eastern European history with collections preserving Cold War artifacts.

Save the date: The next West Coast Germanists' meeting will be held in April 2020 at UC Berkeley.

Andrea Westermann, Paul Lerner, Elizabeth Drummond, and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann

IN GLOBAL TRANSIT: FORCED MIGRATION OF JEWS AND OTHER REFUGEES (1940S-1960S)

Second conference in the “In Global Transit” series, organized by the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI West) in cooperation with the Max Weber Stiftung Branch Offices in Delhi and Beijing, and the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, University of California, Berkeley, held May 20–22, 2019 at the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life. Conveners: Wolf Gruner (USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, Los Angeles), Simone Lässig (GHI), Francesco Spagnolo (The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, Berkeley), Swen Steinberg (Queen’s University, Kingston). Participants: Eliyana Adler (Pennsylvania State University), Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI), Lorena Ávila Jaimes (Konrad Adenauer Foundation Rule of Law Program for Latin America), Tobias Brinkmann (Pennsylvania State University), Pallavi Chakravarty (Ambedkar University, Delhi), Kimberly Cheng (New York University), Anna Cichopek-Gajraj (Arizona State University, Tempe), Natalie Eppelsheimer (Middlebury College), Margit Franz (University of Graz), Sheer Ganor (University of California, Berkeley), Daniela Gleizer (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), Atina Grossmann (Cooper Union, New York), Sandra Gruner-Domic (University of Southern California, Los Angeles), Patrick Heinz (German Consulate General, San Francisco), Emmanuel Nicolás Kahan (National Council for Scientific and Technological Research, Argentina), Razak Khan (Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg), Shir Gal Kochavi (The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life), Nancy Nicholls Lopeandia (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), Andrea Orzoff (New Mexico State University), Isabel Richter (University of California, Berkeley), Claudia Roesch (GHI), Helga Schreckenberger (University of Vermont), Indra Sengupta (GHI London), Björn Siegel (Institute for the History of the German Jews, Hamburg), Yael Siman (Iberoamericana University, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México), Andrea Sinn (Elon University), Nick Underwood (GHI Pacific Regional Office), Sören Urbansky (GHI), Sarah R. Valente (The University of Texas at Dallas), Andrea Westermann (GHI Pacific Regional Office).

During her welcome address, Simone Lässig raised the question of whether the Jewish experience of migration is paradigmatic. She argued that for many European refugees the search for a safe haven continued into the 1950s and that vast numbers of non-Jews in Europe were also forced to flee their homeland for a variety of reasons.

Participants of the conference were welcomed to view the new exhibit at the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, “Memory Objects.” Curators Francesco Spagnolo and Shir Gal Kochavi gave an overview of the exhibit to provide some context and introduce the objects on display. The exhibit is inspired by Warsan Shire’s poem, “Home,” and highlights the objects that migrants take with them as they are on the move. Taking both a historical and contemporary approach to migration, the exhibit reminds visitors that, since the First World War, one in seven humans are forced to be in transit. One of its highlights is a video that features contemporary migrants showing and discussing the items they brought with them as they left their homes in Syria and other places.

The first panel of the conference, titled “Borders and Boundaries,” was chaired by Anna-Carolin Augustin and devoted to the topic of Jewish refugees in Mexico and Argentina. In her contribution “Citizenship Denied: Jewish Refugees in Mexico in a Legal Limbo,” Daniela Gleizer described the “legal limbo” in which the refugees who managed to enter Mexico often remained since they faced great problems when trying to be naturalized there. Unlike Mexico, which welcomed only a small number of Jewish refugees, Argentina admitted the highest number of Jewish refugees in Latin America and regularized the status of illegal immigrants as early as 1948, as Emmanuel Kahan pointed out in his paper “Transit, Borders and Integration: Holocaust Survivors’ Travel to and Arrival in Argentina.” In contrast to the Jewish refugees in Mexico who mostly successfully participated in the Mexican economic miracle of the following years, however, Jewish refugees in Argentina were confronted with a military dictatorship. Both panelists examined the narratives of Jewish refugees in their new home countries through oral history interviews.

Overcoming several obstacles, many Jewish refugees in Mexico shared success stories after the war, which Tobias Brinkmann called an “immigration paradigm.” After discussing this and other approaches to explain Jewish migration in his keynote “Wandering Jews or Jewish Migrations? How Jewish Scholars Conceptualized Migration,” Brinkmann focused on two different migration concepts by Jewish scholars Mark Wischnitzer (1882-1955) and Eugen Kulischer (1881-1956). Both authors shared a similar origin (Russia) and migration trajectory (Berlin — Paris — New York), but came to completely different conclusions in their publications on migration. While Wischnitzer highlighted Jewish migration in his work,

Kulischer, whose study *Europe on the Move* was to become a standard work, completely ignored the Jewish experience. Brinkmann argues that these different interpretations were closely related to their career trajectories: In contrast to Kulischer, Wischnitzer was part of a network of Jewish scholars from Eastern Europe in Berlin and well connected in the world of Jewish aid organizations. This raised the key question about the *agency* of Jews as migrants, which came up repeatedly during the conference.

The question of *agency* was addressed again in Eliyana Adler's paper "'Send me letters and I will send you packages': Polish Jewish Refugees around the Globe Share Knowledge and Resources" during the second panel on "Translating and Producing Knowledge," chaired by Sören Urbansky. Adler presented case studies on Polish Jewish refugees, who shared knowledge through letters in global networks. According to Adler, these letters were an integral part of the Holocaust experience of Polish Jews across their diaspora and might be termed *social capital*. Razak Khan's presentation "The Politics of Refugee Internment and Knowledge Production in Colonial India" dealt with the question of global migrant histories and in-transit archives on the basis of a case study on Leopold Weiss alias Muhammad Asad, a German-speaking Jewish intellectual in Colonial India who converted to Islam. Khan focused on individual migrant actors and the personal role they played in exile. Among other things, this panel raised the question how emotions drive knowledge production.

The third panel, chaired by Indra Sengupta and titled "Conflicting and Converging Identities: Emotions in Transit," put Björn Siegel's paper "We were refugees and carried a special burden": German Jewish Emigrés and the Emotional Struggle of Finding a New Home in São Paulo," in conversation with Sarah R. Valente's paper titled "Post-World War II Brazil: A New Homeland for Jews and Nazis?" about refugees in Brazil to highlight a reoccurring theme of this conference: the search for home. Whereas Siegel emphasized the emotional aspect related to exploring new national and communal identities in new spaces, Valente's focus was spatial. In her presentation, she looked at the *co-existence* of Jewish survivors and escaped Nazis as they lived in the same geographical spaces in Brazil.

South America was also the focus of the fourth panel, titled "Production and Use of Networks in Transit" and chaired by Claudia Roesch. Sandra Gruner-Domic and Nancy Nicholls Lopeandia delivered talks about Bolivia and Guatemala and Chile respectively. In her paper,

“World Sojourners: Jewish Migration to Bolivia and Guatemala,” Gruner-Domic utilized archival sources and oral histories of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Bolivia and Guatemala to undertake a more focused study on what it means to be “in transit.” Her work highlights how global networks enabled the passage of some Jews from Europe through Bolivia and Guatemala as they searched for a safe final destination. Lopeandia’s focus on Chile under Pinochet in her paper “‘We are not going to wait until 1939 ... this is 1933’: The Role of Popular Unity Government and Pinochet’s Dictatorship in the Holocaust Survivors’ Decision to Emigrate to Chile” shows how survivors’ experiences during the Holocaust influenced their decision-making during the upheavals brought about by a rising socialist regime, a coup d’état, and finally a dictatorship. She concluded that in several cases memory of the Holocaust affected how individuals and families navigated their life in Chile during these moments.

During the fifth panel, on “Refugees in Processes of Decolonization, State Building, and State Crisis,” chaired by Isabel Richter, Pallavi Chakravarty presented her paper “Notun Yehudi (the New Jews): A Study of the Refugees from East Pakistan in Post-Partition India.” Chakravarty focused on the similarities they drew to the experiences of Jewish refugees from Europe, such as the adaption of the metaphor of the *Jew-in-Exile* and their desire to return home. Margit Franz devoted her contribution “‘Shifting Figures in a Shifting Landscape’: Holocaust Refugees in Young Independent India” to a small group of Jewish refugees from Europe who had fled to India, where they became ambassadors for internationalism in the arts and a cosmopolitan culture and participated in India’s nation-building efforts through art.

The sixth panel, on “Power Structures and Shifting Settings: Class, Race, and Gender,” chaired by Andrea Sinn, opened with Atina Grossmann’s paper “Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure: Jewish Refugees in Iran.” Based on the micro-history of her parents, Jewish refugees who had fled from Berlin to Iran, Grossmann emphasized Teheran’s special historical significance as a place for Jewish refugees in global transit and the associated history of empire and anti-colonial struggles. The intersection of Jewish exile with colonial history also played a key role in Natalie Eppelsheimer’s paper “Haven in British East Africa: German and Austrian Jewish Refugees in Colonial Kenya.” Taking African history into account, Eppelsheimer pleaded for a critical engagement with the colonial setting and a discussion

of the fact that the grounds on which the Jewish refugees had settled in British East Africa were highly contested.

The papers discussed during the seventh panel, “Departing as Child — Arriving as Adult: Age and Generation,” which was chaired by Sheer Ganor, centered on bringing various narratives of migration together, including flight, remigration and integration. Anna Cichopek-Gajraj’s “‘Living Across Border’: Agency and Displacement of Polish Jewish and Ethnic Polish Migrants after the War (1945–1960)” sought to go beyond the standard narrative of DP camps and seemingly fluid migration to the U.S. Her focus was on the journeys themselves, or the “transit,” but with the caveat that migrants did not necessarily perceive themselves as being in transit or “in-between” places. Transit, she remarked, as did others in the conference, is a notion that develops for people in hindsight. Andrea Orzoff’s paper, “Musical Migration: Ruth Schönthal from Mexico City to New York,” highlighted the story of musician Ruth Schönthal to illustrate the impact that Central European cultural émigrés had on the Latin American musical world. She also demonstrated how music could be the foundation for one’s identity beyond the notion of belonging imposed upon migrants by the nation-state model.

How to find or determine one’s “home” was the question connecting the two papers in the eighth panel, titled “Neighborhoods between Belonging and Alienness” and chaired by Nick Underwood. In her paper “American Dreams: Jewish Refugees and Chinese Locals in Post-World War II Shanghai,” Kimberly Cheng took a novel approach to the history of Jews in Shanghai. By placing their experiences within the Chinese context, Cheng showed how, while in Shanghai, Jewish migrants began to develop an American national identity, which they embraced in order to contextualize and unpack the fomenting Chinese resentment towards Jewish refugees. Yael Siman’s presentation “Home and In Transit Location for Holocaust Survivors in Mexico” focused on Holocaust survivors’ immigration to Mexico, highlighting complex networks and the difficult journeys that many made to get there. Utilizing oral histories from the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive — as many of the contributions on Latin America at the conference did — she painted a vivid picture of how these Jewish migrants reacted to their new home in Mexico.

The ninth panel, “Narrating Transit and Forced Migration,” chaired by Andrea Westermann, also centered on Latin America. In her paper, “From Auschwitz to Bogotá: When Genocide and Political Violence

Converge,” Lorena Ávila Jaimes revealed the experiences survivors had in Colombia, which included having to face war and political conflict in two very different geographical and cultural contexts. By focusing on neighboring Bolivia, Helga Schreckenberger in her paper, “Bolivia as Transitory Refuge: Memoirs of Jewish Refugees,” explored why refugees were unable to establish a more permanent home for themselves there. She noted that many refugees in Bolivia found it hard to give up their adherence to a definitively German cultural space, which made their adoption of and integration into Bolivian culture that much more difficult.

In the concluding discussion, Wolf Gruner presented a summary of the main issues and questions raised during the conference. In particular, he broadened the various dimensions and different approaches of global transit that had been discussed in the individual panels. Terms and concepts were discussed afterwards, for example, similarities and differences to other terms like *migration* or *global displacement*. It was clearly expressed that the individual refugee experience and narratives must always be taken into account in the terminology as well. It was also stated that the history of knowledge is clearly linked to the history of migration and transit and can provide useful concepts. Multilingualism and imagined journeys are two further closely related issues that should be considered in connection with the history of global transit.

This was the second conference in a series dedicated to migration history. The next conferences will probably focus on forced migrations more broadly so that researchers can begin to develop studies that highlight coping strategies and think about forced migration as a form of knowledge production. Specifically, the conferences will seek to determine, among other things, what knowledge is needed to maneuver bureaucracy and consider objects as part of a history of forced migration.

Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI Washington) and Nick Underwood (GHI Washington)

MARITIME MISSIONS: RELIGION, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND EMPIRE IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Conference at the GHI Washington, May 24-25, 2019. Conveners: Jenna M. Gibbs (GHI Washington/Florida International University) and Sünne Juterzenka (GHI Washington/Göttingen University). Participants: Markus Berger (University of Bamberg); Roberto Chauca (Latin American School of Social Sciences/FLASCO, Ecuador); Sarah Crabtree (San Francisco State University); Jean DeBernardi (University of Alberta); Renate Dürr (University of Tübingen); Manikarnika Dutta (University of Oxford); Elisabeth Engel (GHI Washington); Jake Griesel (University of Cambridge); Axel Jansen (GHI Washington); Jan C. Jansen (GHI Washington); Jordan Kellman (University of Louisiana, Lafayette); Ulrike Kirchberger (University of Kassel); Darin Lenz (Fresno Pacific University); Eva M. Mehl (University of North Carolina, Wilmington); Peter Hanns Reill (University of California, Los Angeles); Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington); Justine Walden (University of Toronto).

The first panel on “Culture and Communications in Catholic Missions” was chaired by Sünne Juterzenka. Renate Dürr delivered the first paper, “Emotions in Jesuit Ethnography.” By interpreting the letters of Jesuit missionaries with ethnographical content as personal accounts, Jesuit ethnography can be interpreted as an “emotional practice.” Jesuit accounts were key sources for European understandings of religion and civilization, and emotions were important during the early Enlightenment despite its discourse of rationality. Discussion included whether the emotion of “trust” was present in the sources as it is integral to community formation, a key topic in history of emotions scholarship. Viewing missions through the lens of emotions was discussed as an innovative contribution to the history of missions and ethnography. The second panelist was Eva Maria Mehl, who presented “Expanding Boundaries in the Catholic Spanish Empire: Spanish Augustinian Missionaries in China, 1680-1724.” Augustinian and other religious orders in the Spanish Empire had a significant role in the formation of long-distance networks, cultural encounters, and intellectual links along missionary pathways. From their base in Manila, Philippines, Spanish Augustinian missionaries established missions in southern China in the late 1680s and early 1700s. Missionaries’ testimonies reveal their adaptation to local circumstances and the role of the Philippines as a crossroads of communication between China and the rest of the Spanish empire.

The discussion centered on the Augustinian missionaries' cooperation with other religious orders, how they contacted and engaged with their potential converts, and the global nature of their outreach.

The second panel was "Global Pietist Missions," chaired by Claudia Roesch. The first speaker, Markus Berger, presented "The Globality of Providence. A German Minister in New York City and his Views on Mission, God's Kingdom on Earth, and the American Independence in the late 18th Century." The German Lutheran pastor John Christopher Kunze (1744-1807) strove to create an imagined community of Evangelical and Pietist Christians in America and Europe. In 1770, the Glaucha Institutions near Halle, Germany, appointed Kunze to aid the Lutheran "patriarch" Henry Melchior Mühlenberg in establishing the Lutheran Church in North America. Kunze attempted to establish a mission among Native Americans, but after failing to get European Lutheran support he established ecumenical networks and allied with the Moravians. Discussion included questions about how Kunze took a transdenominational approach at a time when Lutheran Pietists were often in conflict with other denominations. Participants also discussed why Mühlenberg garners so much attention and Kunze so little, which Berger explained is due to the priority earlier research gave to prominent leaders of the Pietist movement. Discussion then turned to the transnational nature of Pietism. The second presenter was Jean DeBernardi, whose paper, "The Open Brethren Movement in London, China and Southeast Asia," explored the Pietist influence on the Evangelical wing of the Brethren movement known as the Open Brethren. In the 1830s, Brethren founder George Müller modeled his work in Bristol on that of the Francke Institute in Halle, Germany, and the London Open Brethren, who founded the Chinese Evangelisation Society in 1850, also looked to the Moravians' global missions. Karl Gützlaff (1803-1851), a key founder of the CES, trained at the Jänicke Institute in Berlin. DeBernardi analyzed early CES missionaries' evangelical strategies in light of these pietist influences. She introduced the concept of "ensampling," showing how Open Brethren missionaries drew on Old and New Testament ideas of discipleship and leadership by apostle's example. DeBernardi, an anthropologist, grounded her paper firmly in archival work. Her conceptual approach provoked a lively discussion of how "ensampling" could be used in mission studies, and of the differences between anthropological and historical analyses. Participants also discussed the Open Brethren's creations of Indian language dictionaries still in use (and available from online retailers) today.

The third panel, “Slavery, Religion and Humanitarianism,” was chaired by Jan C. Jansen and began with Justine Walden’s paper, “Antagonists of Empire: Slavery, Profit, and Italian Capuchins in Congo, 1641-1686,” which explored the Capuchins’ critique of Congo slave-trading. The Capuchins were familiar with Mediterranean slavery and its concept of “just price.” In the Congo, slaves were sold into the Atlantic slave trade for beads and shells, which were important for currency, status, and adornment in Congo. The Capuchins believed this currency was worthless and that the Atlantic slave trade immorally dispensed with just price. They also rejected Atlantic slavery’s scale, and the extreme social distinctions and consumption that the Congo slave economy engendered. Discussion revolved around the Capuchins’ anti-slavery critique and Walden’s premise that they were “color blind.” Participants also discussed the Capuchins’ tolerance towards indigenous practices such as polygamy, and their flexible approach to indigenous converts’ spiritual beliefs. The second paper was Jake Griesel’s “Paving the Way for Dutch Colonial Missions: Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (c. 1717-47) and His Defense of Slavery.” Capitein was an African-born Dutch Reformed minister and missionary taken into slavery by a Dutch colonist as a child and later taken to the Netherlands where he was emancipated and studied theology at the University of Leiden. Capitein returned to the Gold Coast as a missionary under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company. In his 1742 Leiden dissertation, he defended slavery as not in conflict with Christian liberty. Griesel explicated Capitein’s theological and juridical arguments in historical-intellectual context. At the time, there was a major Dutch theological debate between Cocceius, who defended slavery and whose supporters dominated the University of Leiden, and Voetius and his followers, who rejected slavery on the grounds of aversion to wealth and greed. Discussion centered around whether the arguments made in Capitein’s dissertation were genuine or if he assumed a pro-slavery stance to please the Leiden academic authorities. Griesel argued that Capitein’s views were sincerely grounded in written sources, coupled with lack of exposure to the brutality of slavery. He speculated that Capitein may have reconsidered when he came to the slave port of Elmina, which stimulated a discussion of sources: were there sources from Capitein’s Elmina years? When Griesel responded that the only extant source for Capitein is his dissertation, a methodological discussion ensued.

The fourth panel, “Theology and Ethnography,” was chaired by Peter Hanns Reill. Jordan Kellman presented “Franciscan Natural Theology

and the Early Eighteenth-Century Francophone New World Encounter.” He compared the Recollect missionary Louis Hennepin’s voyage on the Mississippi and his encounter with the Illinois in 1679-82, Minim Charles Plumier’s analysis of Caribbean flora in 1689-95, and Minim Louis Feuillée’s exploration of South America in 1703-17. The missionaries forged a tradition of Franciscan natural theology and monastic practices that structured each encounter. These practices, which uniquely resolved the tensions between wonder and disciplined observation and between European and native expertise, were critical to Early Modern Europeans’ understanding of natural systems and modern science. Participants further discussed the contributions of religion to Enlightenment thought. Kellman emphasized that the Franciscans’ practices were a form of Enlightenment observation and even aesthetics. The second panelist, Roberto Chauca, spoke on “Spanish Missionary Debates and the Transatlantic Configuration of Amazonian Ethnic Categories.” Volume one of Jesuit Lorenzo Hervás’s “Catalog of the Languages of the Known Nations” (1800) included a chapter on languages spoken throughout Western Amazonia. Hervás’ “Catalog” institutionalized the relationship between language and ethnic borders by adapting the work of his Jesuit peer, Juan de Velasco. Velasco’s “History of the Kingdom of Quito” (1789), written during a period of conflicts between friars and natives and among different religious orders, produced a conflicted Jesuit ethnographic discourse, as missionaries used ethnography as a language of authority and contention in Amazonia. The discussion focused on the plurality of peoples and languages in relation to Portuguese/Spanish imperial competition — reflected in competing Spanish, Portuguese, and indigenous place names — and on the taxonomy for languages/dialects that missionaries superimposed on a map.

The fifth panel, “American Maritime Expansion,” chaired by Jenna Gibbs, opened with Sarah Crabtree’s presentation, “Whaler, Traitor, Coward, Spy!: William Rotch, the Quaker Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism.” Rotch, a member of the pacifist Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), built a whaling empire spanning the Atlantic, Pacific, and the Arctic Oceans, repeatedly relocating his operations from Nantucket to France to Britain to New Bedford. Rotch’s relationship between his religion and business was complicated, as his spiritual scruples collided with paying taxes to a non-pacifist nation-state, for which he was persecuted as disloyal. Rotch’s case exposed the dynamics between transnational religion and transnational capitalism. Quaker universalism sanctified capitalist ideology, normalizing and even

consecrating globalization. Discussion centered around the relationships of whaling to early capitalism and between Quaker beliefs and nationalism. It also touched on Quaker identity in relation to their perceived similarities with Jews. The second paper, Darin Lenz's "Immersed in Dependency: American Missionaries, Empires, and India in the 1830s," focused on three American missionary families based in Bombay. These families found their missions in India grueling and tragic; half their members died, and the survivors returned to the United States within four years. Their vulnerable circumstances led them to critique colonial culture, question their knowledge of the peoples they aimed to convert, and immerse themselves in layers of physical and political dependency. The discussion returned to questions of emotions in missionary sources. Participants were intrigued by how these American missionaries in India spoke differently in public than in private correspondence. The question was raised of how far missionaries can be understood as imperial agents given that they were vulnerable and critical of imperial authorities.

The last panel, "Missions and Philanthropy," was chaired by Elisabeth Engel. Ulrike Kirchberger gave the first paper, "'Footsoldiers of Globalization'? The Pupils of Eleazar Wheelock's 'Indian Charity School' in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World." A preacher of the Great Awakening, Wheelock founded a school for the co-education of European and Native American children in Lebanon (Connecticut) in the 1750s, aiming to convert Native American children and train them to be Protestant missionaries, schoolteachers, or assistants to European missionaries. Kirchberger examined the roles of students in transatlantic networks of Protestantism and in their ethnic communities at a time when Native American nativists and the prophets of the pan-Indian movement were ascendant on the East coast. She explored whether "native missionaries" were cultural interlocutors or were instead victims of European cultural expansionism whose identities were crushed between different cultures. Discussion included questions about the supposed cohesion of this group of 67 students from varying nations and whether the school was a model for later boarding schools that forcibly stripped Native American children of their language and culture. The second paper, presented by Manikarnika Dutta, "For the Benefit of 'these battered, shattered wrecks': A Global History of Sailors' Homes in the Nineteenth Century," explored how British clergy engaged in seamen's welfare. Seamen's chaplains preached temperance and righteousness, and sailors' homes throughout the empire provided lodging, food,

recreation, basic services, and religious guidance. The homes in South and East Asian port cities doubled as boarding houses for paying captains and seamen and free, temporary shelters for distressed seamen. The homes were intended, Dutta argued, to protect European seamen from racial debasement through contact with “Asiatics” through programs designed to instill imperial and Christian moral masculinity. The discussion hinged on the homes’ supervision of moral health versus the colonial authorities’ attention to sailors’ medical care, which segued to the conference’s concluding discussion of the intersections and dissonances between Evangelicalism and imperialism and between scientific and religious missions.

Jenna M. Gibbs (GHI / Florida International University) and Sünne Juterczenka (GHI / University of Göttingen)

TRANSREGIONAL ACADEMY: HISTORIES OF MIGRANT KNOWLEDGES IN AND ACROSS THE TRANSPACIFIC

Conference at GHI Pacific Regional Office, UC Berkeley, May 28 to June 4, 2019. Convened by the Forum Transregionale Studien (FTS) and the Max Weber Stiftung (German Humanities Institutes Abroad) in cooperation with the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington DC (GHI PRO) at UC Berkeley, the Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CALAS), and the Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley. Organized by the Pacific Regional Office in cooperation with Isabel Richter (DAAD visiting professor, UC Berkeley) and the Goethe-Institute San Francisco. Steering Committee members: Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington), Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO), Akasemi Newsome (Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley), Ryan Jones (University of Oregon), Katerina Teaiwa (Australian National University, Canberra), and Albert Manke (Bielefeld University). Participants: Mitiana Arbon (Australian National University, Canberra), Hayley Brazier (University of Oregon), Wei-ti Chen (College of Charleston), Sarah Comyn (University of Dublin), Ruth Faleolo (University of Queensland), Sylvia Frain (Auckland University of Technology), Connor Hamm (UCLA), Bianca Hennessy (Australian National University, Canberra), Karin Louise Hermes (Humboldt University, Berlin), Rebecca Hogue (University of California, Davis), Botakoz Kassymbekova (FTS, Berlin), Rachel Lim (UC Berkeley), Talei Lucia Mangioni (Australian National University, Canberra), Kristin Oberiano (Harvard University), Emma Powell (Victoria University of Wellington), Nathaniel Rigler (Victoria University of Wellington), Samid Suliman (Griffith University), Tammy Tabe (University of the South Pacific), Daniella Trimboli (Deakin University), Vanessa Warheit (filmmaker, Berkeley), Danny Zborover (Institute for Field Research).

This week-long Transregional Academy hosted 24 scholars with an interest in history from all fields, including (art) history, literary studies, geography, environmental humanities, sociology, political science, anthropology or ethnic studies. The aim of Transregional Academies is to offer an extended workspace for scholars with different regional and disciplinary expertise to present and connect their work to international peers, to question and experiment with conceptual and methodological frameworks in regional and transregional contexts. In our everyday work, we typically archive away for later consideration what we read, saw, and discussed about standard

(or not so standard) vs. decolonial scholarship that together form today's humanities: Yet we sincerely hope that we all think and write slightly differently about "the Transpacific" the next time we venture into research contributions. One finding of the week surely was that the participants got a sense of the importance of "time" for their research. Time is of the essence. We repeatedly discussed the culturally specific meanings and realizations of time or divergent notions of "the past" different societies maintain(ed). Perhaps more importantly: the discussions only highlighted the time-consuming workload ahead of us when it comes to embracing all the knowledge in and contradicting academia.

We might agree with what Brazilian scholar Eduardo Viveiros de Castro stated in 2004: "Common sense is not common. That is why anthropology exists. The incommensurability of clashing notions is precisely what enables and justifies it ... Since it is only worth comparing the incommensurable, comparing the commensurable is a task for accountants, not anthropologists."¹ But how do we as scholars come to terms with incompatible knowledge underlying (indigenous or imperial) science, history writing, community building, or the Pacific islanders' dancing? We asked: do any narratives or media make the task easier? How do the very actors we study deal with contradictory logics? How do we not just compare and comprehend the incommensurability between ways of thinking and apprehending the world, but make this understanding the starting point for true collaboration across academic landscapes and cultural geographies?

The Academy put the topics of migrations and knowledge center stage. Scholars of migration studies have focused on questions of knowledge for a long time. Consider the well-analyzed logics of bureaucratic and societal classification and reclassification of those who newly arrive. In yet another field of migration studies the epistemological dimension has gained some prominence: refugees and migrants render the concept of state territoriality not only visible but also more fluid. Perhaps even more so in the spread-out archipelagic states of the Pacific. Issues of territory, place, or soil take on specific meanings here. Migrations, islands, and seascapes have been closely linked via seafaring, trade and family networks as have migrations and radical environmental change — from resource extraction to nuclear fall-out and global warming. Consequently, we kept asking: How do people assess and assert their options and navigate the en-

1 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation", *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2 (2004)1, 10-11.

tangled scenarios of flight, migration, and mobility? Why do people leave in the first place? Why do they stay put or routinely return?

Over the course of the week, participants presented and workshopped their respective papers, each of which situated and explored “the Pacific” in varying ways in three smaller groups. In group A, Mitiana Arbon’s paper examined how art auction houses ascribe value to Pacific art via Western value systems and offered ways to disrupt these attributions. Samid Suliman’s paper examined how climate change is causing different worldviews to collide in the Pacific, requiring us to think about migration structures in collaborative — and possibly regional — ways. Rachel Lim’s paper focused on the Korean diaspora in Mexico, and asked questions pertaining to the circulation of migrant knowledge as well as claims to diaspora via embodied and corporeal practices of “Koreanness.” Hayley Brazier was grappling with cartographic issues of the sea floor, specifically, how the notion of the deep sea is dominantly mapped by Western European frameworks and how this space might be visually storied alternatively. Daniella Trimboli’s paper examined how whiteness lands in particular ways in Australia and how this is contested or reaffirmed through digital, diasporic interventions. Finally, Connor Hamm’s paper tried to establish ways to use Pacific-based art on climate change to intervene in Western art history, and, ultimately, how the terms of “humanness” might be rearticulated through Pacific-based art projects.

In group B, Tammy Tabe examined the colonial history of the Gilbertese relocation to the Solomon Islands, which the British Colonial Administration declared a humanitarian aid project mitigating environmental migration due to recurrent droughts. Tabe explained that settlers, in contrast, saw this as a forced migration due to the nuclear testing conducted on Christmas Island, which was silenced in the colonial archives. Similarly, Rebecca Hogue juxtaposed activist materials testifying to Pacific women’s knowledge about the extent of nuclear testing and its infrastructure across Micronesia and Polynesia to popular U.S. media reports from the mid-1940s that emphasized the U.S. Navy’s justification for forced migration “for the good of all mankind.” Kristin Oberiano dealt with the relationship between Filipino immigrants and the indigenous Chamorro people in Guam/Guahan after World War II in order to show how the United States empire, settler colonialism, and militarism are historically intertwined in the Pacific. Oberiano’s project is about the complex ways both migrants and indigenous peoples search

for belonging in the Transpacific. Bianca Hennessy analyzed how place is conceptualized in Pacific Studies focusing on the interplay between the twinned forces of belonging to place and movement of people between places (roots and routes). Her ethnographic research in Pacific Studies departments showed how intellectual communities implicitly frame their notions of place through the lens of their favored epistemic approaches. Sarah Comyn analyzed the literary sociability created by colonial mechanics' institutes established in gold mining districts across the Transpacific. She reconstructed the transnational literary networks formed by events such as Mark Twain's lecture tour of Australian mechanics' institutes in the 1890s, and its practices of inclusion and exclusion. Sylvia Frain explored the creative approaches to climate change action produced on digital platforms as visual and textual content to explore how indigenous oceanic futures challenge persisting political arrangements of the Micronesian region, which continues to be controlled by the United States for naval exercises and expanding military bases. Nathaniel Rigler analyzed the identity construction and maintenance by both Pacific Islanders and Western consumers through coconut oil consumption as a legacy of post-1960s Pacific Islanders' migrations to Pacific Rim nations. Coconut oil is an interesting commodity in this respect because it simultaneously retains indigenous meaning and reflects new luxury status.

In group C, Ruth Faleolo described her mixed-methods approach in examinations of Samoan and Tongan migrants crossing from New Zealand to Australia. Faleolo's descriptions of her research to-date revealed a curious new development: e-Talanoa — a mutual knowledge-sharing and knowledge-forming practice wherein Faleolo undertook extended conversations with research participants via social-media platforms. In arguing for culturally responsive and respectful engagement with Pasifika peoples, Faleolo described how social-media platforms enabled the observation of, and admission to, moments often inaccessible. Within indigenous Pacific epistemological and methodological practice, the researcher accepts that they are never truly objective given their kuleana (or responsibility) to the work and thus, the people and places their work affects. Karin Louise Hermes' account of Kānaka Maoli and allied resistance and activism through the arts and demonstrations for and at Mauna Kea on the island of Hawai'i, reminded us of this. Emma Powell presented on genealogical method ('akapapa'anga) in the Cook Islands context. She recounted how her grandmother had gathered her placenta from

an Auckland hospital and subsequently buried it on land purchased when her grandparents first migrated to New Zealand. She went on to explain how such acts demonstrate the different scales of geography, mobility, and relatedness being invoked by Cook Islands Māori people in contrast to economic and development models of diaspora. Talei Luscia Mangioni proposed a similar, latticed network of relatedness between people and place. In her multi-sited research, she traced how the genealogies of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement were haunting her own academic orbit. Using the nuclear science program of the University of California, Berkeley campus as a beginning reference point, Mangioni traced key historical intersections between American actors in the development of nuclear science and her own institution, the Australian National University (ANU). Danny Zborover described costumed festival participants assuming the roles of pechelunges (pirates), negros (The Black Ones), turcos (Turks) and others at the annual San Pedro festivities in Huamelula, Mexico. He explained how the research had revealed that aspects of the festival represented much older Chontal histories of colonialism, mobility and globalization. Wei-Te Chen then went on to discuss the entrepreneurial spirit that has long motivated Japanese medical professionals to pursue opportunities in the far parts of empire. Wei-ti Chen's discussion of the Taiwanese and Japanese expansionist project during the early twentieth century decentered the prominence of state power showing that, in particular, Japanese medical professional migrants were exercising agency at the height of imperialism, independent of state machinations. During additional sessions, we had curated conversations about academic blog posting and watched three films, including one by Berkeley-based filmmaker Vanessa Warheit (*The Insular Empire*, 2010) who joined in the conversation. The screening closed a film series taking a "history from below" look at migration. The Pacific Regional Office organized this series over the spring with DAAD-professor Isabel Richter from UCB's department of history in collaboration with the Goethe-Institute San Francisco (<https://www.ghi-dc.org/events-conferences/event-history/2019/lectures/gehen-bleiben-whether-to-remain-or-to-leave.html?L=0>). A field trip to Angel Island, a former Immigration Station, provided an opportunity to reflect on our topics in a historic setting.

Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO), Daniella Trimboli (Deakin University), Bianca Hennessy (Australian National University, Canberra), Nathaniel Rigler (Victoria University of Wellington), and Emma Powell (Victoria University of Wellington).²

² This report is a revised compilation of the authors' individual contributions for the academic blog <https://academies.hypotheses.org>.

25TH TRANSATLANTIC DOCTORAL SEMINAR NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN HISTORY

Seminar held at the GHI Washington and Georgetown University from May 29 — June 1, 2019; co-organized by the GHI and Georgetown University's BMW Center for German and European Studies. Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University) and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty Mentors: Frank Biess (University of California, San Diego), Ann Goldberg (University of California, Riverside), Anne Kwaschik (University of Konstanz), Corinna Unger (European University Institute, Florence). Doctoral participants: Tobias Bruns (University of Marburg), Christiane Bub (University of Tübingen), Oliver Gaida (Humboldt University, Berlin), Kathryn Holihan (University of Michigan), Charlotte Johann (Cambridge University), Christopher Kirchberg (University of Bochum), Julie Keresztes (Boston University), Max Lazar (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Alexander Finn Macartney (Georgetown University), Jan Rybak (European University Institute, Florence), Richard Spiegel (Princeton University), Rick Tazelaar (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich), Peter Thompson (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Jasmin Söhner (University of Heidelberg), Emily Steinhauer (Queen Mary University of London), Clemens Villingner (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam).

This year's Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar commenced with a short ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the successful format. GHI Director Simone Lässig looked back on a quarter century of mentoring European and American doctoral students in German history. As always, the seminar brought together doctoral students from North America and Europe, all of whom are working on dissertations in modern German history. The seminar was organized in eight panels, featuring two papers each, which opened with two comments by fellow students, followed by discussion of the pre-circulated papers.

The first panel featured two papers on the nineteenth century, one by Christiane Bub and the other by Charlotte Johann, as well as comments from Jan Rybak and Alexander Finn Macartney. Bub's paper used cases studies of delinquent aristocrats to discuss broader social and political changes in the first half of the century. The legal treatment of aristocrats who had violated the law and the public reaction to their cases, she argued, had much to reveal about shifting social hierarchies and processes of social differentiation in this

period. Johann's paper sought to offer a new interpretation of Prussian constitutional history in the first half of the nineteenth century. Focusing closely on Friedrich Carl von Savigny, the founder of the German Historical School of Law, the paper highlighted the role that "legal pluralism" played in the 1840s. Johann showed that the nature, origins, and epistemology of constitutional law were fundamentally contested in this period. Both papers therefore offered an image of Prussia that differed from older interpretations of the Prussian state as first and foremost authoritarian and emphasized that the process of Prussian state-building was far more multifaceted.

Oliver Gaida and Peter Thompson, the authors of the papers discussed on the second panel, took the seminar into the twentieth century. Gaida examined the ways in which authorities in the city of Berlin dealt with deviant youths between the early Weimar years and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. He was able to show that certain assumptions about deviant youths as "work shy" or "asocial" — and the instruments to deal with them — changed remarkably little during a period defined by major political ruptures. Embedding the Nazis' exclusion of deviant youths from the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) in a longer temporal context will allow Gaida to tease out what, if anything, was specific about the regime's treatment of this social group. Thompson's paper also relied on the concept of the people's community. He argued that the National Air Protection League's project of equipping citizens with gas masks in the interwar period served both to protect German citizens from aero-chemical attack and to create an ideological community of national air defense. The Weimar government's inability to provide a large enough quantity of gas masks, coupled with a major gas leak in Hamburg in 1928, Thompson contended, contributed to the Nazis' rise to power with assurances of future national gas protection. The discussion, facilitated by Emily Steinhauer and Christopher Kirchberg, focused on the utility of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in both papers and on the explanatory potential of an object like the gas mask. Did the gas mask really have agency? Did putting one on integrate Germans into the *Volksgemeinschaft*?

The final panel of the first day included two papers on knowledge, education, and public health, by Richard Spiegel and Kathryn Holihan. Spiegel re-examined the *Humanismus-Realismustreit* in Saxony by looking at the introduction of psychology into institutions of higher learning. The Saxon debates about curricular reform and

standardization that began in the 1830s revolved around concerns about how best to enable students' refinement of mind, given a finite economy of attention. Teaching psychology provided an answer to this because it promised the key to the self-government of attention. Holihan focused on the exhibit *Der Mensch* at the 1911 International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden to show how the body's exhibitionary dissection functioned as a form of mass hygiene instruction for a non-expert public. She analyzed the organizers' experimentations with pioneering display methods to elevate the body and to promote "rational" hygienic practices. In so doing, the paper challenged historiographical accounts that divorce the extra-political spaces of exhibitions and museums from the world of high politics. The comments, delivered by Rick Tazelaar and Julie Keresztes, and the ensuing discussion reflected on the related ways in which humans were conceived as governable beings in both papers.

The second day began with papers by Tobias Bruns and Julie Keresztes and comments from Christiane Bub and Max Lazar. Bruns examined discourses about security in Imperial Germany and argued that various forms of mobility (both physical and social) were increasingly perceived as threats after 1878. Measures to curtail mobility — by limiting free trade or confining prostitutes to brothels, for instance — were implemented to guarantee security, Bruns argued. Keresztes's paper dealt with photography in the Third Reich, specifically with the dispossession of Jewish photographers and camera retailers during the early years of Nazi rule. Using businesses in Berlin and Hamburg as case studies, the paper demonstrated how Nazi officials reshaped the photographic industry along "racial" lines in order to transfer ownership of photography businesses and supplies from Jewish men and women to "true" members of the German *Volk*. The participants in the discussion urged both authors to spell out even more clearly how their topics changed conventional scholarly understandings of Imperial and Nazi Germany. The debate also revolved around the relationship between discourses and reality, that is, the nexus between social fears about security and the objective security situation in the Kaiserreich, and around the potential of writing a history of the Third Reich that engaged seriously with photographs as visual sources and photography as a social practice.

Friday's second panel featured papers by Alexander Finn Macartney and Christopher Kirchberg that both dealt with the 1960s and 1970s, as well as comments by Jasmin Söhner and Clemens Villinger. Kirchberg

analyzed the introduction of a computer-based information system in the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in the late 1960s. His main argument was that this reform was the result of internal administrative developments and technological change and should not be misunderstood as a direct response to the protest movements of these years. The reform, Kirchberg contended, was a prehistory of “big data,” not a history of reactions to 1968. Macartney’s paper was one of the few explicitly comparative and transnational contributions at this year’s seminar. Macartney looked at linkages between anti-imperialist groups in West Germany and Japan around 1968 and, through concrete examples of encounters between activists from both states, showed that they were keenly interested in each other’s politics. The Japanese influence on the Global, and West German, 1960s deserved a more prominent place in the historiography, he contended. The discussion homed in on questions of impact and source materials — what difference did transnational ties between West Germans and Japanese ultimately make? And how can one write a history of a secret agency that highlights the role of the people who ran it?

After enjoying a free afternoon on Friday, the participants reconvened on Saturday morning. The first panel of the day included two papers, by Jan Rybak and Max Lazar, that dealt with early-twentieth-century Jewish history in Germany and beyond. Rybak examined the German conquest of much of East-Central Europe from 1915 onward and showed that German Zionists came to the East with a civilizing mission to “rescue” and “nationalize” the Jewish people of the region. The main focus of these efforts were children (often orphans), for whom German Zionists built a national education and welfare infrastructure. Lazar wrote about Jewish integration in Frankfurt am Main between 1914 and 1938. After demonstrating that much of the local literature positively depicted Frankfurt as a Jewish space, Lazar argued that such depictions both reflected and reinforced the integration of the city’s Jewish population. The lively discussion, led by comments from Kathryn Holihan and Oliver Gaida, revolved around issues of comparison and historiographical revisionism. How distinct was the German Zionist mission in the East and how did it compare to other “civilizing” missions? The participants invited Lazar to clarify his definition of “integration” and how it related to the Nazi regime’s antisemitism and politics of exclusion from 1933 onward.

The next panel, with papers by Rick Tazelaar and Jasmin Söhner, continued the focus on the history of the Third Reich and its legacies.

Tazelaar analyzed the leading personnel of the Bavarian State Chancellery after 1945 to show that their experiences during the late Weimar years directly shaped how they organized this crucial state institution. Safeguarding the Bavarian state, he argued, was their paramount concern. His dissertation as a whole tries to provide a more nuanced understanding of the Nazi ties of those who ran West Germany's administration in the early years of the Federal Republic: *Belastung*, he contended, could mean many different things. Söhner took a fresh look at the Central Office of the Länder Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg by focusing on its cooperation with Soviet authorities in bringing Nazi perpetrators to justice. One major goal of her work was offering a more nuanced portrayal of Erwin Schüle, the Central Office's first head, who is often viewed critically because of his own membership in the Nazi party and SA. The discussion, aided by comments from Peter Thompson and Tobias Bruns, again centered on historiographical issues. What role did West German anti-communism play in shaping German-Soviet legal cooperation? And, given the many existing studies of how various German ministries and businesses dealt with the legacies of Nazism, what new insights might we gain by looking at state ministries?

The final panel of the seminar, featuring papers by Emily Steinhauer and Clemens Villinger and comments by Charlotte Johann and Richard Spiegel, looked at practices of consumption and some of its fiercest German critics. Steinhauer focused on two protagonists of the Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who both returned to Germany from exile in the United States after 1945. She contended that these *réémigrés* represented an interesting case study of how a group of intellectuals collaborated with the American occupation whilst simultaneously attacking capitalism and the commodification of culture in their writings, which built heavily on Franz Kafka's ideas about alienation. Drawing on a secondary analysis of oral history interviews, Villinger examined the eating practices of East German workers after 1989 to offer a more nuanced reading of how consumption shaped perceptions of socialism and capitalism after the *Wende*. While a lack of access to basic consumer items was a key feature of life in East Germany in the 1980s, many interviewees began to look back quite nostalgically at these years as a result of the economic and social uncertainty that marked their lives in the early 1990s.

During the concluding discussion the conveners observed that some topics and approaches that seemed to dominate the field until a few years ago were less prominent or even notably absent at this year's TDS: few of the papers were comparative, transnational or global in scope; none dealt explicitly with German colonialism overseas. The history of emotions did also not feature as prominently as it had done a few years prior. Instead, histories of knowledge seemed to be on the rise, as were dissertations with a focus on technology and security issues.

Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University)

POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE: ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, PRACTICES

Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington, June 6–8, 2019. Conveners: Kerstin von der Krone, Simone Lässig (GHI), Kijan Espahangizi, Nils Güttler, Monika Wulz (Center “History of Knowledge” at the ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich), Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer (Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago). Sponsored by the GHI, the Center “History of Knowledge” at the ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich, the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago, and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation). Participants: Gregory Afinogenov (Georgetown University), Ian P. Beacock (University of British Columbia), Martin Beddeleem (Aarhus University), Sarah Beringer (GHI), Jamie Cohen-Cole (George Washington University), Bregje F. van Eekelen (Technical University Delft), Elisabeth Engel (GHI), Fabian Grütter (ETH Zurich), Axel Jansen (GHI), Zoé Kergomard (GHI Paris), Oxana Kosenko (University of Ulm), Anne Kwaschik (University of Konstanz), Malcom Maclaren (University of Zurich), Suzanne Marchand (Louisiana State University), Bryan McAllister-Grande (Northeastern University), Benno Nietzel (Bielefeld University), Johan Östling (Lund University), Felix Römer (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Claudia Roesch (GHI), Anna Ross (University of Warwick), George Steinmetz (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Danielle Taschereau Mamers (University of Toronto), Jakob Tanner (University of Zurich), Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University), Fei-Hsien Wang (Indiana University Bloomington), Richard Wetzell (GHI), Peter Wien (University of Maryland, College Park), Jens Wietschorke (University of Vienna / LMU Munich).

Recent political events on both sides of the Atlantic have brought into question the very idea of knowing and knowledge in the political realm. “Fake news,” “alternative facts” and “post-truth society” are only the most prominent catchwords of this debate that also saw the confidence in science and expert knowledge erode. A conference organized by the GHI in collaboration with the Center “History of Knowledge” at the ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich and the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago aimed to explore the category of knowledge in political history and political culture more broadly. By investigating the role of knowledge in politics, the conference fostered a transatlantic debate on the merits of using knowledge as a category of historical

analysis. Scholars working in the “history of knowledge” paradigm productively conversed with scholars in other fields — such as political history, cultural history, and intellectual history — who are open to using knowledge as a category of analysis. Both the director of the GHI, Simone Lässig, and the scientific coordinator of the Zurich Center “History of Knowledge,” Kijan Espahangizi, delivered welcome addresses. Kerstin von der Krone thanked all speakers for participating in the pre-conference blog series “Exploring Knowledge in Political History,” published on the GHI’s blog *History of Knowledge: Research, Resources, and Perspectives* (<https://historyofknowledge.net/series/poliknow/>).

The conference started with a panel on “Truth, Facts, and Populism,” issues that provided a link to current debates on politics and knowledge. In the first paper, Jens Wietschorke sketched a history of knowledge about “the popular” going back to the emergence of German “Volkskunde” at the beginning of the twentieth century. He argued that knowledge about “the common people” represented a strategy of distinction and self-legitimation by the educated classes and that it formed part of a tendency to culturalize social and economic inequalities in society. In his paper on the history of neoliberal epistemologies, Martin Beddeleem showed that initially, the competitive market was the ideal model for the emergence of objective knowledge. However, since the 1970s, more militant epistemic practices gained ground by promoting ignorance and doubt. He argued that this development fostered the emergence of present mistrust in science and public expertise. Jamie Cohen-Cole provided an intellectual history of post-truth politics emphasizing the discrepancy between the self-perception of left-liberal academics and the conservative perspective on postmodern constructivist discourses since the 1970s. While center-right accounts of knowledge claimed to be objective and neutral, they discredited the postmodern critique of practices such as IQ research on gender and racial differences as political and Marxist. In their comments, Simone Lässig and Monika Wulz both highlighted that the history of post-truth and populist knowledge is key to understanding competing and discriminatory strategies as part of political histories of knowledge.

Kerstin von der Krone introduced the public evening panel on knowledge, power, and political culture and highlighted the importance of a transatlantic conversation on the relation between history of knowledge and political history. Jakob Tanner’s and Suzanne

Marchard's keynote presentations opened up this conversation, followed by a discussion moderated by Anna von der Goltz. Drawing on the work of Marc Flandreau on the interrelation of academic knowledge and the stock exchange in the Victorian age as well as Philipp Mirowski's reflection on the complex relation of data, information, and knowledge, Jakob Tanner outlined how the "prism" of knowledge and its history could shed new light on economic history and vice versa. Suzanne Marchand, in turn, warned against using the term "political" too extensively without clear-cut restrictions of its meaning in concrete historical studies. She argued that knowledge must not be superimposed with power and that culture is not synonymous with politics. The following prolific discussion focused on the relation between knowledge and power, taking its economic and political dimensions into account as well as its oppressive and antagonistic aspects.

The second panel focused on expertise and education in relation to state politics. Benno Nietzel spoke about the role of psychologists in propaganda strategies underlying the hostile relations between Germany, Russia, and the United States during the Second World War. Bregje van Eekelen highlighted the expertise of creative thinking practices in the 1950s in academia, management, and the military. She argued that we must understand creativity as an institutionalized form of freedom that offered the opportunity for a depoliticized discourse during the Cold War. Bryan McAllister-Grande presented the knowledge culture of a group of Puritan-inspired Christian Humanists influential in U.S. academia in the 1930s. Relying on ancient knowledge and religion, they promoted both Christianity and Platonism as the highest forms of reason and emphasized the force of religious authority against the relativist crisis prominent at that time. Fei-Hsien Wang demonstrated the influence of Anglo-American textbooks on Chinese education reform around 1900. She argued that textbooks enforced the normalization of the Anglo-American knowledge order, making it more relevant than American business interests in the newly emerging regime of international intellectual property rights. Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer's comments compared the role of the humanities in the U.S. and China, which opened up a transnational perspective on the role of ancient history in early twentieth-century knowledge politics. For Johan Östling, history of knowledge is a field in which perspectives from cultural, global, political, and economic histories as well as from the histories of science, media, and infrastructure can cross-fertilize to develop a bigger and, at the same time, more nuanced picture of historical interrelations.

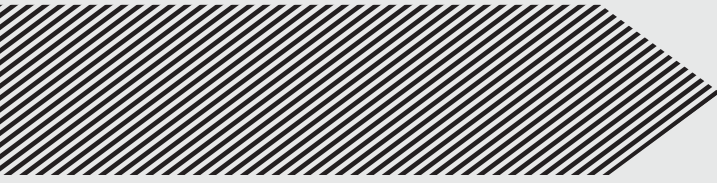
The third panel focused on theories and practices of knowledge “after crisis,” as Espahangizi’s comment later underscored. Malcolm Maclaren argued that the specific style of reasoning embodied in the League of Nations and its great faith in international law was a direct reaction to the devastating experience of the Great War. What might appear as overly optimistic from the viewpoint of later generations should rather be understood as a way of reinventing politics after total violence by means of international law through rational negotiation, reason, and knowledge. In his comment, Gregory Steinmetz reminded us not to forget the colonial context of the interwar period. Zoé Kergomard presented her results on the history of voter abstention in Switzerland in the second half of the twentieth century. She looked at the way this social phenomenon was analyzed and interpreted by political scientists, for example as a form of democratic “apathy” after the Second World War and as a form of alternative participation after the societal transformations of the 1960s and 1970s. Fabian Grütter argued that the study of knowledge itself was reinvented after the end of the boom era. In the material “wastelands” of the post-industrial society, a new pragmatic and small-scale epistemology emerged that shaped our current understanding of knowledge.

The role of knowledge in governance took center stage in the fourth panel. Gregory Afinogenov chronicled Russian information politics in the aftermath of the French Revolution. He sketched the counter-revolutionary reading culture in Russia around 1800 and argued that the circulation of political knowledge in journals independent from the state ultimately rallied the people behind the reactionary monarchist state itself. Anna Ross argued that statistics were a tool of state reform after the 1848 revolution in Germany. Through statistics, state authorities adopted revolutionary ideas which influenced their decision-making; statistics mediated between conservatives and oppositional democrats. Kerstin von der Krone’s related comment pointed to the role of state officials and civil actors as knowledge producers in this scenario. In presenting a history of knowledge about economic inequality in the United Kingdom of the 1980s under Thatcher, Felix Römer argued that contemporary knowledge about poverty resulted from a politics of ignorance in which statistical studies were cut back and the debate on poverty was marginalized. In her comment, Anne Kwaschik highlighted the integrative capacity of knowledge as an object of research bringing together aspects of social history, political history, and history of science in fields such as the histories of economics and of bureaucracies.

The fifth panel considered the links between knowledge, society, and social activism. First, Ian Beacock presented case studies of queer amateur historians in early-twentieth-century Germany who worked and published on the history of queer people. Studying the knowledge politics of pioneering gay and lesbian activists provided a fruitful entry point to reconstructing an early queer imagination from within, rather than from an external, medicalized perspective. Next, Oxana Kosenko described the various forms in which both the government and revolutionary activists in the Soviet Union publicized hygiene education between the 1920s and 1940s. Such “theatrical biopolitics” aimed at preparing the population for the new proletarian society. Sanitary knowledge and values were transmitted through different channels like public performances by traveling theater troupes, sanitary mock trials, and film productions. Finally, Danielle Taschereau Mamers analyzed racial taxonomies and practices of documenting “Indian” identity in the context of settler colonial politics of knowledge in Canada. In response to a comment from Richard Wetzell, she emphasized the active role of indigenous resistance against logics of epistemic othering. In the discussion following the panel, Peter Wien advocated moving beyond the dominant “Foucauldian-Gramscian paradigm” in the history of knowledge.

The final discussion of the conference, moderated by Axel Jansen, opened with concluding remarks from Simone Lässig, who highlighted the productive transatlantic dialogue between the histories of knowledge and of political culture. Co-convenor Bartsch-Zimmer picked up on an underlying methodological question raised by Espahangizi earlier in the conference: is it possible to write a history of knowledge as a merely descriptive history of knowledge *claims* that refrains from evaluating these claims? The case of political knowledge particularly highlights the problem of avoiding normative evaluation, even in the choice of one’s objects of research. Should propaganda be treated and analyzed as a form of knowledge? What is the political effect if a historian of knowledge were to do so? Then again, how can we deal with the normative dimension of the history of knowledge without falling into a Whiggish history of truths? The conference proved a fruitful framework for combining a wide variety of empirical case studies with a discussion of conceptual questions key to a political history of knowledge, or perhaps a knowledge history of political culture.

Kijan Espahangizi and Monika Wulz (Center “History of Knowledge” at the ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich)



GHI News

NEW GHI PUBLICATIONS

1. Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge University Press)

Ricky W. Law, *Transnational Nazism: Ideology and Culture in German-Japanese Relations, 1919–1936*.

John P. R. Eicher, *Exiled Among Nations: German and Mennonite Mythologies in a Transnational Age*.

2. Studies in German History (Berghahn Books)

Karl Heinrich Pohl, *Gustav Stresemann: The Crossover Artist*.

Anne C. Schenderlein, *Germany on Their Minds: German Jewish Refugees in the United States and Relationships with Germany, 1938–1988*.

3. Worlds of Consumption (Palgrave Macmillan)

Jan Logemann, Gary Cross, and Ingo Köhler, eds., *Consumer Engineering, 1920s–1970s: Marketing between Expert Planning and Consumer Responsiveness*.

4. Special Issues of Journals Based on GHI Conferences and Workshops

Elisabeth Engel and Nicholas Grant, eds., “Going South: Tracing Race and Region in the Post-emancipation Black Atlantic.” Special issue, *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 2 (2018).

Axel Jansen, John Krige, and Jessica Wang, eds., “Empires of Knowledge.” Special issue, *History and Technology* 35, no. 4 (2019).

Jan C. Jansen, Jessica Harland-Jacobs, and Elizabeth Mancke, eds., “The Fraternal Atlantic (c. 1770–1918).” Special issue, *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 16, no. 3 (2019).

Simone Lässig and Karen Hagemann, eds. “Discussion Forum: The Vanishing Nineteenth Century in European History?” *Central European History* 51 (2018).

Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, eds. “Knowledge and Young Migrants.” Special issue, *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 3 (2019).

STAFF CHANGES

Sally Dill, who joined the GHI as Administrative & Research Assistant in 2016, left the institute in August 2019 in order to take up a position as translator for the Swiss embassy.

Christiane Geidt, Receptionist and Administrative Assistant since 2017, left the institute in April 2019.

Daniel Graham joined the GHI as Administrative Assistant in April 2019 after serving as a research intern since December 2018. Before joining GHI, Daniel worked on two congressional campaigns.

Nora Hilgert joined the GHI as Research and Press Coordinator in May 2019 to cover for Sarah Beringer, who is on maternity leave. Nora is on leave from her position as Managing Director of the German Historical Association.

Kerstin von der Krone, GHI Research Fellow since 2016, has left the institute at the end of June 2019 for Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. Initially a research fellow at the Martin-Buber-Chair for Jewish Philosophy and Thought, she is now Head of the Judaica Division at the University Library.

Stephanie Oehrlein joined the GHI as an Administrative Associate in April 2019 to cover for Melanie Smaney, who is on maternity leave. She previously worked in various events and administrative positions.

GHI FELLOWSHIPS AND INTERNSHIPS

Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships

The GHI awards short-term fellowships to European and North American doctoral students as well as postdoctoral scholars to pursue research projects that draw upon primary sources located in the United States. We are particularly interested in research projects that fit into the following fields: German and European history, the history of German-American relations, the role of Germany and the USA in international relations, and American history (European doctoral and postdoctoral scholars only).

The proposed research projects should make use of historical methods and engage with the relevant historiography. We especially invite applications from doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars who currently have no funding from their home institutions. The fellowships are usually granted for periods of one to five months.

The GHI also offers a number of other long-term doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships with more specific profiles to strengthen key research interests at institute, including: the history of knowledge, the history of race and ethnicity, the history of religion and religiosity, the history of family and kinship, the history of migration, and North American history. In addition to these opportunities, several new fellowships programs have been introduced: the Binational Tandem Research Program for “The History of Knowledge” and “Global and Trans-regional History,” and the Gerda Henkel Postdoctoral Fellowship for Digital History.

For further information about these programs and current application deadlines, please check our website at www.ghi-dc.org/fellowships.

GHI Internships

The GHI Internship Program gives German and American students of history, political science, and library studies an opportunity to gain experience at a scholarly research institute. Interns assist individual research projects, work for the library, take part in the preparation and hosting of conferences, and help with our publications. They receive a small stipend. The program is very flexible in the sense that the GHI tries to accommodate the interns’ interests, abilities, and goals. A two-month minimum stay is required; a three-month stay is preferred. There is a rolling review of applications. For further information, please check our website at www.ghi-dc.org/internships.

GHI FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

Short-term Doctoral Fellowships

Clara-Sophie Höhn, Universität Augsburg

“Invisible Revolutionaries”: White Southern Female Activists in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s

Clemens Huemerlehner, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Brsg.

Öl statt Kohle. Internationale Geschichte der westdeutschen Energietransition nach 1945

Benjamin Nestor, Marquette University

Einsatzgruppe C in the District Galicia: Ideology, Situational Violence, and Mass Murder

Ricardo Neuner, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

Die Vermessung des Konsumenten. Die Psychologie des Verbrauchers in der amerikanischen Verhaltensforschung nach 1945

Anna Katharina Rauscher, Freie Universität Berlin

Counterpointing "Quiet Diplomacy." Classical Music, Human Rights and Political Activism (1975-2000)

Helene Schlicht, Universität Bielefeld

California Dreamin'. The Counterculture, the Cyberculture and the Role of Regional Networks in the Digital Age

Cora Schmidt-Ott, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen

Samuel Huntington und die intellectual history des American Century

Anka Steffen, Europa-Universität Viadrina

"Priesterschaft des heiligen Merkur." Schlesische Leinwandkaufleute und der atlantische Leinwandhandel in der frühen Neuzeit

Malin Sonja Wilckens, Universität Bielefeld

Das große Köpfemessen – Die Vergleichende Anatomie und die Konstruktion von "Menschenrassen"

Short-term Postdoctoral Fellowships

Christian Bailey, Purchase College, State University of New York

The Stranger Who Dwells with You: Love between Jews and other Germans, 1874-1968

Janine Theresa Murphy, Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena

Turnen and the Turners: The German Gymnastics Movement in America, 1848-1919

Olivier Schouteden, American University Cairo

Alphonse Pinart's Expeditions: Knowledge, Encounters, and Collections during the Age of European Colonial Expansion (1871-1911)

Sari Siegel, Yale University, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies

Healing after the Holocaust: Jewish DP-Physicians and the Provision of Medical Care to Fellow Survivors in Germany, 1945-1950

Allison Stagg, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz

The Female Influence: Collectors, Promoters, Designers of Political Caricature Prints, 1790-1840

Erik Wegerhoff, ETH Zürich

Peter Blake, die Architektur und das Auto. Wandlungen und Wendungen eines Modernisten zur Postmoderne (1950er-1970er)

Horner Library Fellows

Michael Kaelin, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Not My Brother's Keeper: Immigrant Communities, Nativism, and the Limits of Inclusion

Timothy Wright, University of California, Berkeley

Rituals of the Reborn: Ascetic Protestantism and Alternative Christianities in the Atlantic World, 1680-1780

Tandem Fellowships in the History of Knowledge & Knowledge Cultures

Jamie Cohen-Cole, George Washington University

The Science of Children

Susanne Schmidt, Freie Universität Berlin

Midlife Crisis Revisited

Tandem Fellowships in Global and Trans-Regional History

Gregory Afinogenov, Georgetown University

Seated at the Right Hand: Russia against World Revolution, 1770-1830

Anna Ananieva, Universität Tübingen

The European Tour of "Comte & Comtesse du Nord": Private Status and Public Visibility of the Traveling Russian Court on the Eve of the French Revolution

Tandem Fellowships in the History of Migration at the German Historical Institute Washington's Pacific Regional Office in Berkeley

Sheer Ganor, University of California, Berkeley

Undevised Heimat: Forced Migration into Germany in the Twentieth Century

Rebekka Grossmann, Hebrew University

Thinking Belonging. Post-Colonial Resistance and the German-Jewish Experience

**RESEARCH SEMINAR AND COLLOQUIUM,
SPRING/SUMMER 2019**

- January 23** **Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)**
Monument Wars in an Age of Postcolonial
Globalization
- January 24** **Julia Engelschalt (Bielefeld University)**
Climates, Contagion, and Comparison: American
Physicians between Colonial Warfare and the New
Public Health, 1898 – c. 1925
- Caterina Schürch (Ludwig-Maximilians-
Universität München)**
Beyond Disciplinary and Political Boundaries: Uniting
Epistemic Visions in Interwar Physicochemical Biology
- February 6** **Michelle Lynn Kahn (University of Richmond)**
Foreign at Home: Turkish-German Migrants and the
Boundaries of Europe, 1961-1990
- February 21** **Johannes Nagel (Universität Bielefeld)**
The U.S. Military Transformation and the Observation
of World Politics, 1865-1910
- Laura Nicolaiciuc (Ludwig-Maximilians-
Universität München)**
Mapping the Monuments. Die American Harvard
Group und das American Council of Learned Societies
als Initiatoren des amerikanischen Kunstschatzes in
Europa
- March 7** **Vinícius Bivar Marra Pereira (Freie Universität
Berlin)**
The American Front: Nazi Germany, the United States
and the Struggle against Communism in Brazil
(1935-1938)
- Sielke Beata Kelner (Graduate Institute of
International and Development Studies)**
Bringing the Gospel to the East: U.S. Evangelical
Missionary Activism in Communist Romania
- Pascal Pawlitta (Institut für Zeitgeschichte
München)**
The Politicization of Climate: The Origins of
International Climate Policy (ca. 1979-1992)

- March 21** **Kerstin Bischl (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)**
 Letztes Jahr in Birobidžan? Sowjetisch-jüdische Entfremdungen 1953-1991
- Maximilian Klose (Graduate School of North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin)**
 Why They Gave: CARE, the American Public, and U.S.-German Relations since 1945
- Mathias Häußler (University of Regensburg)**
 Cold War Elvis: The Rise and Fall of an American Cultural Icon
- April 3** **Thomas Zimmer (Universität Freiburg / Georgetown University / GHI)**
 Postmodern Leviathan: A History of the State in West Germany and the United States in the 1960s and 70s
- April 18** **Esther Heyer (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)**
 Franziskus Graf Wolff Metternich (1893-1978): Projektionsfläche für Fremd- und Selbstinszenierung zwischen Kunstgeschichte, Denkmalpflege und Kulturpolitik
- Franziska Walter (Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin/ Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)**
 Security Culture in Bavaria 1945-1970. Staff, practices and experiences in the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, Bavarian Criminal Police Office and Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution
- Katrin Horn (Universität Bayreuth)**
 Public Intimacies: Gossip in Late-Nineteenth-Century Memoirs and Magazines
- April 24** **James M. Brophy (University of Delaware)**
 The Spectrum of Political Dissent: Publishers in Central Europe, 1800-1870
- May 16** **Luise Fast (Bielefeld University)**
 Decentering Cultural Encounter. Indigenous Intermediaries as Transcultural Brokers in the Nineteenth Century
- Jens Pohlmann (GHI Washington/ Roy Rozenzweig Center for History and New Media)**
 Free Speech, Regulation, and Democracy in the Digital Age. An Analysis of Transatlantic Internet Policy Differences in Germany and the United States

June 13

Timothy Wright (Max Planck Institute for Human Development)

Rituals of the Reborn: Ascetic Protestantism and Alternative Christianities in the Atlantic World, 1680-1780

Julie Keresztes (Boston University)

Cameras for the Volk: Photography, Community and Society in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Hannah Rudolph (GHI Washington)

“... a symbol of national strength” - The Media Discourse on the Widows of September 11th

GHI CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2019/20

- June 12** **The Politics of Research: Academic Freedom, Governmental Funding, and Public Accountability**
 Panel Discussion at the GHI
 Panelists: Mary Sue Coleman (AAU), Julika Griem (DFG), Wilhelm Krull (Volkswagen Foundation), Jon P. Peede (NEH), and Pauline Yu (ACLS), moderated by Doug Lederman (Inside Higher Ed)
- August 27** **Kino-Q: The Aids Trilogy, Pt III - The Fire under Your Ass (1990)**
 Film Screening at Goethe-Institut Washington
 Introduced by Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)
- September 6-7** **Global Knowledge, Global Legitimacy? Transatlantic Biomedicine since 1970**
 Conference at GHI
 Conveners: Axel Jansen (GHI Washington) and Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington)
- September 24-25** **Sixth Junior Scholars Conference in Jewish History: Radicalism and Resistance in Modern Jewish History**
 Conference in Hamburg
 Conveners: Miriam Rürup (Institute for the History of the German Jews, Hamburg), Anne Schenderlein (German Historical Institute Washington), and Mirjam Zadoff (NS-Dokumentationszentrum München), with additional support from the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo Baeck Instituts
- October 1** **From Revolution to Routine? Patterns of German Democracy in the Twentieth Century**
 Lecture at GHI PRO, Berkeley
 Speaker: Lutz Raphael (Trier University)
- October 3-6** **GSA Seminar: Beyond the Racial State: New Perspectives on Race in Nazi Germany**
 Seminar at Forty-Third Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Portland, OR
 Conveners: Devin Pendas (Boston College), Mark Roseman (Indiana University), and Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)

- October 3-6** **Work, Migration, Environment: The German and Central European Experience**
 Panel at the Forty-Third Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Portland, Oregon
 Conveners: Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO, Berkeley) and Eagle Glassheim (University of British Columbia, Vancouver)
- October 10-12** **Medieval History Seminar**
 Seminar at GHI London
 Conveners: Paul Freedman (Yale University), Bernhard Jussen (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main), Simon MacLean (University of St Andrews), Ruth Mazo Karras (Trinity College Dublin), Len Scales (Durham University), and Dorothea Weltecke (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)
 Organized by the German Historical Institute London in co-operation with the German Historical Institute Washington and the German History Society
- October 10-12** **Digital Hermeneutics: From Research to Dissemination**
 International Conference and Workshop at the GHI
 Organized in collaboration with the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH) and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (RRCHNM)
 Conveners: Andreas Fickers (C²DH), Gerben Zaagsma (C²DH), Sean Takats (RRCHNM), Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), Jens Pohlmann (GHI Washington), Daniel Burckhardt (GHI Washington)
- October 15** **Beyond the Pressure to Perform: On the Concept of “Leistung” in Nineteenth-Century Germany**
 Lecture at GHI PRO, Berkeley
 Speaker: Nina Verheyen (Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities)
- October 21** **“Maybe Esther”: Storytelling and the Unpredictability of the Past**
 Lecture at the Alumni House, UC Berkeley
 Speaker: Katja Petrowskaja
 Sponsored by the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius
- October 21-23** **Histories of Migration: Transatlantic and Global Perspectives**
 Bucerius Young Scholars Forum at GHI PRO, Berkeley
 Convener: Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO)

- October 26** **Object Lessons: German and American Perspectives on Provenance Research of the Colonial and Nazi Eras**
 Panel Discussion at the GHI
 Panelists: Raphael Gross (Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin), Glenn Penny (University of Iowa), Hilke Thode-Arora (Museum der Fünf Kontinente, Munich, and 2018 PREP Guest Speaker), Mirjam Brusius (German Historical Institute London), Christine Kremer (National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution), and moderated by Irene Bald Romano (University of Arizona, and 2018 PREP participant)
- November 1** **Moral Reasoning in the Wake of Mass Murder: Disability and Reproductive Rights in 1980s-1990s Germany**
 33rd Annual Lecture at the GHI
 Speaker: Dagmar Herzog (Graduate Center, City University of New York)
- November 1** **Twenty-Eighth Annual Symposium of the Friends of the German Historical Institute**
 Presentation of the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize at GHI Washington
- December 9-10** **Archives of Migration: Annual Academic and Policy Symposium “Innovation through Migration”**
 Policy Symposium at GHI PRO, Berkeley
 Conveners: Fatima El-Tayeb (UC San Diego) and Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO)
- 2020**
- April 23-24** **Migration and Racism in the United States and Germany in the Twentieth Century**
 Workshop at the GHI
 Conveners: Maria Alexopoulou (University of Mannheim), Elisabeth Engel (GHI Washington)
- June 1-2** **Mobilities, Exclusion, and Migrants’ Agency in the Pacific Realm in a Transregional and Diachronic Perspective**
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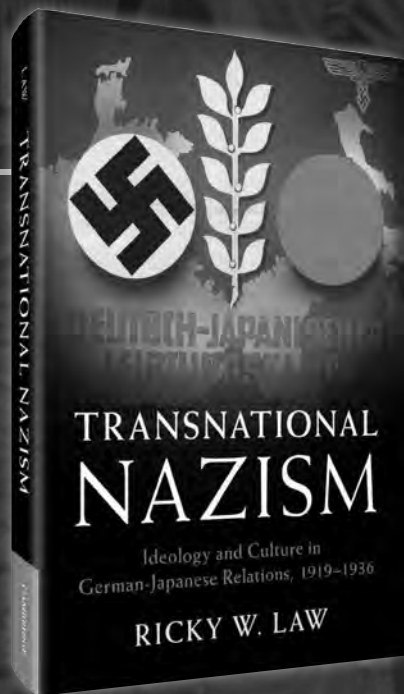
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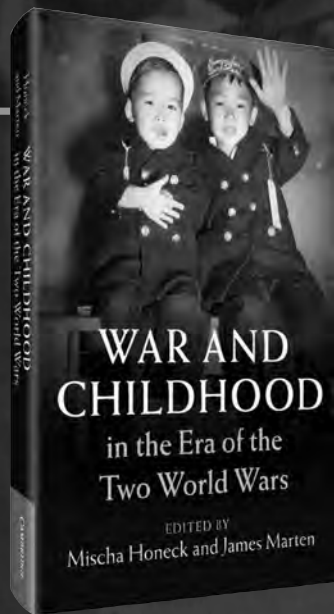
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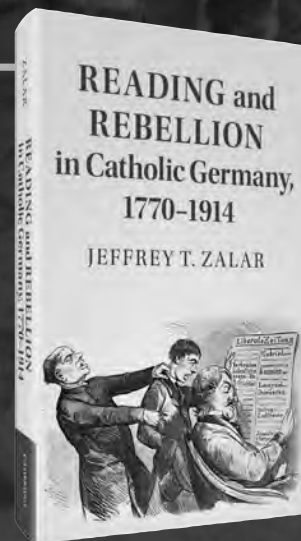
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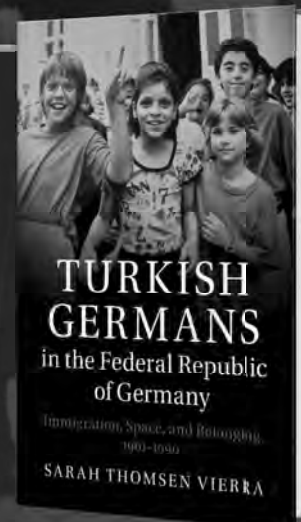
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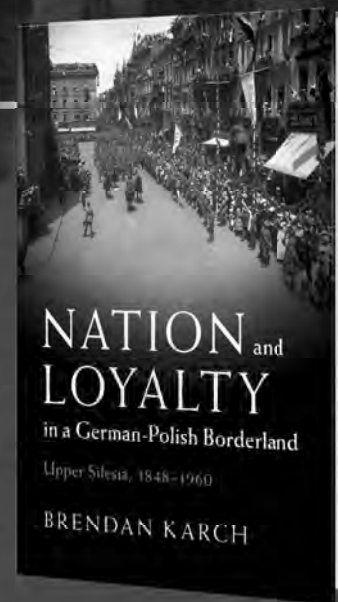
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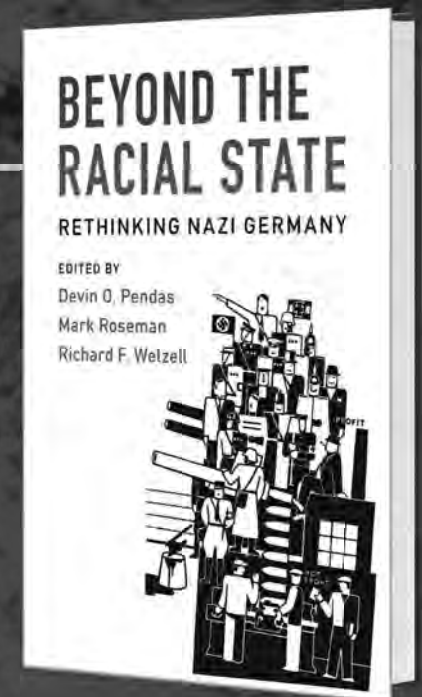
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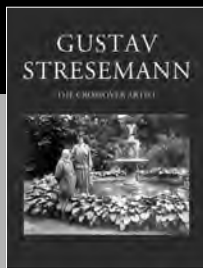


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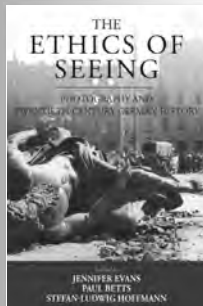
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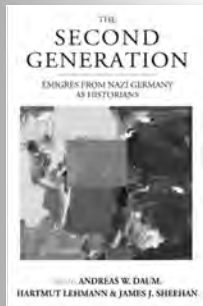
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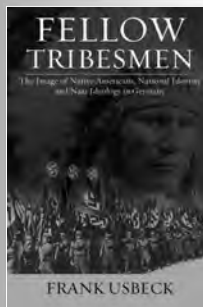
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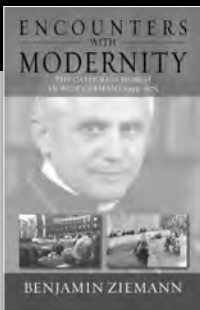
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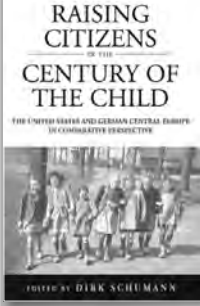
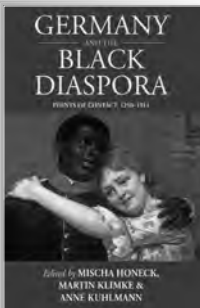
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Nach einer erfolgreichen Karriere im Kulturbetrieb der Weimarer Republik akzeptierte der deutsche Regisseur William Dieterle im Jahre 1930 ein Vertragsangebot der US-Filmgesellschaft Warner Bros. Pictures. Dort gelang ihm der Aufbau eines Netzwerkes deutschsprachiger Künstler, dem Persönlichkeiten wie Max Reinhardt und Fritz Kortner angehörten. Es entstanden Filme, die zum Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus und zur Repräsentation eines „anderen Deutschland“ in der Emigration beitrugen. Larissa Schütze beschreibt auf Basis der Firmenunterlagen Dieterles Integration in die institutionellen Strukturen der Warner Bros. Studios und rekonstruiert die Produktionsgeschichte seiner dort entstandenen Filme unter Berücksichtigung der politischen, gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen im Amerika der dreißiger Jahre.

Vorstellungen von „guter Staatsbürgerschaft“ dominierten in den USA der Zwischenkriegszeit, die von einer restriktiven Migrationsgesetzgebung geprägt war. Die Einwanderungsdebatten waren mit strikten Amerikanisierungsforderungen verknüpft. Am Beispiel von Mitgliedern der Gymnastikorganisation *Sokol* sowie Sportler/innen des *Jewish People's Institute* (JPI) in Chicago wird gezeigt, wie tschechische und jüdische Migrant/innen und ihre Nachkommen Sport als Strategie der Legitimierung und im Kampf um Anerkennung nutzen. Ihre Handlungsoptionen standen dabei im Spannungsfeld von Adaption, Ablehnung und Umdeutung dominanter US-Staatsbürgerschaftskonzepte und beinhalteten die Integration kultureller Selbstbilder.



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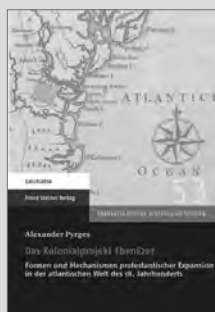
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Alexander Pyrges

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Ab der Wende zum 18. Jahrhundert engagierten sich protestantische Landeskirchen vermehrt im atlantischen Raum und veränderten so die nordatlantische Welt des Protestantismus grundlegend. Abseits der Pfade nationalhistorischer Interpretationen behandelt Alexander Pyrges diesen über kirchliche und herrschaftliche Grenzen hinweg wirkmächtigen Prozess.

Im Zentrum steht das Kolonialprojekt Ebenezer: Im Jahr 1734 gegründet wurde die Gemeinde Ebenezer in der britischen Kolonie Georgia jahrzehntelang durch anglikanische und lutherisch-pietistische Kirchenreformer in England und im Alten Reich gefördert. Die Studie gibt Aufschluss über die religiöse Verdichtung der nordatlantischen Welt im 18. Jahrhundert.



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