

**„Winning their Trust and Affection“ –
Royal Heirs and the Uses of Soft Power in
Nineteenth-Century Europe**

Veranstalter: AHRC-funded project „Heirs to the throne in the constitutional monarchies of nineteenth-century Europe“, University of St Andrews

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Bericht von: Charles Jones / Maria-Christina Marchi / Richard Meyer Forsting, School of History, University of St Andrews

The relationship between monarchies and power changed drastically in the course of the nineteenth century. Kings and queens lost control over resources that are often referred to as „hard power“. As a consequence, ruling dynasties had to develop techniques that would generate for them a measure of „soft power“ – a capacity defined by political scientist Joseph S. Nye as the ability to persuade, co-opt, charm and attract others. This notion of soft power and its applicability to the development of nineteenth-century monarchy – and especially to the roles played by royal successors embodying and preparing for the exercise of future monarchical rule – was the theme of the second conference organized by Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens on behalf of the AHRC-funded project „Heirs to the throne in the constitutional monarchies of nineteenth-century Europe“ at the University of St Andrews.

In his introduction FRANK LORENZ MÜLLER discussed the concept of soft power as developed by Nye and pointed to its utility for understanding some of the successes of nineteenth-century monarchical systems: „If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place – in short, if my behaviour is determined by an observable but intangible attraction“, Nye has observed, „soft power is at work.“¹ Using this approach brings up fruitful questions about the relationship between power and monarchies:

First and most fundamentally, how can that „attraction“ that betrays the successful working of soft power be defined, observed and perhaps even measured when assessing the

relationship between monarchy and its relevant contexts? Second, according to Nye, the extent of soft power wielded by an agent rests on its culture – the set of values and practices that create meaning for a given society. What were those values and practices that endowed monarchs with the resources to exercise soft power? To what extent were they shaped, invented, popularized and defended by monarchy? Was there a pre-existing, dwindling stock of „monarchical capital“ on which royal families had to eke out an increasingly marginal existence, or could it be replenished or generated, and if so – how? And finally, the relationship of soft power and hard power requires a closer look since nineteenth-century monarchs (and their heirs) often wielded significant residual amounts of hard power and usually proved reluctant to relinquish them – even as they were gaining new soft power resources. Here, too, Nye provides a useful phrase: smart power – defined as „strategies that successfully combine hard and soft power resources in differing contexts.“ Müller concluded by asking whether this smart power notion provides a better understanding of the story of monarchy and power in nineteenth-century Europe.

The opening keynote lecture by MONIKA WIENFORT (Wuppertal) explored the fundamental role of the concept of „family“ within dynasties. The attempt to popularize monarchy, which occurred throughout the century, was linked to the changing interpretations of how monarchy and nation were connected, while mass media and public opinion became widely acknowledged agents for the representation of dynasties. Wienfort highlighted familiarity, respectability and domesticity as three key dimensions in the evolution of the monarchy and explained how dynasties aimed to represent themselves as closely knit families. Queen Victoria and her daughter Vicky maintained a letter correspondence which became more than just a practical form of communication between family members. Their „language of cousinhood“ promoted a sense of intimacy between the royal figures which spoke to predominant middle class val-

¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Soft Power. The Means of Success in World Politics*, New York 2004, p. 7.

ues. Demonstrating shared values of familial love with public appearances and royal representations, like acts of philanthropy, helped royal families to build respectability. Especially royal heirs were frequently involved in charitable events and became patrons of the arts and sciences. Representations of domesticity, however, was what brought the monarchy closer to the middle classes, winning over the people in the attempt to equate nation with family, and family with the crown. Thus, Wienfort argued, an emphasis on the beau ideal of family in nineteenth-century monarchies was crucial in establishing a tie between the crown and the public.

The first panel then investigated this bond, created by appeals to the public through notions of beauty and emotions. Addressing the question of the efficiency of soft power, the papers discussed issues of agency and royal media strategies. RICHARD MEYER FORSTING (St Andrews) introduced the role of royal masculinity in the portrayal of the young Alfonso XII and Alfonso XIII. His paper focused on the visual media used to present these heirs to the Spanish public and the difficulties encountered in creating a convincing masculine image for young royals. In contrast to this, IMKE POLLAND (Giessen) demonstrated the feminization of the public sphere. Prominent public personas like Alexandra Princess of Wales became key players in boosting the popularity of the British monarchy. A fashion icon and a celebrity, Alexandra also appealed to the public as a mother and wife and thus as a figure of continuity and stability. EDWARD OWENS (Manchester) analysed the January 1947 Sunday Pictorial poll on Princess Elizabeth's upcoming nuptials which asked „Should our future queen wed Philip?“ It emerged that the majority of the respondents wanted the young princess to marry for love. Taking the subjects' voice seriously, Buckingham Palace proceeded to fashion a narrative that could foster emotional ties and create social cohesion around the monarchy.

The second panel dealt with how heirs employed soft power strategies when attempting to win over and persuade sceptical audiences. The panellists outlined how heirs accepted or refused to play a specific part in

public. TROND NORÉN ISAKSEN (Oslo) analysed the Swedish royal presence in Norway in the context of the union of the Swedish and Norwegian crowns. A „Norwegian“ education of heirs and their presence in the country were essential components of making the future monarch acceptable to his Norwegian subjects. ALMA HANNIG (Bonn/Vienna) discussed Archduke Franz Ferdinand's unwillingness to employ soft power to popularize his image. Franz Ferdinand remained a mystery to many Austrians, as the Habsburg heir fiercely guarded his private life, portraying sternness and military virtue in his public persona. Unlike the archduke, Edward Prince of Wales tried to influence his negative public image and, at least half-heartedly, to gain popularity through charitable engagements. JANE RIDLEY (Buckingham) argued that, perhaps counter-intuitively, the adventures and scandals surrounding the prince could also be interpreted as an effective projection of a masculinity which secured him a certain popularity and would eventually become an asset.

The third panel explored viable applications of soft power through conduits of communication that developed between royalty, the press, and the public sphere. The presentations showed how the practice of soft power was experienced at different levels. KRISTINA WIDESTEDT (Stockholm) used Swedish King Oscar II to illustrate the changes made in the reporting of royal events between the first and last decades of his reign. She suggested that the public played an increasingly significant role as spectators-on-site as well as spectators-by-proxy. MARIA-CHRISTINA MARCHI (St Andrews) illustrated the successful collaboration of visual media and royal soft power in her discussion on the post-Risorgimento „marketing“ of the Italian heir Umberto and his wife Margherita. Monarchical propaganda could be exploited, not only to popularize the ruling House of Savoia, but also as an instrument for Italian unity and national identity. MILINDA BANERJEE (Kolkata/Heidelberg) expanded upon the concept of national identity in his analysis of three visits by Princes of Wales to Bengal made by the later Edward VII (1875-76), George V (1905-6), and Edward

VIII (1921-22). Here royal power effectively constructed emotional appeals and their impact permeated both imperial and nationalist spheres.

The second keynote lecture by ERIK GOLDSTEIN (Boston) discussed the role of royals in public diplomacy between European powers and the United States. Goldstein argued that royal family visits, commemoration efforts and the experience of American leaders as ambassadors in Europe meant that royal connections remained a significant component in foreign relations during the long nineteenth century. Royal heirs' international role was a classic exercise of soft power, aimed at improving relations and perceptions. The future Edward VII made a high profile visit to the US in 1860 which strengthened diplomatic relations with Britain. However, Goldstein showed that the long-term benefits of royal visits were not always effective: French, Russian, German and Italian visits had positive results but failed to have a lasting impact on foreign relations. The attempts of European royals to buy into the commemoration boom also had mixed results. The British erected a statue of Alfred the Great in the US, to link his image with that of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The present was built on goodwill created by the royal visit and was welcomed warmly. German Emperor Wilhelm II decided to follow suit; however, his gift of a statue of Frederick the Great and a bust of himself failed to construct a link to the history of the US.

The fourth panel was dedicated to the use of „popular“ heirs in promoting dynastic values and forging a collective identity of the monarchy and the nation. The panellists also discussed the influence of nation building and nationalization processes on the representation of monarchy. MIRIAM SCHNEIDER (St Andrews) presented Crown Prince Constantine of Greece's strategic use of cultural politics between 1896 and 1906. Through the promotion of archeology and his success in reviving the Olympic Games, Constantine was able to endear the monarchy, though briefly, to an often-fickle Greek populace. JEROEN KOCH (Utrecht) discussed the contentious return of the House of Orange to power in the Netherlands and the equally difficult relation-

ship between William I and his son the Prince of Orange. The prince's hero status, earned at Waterloo, helped boost the monarchy's popularity and provided the House of Orange with public legitimacy. BERNARD RULOF (Maastricht) discussed the Legitimist movement and the promotion of Henri Comte de Chambord as heir to the throne of France following the July Revolution of 1830. The image of the „Bon Roi“, deeply rooted in dynastic memory, presented Henri as a charismatic personality and a man of the people. FRANK STERKENBURGH (Warwick) argued that German Emperor Wilhelm I, while heir to the Prussian throne (1840-61), propagated his image as a paragon of Prussian dynastic and military virtue at home and abroad. Wilhelm authorized newspaper articles and biographies that appealed to both liberal and conservative audiences.

The concluding round table discussion focused on the specificity of the European nineteenth century; the creation and adoption of narratives by the monarchy; and the role played by spectators in this context. The nineteenth century played a crucial role in the development of the institution „royal heir“ and their interaction with soft power. As a moment of redefinition following the French Revolution, it saw monarchies lose much of its more traditional, largely unquestioned legitimacy and transitioned into a period of „conditional kingship“. Constitutions, notions of nationalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie changed the way in which monarchy related to its subjects and vice versa. The notion of monarchical responsibility towards its people became widely accepted, and soft power strategies were applied by the crown to become an embodiment of the nation. Heirs in particular were central to the development of soft power as they often acted as representatives of the crown with a mission to connect with the people.

Conference Overview:

Welcome / Introduction

Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens

Keynote Lecture I

Monika Wienfort, Wuppertal: Dynastic Heritage and Bourgeois Morals. Monarchy and

Family in the 19th Century

Panel 1: Emotional Appeals

Richard Meyer Forsting, St Andrews: The importance of looking the part: Heirs and male aesthetics in nineteenth century Spain

Imke Polland, Giessen: Alexandra and the Attractions of Attire: How to fashion the popularity of the British Monarchy

Edward Owens, Manchester: 'A Real Princess, Really in Love with a Real Prince': The 1947 wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip of Greece

Panel 2: Persuading Sceptical Audiences

Trond Norén Isaksen, Oslo: The Power of Presence: Crafting a Norwegian Identity for the Bernadotte Heirs

Alma Hannig, Bonn/Vienna: 'He was no greeter'. Archduke Franz Ferdinand – an uncharming prince?

Jane Ridley, Buckingham: Bertie Prince of Wales: Prince Hal or Welfare royal?

Panel 3: Conduits of Communication

Kristina Widestedt (Stockholm): Royal family events and media access during the reign of Oscar II of Sweden

Maria-Christina Marchi (St Andrews): Selling the Monarchy: Building a Royal Market in Post-Risorgimento Italy

Milinda Banerjee (Kolkata/Heidelberg): Imperial Communication and Nationalist Discourses: Visits of Princes of Wales to Bengal

Keynote Lecture II

Erik Goldstein (Boston): Royal Ambassadors – Monarchical Public Diplomacy and the United States

Panel 4: Dynastic Values and Collective Identity

Miriam Schneider (St Andrews): A 'sporting Hermes' – Crown Prince Constantine and the ancient heritage of Modern Greece

Jeroen Koch (Utrecht): The Uses of a Hero. King William I of the Netherlands and the Prince of Orange, 1815-1840

Bernard Rulof (Maastricht): The bon Roi Henri V: Constructing/Expecting a Charismatic Monarch

Frank Sterkenburgh (Warwick): Embodying Prussia: Prince Wilhelm and the medial rep-

resentation of military virtues

Round Table / Final discussion

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