

### **Die Ideen von 1917. Debatten auf Burg Lauenstein über die Neuordnung Deutschlands nach dem Krieg**

**Veranstalter:** Meike G. Werner, Vanderbilt University, Nashville (USA); Ulrich Raulff and Marcel Lepper, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (Germany)

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**Bericht von:** Steven Schouten, University of Amsterdam

On 7-8 December 2017 a conference, entitled „The Ideas of 1917: Debates at Burg Lauenstein on the New Order of Post-War Germany“, took place at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach am Neckar, Germany. Scholars from Germany and the United States were invited to discuss the history of two conferences that took place at Burg Lauenstein in Upper Franconia in 1917. In that year Germany experienced its third year of the First World War and, with the social, economical and political reorganisation of the country subject to great debate, Eugen Diederichs and his co-organising *Dürerbund*, *Comeniusgesellschaft* and *Vaterländische Gesellschaft 1914 in Thüringen* hoped to formulate a vision of Germany's future that was rooted in „German Spirituality“ (*Geistigkeit*). The first of the two conferences took place from May 29 to 31, the second from September 29 to October 3, 1917. Around 60 to 80 members of Germany's cultural elite were invited, among them the poet Richard Dehmel, the sociologists Max Weber, Werner Sombart and Ferdinand Tönnies, the future president of the German *Bundesrepublik* Theodor Heuss, and the future playwright Ernst Toller. While Diederichs had hoped that the debates would lead to a national community beyond fractures, 'Lauenstein' instead revealed deep political and ideological conflicts. A third conference in May 1918 received less attention, as many icons of the first two meetings did not attend; little is known about this last Lauenstein conference.

Relying on unpublished documents about these meetings from the *Nachlass* of Diederichs at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, such as the protocols, correspondences, photo-albums and articles and essays

published in various journals, the scholars at the transatlantic Marbach conference aimed to analyse Lauenstein's intellectual spectrum. The title of the conference, „The Ideas of 1917“, derived from a term coined by Max Weber in a speech given upon the invitation of the German *Nationalausschuss* on August 1, 1916 in Nuremberg, where he was invited to talk about Germany's war aims. The term referred to a call for a constructive, post-war programme to motivate the population in wartime. According to MEIKE G. WERNER (Nashville), the Lauenstein initiative should be seen as an answer to that call.

The opening talk was delivered by ROGER CHICKERING (Georgetown), who analysed the historical context of the 1917 Lauenstein meetings. While political events that year, such as the entry of the United States into the war, the foundation of the pacifist German Independent Socialist Party (USPD) in April 1917, and the Peace Resolution of the German parliament seemed to point towards the war's end, the war also moved into the direction of a total one. Faced with hunger and desperation, especially since the winter of 1916/17, opposition to the war increased and, along with this, a need to re-mobilise the population. To prevent radicalisation, the government initiated a debate in August 1916 in various towns to discuss German war aims in public, although not unrestrictedly. It was in this context that Weber formulated his call for the „ideas of 1917“. Debates on Germany's future revealed a revitalisation of the 1914 discourse on the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but also a discourse on the need for political reform and democracy. A third option, a revitalisation of the (apolitical) German *Kulturmission*, was advocated by Diederichs at Lauenstein. Yet here the debate was dominated by the increasingly *völkisch* nationalist, ex-Protestant theologian Max Maurenbrecher, who attempted to establish a synthesis of culture and militarism. In May 1917 he clashed with Weber, who called for political reform, and who advocated a more rational approach. Although widely praised for his courage in condemning German autocracy, Weber remained an outsider because none of the Lauenstein debates was on political reforms. Moreover, the war, Chickering said, seemed almost absent from

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the debates; it was discussed only in an abstract, metaphysical fashion. Chickering argued that Lauenstein hardly found any resonance in Germany.

Session I was opened by MEIKE G. WERNER with a paper on the „choreographer“ of these meetings: Diederichs. He was a nationally and internationally well-known publisher of a wide assortment of German and foreign literary, philosophical and (neo-) religious books and world views, ranging from neo-Romanticism to *völkisch* thought, from Paul de Lagarde's German Ideology to Martin Buber's Jewish mysticism. Diederichs had a universal cultural agenda, yet at its center stood Germany and, above all, the German *Geist*; his aim, Werner argued, was to enrich that *Geist* with global culture, and to actively contribute to a German cultural transformation. At Lauenstein, Diederichs took a decidedly indecisive intellectual stance; in the protocol of the first meeting, according to Werner, his voice is surprisingly absent. TERESE LOEWE-BAHNERS (Munich) turned to the women at the Lauenstein meetings. While the invitation lists feature hardly any women, photos of the 1917 conferences show that quite a number of women were present, the majority probably wives accompanying their invited husbands. Although it is hard to determine all their identities, they included Ida Dehmel (the wife of the poet Richard Dehmel), Marianne Weber (Max Weber's wife), Lulu von Strauss und Torney (Diederichs' wife), and Ella Kroner (the wife of the sculptor Kurt Kroner). The photos also reveal that women did not necessarily place themselves in the background, their roles as 'wives' notwithstanding. The names of women on the lists of invitees included Selma von Lengefeld and Gertrud Bäumer. Like Marianne Weber and Ida Dehmel, they were prominent in the women's movement, yet women's rights were not discussed at Lauenstein. STEFFEN BRUENDEL (Frankfurt am Main) aimed at a structural analysis of the intellectual positions of the Lauenstein invitees, focussing on the constitutional-political visions for a post-war national order of eight invitees, i.e. Karl Bröger, Paul Ernst, Ernst Kriek, Kurt Kroner, Walter von Molo, Carl E. Uphoff, Wilhelm Vershofen, and Josef

Winckler, and their positions regarding the actual post-war order of Germany. He identified four groups: the aesthetes, the avant-garde, the established, and the popular or *Volk-* and *Heimat-*oriented, and classified his eight cases within these four groups, showing that their positions before and after Lauenstein changed. CAROLIN VOGEL (Hamburg) turned to Richard and Ida Dehmel. While prominent at the event, she said that they were also marginalised as they mainly observed and did not take position. Despondent about the diverse opinions that circulated at Lauenstein, Richard Dehmel, shortly before his death, characterised the meetings as a „miniature symbol of the German inaccessibility“. JUSTUS ULBRICHT (Dresden) spoke about the religious orientation of the 1917 meetings, arguing that this was a dimension of Diederichs' *Volks-*idealism in which religion – in a secular-mystical sense – was a cure against spiritual fragmentation.

The public evening event consisted of statements by JÜRGEN REULECKE (Giessen), CAROLA DIETZE (Jena), ULRICH SIEG (Marburg), and BARBARA STAMBOLIS (Paderhorn). Introducing the panel to the public, Werner returned to the centrality of Weber's call for „the ideas of 1917“ to give an impetus to the postwar construction of a Germany, and she repeated that Diederichs' 1917 initiative can be seen as a response to that call. Reulecke emphasised the psychohistorical significance of the deplorable food situation in the *Heimat* since the Winter of 1916/17 and depicted the strikes for democratic reform, and the foundation of both the Spartacus group (1916) and the USPD (1917), as attempts to give new meaning to the war. Drawing on the terminology of Reinhard Koselleck, he argued that the 1917 home front provided a „space of experience“ (*Erfahrungsraum*) for a (new) „horizon of expectation“ (*Erwartungshorizont*). Stambolis then explored Lauenstein as an *Erfahrungsraum* for the German Youth Movement. Those born around 1890 were notably present at the third Lauenstein meeting in 1918, for example Knud Ahlborn, Harald Schultz-Hencke, Alfred Kurella, and Margarete Hahlo. Hans Blüher, the controversial *Wandervogel*-ideologue, was also invited.

Unfortunately, we know very little about this meeting; there is no protocol, and memoirs barely recall the meeting. Sieg pointed out that „pure mobilisation“ no longer worked after the battle of Verdun in 1916, and that by the time that Diederichs organised his first meeting there was a need for *binding* – in this context the idea for a *Volksgemeinschaft* gained new relevance and, along with this, notions of in- and exclusion. The quest for „sense-giving horizons“ provided little room for rationality. Dietze turned to the philosopher Helmuth Plessner, who is often said to have been present at Lauenstein, yet evidence for that presence, Dietze showed, does not exist.

Session II, taking place on the next day, started with a presentation by GANGOLF HÜBINGER (Frankfurt an der Oder). He argued that Lauenstein was a „transit station“ in the intellectual development of many participants, including Weber. At Lauenstein Weber defended the need for a reform of the suffrage system and the introduction of institutional guarantees to defend a new democratic order, and he embraced a rational bourgeois culture. Powerful rhetorically, such views isolated him intellectually amidst the cultural establishment of Lauenstein. Yet Lauenstein influenced his future views. Firstly, it increased his stance against an „intellectualisation of the world“. Only five weeks after the 1917 fall meeting he called in a lecture for a strengthening of the professionalism of the academic. Secondly, though opting for democracy politically, he argued that academics as such should stay out of the realm of politics. And thirdly, it also convinced Weber that modernity was a „culture of conflict“, and that it should be embraced as such. JAN EIKE DUNKHASE (Marbach) spoke about the controversy that evolved between 1911 and 1920 between Weber and Sombart about the relationship between Judaism and capitalism. Although both men attended Lauenstein in 1917, this controversy didn't resonate in the debates on Burg Lauenstein. MICHAEL PILZ (Innsbruck) spoke about Ernst Toller, who also attended Lauenstein. He showed two photos of Toller at Burg Lauenstein – one in which he seems to very attentively listen to Weber and one in which he talks – with his eyes closed

– to the painter Carl E. Uphoff. The first, well-known photo appeared in many scholarly publications and also on the internet *outside* the context of Lauenstein, as Karin Priem (Luxemburg) later that day would show.

Session III opened with a paper by BARBARA STAMBOLIS about the relation of Lauenstein and the German Youth Movement. Developing the presentation of the evening before, she concluded that the meetings played no role for the Movement. The Movement organised itself *outside* the events at Burg Lauenstein, for example during the West-German Youth Day that took place at the Loreley on August 4-5 that same year. What was relevant at Lauenstein, however, was youth as an „idea“. THOMAS HERTFELDER (Stuttgart) sought to locate the relevance of Lauenstein in the life and thought of Theodor Heuss. He pointed to his contacts with Von Molo, Weber, Dehmelt, and Vershofen, and to Heuss' memory of the walks before and after the discussions. Hertfelder also stressed Heuss' ambivalence toward Diederichs and his ideas. He argued that it was probably not Diederichs but his wife, Lulu von Strauss und Torney, who had invited him to Lauenstein. KARIN PRIEM, then, focussed on the material and social meaning of the photos of the first two Lauenstein meetings. She pointed to the orchestrated nature of these photos, and to their „social life“ and mobility. Diederichs was disappointed about these pictures as they did not visualise his ideal of a new community. Priem showed that he decided to organise the photos in two albums aesthetically rather than chronologically; while they still reveal historical moments, he thus took them out of their immediate historical context. The consequence of such decontextualisation was further illustrated by Priem in respect to the above mentioned photo of Toller and Weber that circulates freely on the internet today.

FRANK A. TROMMLER (Philadelphia) concluded the conference with a paper on the politics of cultural renewal in Weimar Germany. He turned to the Social-Democrat Konrad Haenisch, the Prussian Minister of Culture of the newly founded Republic, who aimed at a new *Kulturpolitik*, implemented by Carl Heinrich Becker, to enable the transition from autocracy to democracy. Haenisch's

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idea of politicizing the population through education went back to March 1917, when he had first argued for the need to learn to think politically. To him, *Kultur* was not so much a mobilising factor, as Diederichs preferred to see it, but a pedagogical one. To be sure, Haenisch was not alone in calling for culture as a political instrument. All programs of Weimar's political parties contained a paragraph on culture and schooling politics. From a *Kulturstaat* Germany had turned into what Trommler termed a „*Kulterversorgungsstaat*“.

Overall the conference confirmed that the Lauenstein meetings foreshadowed the lines of conflict in the Weimar Republic, and are as such in need of further research. While Weber has been central so far, his outsider-position calls for a history of Lauenstein that steps out of „Weber's shadow“ and even more importantly includes the third less official meeting in May 1918. Finally, it was concluded that the photos as sources in themselves deserve attention.

The contributions with selected documents and photographs will be published in 2018 in the series „Marbacher Schriften. Neue Folge“ with Wallstein Verlag in Göttingen.

#### **Conference Overview:**

Ulrich Raulff, Marbach; Marcel Lepper, Marbach und Meike G. Werner, Nashville  
Begrüßung und thematische Einführung

Roger Chickering, Georgetown, USA  
Eröffnungsvortrag: Deutschland im Jahr 1917

*Sektion 1: ‚Geist‘ in den Zeiten des Krieges*  
Moderation: Jan Bürger

Meike G. Werner, Vanderbilt University  
Der Verleger als Choreograph: Eugen Diederichs lädt ein auf die Burg Lauenstein zur Debatte über Deutschlands Zukunft

Teresa Löwe-Bahners, München  
Die Unsichtbaren: Die Frauen auf den Lauensteiner Tagungen

Steffen Bruendel, Frankfurt am Main  
Für Freiheit, Volk und Vaterland. Künstler und Schriftsteller auf Burg Lauenstein

Carolyn Vogel, Hamburg  
Zwei Menschen. Richard und Ida Dehmel

1917

Justus Ulbricht, Dresden  
Reformation des 20. Jahrhunderts? Religiöse Orientierungen auf Lauenstein im Jahr des Lutherjubiläums 1917

*Öffentliche Abendveranstaltung / Podiumsdiskussion*

Moderation Meike G. Werner, Vanderbilt University

Die Ideen von 1917

Jürgen Reulecke, Gießen; Carola Dietze, Jena; Ulrich Sieg, Marburg; Barbara Stambolis, Paderborn

*Sektion 2: Im Schatten Max Webers*

Moderation: Sonja Asal, Berlin

Gangolf Hübinger, Frankfurt an der Oder  
Max Weber, die Nationalökonomien und der Streit um Max Maurenbrecher

Jan Eike Dunkhase, Marbach  
Judentum und Kapitalismus. Die Weber-Sombart-Kontroverse nach 100 Jahren

Michael Pilz, Innsbruck

Ernst Toller 1917: Auf dem Weg ins literarische Feld

*Sektion 3: Generation Jugend*

Moderation: Jürgen Reulecke, Gießen

Barbara Stambolis, Paderborn  
Lauenstein als jugendbewegter Experimentier- und Erfahrungsraum

Thomas Hertfelder, Stuttgart  
Spaziergang in wirrer Gesellschaft. Theodor Heuss auf Burg Lauenstein

Karin Priem, Luxemburg  
Lauenstein im Bild

Frank Trommler, Philadelphia  
Zur Politik der kulturellen Erneuerung Deutschlands

#### *Abschlussrunde*

Tagungsbericht *Die Ideen von 1917. Debatten auf Burg Lauenstein über die Neuordnung Deutschlands nach dem Krieg.* 07.12.2017–08.12.2017, Marbach, in: H-Soz-Kult 10.02.2018.