

**„Von der Monarchie zur Republik“.
Forschungsperspektiven zur
Demokratiegeschichte in der Frühphase
der Weimarer Republik (1918-1923)**

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On 9-10 November 2017, the University of Stuttgart hosted a conference on the transition from the monarchy to the Weimar Republic between 1918 and 1923. While the start of the Republic is usually associated with events on the national level, such as the sailors' revolt in Kiel, its proclamation on 9 November 1918 or the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the Stuttgart conference offered a regional perspective on the beginning of the Weimar Republic. Its focus was on the nature of the democratic start in Baden, Hohenzollern and Württemberg. Among various questions formulated, arguably the most central one at this conference was: what did the 1918 Revolution, the end of the monarchy, and the beginning of democracy look like in the German South-West?

Besides finding answers to that question, the conference intended to launch and present a large-scale research and digitisation project by the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg (State Archives of Baden-Württemberg) and the University of Stuttgart on the transition from the monarchy to the Republic from 1918 to 1923. The project, a thematic focus within the online project LEO-BW (Landeskunde Entdecken Online, <http://www.leo-bw.de>) of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, aims, as PETER SCHOLZ (Stuttgart), ROBERT KRETZSCHMAR (Stuttgart) and SABINE HOLTZ (Stuttgart) explained, to facilitate research on the regional history of this transition. Financed with a total of 450,000 Euro by the Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst Baden-Württemberg (Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg), the project started in June 2015 and ended in November 2017. It is the first to provide online access to archival

sources about the early Weimar Republic in the German South-West.

Section I offered a joint contribution on this theme-focussed project of LEO-BW by GERALD MAIER (Stuttgart), ANDREAS NEUBURGER (Stuttgart), SIMONE TIBELIUS (Stuttgart), and CHRISTINA WOLF (Stuttgart), all of whom dedicated themselves to the realisation of this project. The digitised sources, selected from five departments of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg (i.e. Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Sigmaringen, and Ludwigsburg), cover a broad field of socio-economic, political and cultural topics from the history of Baden, Hohenzollern and Württemberg. The nature of these sources is very diverse; they include official documents, such as the Abdication Statement of King Wilhelm II of Württemberg on 30 November 1918, but also posters, photos, letters, and pamphlets. Moreover, they come from a variety of files and estates, for example that of Princess Louise of Prussia (1838-1923), the Grand Duchess of Baden. Each source is accompanied by a short text on the historical context, written by Florian Brückner of the University of Stuttgart. All together some 900,000 historical documents have been digitised (corresponding to circa 10% of the files available on the subject in the archive). In 2016 the Landesarchiv kept documents of a scope of circa 156 kilometers. Of these, an estimated 175 meters have been digitised during the project – a total that thus corresponds to the above mentioned total of circa 900,000 historical documents. LEO-BW's „From Monarchy to Democracy“ not only makes sources more accessible, Tibelius explained, its use of linked data also enables possibilities for network-connections with other institutions. Wolf pointed in this context to its intended connection to the overarching portals of the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (DDB, <http://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de>) and Archivportal-D (<http://www.archivportal-d.de>). The Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) in Koblenz is currently working on a comparable digitisation project of archival material, one that at this conference was later more extensively introduced by ANDREA HÄNGER (Koblenz), and so is the Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen

(State Archives of North Rhine-Westphalia). The linked data system provides possibilities to also connect with these projects.

Shifting attention to the study of some of the digitised archival sources, AMELIE BIEG (Stuttgart) and THERESA REICH (Stuttgart) presented the first paper of this conference. It focussed on the Hohenzollern territories, which were part of Prussia from 1850 until 1946. From 1927 to 1931, a conflict evolved between its Regierungspräsident Alfons Scherer (1885-1964) and the Hohenzollern family that revealed, Bieg and Reich argued, how difficult it was to establish a truly republican state after the 1918 Revolution, as social and economical ties of the civil servants to the high nobility continued to exist.

Section II started with a presentation by URSULA ROMBECK-JASCHINSKI (Stuttgart) on the fate of the last king of Württemberg. Unlike the German Kaiser and other German kings, Wilhelm II of Württemberg (1848-1921) did not flee during the 1918 Revolution. Rombeck-Jaschinski pointed to the popularity of the monarchy in Württemberg until far into the First World War. Even Social Democrats, such as Carl Hugo Lindemann (1867-1949), continued to support the monarchy up to the Revolution. However, regime change in Berlin on 9 November 1918 resulted in regime changes in the regions. Almost overnight, Rombeck-Jaschinski argued, the monarchy became an anachronism and, although not willingly, Wilhelm II decided to abdicate on 30 November 1918. Rombeck Jaschinski showed that monarchist sentiments continued to exist and that the Left at times feared a monarchist revival, for example during the former king's funeral in October 1921. ANGELA BORGSTEDT (Mannheim) presented a paper on the thousands of German migrants who came from the Alsace-Lorraine to Baden at the end of the First World War, when their former homes were lost. Due to the deplorable post-war social-economical condition and to a shortage of houses in particular, their arrival created tensions in the cities such as Karlsruhe and Mannheim. The migrants contained many *Alt-Elsässer*, i.e. Germans who had settled in the Alsace before 1871, and a large number of highly educated people, such as the majority of the aca-

dem staff of the University of Strasbourg and many judges and lawyers. The state took care of them, but self-help, amongst others by the Hilfsbund der Vertriebenen der Elsass-Lothringer (Aid Organisation of the Evicted from the Alsace-Lorraine), was essential. WILFRIED REININGHAUS (Münster) shifted attention from the German South-West to Westphalia, and presented on the Peasants', Soldiers' and Workers' Councils (Räte) in this region. According to Reininghaus, Weimar should not be seen from its (tragic) end, but rather from its beginning in 1918/19. Although the councils, especially the more successful Workers' councils, were seen as obstacles in a party political power struggle between the Socialists and the Communists by 1919 and were often denied a role of importance thereafter, they played a stabilising role in the transition from monarchy to democracy.

The evening lecture of the conference was held by WOLFRAM PYTA (Stuttgart). Taking a cultural approach, he focussed on what he called the „form and style change of the political“ in 1918/19, arguing that the 1918 Revolution in Germany joined hands with the introduction of what Walter Benjamin (1936) once termed an „aestheticisation of politics“ on the one hand, and a revitalisation of the symbolic value of the *Volkswille* or popular will on the other. In November 1918 this change revealed itself particularly well in Munich and Berlin, where Kurt Eisner (1867-1919) respectively Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939) and Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919) set the context for a change in political style, incorporating calls for a truly participatory and transparent democracy on the one hand, and a glorification of popular sovereignty on the other. The councils became the symbolic embodiment of this change, representing a new, more direct political style. With the introduction of the Weimar constitution in 1919 expectations about a democratic German „World Mission“ increased; drawing on Reinhard Koselleck, Pyta argued that the 1918/19 „space of experience“ (*Erfahrungsraum*) set the frame for a „horizon of expectation“ (*Erwartungshorizont*) about democracy and Germany's special role in it; however, such expectations did not consider the idea that democracy might fail, as would

happen between 1933 and 1945.

Section III began on the second day with a paper by SYLVIA SCHRAUT (Munich). Looking at the liberal bourgeois women's movement in the 1920s, she argued that a marginalisation of that movement took place during those years, the entry of several women – for example Marianne Weber (1870-1954) – in parliament as members of the German Democratic Party (DDP) notwithstanding. Significantly, the 1920s witnessed a decline of the share of women in the DDP – in the early 1920s women made up almost 10 percent of the candidates, but by the end of the 1920s this was only 3 percent. Politics, political parties and the new parliamentary structure in Weimar Germany incorporated traditional gender roles; while the First World War had led to an increase of the female share in professional work, the 1920s demanded of women that they cede their positions to returning soldiers and that traditional roles should not be endangered. Economic hardship, Schraut showed, strengthened this development. MARCO BIRN (Reutlingen) showed that the return of soldiers and socio-economic deprivation also led to a strong competition between female and male students at the Universities of Heidelberg, Tübingen and Freiburg in the early Weimar Republic. While the share of female students at these universities had substantially increased in wartime (in Heidelberg, for example, this was 55% in 1918), men now reclaimed 'their' positions. For example, in Heidelberg the Reichsbund der Kriegsteilnehmer-Verbände (Imperial League of War Participants' Associations) invented a ranking system to ensure the return of former soldiers to the university. CORD ARENDES (Heidelberg) showed how one could use archival sources as teaching material. He presented a video of a theatre project that was developed in one of his so-called Praxisseminaren (practice-oriented seminars). The project, presenting archival documents on stage, brought Weimar and its significance for democracy visually back into the present. LAURA MOSER (Heidelberg) spoke about naturalisation requests of women in Karlsruhe between 1918 and 1933. Often such requests came from women who had married non-German men and who, therefore, had lost their German citi-

zenship. Drawing on 141 such naturalisation requests from the city archives of Karlsruhe, Moser stressed that 82 of these women, although formally French, Polish, Austrian or stateless, regarded themselves as German. Civil servants had to evaluate whether to take these requests into consideration; they often declined requests, Moser said, yet civil servants in Baden tended to be more lenient than they were in Bavaria. Finally, PETER EXNER (Karlsruhe) presented a paper on the exhibition „Daring Democracy? Baden 1818-1919“ (Demokratie wagen? Baden 1818-1919), an initiative of the Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe and the Staatsarchiv in Freiburg, two departments of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. The exhibition, which runs from 2018 to 2020, traces the struggle for democracy in Baden. While it presents historical facts and documents, it also has an explicitly didactic aim – it wants to show that civil rights and democracy were not a matter of course, but that people had to fight for them and that democracy also requires commitment today.

The conference ended with a discussion about the meaning of digitised archives for the history of democracy, about the kind of information that will or will not be consulted, and about the possible future of digitised archives. JULIA ANGSTER (Mannheim) feared that the digitisation of sources might join hands with the risk of overlooking analogue (i.e. non-digitised) sources. FRANZ-JOSEF ZIWES (Sigmaringen) pointed to the importance of the contextualisation of the online sources and of the inclusion of very diverse sources, highlighting multiple historical perspectives. Hänger explained that the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, too, has started a digitisation project on Weimar. It hopes to release some six million images in four years and, like LEO-BW's „From Monarchy to Republic“, to offer a mix of better- and lesser-known sources. Although positive about digitisation, she shared Angster's worry about the fate of analogue-only sources. NICOLE BICKHOFF (Stuttgart) pointed to the advantage of digitised sources for various types of research. They are ideal for historians or students who, independently of their location, need sources for their seminars and papers. For journalists,

too, SVEN FELIX KELLERHOFF (Berlin) said, digitised sources are an excellent entry into the past. Exner re-emphasised the relevance of these sources for exhibitions. In addition, Angster pointed to language, as the sources and commentaries are all in German, and she wondered whether LEO-BW is primarily a regional and national benefit or whether it will, ultimately, be a transnational one.

In summation, LEO-BW's „From Monarchy to Republic“ is an ambitious project that opens out the history of the transition from the monarchy to the Weimar Republic without users having to physically access the archives themselves. While there is a risk that this might lead to a narrowing of historical research, as Angster stressed, it also provides opportunities for research and to globally access and connect archival sources. The papers on the history of Baden, Hohenzollern and Württemberg, most of which relied on sources from the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, offered insightful contributions to that history. They will be printed in a publication planned for 2018.

Conference overview:

Peter Scholz (Dekan der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Stuttgart): Begrüßung

Robert Kretzschmar (Präsident des Landesarchivs Baden-Württemberg) / Sabine Holtz (Vorsitzende der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg / Universität Stuttgart): Grußworte

SEKTION I: DIGITALE PRÄSENTATION VON QUELLEN ZUR SÜDWESTDEUTSCHEN DEMOKRATIEGESCHICHTE

Einführung und Moderation: Gerald Maier (Stellvertretender Präsident des Landesarchivs Baden-Württemberg)

Andreas Neuburger / Simone Tibelius / Christina Wolf (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg): Vorstellung der Quellensammlung

Amelie Bieg / Theresa Reich (Universität Stuttgart): Eine Frage der „Staatsautorität der Republik“? Die Rolle der Beamten im sog. Sigmaringer Titeltstreit

SEKTION II: REVOLUTION UND POLITI-

SCHER UMBRUCH

Moderation: Sabine Holtz (Stuttgart)

Ursula Rombeck-Jaschinski (Universität Stuttgart): Überlebte Tradition? – Das Ende der Monarchien in Südwestdeutschland

Angela Borgstedt (Universität Mannheim): Die Integration von Zwangsmigranten nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Elsässer, Lothringer und andere Flüchtlinge im Südwesten

Wilfried Reininghaus (Universität Münster): Arbeiter-, Bauern- und Soldatenräte in Westfalen 1918/19

ÖFFENTLICHER ABENDVORTRAG

Sabine Holtz / Wolfram Pyta (Universität Stuttgart): Verheißungen und Verwerfungen beim Beginn einer Demokratie – Kulturgeschichtliche Überlegungen zum Start der Weimarer Republik

SEKTION III: GESELLSCHAFT IM WANDEL

Moderation: Nicole Bickhoff (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg)

Sylvia Schraut (Universität München): Schwieriger Übergang oder Bruchlandung? Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung des Kaiserreichs in der ersten deutschen Demokratie

Marco Birn (Kreisarchiv Reutlingen): Studieren in Zeiten des Umbruchs. Akademisches Leben an südwestdeutschen Universitäten zu Beginn der Weimarer Republik

Cord Arendes (Universität Heidelberg): Archivalische Quellen „im Einsatz“: Das Praxisprojekt Geflüchtet, unerwünscht, abgeschoben – „lästige Ausländer“ in der Weimarer Republik

Laura Moser (Universität Heidelberg): Der Versuch zu bleiben. Einbürgerungsanträge in der Republik Baden

Peter Exner (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe): Demokratie wagen? Baden 1818–1919: Eine Ausstellung des Landesarchivs Baden-Württemberg

Podiumsdiskussion: BEITRÄGE DER ARCHIVE ZUR ERFORSCHUNG DER DEMOKRATIEGESCHICHTE

Moderation: Gerald Maier (Stuttgart) / Sabi-

ne Holtz (Stuttgart)

Diskutantinnen und Diskutanten:

Julia Angster (Universität Mannheim)

Nicole Bickhoff (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Leiterin des Hauptstaatsarchivs Stuttgart / Vorsitzende des Württembergischen Geschichts- und Altertumsvereins e.V.)

Andrea Hänger (Vizepräsidentin des Bundesarchivs)

Sven Felix Kellerhoff (Leitender Redakteur der WELT)

Peter Exner (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe)

Franz-Josef Ziwes (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Stellvertretender Leiter des Staatsarchivs Sigmaringen)

Tagungsbericht „Von der Monarchie zur Republik“. *Forschungsperspektiven zur Demokratiegeschichte in der Frühphase der Weimarer Republik (1918-1923)*. 09.11.2017–10.11.2017, Stuttgart, in: H-Soz-Kult 17.03.2018.