

Hollow-sounding jubilees:

Forms and effects of public self-display in Wilhelmine Germany

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Contemporaries referred to Wilhelm II's time of government before 1914 as an 'age of festivities' and speeches.ⁱ In 1913, the *Sozialdemokratische Flugschriften* commented: 'The amount of official celebrations that the German Empire has had to endure over these last twenty-five years has been seemingly endless. They follow each other as uninterruptedly as film-reels do in a cinema. [...] And each festivity is a 'milestone', each is glorified by speeches [...].'ⁱⁱ The Kaiser's appearances in public are revealing processes of public communication. Contemporaries counted among them 'national public holidays' (*Nationalfesttage*), 'state celebrations' (*Staatsfeste*), regional and local events as well as a number of other public holidays and jubilees of very different natures. Addresses, speeches and toasts formed part of these, as did marches and parades, flags and standards, obelisks and memorials, illuminations, torch-lit processions and fireworks, church visits, poems, songs and the '*Hohenzollernfestspiele*' in the new opera house (*Neues Königliches Operntheater*). The court ceremonial planned all details and accompanied the media from the first announcement of an event to the publications which were intended to record and secure its fame for the future.

As in most monarchies at the end of the nineteenth century, in the German Reich and in Prussia, the birthday of the ruler and his more famous ancestors, selected historical events, funerals and the coronation formed the core of an increasingly secularized culture of celebration.ⁱⁱⁱ Laws and decrees stipulated whatever was necessary for this. For example, shortly after acceding to the throne, Wilhelm decreed that forthwith all schools should commemorate the birthdays and anniversaries of the deaths of his two predecessors 'as patriotic days of remembrance'.^{iv} The Kaiser and his advisers had interpretive power over an event – often, although not consistently, they exercised this in agreement with the government. They attempted to transform ideas and programmes and the results of history from a Prussian-dynastic perspective into an immediately recognizable social reality. Thus the *Neue Preußische (Kreuz) Zeitung* commented on the occasion of the celebration of 22 March 1897:

The character of national festivities, even when the concern the celebration of a famous personality, a ruler or a statesman, is influenced by the feelings of large sectors of the population to such an extent that the person to whom the celebration appears predominantly

as the embodiment of some national idea, an idea to which large parts of the population are attached.^v

Moreover, the Kaiser and his advisers gave validity to an official canon which included legally fixed religious and secular holidays, ranging from Whitsun to *Sedanstag*.^{vi} They documented the lifestyle and self-confidence of the monarch, the 'grandeur' of the monarchy and the state, of court and society, by distinguishing and accentuating the festivity and its programmatic aim in as obvious and impressive a way as possible, using personnel, architecture, ceremony and symbolism to do so.^{vii} Wilhelm himself offered a definition of such festivities, arguing that the national holidays were 'particularly comforting in these fast-moving times which are so dominated by economic and political interests, for they force one to halt for a moment in the haste of the working life and to look at the past.'^{viii} Other contemporary commentators offered a more grandiose interpretation still: 'What is the task of the Jubilee of 1913? – To remind the German that this is about his very own business, his own pride, and his best effort. It was not just the wars of liberation in which this power unfolded, but it was completely contained within them; it was a strong punch into world history.'^{ix}

Extraordinary in character, clearly distinguished from everyday life and aimed at long-term effect, all spectacular public celebrations helped to form and solidify collective memories. Politics of mentality and culture, historical ceremonial and art-forms, personal love of pomp and offers of integration culminated in these major events.^x State celebrations were thus able to contribute repeatedly and long-term to the visualization, legitimization and authenticity of control and power, as long as the organizers used the media intelligently and adapted themselves to the particular possibilities and forms of public communication offered by them. Under these conditions various versions of a celebration, in writing, drawing and photography, theatre and festivals, sound, narratives and rumours, which could be repeated any number of times, continued to have an effect over and above the ephemeral public event.

From the perspective of communications history, it was not just public appearance of the monarch, his actions or speeches, that were centre-stage, but to almost the same degree the audience, and with that different forms and methods of conveying meaning and the varying contexts in which such meanings were understood. As Friedrich Naumann once noted, an Emperor's words have a stronger effect if he repeat something which has been said before: 'In such cases it is the Emperor who stamps his image onto the copper of an everyday opinion and thus turns it into a national coin. [...] Given the nature of the German Empire it is

very difficult to distinguish between a private point, publicized at the Kaiser's behest, and a direct imperial announcement.^{xvi}

Wilhelm II appeared in public more often than any of his predecessors. While his participation in the business of government was arbitrary and irregular, even sporadic, he displayed a disproportionately greater sense of responsibility when it came to invitations to holidays and celebrations, the suggestion of festivities, and his personal involvement in the planning of the programme and the stage-management of the event. Your Majesty explained yourself how important it is when the Kaiser and Kaiserin personally attend a festivity and thus uphold its national importance.^{xvii} The files reveal not only with how much commitment and decisiveness Wilhelm exercised his 'personal rule'^{xviii} in this respect. They also reveal how densely the Kaiser's diary was cramped with this kind of public engagements and what a huge effort was afforded to his domestic and foreign trips, and to the planning of a suitably majestic appearance even down to the small provincial towns. Given the knowledge of the complex demands placed upon a modern-day government, this is surprising. Little wonder that the former minister of war Karl von Einem (Minister of War from 1903-1909) concluded in 1915:

'We have not had a functioning head of state for 25 years.'^{xix} Instead, the head of the German Reich worked equally hard in the officers' mess and on the dance floor as he did on stage and exercise ground. In the latter years of the *Kaiserreich*, the value of such festivities was determined primarily by the Kaiser's opinion and his preferences, and much less by dynastic or class-representative concerns or general power-political necessities. Therefore the politically disparate development of the latter years of the *Kaiserreich* shall be investigated in terms of public reception within the media, and thus within the context of public life from a perspective, and with the help of documents, that have until now been neglected.^{xx} This includes subjects which were dealt with in literary or theatrical ways, as well as public celebrations and union, church or party congresses, newspapers and (specialized) journals, official commemorative publications, competitions, flyers, memorials, uniforms and flags, coins and medals.

An addition to the traditional media of picture stories and illustrated journals, caricatures and posters was the latest medium of film.^{xxi} Wilhelm II used it in connection with the celebrations in honour of Queen Luise by authorizing and supporting the first film on Luise.^{xxii} The countless, usually spontaneous speeches of the Kaiser^{xxiii}, often delivered to ambivalent or even disastrous effect, are as much to consider as the symbol-laden staging of his appearances at manoeuvres and the naming of ships, unveilings of memorials or blessing of

flags, opening of buildings or exhibitions^{xix}, parliaments and factories, welcoming of deputations or organizations. In each case the presentation and the medium are of central importance, as are the conditions for communication and the forms of delivery and reception. What will be examined is a meaningful sub-section of reality, namely the space of public communication. For the audience, for people from all groups, classes and walks of life, this space was filled with questions and answers, with truth and lies – be that the content of rumours or that of confirmed information, be that insights, realizations, signs or symbols. An analysis of the changes which occurred in the self-image of the monarchy, in the general political style, and in public perception in the latter years of the Kaiserreich is made easier by the fact that Wilhelminism itself was closely bound up with the public. Wilhelm II liked to demonstrate his ‘closeness to the people’ (*Volksnähe*) and a certain joviality during his public appearances. The monarch sought his success primarily in staged events (which, though largely based on protocol, were planned also by him), that is to say in the circle of those ‘people who crowded around each royal appearance and shouted vivat’.^{xx} This tendency was more pronounced following the ‘Hun-Speech’, the first climax in a whole series of negative experiences with imperial self-representation.^{xxi} For the rhetorical slip made by the Kaiser when seeing off the troops bound for the war against the Boxers on 27 July 1900, by no means a singular or isolated mistake, led in the autumn of that year to a serious loss of popularity for the monarchy. This was despite extensive attempts at calming the situation which were embarked upon immediately following the speech.^{xxii}

In the Reichstag, within the political parties and the public, the Kaiser’s reputation had suffered to such an extent that what still remained of the already corroded ‘royalist capital’^{xxiii} now threatened to dissolve further even in conservative and generally monarchist circles. Already a decade earlier, *Die Zukunft* had asked:

‘How can it be that his [Wilhelm’s] words, intended to evoke a new mood for celebration, nonetheless had such a negative effect on the sensibility of even the most reliable monarchists? This effect is produced by the tone, not by the meaning of the words – and once more on this occasion it was the tone that caused the anxiety.’^{xxiv} The Kaiser’s discourse, at best intended to be ‘popularizing’, had failed not only due to the monarch’s weak self-control, his failure to follow individual and collective ministerial advice, and his lack of tact, but primarily because of an insufficient sensitivity vis-à-vis the media and because of the strategy of conflict which he directed most pointedly at journalists. Wilhelm II wanted to be ‘modern’ and to have a public effect. He did possess the gift of approaching people and succeeded when he appealed directly to his audience^{xxv}, but he lacked a deeper understanding of the media and the ‘press market’.

His advisers did not even succeed in convincing him to study a modest file of press-cuttings on a regular basis.^{xxvi} Thus Wilhelm II did not develop a deeper understanding of contemporary discourse or even a modest sensitivity for the changes taking place in society and mentality. This is also why his sporadic and amateurish attempts to instrumentalize individual publications or editors had to fail. The study of which this essay forms a part begins its analysis of festivities and public celebrations, particularly within the media, in 1896/97 with the twenty-five year jubilee of the founding of the Reich, at a time when Bernhard von Bülow was influential in the background^{xxvii}, and continues until October 1913, with the unveiling of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in Leipzig.^{xxviii} In total, this study takes account of a large number of public events of importance for the politics of the media, of culture and society. These include the commemoration of the King's Coronation of 1701 and of the Founding of the Reich in 1871, as well as countless birthdays and remembrance days.^{xxix}

The publication of the Daily-Telegraph-Interview of 28 October 1908 is, from the point of view of the history of communications, the key event for the investigation of the politics of public relations with regard to state celebrations. In the 'six-some' of communications politics (Kaiser, Chancellor, Parliament, Media, Journalists, Public/Recipients), the balance changed dramatically following the Eulenburg scandal and the Daily-Telegraph-Affair. Although Wilhelm II did restrict his public speeches and conversations for a while following this crisis, he did not really stop delivering contentious addresses.^{xxx} Since the autumn of 1908, since this 'November-Revolution'^{xxxi}, it is possible repeatedly to demonstrate a latent readiness for protest in society.^{xxxii} Since Bülow's fall an increasingly self-confident parliament had had a chance to practise its inter-fractional desire to shape policies, and this meant that in times of crisis, this readiness for protest could even be increased.

The '*Gottesfriede*' (divine peace)^{xxxiii} that the Kaiser and his people had agreed in November 1908 had lasted barely two years when the next big scandal occurred in Königsberg. With this event Wilhelm had, in the opinion of his critics, returned to his true self and was bound to suffer the inevitable consequences.^{xxxiv} Democrats, Liberals and Socialists in Germany and Austria-Hungary all criticized this renewed breach of the domestic peace and regarded it as a 'call for war' of a late-comer against constitution and parliamentarianism which would at best have been worthy of a Tsar.^{xxxv} In public gatherings the SPD protested vehemently against 'the absolutism proclaimed in the Kaiser's speech' and against the 'irresponsible powerbroker' (*Drahtzieher*).^{xxxvi} They claimed that all of Germany was of the impression that 'the clique which holds the Kaiser in its hands', could lead the world towards catastrophe,

war or coup d'état.^{xxxvii} Thomas Nipperdey's interpretation of the last two and a half years before the war 'as a stable, not acute crisis'^{xxxviii} is at best true for the '*Grosse Politik*' and for the parliamentary affairs in the Reich. Within the media and the public, including middle class national-liberal circles, the impression was rather that of an increasing inability to arrive at convincing and stable long-term crisis management, even where urgent domestic policy subjects were concerned. The number of demonstrations and strikes, and their vehemence, size and thematic concerns (for example against the price increases for meat) increased. Despite economic prosperity, the costs for armaments were becoming an increasing burden; the policy of the agrarians was increasingly regarded as demagogic, reactionary and egotistical; in South Germany the anti-Prussian mood grew, as did the polemic in the media against Prussianism; in the entire country the aversion increased against populist-demagogic groupings such as the old-established Pan-German League (1891-94), as well as the newly founded 'German Army League' (1912) and the 'Prussian League' (1913). At the same time there was a popular loathing of the 'militarization' of politics and society (evidence of which seemed to be provided by the Zabern affair).

The focal point of the Kaiser's popular activities shifted after 1910 time towards festivities which were more restricted by ceremony. The Chancellor lost influence vis-à-vis the monarch and parliament. The Reichstag and the media increased their importance for public discourse despite the fact that initiatives for legislation to change the constitution had failed. Under such conditions, increased domestic pressure had to result, especially when in addition a nationalist right wing protest developed among the public, as happened later in the Moroccan Crisis.^{xxxix} While the ceremony of festivities and the rituals of public holidays protected the Reichstag from direct degradation of parliament and its members, or the Social Democrats from drastic attacks by the Kaiser, it did not protect the monarch's opponents completely from his spontaneous outbursts or exaggerated displays of overbearing views of divine right and absolute power to rule within the perceived sanctuary of the Brandenburg Landtag. Following the Daily Telegraph scandal, the politics of communication and reception had changed. This was a significant, broad shift, and provided a new basis for the final years of the Kaiserreich. No subject and hardly a politically interested person remained untouched by it, because the shock it caused in public and parliamentary life, as well as in the media- and party-political scene, was given more attention and was more strongly registered, analysed, interpreted and reacted to than ever before.

If Nipperdey considers the majority of voters to have been hardly touched by the crisis and if he concludes noticeably vaguely that the Kaiser's self-esteem had 'of course [...] suffered a

blow since then'^{xi}, then he exaggerates the importance of the external factor that the public unrest and the revolutionary upsurge among radical Socialists calmed down after a while. The disturbance had at times taken on revolutionary traits in public discourse and was able to continue in less spectacular, but politically no less important ways. The politicization of the public, the parliamentarization of government work, the self-confidence of the oppositional powers, and the importance and scope for influence of the media had, however, not come about just at that point. They had merely increased and grown, so that in contrast with the time before the 'November storms' of 1908, any criticism or defence of the monarch, of the person or deeds of the Kaiser or the Hohenzollern, of the social and constitutional situation of the Reich or Prussia had to be more fundamental.^{xii} In addition, the repertoire of convincing excuses had decreased, and their recipients, both at home and abroad, were increasingly less inclined to disregard 'spontaneities', 'clumsiness' and discrepancies between the spoken word and the government's official version of an imperial speech.^{xiii} The Kaiser's word had to lose its impact if discussions arose in the press over the different versions of a speech or the meaning of a word, for 'nothing is worse', as the *Berliner Tageblatt* commented, 'than if the other, perhaps exaggerated and vulnerable interpretation [of a speech] has become firmly stuck in the heads [of the public]. And as is known, the subsequent semi - or completely officious corrections do not enjoy a high regard among our people.'^{xliii}

At the same time, excuses such as lack of experience or likeable shortcomings which were explicably 'human' were hardly able to have calming or apologetic effects any longer. This was because neither had time helped to 'heal' them, nor had the negative experiences of the past led the political advisers and others in positions of responsibility to manage such situations with more imagination and determination. Following the turn of the century the unease with which the abundant public celebrations were received turned into ever more strongly voiced public criticism. 'We won't join in the celebration!', the *Vorwärts* declared in 1913:

We stand uninvolved on the sideline and shrug our shoulders when a frothing wild water of celebratory speeches, articles and hurrahs pours over the country. We know how much despicable hypocrisy is voiced in this noisy carry-on, and we know how convinced monarchists talk about the carrier of the crown when they are in private – if all the lèses-majesté were known that are uttered in these circles, the prosecutors would have to introduce night shifts.^{xliii}

But the disapproval of parties and editors, even those of conservative leanings, only heightened Wilhelm's triumphant displays and the increasingly inappropriate desire to

impress of a statesman who was visibly failing to mature. In this context the *Berliner Tageblatt* commented:

The first and most painful [realization] that we have to emphasise is that we cannot write without restraint: the Kaiser and *his* people, or: the German people and *their* Kaiser. There are many among us who are lacking the feeling that the personal bond between a master and his people should be a matter of course. And although doubtless a large majority of the German people is still currently monarchically inclined it cannot be denied that this relationship has shifted to the detriment of the *Kaisertum* since the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I.^{xlv}

On the other hand the 'simple' subject did not seem to tire of celebrating his Kaiser whenever the opportunity arose, and appeared to follow his self-confident and exaggerated accounts with equal enthusiasm even when they modelled themselves on the images of leaders and politics of bygone eras. But even among these recipients changes were taking place. In addition, national celebrations were increasingly losing the political profile in favour of public entertainment. Even the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine*, on the occasion of the jubilee of the Kaiser's accession to the throne in 1913, only published sixteen articles by academics on legislation and the navy, technical matters or the economy, industry and sport, but without offering a historical or political commentary on the event itself anywhere in the paper. *Die Gartenlaube* restricted itself to a double-page reproduction of a drawing depicting part of the formal dinner in the Kaiser's *Schloss*.^{xlvi} The preparation of the celebrations in the media decreased, too, and became more one-sided, restricting itself to conventional historical paintings or eulogies in which even the weakest of Prussian kings were glorified and in which Prussia's path to national unity was related uncritically as an inevitable development.^{xlvii} The Wilhelmine state was depicted under the motto 'Ein Volk, Ein Kaiser, Ein Reich!' as the culmination and completion of German history. Leaders and commentaries were dedicated almost entirely to conjuring up political and social unity, economic and military strength, and to declaring the desire to support the path of the German Reich towards *Weltmacht* also by way of journalism. Only occasionally a reflection of reality is visible at the margins where the fact was not glossed over that there existed in Germany not only differences of opinion, but profound controversies over constitutional, confessional, economic, party-political and ethnic questions which could lead to a 'new Jena', 'this time however a domestic Jena (*ein inneres Jena*)'.^{xlviii} Festivities and celebrations are no fixed entities, they are not autonomous and do not contain a purpose within themselves. For Wilhelm II, they not only stood outside of everyday political life in a peculiar way, but for the biggest group in society they were even in obvious contrast to it. They were intended to provide a 'free space' outside of 'party

quarrels^{xlix}, in which harmony and the propaganda-based image of history had to prevail. This protective zone was intended to deflect from politics and economy and at least on the celebration day itself prevent conflicting interests and arguments. In the process of societal change and public discourse domestic policy debates developed their own dynamic. As the *Intelligenzblatt* commented, such public discourse was seen as ‘a sign of strength and not of weakness. It is understandable that in times in which the vital interests of the whole seem secure, the quarrels and differences of interests of the parts come to the fore and seem temporarily to overshadow the unifying interest.’ⁱ

It was not just the public’s ‘loss of monarchical conviction’ that was detectable in the Wilhelmine epoch. Lost in its ‘political shape, ‘social atmosphere’ and rhetorical behaviour were ‘natural authority’ and role model function for the future.ⁱⁱ In the ‘democratic current’ the monarchical aura suffered continually and to a degree that had not even been experienced during the revolution of 1848/49. As the *Kreuz-Zeitung* commented in 1913: ‘Never in the history of the German people, the most monarchical people in its conviction and character, its customs and habit, has the monarchical thought been so attacked, has the monarchy faced such a strong front of open and hidden opponents as in this most recent past.’ⁱⁱⁱ Wilhelm II did not succeed in developing new, more sophisticated and politically convincing forms of leadership-aesthetic, suitable for an industrial nation. Demonstrative visits to factories or an openly displayed interest in modern technology did not suffice to cancel out the impression of the staged and superficial. The Kaiser did not even manage to change the traditional ceremonial forms of state and court celebration, so that they could be accepted by a society that was less guided by league or party dignitaries, and increasingly by middle-class expectations, and by functionaries and the conditions of a differentiated press.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ In the latter years of the Kaiserreich public celebrations were reduced to a self-congratulatory, backward looking and triumphant gesturing^{iv} and an intoxicated national monumental cult. As a result they were regarded, if not even as completely anachronistic, then at least as a historicizing political myth^v whose main parts were no longer considered to be appropriate. The *Fränkische Tagespost* expressed this unhappiness thus:

Oh, no, the wishes of the present and the hopes for the future of the people are not attached to such displays of royal splendour and pompous expansion of power, which makes obvious to everyone the extent to which the *privileges* (Vorrechte) still connected with royalty, and the extent of the *denial of privileges of the people* (Volksentrechtung); to such displays which swallow *hundreds of thousands* which have *to be paid by the poorest of the poor*, to such displays which aim at giving undeserving gloss to an *old and innerly rotten glory* in the eyes of the foolish and the young. [...] We no longer rebel against the new German Reich, we

accept it, although many millions of Germans remain excluded from it: but even within the given borders: how much is still lacking from a unity like we envisage it! [...] Of course, we too want to know that the ties which bind us Bavarians to the Reich are unbreakable. But this makes the demand all the more urgent that this Reich not be placed under the thumb of Prussia and its Junker-class, that this Prussian coercion does not suffocate these progressive buds in other states, too, allowing to flower and grow only that which is spiritually congenial to its reactionary clique.^{lvi}

Even in the case of the *Sedanstag* the constant evocation led first to a weakening of the message both journalistically and at the psychological level of reception, then to a partial re-interpretation^{lvii} and finally even a devaluation of the event.^{lviii}

When *Die Gartenlaube* published an historical overview and a portrait of Leibnitz on the occasion of the celebration of the Academy of Science^{lix}, it is true that it chose a less engaging and original approach than in comparable cases of the immediate past, but at least this approach does not reveal the same lack of imagination in subject matter, conventionality in style, and indifference in presentation than the reporting of numerous publications on the occasion of high-ranking celebrations. The *Kreuz-Zeitung* claimed: 'Memorial celebrations of the old Kaiser, who led us to peace through victorious wars, are more and more clearly turning into demonstrations for internal and external peace. The creation of the new *Nationalkokarde* [national emblem on uniforms] is a step on the way of closer amalgamation of the German peoples into one German people.'^{lx}

Although Wilhelm II did not appear prominently during the building and particularly the inauguration of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in Leipzig in 1913 – although present, he did not give a speech for reasons of domestic policy and diplomacy^{lxi} - , the importance for the public of this state celebration should not be rated lower than that of the *Sedanstag* or the Kaiser's birthday. Thus the *Illustrierte Zeitung* published two extensive special editions, and the *Leipziger Neuesten Nachrichten* summarized its editions from 16-19 October into one special edition.^{lxii} *Die Gartenlaube* boasted a large-scale illustration of the 'gigantic scaffolding' during the building of the memorial, without however emphasizing more than the technical aspects of it, while reporting the usual fare in its four-page highly illustrated spread on the 'Battle of Leipzig'.^{lxiii} This relative restraint was most obvious on the occasion of the inauguration of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, which was criticized sharply not only by the SPD. *Der Morgen* judged the memorial to be 'a monster of unprecedented nature',

A contradiction within itself, a symbol of thoughtlessness and of lying helplessness. [...] The greatness of the memorial consists of, of roses the size of men, of toes which weigh a ton, and of the puffed-up bodies of wrinkled acrobats rolling around. Where in this bombastic fever of stone is there even a shred of German spirit and thankful belief in our fathers? One stands crushed by this raw materialism which suffocates all but the last spark of soulful reflection; one stands hopelessly in front of such advertised exaggeration of such infertile poverty of thought. This tool of arbitrary power lacks inner proportion, which is why, despite its many-digit figures, it appears like a toy, like the babble of epigones who want to be heroic but are actually only childish.^{lxiv}

The editors of *Die Gartenlaube* celebrated the inauguration with a conspicuously short illustrated report about the ‘real people’s celebration’ of the ‘German Patriots’ League’, prefacing it with the statement that the event had passed ‘without any disharmony’.^{lxv} Because of such critical receptions, these celebrations could have little more than politically restorative power. Neither the Kaiser nor the court were able to offer appropriate future-oriented ideals to ‘public opinion’, which had become a recognized ‘power factor of political progress’, as the *Intelligenzblatt* had already foreseen in 1899.^{lxvi} All that ‘Wilhelm the Sudden’ [‘Wilhelm der Plötzliche’], as South German humour mocked him, could offer, was an exaggerated dynastic consciousness and a populist romanticized expressiveness in ever-changing variations. The ‘Bayreutherization’ of state celebrations served a traditional national pedagogy. Even under Wilhelm II it utilized the myths of a ‘natural’, purposeful and divinely-willed rise of Prussia and its ‘German calling’ of national unity, despite the fact that this Kaiser, in the eyes of an increasing majority, had ‘never achieved anything useful’.^{lxvii} This imitative monarchical ‘anti-world’ unashamedly demonstrated autocratic features in an increasingly parliamentarized constitutional state and thus tried to prevent change or reform programmes. It managed, at least in the conservative and national liberal media, to promote a favourable journalism consisting of a mostly undemanding eulogizing praise of the ruler.^{lxviii} However, the critical press, intellectuals and thoughtful contemporaries in the sciences, politics and the economy missed ideals beyond the fleet and colonies, as well as a deeper enthusiasm directed at the major issue of imperfect national unity.^{lxix} Friedrich Meinecke commented in the Kaiser’s jubilee year: ‘Our goals go beyond Fatherland and state, but our roots are well submerged within it. [...] Thus we have entered, even in our inner development, a danger-zone whose outcome lies in the dark. [...] Therefore we lack today the inclination to brag and boast.’^{lxx}

The monarch’s pathetic gesturing and the theatrical attitude had to have the ring of an anachronistic, banal and hollow ‘operetta regime’ (Holstein) amidst the sober prose and

statistics of a society that was defined by technology and economy, matter-of-factness and efficiency.^{lxxi} Only parts of the audience condemned the Kaiser's speeches as careless diplomacy^{lxxii} and non-statesmanlike chattiness, as tactless and out of control, or even as the despicable 'unmanly childishness' of a dilettante on the throne who was damaging the German Reich both at home and abroad.^{lxxiii} War veterans' associations approved of Wilhelm's departure from the 'old Prussian, measured' behaviour of his grand-father, from whom he wanted to distinguish himself in this point in public^{lxxiv}, and also liked his approach to his God, the 'great Ally'.^{lxxv} They welcomed the exterior splendour of the celebration and the ever-present involvement in navy and colonial policy, because this was seen as a way in which the country could emerge from 'the shadow of the foundation of the Reich'.^{lxxvi} In the celebrations of various clubs (singing, gymnastic and war veterans), in university jubilee speeches and in the pamphlets accompanying state festivities, these images and ideas of the Kaiser^{lxxvii} can be found particularly in those passages which try to propagate and legitimize a romanticized image of war which elevates death in battle, as well as trying to popularize national enthusiasm and willingness for sacrifice.^{lxxviii} Such stylizations, like for example the Sedan-celebrations, did not explicitly rule out a great war, and called it either 'people's battle' (*Völkerschlacht*) or 'world war'. They grounded it historically along a traditional line which, although verbally conjuring up the 'ideas of 1813', was connected with completely new political ideas. These included the decadence of the western 'civilizations', exaggerated beliefs in the chosen German nation, preparation for a 'war of beliefs' (*Glaubenskrieg*)^{lxxix}, and ideologies which had until then been less well known: the slogan '*Ein Volk, ein Reich!*' and the idea that the Germans, as a 'world power', were faced with a 'racial war'.^{lxxx} There was criticism of this view of history and its official propaganda, and not only among the SPD, but also in the national-liberal *Bürgertum* who regarded the many celebrations^{lxxxi}, the hollow-sounding pathos, the emotions against 'enemies of the Reich', the martial stereotypes and the anti-Polish excesses^{lxxxii}, as well as the diversion attempts of an obtrusively practised tactics of 'panem et circenses' at best as anachronistic and politically dangerous.

The *Berliner Tageblatt* commented in 1913:

The German *Bürgertum* is once again willing to make grave sacrifices for 'the glory of the Reich'. But one cannot deny the fact that even for the German *Bürgertum* there is a point beyond which it does not want to go. It has been treated as a *quantité négligeable* for twenty-five years; now it screams for reforms. [...] The Kaiser is the living representative of German unity. May he become ever more conscious of the fact that this *unity* has its most secure roots in the *liberty* of the people.^{lxxxiii}

However, *Die Zukunft* had already voiced similar thoughts on the occasion of the Kaiser's birthday (and the twenty-fifth anniversary of German unification):

A people who are continually confronted with new sensations, who cannot calm down and develop a certain trust in a steady leadership eventually loses the ability to be able to distinguish between what is important and unimportant. Unless one was telling lies one would have to admit that the Kaiser's birthday is not being celebrated in the mood for which one would hope and wish. [...] Today, when everyone feels that the serious purpose of the celebration is more directed towards the present than the past, the image is unfortunately a different one: cheap generalizations are being shouted out [...]. Black worries lie over the land and darken the joy of the glorious past; the enemies ask with scorn if the new Reich will ever experience a second jubilee [...].^{lxxxiv}

During the Daily-Telegraph-affair Harden had publicized his views regarding the Kaiser's weak leadership in such a sharp way, and had demanded an abdication so forcefully that the Prussian state minister Paul von Breitenbach in his role as head of the Reichs-office for the administration of the Reichs-railways immediately forbade the sale of *Die Zukunft* at railway stations.^{lxxxv}

The nation does not believe that the almost fifty-year-old will change^{lxxxvi}, will be able to practise reserve [...]. The business of the Reich demands a political temperament, not a dramatic one. We don't want a Jupiter who sends lightning from the clouds. [...] Wilhelm II has proven that he is utterly unable to conduct political business [...]. The Kaiser is no monarch. The Reich is sovereign, not the Kaiser [...]. We don't want to be insulted in our cultural feelings as educated Europeans day after day through speech and writing. We want to preserve state secrets [...], to despise lies, charades (Gaukelspiel) and Byzantine pomp. [We want to] be able to have alliances again. [...] And the old respect will return since it has been proven that the Germans still dare to have demands even against the Kaiser.^{lxxxvii}

Already by the turn of the century the public no longer regarded Wilhelm II as a personality who could have an integrative role within society and who could guarantee social cohesion consensually. Despite the fact that the anti-Socialist laws had not been renewed, the views of history and politics held by the SPD and those held by the Wilhelmine government were irreconcilably opposed.^{lxxxviii} The working classes removed themselves from state celebrations as much as possible and had in any case long begun to celebrate their own holidays and to develop their own traditions, myths, cults and symbols.^{lxxxix}

The state-organized festivities seemed increasingly deficient. Aside from the pomp, they mirrored an unsatisfactory backward-looking view which was dominated by Prussian interpretations of history.^{xc} In this way, new anti-Prussian views and prejudices were created or existing ones confirmed. In addition, Wilhelm gave support, not only abroad, to the misconception that the German Reich equalled Prussia^{xcⁱ} because it identified itself largely with the same traditions, and because it also glorified the military^{xcⁱⁱ}, sought a militarization of public life, and had a longing for opportunities to prove itself in foreign policy and in wars and conflicts in an irresponsible fashion. In the programmes of public display this was documented with varying degrees of clarity, but it was nonetheless recognizable as a political concept^{xcⁱⁱⁱ}, whose main features consisted of an exaggerated view of the country's power and of increasingly narrowing national-conservative perspectives.^{xc^{iv}} Most often these became more concrete in the attempts to legitimize a provocative patriotism with naval and world policy.^{xc^v} The prevailing messages could be reduced to the following core: all of Europe lived in continual crisis, a war was not impossible and a larger war, a 'world war' could actually be credited with a positive, progressive potency.^{xc^{vi}}

As a result of the loss of the 'monarchical aura' during a worsening domestic political crisis, the level of attention for symbol-laden festivities and the journalistic commentary on such official celebrations increased. The planning and the programmes of state celebrations in Wilhelmine Germany, their order of events and their place in the media offered insights not only into the political profile and the personal inadequacy of the monarch, but also into the decreasing effectiveness of the 'Kaiser myth' and the increasing 'social will-power' of 'public opinion' in regard to the reception of official events and collective memory.^{xc^{vii}} In this way polarization and a negative general mood grew in a society which was displaying increasing political openness. The unease regarding Wilhelm's public appearances and the measures taken by the state leadership, detectable across the societal divides, promoted a radicalization not only of the left, but also a rethinking which extended into the political middle ground. The emphatic identification of the Kaiser with the state, practised over decades, and the covert, but latently effective identification of the history of Prussia, or rather the Hohenzollern, with that of the German Reich in official celebrations, connected the public perception and fate of one person with that of the state. This ideology and societal development – taken further because of the Kaiser's strongly reduced and finally entirely lacking political and media presence during the war^{xc^{viii}} – were among the prerequisites for the collapse of the monarchy and the revolutionary events of the autumn and winter of 1918/19.

ⁱ *Gloria industria alitur!* – Dedicated to John, friend, critical editor of sources and unbiased researcher, for 31 May 2002.

ⁱⁱ ‘Dichtung und Wahrheit über 1813’ (*Sozialdemokratische Flugschriften* 19); Berlin 1913, 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sabine Behrenbeck and Alexander Nützenadel (eds.), *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats*, Cologne 2000.

^{iv} Decree of 9 July 1888. Gerhard J. Bürgel, *Die Feier vaterländischer Gedenk- und Erinnerungstage in der Volksschule*, Cologne 1894, p.5. – At that time, days of celebration, in chronological order, were as follows: January; 18th, coronation of the King, and foundation of the Reich; 24th, birthday of Frederick the Great; 27th, birthday of Wilhelm II; March; 9th, remembrance of the death of Wilhelm I, 10th, accession to power of Frederick III; 16th, the funeral of Wilhelm I; 22nd, birthday of Wilhelm I; April; 1st, Bismarck’s birthday; 30th, Roon’s birthday; Mai; 10th, Peace of Frankfurt; June; 15th, death of Frederick III and accession of Wilhelm II; July 19th, remembrance of the death of Luise; September; 2nd, *Sedanstag*; 30th, Kaiserin Augusta’s birthday; October; 14th, remembrance of Jena and Auerstedt; 18th, coronation of Wilhelm I and Frederick III’s birthday; 26th, Moltke’s birthday; November; 21st, Viktoria’s birthday (Kaiserin Friedrich).

^v *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung (NPZ)*, 136, 22 March 1897 [A]: ‘Der 22. März – ein preußischer Festtag’. Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch (ed.), *Karl der Große als vielberufener Vorfahr*, Sigmaringen 1994, pp.9-21, refers in this context to an ‘ideological complex’; a similar argument can be found in Elfie Rembold, *Die festliche Nation*.

Geschichtsinszenierungen und regionaler Nationalismus in Großbritannien vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, Berlin 2000, pp.17-19.

^{vi} Cf. the section on ‘Volksfeste’ in the *Gothaischer Genealogischer Hofkalender*.

^{vii} Long reports on details can be found in the semi-official conservative local and regional press; shorter versions in NAZ, 22 March 1897: ‘Unter den Linden’. On this point generally cf. Heinrich Popitz, *Phänomene der Macht. Autorität – Herrschaft – Gewalt – Technik*, Tübingen 1986.

^{viii} Decree (*Dankerlaß*) on the occasion of Frederick the Great’s 200th birthday and his own birthday, 29 January 1912, quoted from Schultheß, *Europäischer Geschichtskalender* 54, Berlin 1913, p.11.

^{ix} Edgar Ubisch, ‘Der Freiheitskampf von 1813’, in: *Preußische Jahrbücher*, 151, January-March 1913, p.149. Cf. Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des Kaisergedankens, 1871-1918*, München 1969.

^x A good overview can be found in Michael Maurer, ‘Feste und Feiern als historischer Forschungsgegenstand’, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 253 (1991), pp.101-130; in addition see W. Gebhardt, ‘Fest, Feier und Alltag. Über die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit des Menschen und ihre Deutung’, Diss. phil. Tübingen 1986, and the essay collection of Uwe Schultz (ed.), *Das Fest. Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 1988; Dieter Düding et al. (eds), *Öffentliche Festkultur. Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Reinbeck 1988; Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte (eds), *Bürgerliche Feste. Symbolische Formen politischen Handelns im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1993; and the research by Volker Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern in Deutschland: von Wilhelm I. bis Franz Josef Strauss ; eine Studie zur politischen Semiotik*, Stuttgart 1990; Wolfgang Hardtwich, ‘Nationsbildung und politische Mentalität. Denkmal und Fest im Kaiserreich’, in: idem, *Geschichtskultur und Wissenschaft*, Munich 1990, pp.264-301. – For the early history of celebrations in Prussia, and in particular the jubilee celebrations of the coronation of 1701, see now Bernd Sösemann, ‘Zeremoniell und Inszenierung. Öffentlichkeit und dynastisch-höfische Selbstdarstellung in der preußischen Krönung und den Jubiläumsfeiern (1701-1851)’, in: idem (ed.) *Kommunikation und Medien in Preußen vom 16. bis zum 19.*

Jahrhundert (Beiträge zur Kommunikationsgeschichte 12), Stuttgart 2002, pp.85-135, and for the subject as a whole the bibliography Bernd Söseman (ed.), *Öffentliche Kommunikation in Brandenburg-Preußen. Eine Spezialbibliographie*, bearbeitet von Albrecht Hoppe (Beiträge zur Kommunikationsgeschichte 13). Stuttgart 2002.

^{xi} *Die Zukunft*, 34, 1896, pp. 337-345: ‘Das Kaisertelegamm am Friedensfeste; citations pp. 337 and 342.

^{xii} **Penzler and Krieger (eds), *Reden II*, p.175.**

^{xiii} Because the public perception was that of ‘personal rule’, it is not necessary here to go into the details of the complexities around this term, which has repeatedly been explored by John Röhl with the help of contemporary sources.

^{xiv} Cited in Wilhelm Deist (ed.), *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, 2 vols, Düsseldorf 1970, No. 425, note. 5); cf. also idem, ‘Kaiser Wilhelm II in the Context of His Military and Naval Entourage’, in: John Röhl and Nikolaus Sombart (eds), *Kaiser Wilhelm II. New Interpretations. The Corfu Papers*, Cambridge 1982, pp.169-192. Chief of the General Staff Graf von Waldersee declared in his memoirs that by 1890 the Kaiser had not had ‘the slightest inclination to work anymore’. Heinrich Otto Meissner (ed.), *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 2 vols, Stuttgart 1923, vol. 2: 1888-1900, p.152).

^{xv} This deficit is more than apparent. Journalism and communication studies rarely include more than an ‘historical dimension’ in the guise of whatever the current predominant theory might be. The *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte*, thus far in three volumes, is obviously determined to effect a change in this regard. Although parts of the historical sciences, as well as some literary studies scholars, have discovered the media as a topic for investigation, and publicist and audio-visual accounts as sources, they have not widely drawn any far-ranging convincing theoretical or methodological conclusions from them. Even recent overviews of the history of the past century depict decision, events and developments as if the media had not yet been invented or – if they are mentioned – as if they had been without influence. Cf. Bernd Söseman, ‘Einführende Bemerkungen zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Medien und der öffentlichen Kommunikation in Preußen’, in: idem (ed.), *Kommunikation und Medien in Preußen*, pp.9-21. An older publication concentrates solely on the attitude of the press during the abdication question: Adolf Stutzenberger, *Die Abdankung Kaiser Wilhelms II. Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kaiserfrage und die Haltung der Presse*, Berlin 1937. Cf. also the thematically broader study by Friedrich Zipfel, ‘Kritik der Öffentlichkeit an der Person und an der Monarchie Wilhelms II. bis 1914’, Diss. phil. **Berlin** 1952.

^{xvi} Ulrike Oppelt, *Film und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg. Propaganda als Medienrealität im Aktualitäten- und Dokumentarfilm* (Beiträge zur Kommunikationsgeschichte 10), Stuttgart 2002, pp.65-79.

^{xvii} The film elevated the Queen to a ‘mother of the fatherland’ and placed her in the tradition of the ‘protestant madonna’. For details cf. Axel Marquardt and Heinz Rathsack (eds), *Preußen. Versuch einer Ausstellung*, Berlin 1981, vol. 4, p.237.

^{xviii} ‘For the rest of the world’, commented *März*, ‘that wants to get to know Wilhelm II, can do so in detail and at length by reading the speeches [...]’; commented ‘Ludwig Thoma in: *März* 3, 16 February 1909, pp.248-250.; Die Krügerdepesche’; this citation p. 250.

^{xix} The centenary celebrations in Breslau in 1902 led to a confrontation when Gerhart Hauptmann’s ‘Festspiel’ was considered such a provocation by the court that the Crown Prince resigned from the position of patron of the exhibition; the public performance of the play had to be stopped on 18 June. Schultheß, *Geschichtskalender* 43, 20 May 1902.

^{xx} Walther Rathenau, *Der Kaiser. Eine Betrachtung*, Berlin 1912, p.8. Nor was this propensity confined to any particular class, as Walther Rathenau commented: ‘Not only the so-called

'better' circles, but also simple, little folk take great interest in the fate of the Kaiser's court [...].Ibid. Cf also *Intelligenzblatt (Kreise Teltow-Beeskow-Storkow)* 11, 26 January 1899: 'Zum 27. Januar'. The local and regional press was dominated by an uncritical, panegyric tenor: 'It is not in wars and battles that H.M. seeks honour and fame, no, the gun at ease, the powder dry, the sharpened sword in hand is how today Germany's Kaiser stands, Germany's people stand, a faithful friend to its friends, a dreaded enemy to its enemies, a refuge for peace through its power and strength.' *Grunewald-Echo* (Berlin) 5, 31 January 1909: 'Die einzige Kaisergeburtstagsfeier'.

^{xxi} For details, and for the correct version of the text, cf. Bernd Söseman, 'Die sogenannte Hunnenrede Wilhelms II.', in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 222 (1976), pp.324-358. See also Annika Mombauer's contribution to this volume, pp.xxx.

^{xxii} Bernd Söseman, 'Der Verfall des Kaisergedankens im Ersten Weltkrieg', in: John C.G. Röhl (ed.), *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II. in der deutschen Geschichte*, München 1991, pp.145-170.

^{xxiii} A term used by Friedrich von Holstein, letter to Philipp Eulenburg, 1 January 1895. John Röhl (ed.), *Philipp Eulenburgs politische Korrespondenz*, 3 vols., Boppard 1978, [vol.2](#), p.1071).

^{xxiv} *Die Zukunft*, 18, 13 March 1897, p.489: "Sankt Wilhelm"

^{xxv} His most frequently chosen topic for this was an appeal against 'enemies of the Reich'. '[...] especially today there are powers within the Volk which want to rob the people of this idealism. Help me to preserve the ideal assets of the people which enthused our Volk in 1813 and which also had their effect in 1870.' Wilhelm II's speech to a deputation of Berlin students, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the German Reich (18 January 1896), *ibid*, p.8.

^{xxvi} Röhl, *Eulenburgs Korrespondenz*, Nr. 276; Eulenburg's letter to Wilhelm II, 1 January 1890, [vol.1](#), p.402. In relation to his neglect of political business, Eley refers to a 'model of absentism'. Geoff Eley, *Wilhelminismus, Nationalismus, Faschismus. Zur historischen Kontinuität in Deutschland*, Münster 1991, p.72; cf. also Isabel V. Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918*, Cambridge 1982, pp.31-44.

^{xxvii} The influence of this smooth and sycophantic courtier can be seen earlier than just immediately prior to his taking over the Chancellorship on 18 October 1900.

^{xxviii} These turning points correspond to the different phases referred to in John C.G. Röhl, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II., Großherzog Friedrich I. und der "Königsmechanismus" im Kaiserreich', in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 236 (1983), p.554.

^{xxix} They included: King's Coronation (1701); Founding of the Reich (1871); Birthday Frederick the Great (1712); Birthday Wilhelm II (1859); East-Prussian *Landtag* (1813); Friedrich-Wilhelm-University (1813); Wilhelm I's death (1888); Accession of Frederick III (1888); Birthday of Queen Luise (1776); 'Iron Cross' (1813); Address 'To My People' (1813); Academy of Sciences (1700); Birthday Wilhelm I (1797); Schiller-Celebrations/Parades; Peace of Frankfurt (1871); Johanniter-Orden-Celebration; Tannenberg (15. Juli 1410); Mansfeld Mining (1200); Death of Frederick III; accession of Wilhelm II (1888); Victory Celebration (1871); *Turnplatz Hasenheide*(1811); *Großer Kurfürst*; 'Begegnung in Tilsit' (1807); Anniversary of Queen Luise's death (1810); Centenary Celebration (1813); Sedan (1870); Jena and Auerstedt (1806); Wilhelm I's coronation (1861); birthday of Friedrich III. (1831); *Völkerschlacht*, Leipzig (1813); birthday of Helmuth von Moltke (1800); Social legislation (1881); *Siegessäle* (1886); millenium celebrations.

^{xxx} Elisabeth Fehrenbach is wrong when she states that Wilhelm's Königsberg 'expectation' speech was the last speech that was critically received. Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens 1871-1918*, München 1969, p.133. It was followed by a

number of other contentious speeches, including Marienburg/East Prussia on 29 August 1910, Hamburg on 20 June and 27 August 1911, Königsberg on 5 February 1913, Berlin on 9 February and 15 June 1913, Bremen on 15 June 1913, Kehlheim on 25 August 1913, and again in Berlin and Hamburg on 22 March and 23 May 1914 respectively.

^{xxxii} Maximilian Harden's phrase in an interview, *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 29 August 1910: 'Maximilian Harden über die Kaiserrede', which was immediately sent to the Chancellor to Hohenfinow.

^{xxxiii} It is therefore possible to speak of an 'inter-fractional policy in statu nascendi'. After 1912, and particularly in January 1913, following the anti-conservative direction of the Centrum and the parties' more self-confident treatment of the army bills (acceptance by the Social Democrats and rejection by the conservatives) that policy received a much clearer political outline than even before.

^{xxxiiii} *Kölnische Zeitung*, 30 August 1910: 'Schluß der Debatte'.

^{xxxiv} **Zur Entwicklungsrede (Festmahl in Königsberg) s. *Der Morgen* (Vienna), 32, 29 August 1910: 'Die Königsfanfare' (Leader); *Ostdeutsche Rundschau*, 28 August 1910: 'Die neue Kaiserrede'; *Hannoverscher Courier*, 28 August 1910. **Der Kaiser hatte am 25. August 1910 u.a. gesagt: „[...] Was lehrt uns die hohe Figur der Königin Luise ? Sie lehrt uns, daß, wie sie einst ihre Söhne vor allen Dingen mit dem Gedanken erfüllt hat, die Ehre wieder herzustellen, das Vaterland zu verteidigen, wir Männer alle kriegerischen Tugenden pflegen sollen; [...] Denn nur auf unserer Rüstung beruht unser Friede. Und was sollen unsere Frauen von der Königin lernen? Sie sollen lernen, daß die Hauptaufgabe der deutschen Frau nicht auf dem Gebiet des Versammlungs- und Vereinswesens liegt, nicht in dem Erreichen von vermeintlichen Rechten, in denen sie es den Männern gleichtun können, sondern in der stillen Arbeit im Hause und in der Familie. Sie sollen die junge Generation erziehen, vor allen Dingen zum Gehorsam und zum Respekt vor dem Alter! [...] Als Instrument des Herrn Mich betrachtend, ohne Rücksicht auf Tagesabsichten und Meinungen, gehe Ich Meinen Weg, der einzig und allein der Wohlfahrt und friedlichen Entwicklung unseres Vaterlandes gewidmet ist.“****

^{xxxv} *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 27 August 1910: 'Der Gottesgnadenkaiser': 'This speech is among his worst excesses (gehört zu seinen schärfsten Entgleisungen)', and *Neues Wiener Journal*, 27 August 1910: 'Also sprach Kaiser Wilhelm...', *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna) 16527, 27 August 1910. However, there were also calming commentaries: 'The Kaiser only speaks aggressively, but he acts tamely', *Die Zeit* (Vienna) 30 August 1910: 'Der Weinprediger', and similarly: *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 August 1910; *Neues Wiener Tageblatt*, 238, 31 August 1910: 'Die Königsberger Kaiserrede'; *Fremden-Blatt* (Vienna) 238, 31 August 1910.

^{xxxvi} *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Vienna) 27 August 1910: 'Er hat die Sprache wiedergefunden'.

^{xxxvii} *Badischer Landesbote*, 215, 16 September 1910: Theodor Butz, 'Eine taktische Frage' (reader's letter). The Auswärtiges Amt presented this article to the Chancellor, together with a report by the German consul in Moscow (31 August 1910) which refers to the newspaper *Golos Moskwy*, which enquired anxiously whether German policy could still be trusted and who was responsible for it, if it was headed by a 'mystic'.

^{xxxviii} Thomas Nipperdey **Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918. vol. 2: Machtstaat vor der Demokratie, München 1992, p.755.**

^{xxxix} Bernd Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff. Ein Leben mit der Zeitung*, München, 2nd edn, 2001, pp.122-131.

^{xl} Nipperdey, *Geschichte*, **vol.2**, p.737.; see also idem, 'Organisierter Kapitalismus, Verbände und die Krise des Kaiserreichs', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 5, 1979, pp.418-433.

^{xli} On the occasion of the centenary of the wars of liberation, Theodor Wolff recorded his criticism by casting back his eyes on Friedrich III: ‘The civil rights which had been promised to them [the German patriots of 1813] were not granted; yesterday’s celebrated heroes of liberation were put in chains as demagogues, the parasites returned to the places drenched in the people’s blood, and a nation just united was once more divided into casts and classes, into well- and ill-meaning camps [...]. Would we have seen this happen if fate had given him [Friedrich III] more time? – we do not know. But perhaps he would have kept his promise.’ *Berliner Tageblatt*, 125, 10 March 1913: T.W. ‘An mein Volk’.

^{xlii} Following the ‘Hun speech’ officials started to deny the ‘public character’ of a speech in cases of conflict with the press over the correct wording of an address by the Kaiser. ‘Fridericus-Rex-speech’; *Döberitz*, 29 May 1903, [in: Penzler and Krieger \(eds\), *Reden III*, p.159f.](#)

^{xliii} *Berliner Tageblatt*, 251, 18 May 1905; for similar views see *Freisinnige Zeitung*, 226, 15 May 1905 (evening edn), *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 228 und 234, 16 und 19 May 1905 (evening edn).

^{xliv} *Vorwärts*, 149, 16 June 1913: ‘Wir und Wilhelm’.

^{xliv} *Berliner Tageblatt*, 298, 15 June 1913: Wilhelm Ostwald, ‘Der Kaiser und das Volk’.

^{xlvi} *Die Gartenlaube*, 1913, Nr. 27, p.570f.

^{xlvii} The *Kreuz-Zeitung* was not alone in spreading this view, but it did so particularly often and celebrated the ‘world historical importance’ of events immoderately and exaggeratedly: ‘There are basic truths in history about which there is no disagreement. Among those is foremost the one that everything big or important that has happened in Prussia and Germany since the days of the Reformation was particularly the work of the house of Hohenzollern [...]’. *NPZ*, 16, 10 January 1901 (evening edn): ‘Die Hohenzollern in demokratischer Beleuchtung’.

^{xlviii} *Vorwärts*, 69, 22 March 1897: ‘Politische Übersicht’.

^{xlix} *Intelligenzblatt*, 99, 26 August 1913: ‘Die Fürstenfeier bei Kehlheim’.

^l *Ibid*, 37, 9, 21 January 1911: ‘Vierzig Jahre deutscher Einheit’.

^{li} The former Reichstag-member of the National-Liberal Party and travel companion of the Crown Prince, Friedrich Dernburg (1833-1911) had urged on the occasion of the Kaiser’s 50th birthday, that the ‘reciprocal trust between Kaiser and Volk’ had to be reproduced, because otherwise ‘an element of national strength’ would be lost. ‘Zum 50. Geburtstag des Kaisers’, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 47, 27 January 1909). Only two years later, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Reich, negative visions of the future prevailed: ‘Among the people one no longer thinks that things are about averting a catastrophe, but rather about delaying one if possible. Après nous le déluge [...]. *Bayerisches Vaterland*, 18 January 1911. Similar accounts can be found in *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Germania*.

^{lii} *NPZ*, 275, 15 June 1913.

^{liii} ‘We had to experience how a whole number of pseudo-patriots just in these days intended to conjure up the Prussian epoch of conflict of the sixties which had been happily overcome. [...] Added to this were the utterly superfluous attempts at intimidation which had been instigated in as clumsy a way as possible by irresponsible, alleged confidants of the crown, like Freiherr v. Stumm. [...] Thus politically the centenary celebrations began in a disharmonious way which only served too well to diminish the joy of the memorable jubilee days both with the government and the governed alike.’ *Berliner Tageblatt*, 146, 21 March 1897: Arthur Levysohn, ‘Politische Wochenschau’.

^{liv} *Vorwärts*, 66, 20 March 1900. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Wilhelm’s accession to the throne, *March* published an ironic, quotation-filled essay on the topic of the Byzantinism of obtrusive flatterers in publishing houses, editorial offices and academic

offices ('superiority of the Wilhelmine epoch over similar eras, such as the Medici or Augustus. And all that: through only one man'. *März* 25, 21 March 1913, pp. 397-402: Wilhelm Herzog, 'Wie sie Ihn umjubeln', here: 398).

^{lv} 'Myth is the most important medium of society's "imagination". [...] Tales of the past serve to create a consciousness of unity and uniqueness, i.e. identity. Knowledge about the past secures identity. [...] Only at a next step is the decision made whether such further development assumes the character of circular insistence, resisting against the powers of change, or if on the contrary it strives for change, in opposition to the powers of insistence. In either case there is a narrative virulence at work, and stories exercise power to determine actions.' Dieter Harth / Jan Assmann (eds), *Revolution und Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 9-35, 39-43; here: 41f.; Rüdiger Voigt (ed.), *Politik der Symbole, Symbole der Politik*, Opladen 1989, pp. 9-14.

^{lvi} *Fränkische Tagespost*, 198, 25 August 1913: 'Fürstentag zu Kehlheim'; see also 'Weckruf zur Preußenwahl' (Sozialdemokratische Flugschriften 17), Berlin 1913, pp.5-8: 'Preußen und das Reich'.

^{lvii} Some papers undertook this re-interpretation gradually with the aim no longer to humiliate the French. 'We are not celebrating the defeat of the enemy [des Erbfeindes], we are celebrating the birth of German unity [...]' *Intelligenzblatt*, 104, 3 March 1910: 'Sedan'.

^{lviii} 'May the Sedanstag lead our German people back to faith; for from faith alone does new life flow, all virtues spring from it. If the right faith becomes alive again, then duty and obedience, order and modesty will return; then love for King and Fatherland, respect for superiority and regard for the law will emerge again.' *NPZ*, 408, 31 August 1895: 'Sedan'.

^{lix} *Die Gartenlaube*, 1900, Nr. 6, pp. 196f.

^{lx} ~~"Immer klarer stellt sich die Gedenkfeier für den alten Kaiser, der uns durch siegreiche Kriege zum Frieden geführt hat, als eine Kundgebung für den Frieden nach innen und nach außen dar. Die Schaffung der neuen Nationalkokarde bedeutet einen Schritt auf der Bahn der innigeren Verschmelzung der deutschen Völker zu einem deutschen Volke"~~ (Berliner Tageblatt 150, 23 March 1897: 'Das Wilhelmsfest. Kaiser, Fürsten und Volk').

^{lxi} **Illustrirte Zeitung** Nr. 3669, 23 October 1913, pp.705-710: 'Das Leipziger Jahrhundertfest'; 710-717: 'Die Leipziger Erinnerungs- und Festtage'; 718-719: 'Die Eilbotenläufe der Deutschen Turnerschaft zur Weihe des Völkerschlachtdenkmals'; 720-72: 'Die russische Gedächtniskirche in Leipzig'; 725f.: 'Die Gedenkfeier der Völkerschlacht vor fünfzig Jahren'.

^{lxii} *Illustrirte Zeitung* Nr. 3668, 16 October 1913, pp. 2-10: 'Die Schlacht bei Leipzig'; 11f.: 'Das Denkmal' (poem by Freiherr Börries von Münchhausen); 13f.: 'Die Völkerschlacht in der Karikatur'; 686-688: 'Wie es Leipzigs Einwohnern während der Völkerschlacht erging'; *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, no No., no date: 'Die Leipziger Jahrhundertfeier'; with a leader by the historian Karl Lamprecht, 'Zur Denkmal-Weihe'.

^{lxiii} *Die Gartenlaube*, 1911, Nr. 45, pp.1067; 893-7.

^{lxiv} *Der Morgen*, 7, 14 June 1913, p. 577: Robert Breuer, 'Das Leipziger Denkmal'.

^{lxv} A fact that was important to the author (Carl Boysen, 'Das Leipziger Fest') because he closed by stating that the band between the former allies had been torn, and the peoples no longer regarded each other 'in the same friendly matter', because 'politics [die leidige Politik] had split them apart during the course of the years.' *Die Gartenlaube*, 1913, Nr. 44, pp. 941f.

^{lxvi} *Intelligenzblatt*, 153, 30.XII.1899: 'An der Jahrhundertwende'.

^{lxvii} Maximilian Harden, interview in the *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 29 August 1910: 'Maximilian Harden über die Kaiserrede'. See also note 34.

^{lxviii} Georg Barthel Roth, *Der deutsche Kaisergedanke. Ein ernstes Mahnwort an das deutsche Volk zum 27. Januar 1893*, Cologne 1893.

^{lxix} *Berliner Tageblatt*, 292, 12 June 1910: 'Albert Traeger, Achtzig Jahre'.

^{lxx} Friedrich Meinecke, 'Deutsche Jahrhundertfeier und Kaiserfeier' (speech at Freiburg University, 14 June 1913), in *Logos*, 4, 1913, pp.161-175, here 161 and 175; idem, *Betrachtungen über Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft des Deutschen Reichs von einem Süddeutschen*, Straßburg 1896, p.38.

^{lxxi} In a piece on Friedrich the Great in the *Illustrierte Zeitung* the portrait of the most important German 'modern ruler' (p. 5) contained a careful, but distinctly drawn opposite picture. *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 138, Nr. 3577, 18 January 1912, pp. 2-5: J.v. Pflugk-Hartung, 'Friedrich der Große'. See also Paul Schulze-Berghof, *Die Nationalbühne und Volksfeier für Friedrich den Großen*, Berlin 1911, p. 4.

^{lxxii} 'The powder dry, the sword sharpened, the goal identified, the strength marshalled and the pessimists banned! My glass is raised to our people in arms!' Wilhelm II's 'powder speech' in Berlin on 26 October 1905, in: Penzler and Krieger (eds), *Reden III*, p.279.

^{lxxiii} On this point see Hildegard Freifrau von Spitzemberg, *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus, Göttingen, 2nd edn 1962, p.489, or Marie Fürsting Radziwill, *Briefe vom deutschen Kaiserhof 1889-1915*, Berlin 1936, pp. 314f. – Max Weber wrote to Friedrich Naumann on 14 December 1906: 'The measure of contempt which greets us, as a nation, abroad (Italy, America, everywhere! and rightly so! that's what is decisive), because we allow ourselves to accept this regime of this man, has become of late a factor of first class world political importance for us. [...]. [Politics that want to protect Wilhelm II's personal prestige] are today no longer politics which calculate on the basis of reality, be that at home or abroad. Because this prestige is gone [...].'
Max Weber Gesamtausgabe, ed. Horst Baier et al., Abt. II: Letters, vol. 5, p. 202.

^{lxxiv} In addition, Wilhelm tried with his campagne to popularize the honouring of his grandfather (commemorative coins, construction of memorials, his naming as 'Wilhelm the Great' and particularly during the celebrations of his 100th birthday, 21-23 March 1897), which was not just supported by the Kreuz-Zeitung, to divert some of that glory onto his own time in office. Röhl, *Eulenburgs Korrespondenz*, Nr. 1301; letter from Monts to Holstein, 2 March 1897, p.1795; Jakob Vogel, 'Zwischen protestantischem Herrscherideal und Mittelaltermystik. Wilhelm I. und die "Mythomotorik" des Deutschen Kaiserreichs', in: Gerd Krumeich and Hartmut Lehmann (eds), *"Gott mit uns". Nation, Religion und Geschichte im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 213-230.

^{lxxv} 'Fridericus-Rex-speech', [Döberitz 29 May 1903, in: Penzler and Krieger \(eds\), Reden III, p.160](#)

^{lxxvi} Thomas Rohkrämer, *Der Militarismus der "kleinen Leute". Die Kriegervereine im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914*, Munich 1990, pp.201f.: Thirty years after the wars of unification it was deemed time to end the 'current self-congratulatory saturatedness' and to depart for new goals.

^{lxxvii} An example here is Theodor Birt, *Preußen und der Befreiungskrieg. Gedenkworte am kaiserlichen Geburtstag gesprochen* (Marburger Akademische Reden 28), Marburg 1913: See also Wilhelm II's unveiling of the memorial on the Kyffhäuser, in: Schultheß, *Geschichtskalender*, 43, 1902, p. 84, 18 June 1902), and 'Dichtung und Wahrheit über 1813' (*Sozialdemokratische Flugschriften* 19), Berlin 1913, pp. 8-16.

^{lxxviii} On the subject of death in battle, see also Isabel Hull's contribution to this volume.

^{lxxix} Werner Sombart, *Händler und Helden. Patriotische Besinnungen*, Munich 1915, p. 3.

^{lxxx} An example for this is Karl Wahl, whose speech in Tübingen, 'The idea of 1813', which was immediately published, demonstrated such racial-political views. *Die Ideen von 1813*, Tübingen 1913, p. 29; *Intelligenzblatt*, 10, 22 January 1901: 'Deutschland-Preußen 1701 und 1901'; ibid, 100, 28 August 1913: 'Die Jahrhundertfeier in Kehlheim'.

^{lxxxix} Even the *Kreuz-Zeitung* concluded after seven years: ‘Surely we have now celebrated enough’, now it was necessary to become ‘practical’ and follow the celebrations up with deeds (Germany’s development to a ‘sea power’). *NPZ*, 29, 18 January 1896: ‘Zum 18. Januar’, while *Die Zukunft* stated a year later: ‘Seriously minded sons of Germany look forward with a strange anxiousness and almost shivering to the days of celebration which the beginning of spring brings us. Their unease not only stems from a feeling of having had one’s fill which the many festivities of the last years must have aroused in any sober and hardworking person [...]’. *Die Zukunft*, 18, 20 March 1897: ‘Der große Kaiser’, p. 34.

^{lxxxix} For example, on 20 August 1910 in Poznan when Wilhelm II referred it as a German province. For comments in the Polish press, see Schultheß, *Geschichtskalender*, 51, 1910, pp.336f., 23 August 1910. See also Jürgen Vietig, ‘Die polnischen Grunwaldfeiern der Jahre 1902 und 1910’, in Wolfgang H. Fritze (ed.), *Germania Slavica*, vol. 4, Berlin, 1980 pp. 237-262; Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der Ordensstaat als Ideologie. Das Bild des Deutschen Ordens in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Publizistik*, Berlin 1979, pp. 197-199.

^{lxxxix} *Berliner Tageblatt*, 298, 15 June 1913: Paul Michaelis, ‘Das Regierungsjubiläum des Kaisers’.

^{lxxxix} *Die Zukunft*, 16, 18 January 1896: ‘Das Deutsche Reich’, p. 101.

^{lxxxix} In the end, however, the Chancellor did not go as far as decreeing a general prohibition. For details see Peter Winzen, *Das Kaiserreich am Abgrund. Die Daily-Telegraph-Affäre und das Hale-Interview von 1908*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 43, 260f.

^{lxxxix} Cf. Wilhelm’s view, following an intervention from Bülow, who claims having asked the Kaiser in 1907 to exercise a greater reserve in his public appearances. Wilhelm replied that ‘he could not change himself and needed to stay the way he was. Everything else we want to leave to God’s will [...]’. Bernhard Fürst von Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 4 vols, Berlin 1930, I, p. 601. – *Der Morgen already* expressed this realization in 1909: ‘It cannot be demanded that the personal character of a fifty-year old man can be changed fundamentally; it also cannot be expected, for it is an impossibility. [...] The decisive nature of this moment is the fact that the Kaiser has to make the decision if he wants to continue in his high office in unison with the entire German people or according to the advice and whisperings of a small and until now powerful group. For every monarch there comes at one point the historic moment when he has to part with the powers that until that time had been seen to be his support, but that have actually become suppressing and a hindrance. For the Hohenzollern dynasty that moment has now come. If it wants to fulfill its mission, which the German people have given it, in a lively and powerful manner, then it must free itself from the influence of the class of courtiers and bureaucrats who refer to their former merits for Prussia, but who are strangers to the tasks of the present, if not hostile. (M 5, 1909, 92-94: Verus (Ps.), Zum fünfzigsten Geburtstag Wilhelms II.).

^{lxxxix} *Die Zukunft*, 65, 21 November 1908/09, p. 304: ‘Gegen den Kaiser’.

^{lxxxix} Dieter Groh, *Emanzipation und Integration. Beiträge zur Sozial- und Politikgeschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung und des Zweiten Reiches*, Konstanz 1999, pp. 307-323.

^{lxxxix} Despite the inner opposition which he describes, Wolfgang J. Mommsen nonetheless attributes a high integrative power to the Kaiserreich. *Der autoritäre Nationalstaat*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, p. 38.

^{xc} See e.g. *NPZ*, 136, 22 March 1897: ‘May that Prussian spirit [...] even in the changing times [...] remain unchanged.’

^{xc} ‘The new German Reich cannot be Roman, but it must also not be Prussian. [...] The craze for world power would lead to dangerous enmity abroad while the rigid Prussianism would do the same at home. Prussia certainly has done great things for Germany. [...] The German Reich [...] must become German, be German, and remain German and must decisively break

with all junk from a dead past.’ *Die Zukunft*, 16, 18 January 1896, p. 108: ‘Das Deutsche Reich’).

^{xcii} Between 1891 and 1913 the numbers of members in the *Kriegervereine* in Prussia, Bavaria and in Württemberg increased threefold; in Baden, Hesse and Saxony they increase by more than double, and in the entire Reich from 1900 to 1913 they rose from 2,184 to 2,837 million. (Rohkrämer, *Militarismus*, p. 271).

^{xciii} On the topic of ceremonials see Miloš Vec, ‘Das preußische Zeremonialrecht. Eine Zerfallsgeschichte’, in Patrick Bahners and Gerd Roellecke (eds), *Preußische Stile. Ein Staat als Kunstwerk*, Stuttgart 2001, pp.101-113, here 101.

^{xciv} ‘Not only the so-called third Kaiserreich was destroyed at Sedan – this one fact alone would probably not have sufficed to give to that 2nd September 1870 its inestimable historical meaning for all time – no [...]. In the light of the irresistible flowing of national thought, here as there, and in the light of the power of the liberating thoughts of nationally minded politicians in Germany the unnatural diplomatic system of the ‘restored’ Europe collapsed like a house of cards.’ *Berliner Tageblatt*, 443, 1 September 1895: ‘Sedan’).

^{xcv} Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, vol. 2, Munich 1960, pp. 126f.

^{xcvi} Cf. Manfred Messerschmidt, ‘Reich und Nation im Bewußtsein der wilhelminischen Gesellschaft’, in Herbert Schottelius and Wilhelm Deist (eds), *Marine und Marinepolitik im kaiserlichen Deutschland 1871-1914*, Düsseldorf 1972, pp. 30-33.

^{xcvii} Friedrich Tönnies, *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung*, Berlin 1922, pp. 91f.

^{xcviii} Deist, *Militär*, II, No. 332, pp. 846f., note 5 (report from Major von Weiß for Ludendorff, 24 July 1917); see also Hans Delbrück’s clear analysis in *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 174, 1918, p. 434, and in general Söseman, *Verfall*, passim and particularly pp. 158-165.