

PREFACE

This work is a considerably revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation, "The Parties, the Princes, and the People: A Study of the German Referendum of June 20, 1926," completed at the University of California at Berkeley in 1970. The bulk of the research was undertaken some years earlier, in the early sixties, primarily in the collections of the University of California Library and the Hoover Library in Palo Alto, and then, thanks to the Class of 1883 Traveling Fellowship, in West Germany where I was able to make use of important documentary materials at the *Bundesarchiv* and the newspaper holdings of the *Institut für Zeitungsforschung* in Dortmund. Since that time I have attempted to keep up to date with the steady stream of publications relevant to the subject, but have not had the opportunity for further archival research.

The observant reader may note certain peculiarities in the citation of documents. These stem from the time and circumstances in which the basic research was completed. References to the records of the Reich cabinet meetings and related documents are to the microfilm collection of the "Kabinettsprotokolle" rather than to the documentary vol-

umes now in the course of publication.¹ Likewise, I used the papers of the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* in microfilm form, rather than the actual documents themselves now at the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz. An effort has been made to cite these documents clearly in terms of date and origin, as well as by microfilm reel and frame number, to facilitate reference to the actual documents, if that is desired. A number of important collections of personal papers have also become available since my trip to Germany in 1962–63 (most notably the *Nachlässe* of Erich Koch-Weser, Wilhelm Marx, Kuno Graf Westarp, and Otto Braun) but an examination of the recent monograph by Ulrich Schüren,² who has had access to these and other personal papers, suggests that while their use would have added further detail to this study, it would not have altered the main line of argumentation.

I am in the somewhat problematic situation of now publishing the results of my research after Dr. Schüren's more recent investigation has appeared in print. (He did not know of my dissertation until after the completion of his manuscript.)³ Given these circumstances, some readers may question the need for two detailed historical studies concentrating on the same set of events. Although much has been written on the history of the Weimar Republic, scholarly attention has tended to concentrate on the revolutionary and immediately post-revolutionary period of 1918–23 or on the end phase culminating in the triumph of Hitler in 1933. Relatively little attention has been paid to the so-called "good years" between 1924 and the onset of the depression in 1929. In the following study I hope to elucidate prevalent attitudes which demonstratively affected the practice of politics in that rather understudied period.

Dr. Schüren has written a carefully researched account of the controversy over the property settlements made with Germany's former ruling families after 1918 and the ensuing *Fürstenenteignung* referendum in 1926. These subjects are clearly the main topic of the present volume as well; but I believe that the reader will recognize other themes of re-

¹ Germany. Reichskanzlei. *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik. Die Kabinette Luther I und II.*, ed. Karl-Heinz Minuth, 2 vols. (Boppard am Rhein, 1977). The volume on the third Marx cabinet has not yet appeared. It has not been possible to include references to scholarly publications obtained after 1980.

² Ulrich Schüren, *Der Volksentscheid zur Fürstenenteignung 1926, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien*, 64 (Düsseldorf, 1978).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16, note 17.

search interest which go beyond what Schüren has attempted, namely, the malfunctioning of both parliamentary and plebiscitary forms of legislation when attempted *simultaneously*, the substantial difficulties impeding political cooperation (coalitions) in a multiparty system, and the persistent recurrence of divisions *within* the various political parties which often affected the formulation of party tactics and policy.

The lengthy discussions of party history and factionalism which interrupt my account of the initiative and referendum campaign developed directly from an effort to understand why several important parties made a number of inconsistent policy decisions during the course of the year-long controversy in 1925-26. I have paid particular attention to the conduct of the Social Democratic Party, justified by the key role it played in the calculations of other parties. However, the behavior of other important parties has been examined as well, and one must conclude that mistaken judgments and the disavowal of expected commitments were not weaknesses peculiar to one party alone. Simply stated, no party's leadership could or would undertake actions which threatened its own party's unity. Commitments to other parties, policies which otherwise had arguable advantages, were abandoned at the threat of a party split.

Party leaders with good reason feared any disruption of party unity and effectiveness, as well as outspoken challenges to their own authority as leaders. The *Fürstenenteignung* referendum campaign multiplied such challenges and, in a number of cases, seriously disrupted party harmony. In part this was due to the exceptional nature of the issue itself, but fundamentally the threat to established party loyalties lay in the nature of initiative and referendum proceedings as such. There are only two sides in a referendum election; if voters participate, they must vote either "yes" or "no." The established patterns of German parliamentary life and electioneering were not well adapted to simple bipolar decisions. In a multiparty system each party consistently stressed its separate and distinctive identity in matters of policy, doctrine, and organization. The pressures of a referendum campaign worked against the maintenance of separate positions; it forced some parties into awkward and unwanted associations. Furthermore, in accord with democratic theory but much to the surprise of some party leaders, the initiative and referendum encouraged many voters to decide for themselves how

to vote, ignoring the instructions of their party officials. All these things created a mood of uncertainty, frustration, and, at times, alarm. The working of democracy, even in the relatively stable years of the mid-twenties, was not reassuring, as numerous quotations from contemporaries make clear.

Historians in the German Democratic Republic have devoted considerable attention to the *Fürstenenteignung* campaign. In their view it reveals the successful implementation of *Einheitsfront* tactics by the German Communist Party under the leadership of Ernst Thälmann.⁴ Like Dr. Schüren, I think these writers overrate the actual successes of the United Front tactics and are hampered by the interpretive limitations of an official historiography.⁵ Yet, some regional studies of the referendum campaign contain solid and enlightening information.⁶ Historians and political scientists in the Federal Republic have tended to pass over the initiative and referendum campaigns of the Weimar Republic despite their strong interest in the history of the political parties and parliamentary elections. A few years ago, Reinhard Schiffers published a useful but rather dry study of the legal and political discussions of the plebiscitary elements in the Weimar constitution, in which he enumerated and briefly described the various efforts to carry out initiative and referendum proceedings on

⁴ Heinz Karl, *Der deutsche Arbeiterklasse in Kampf um die Enteignung der Fürsten (1925/1926)*, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie der Arbeiterbewegung*, 20 (Berlin, 1957); Mirjam Kölling, "Der Kampf der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands unter der Führung Ernst Thälmanns für die Einheitsfront in den ersten Jahren der relativen Stabilisierung (1924 bis 1927)," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 2 (Nr. 1, 1954): 3-36; Heinz Habedank, "Die Aktionseinheit der Arbeiterparteien gegen die Fürstenabfindung 1926 und die freien Gewerkschaften," *Die Arbeit. Theoretische Zeitschrift des FDGB* (Nr. 10, 1966), pp. 50-53. I have been unable to consult Ilse Kelbert-Girard, "Die grosse Volksbewegung für die entschädigungslose Fürstenenteignung. Volksbegehren und Volksentscheid 1926" (dissertation, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1960).

⁵ Schüren, pp. 15-17.

⁶ Erwin Könnemann, "Die Verhinderung der entschädigungslosen Enteignung der Fürsten 1925/26," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 7 (Nr. 3, 1957/58): 541-60; Gerhard Knoch, "Der Kampf der Magdeburger Bezirksorganisation der KPD gegen die Fürstenabfindung 1926," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Technischen Hochschule Otto von Guericke Magdeburg*, 10 (Nr. 4, 1966): 417-24; Martin Kasper, "Oberlausitzer werktätige Bauern im Kampf gegen Fürstenabfindung, für den Reichskongress der Werktätigen," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Rostock. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 17 (Nr. 2/3, 1968): 173-80; and Werner Fritsch, "Die Massenbewegung der Werktätigen für die Enteignung der Fürsten 1925/26 in Thüringen," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 19 (Nr. 3, 1970): 375-93.

the state and national level.⁷ I hope that other scholars will follow up on his work and that of Dr. Schüren. Certainly, the fuller investigation of the important initiative and referendum campaigns of the later twenties and early thirties is a desideratum.

I consider myself fortunate to have taken my Ph.D. at the University of California. My dissertation was completed under the direction of Professor Werner T. Angress, now at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. His insistence on clarity of expression and accuracy in detail have been coupled with patient understanding and friendship. In the preparation for my research or in the writing of the dissertation I have benefited from the aid and criticism of Professors Hans Rosenberg, the late Raymond J. Sontag, Carl Schorske, Wolfgang Sauer, and Paul Seabury. My colleagues at Portland State University have given me steady encouragement; I would particularly like to thank the former head of the department, Jesse L. Gilmore. My wife, Martha Ullman West, has given editorial advice, secretarial aid, and constant support, good humor and love. To her I dedicate this book.

I would like to acknowledge the aid of the archivists and staff at the *Bundesarchiv*, Koblenz, and the *Institut für Zeitungsforschung*, Dortmund, as well as the librarians at the University of California Library, the Hoover Library, the New York Public Library, the State University of New York at Stony Brook Library, the University of Oregon Library, the University of Washington Library, the Portland State University Library, and Reed College Library. Many of the items I wished to consult have not been easy to locate; the help of reference librarians and interlibrary loan services is especially appreciated.

The editorial staff at the American Philosophical Society has overseen the transformation of a lengthy, detailed manuscript into a finished book with great care and attention. I would also like to thank my graduate assistant, Robert Lanxon, for his help in reading the proofs. Any mistakes, of course, are the responsibility of the author.

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⁷ Reinhard Schiffers, *Elemente direkter Demokratie im Weimarer Regierungssystem, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien*, 40 (Düsseldorf, 1971).

