

Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d'histoire XXXII, April/avril 1997,
pp. 26-55, ISSN 0008-4107 © Canadian Journal of History

Abstract/Résumé analytique

"Why Can't a Saxon be More Like a Prussian?" Regional Identities and the Birth of Modern Political Culture in Germany, 1866-67

James Retallack

Before the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, many Saxons regarded their kingdom as a "lucky" little homeland, undisturbed by the militarist spirit and constitutional crisis that afflicted Prussia to the north. Hence military defeat, occupation by the Prussians, and involuntary incorporation into the North German Confederation came as tremendous psychological and political shocks to the Saxon people. As Reichstag elections were organized for the first time under Bismarck's universal manhood suffrage, the Saxon electorate provided no signal that the national idea had triumphed in Germany. Its political temper turned so sour that the pro-Prussian National Liberal Party became a virtual pariah in the kingdom. The modernization of German political life may have been unavoidable in the long run. But in this watershed era, parochialism and resentment were trump.

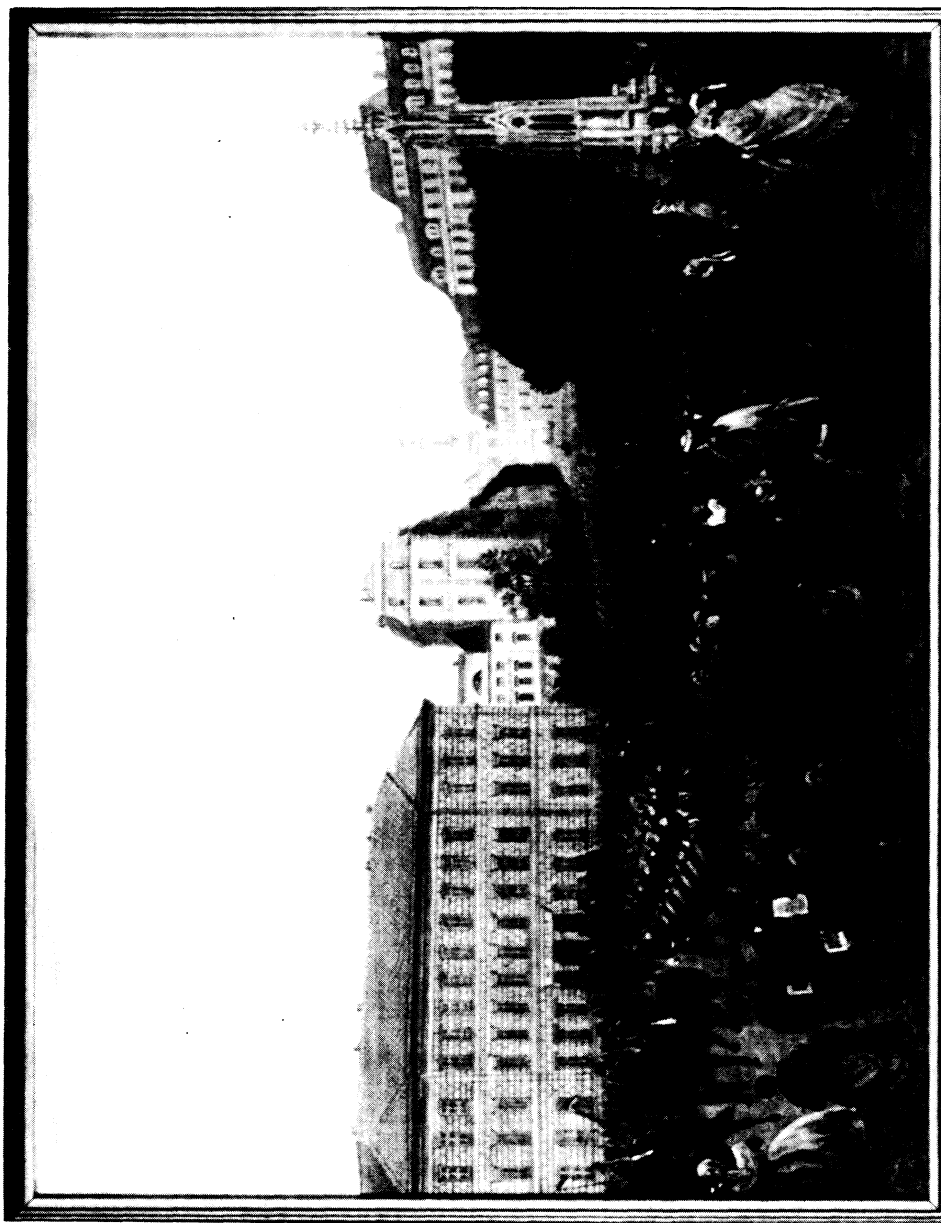
This paper addresses these psychological orientations in order to illuminate the interpenetration of local, regional, and national identities. On the one hand it offers a micro-level analysis of municipal politics, associational life, parliamentary debates, and key constituency races. It also explores the contentious civil liberties environment in Saxony. In these ways it evokes the ambiguity of regional political alignments in ways that national-level studies typically cannot. On the other hand, this essay speculates that the harsh Prussian occupation may have contributed initially to the slow progress of the liberal democratic ideal by fueling resentment against the "disease" of mass politics.

These approaches seem particularly fruitful for the historian interested in more than just election outcomes. By examining the interplay of electoral inputs in a specific historical context, and by suggesting that the concept of "electoral culture" merits further consideration, this essay throws light on the broader evolution of German political cultures (in the plural). It concludes that a Prussocentric perspective is no longer adequate to explore continuities stretching across the historical divide of 1866.

Avant la guerre Austro-Prussienne de 1866, une grande partie du peuple germanique considérait leur royaume comme une patrie favorisée par la chance, non troublée par le vent militaire et la crise constitutionnelle dont souffrait la Prusse au nord. Pour cette raison, la défaite militaire, l'occupation prussienne et l'incorporation involontaire à la Confédération de l'Allemagne du nord apportèrent un terrible choc psychologique et politique chez le peuple saxon. Alors qu'on organisait les premières élections du Reichstag avec suffrage universel des hommes sous Bismarck, l'électorat saxon ne donna aucune indication que l'idée de nation avait triomphé en Allemagne. Son humeur politique devint tellement rébarbative que le parti pro-prussien Libéral National devint politiquement un paria dans le royaume. Il était inévitable qu'éventuellement la vie politique allemande devait se moderniser. Mais durant cette période critique, le ressentiment et l'esprit de clocher étaient des atouts.

Cet article étudie ces orientations psychologiques pour jeter de la lumière sur l'interpénétration des identités locale, régionale et nationale. D'un côté, on présente une analyse à un niveau unique des politiques municipales, de la vie en société, des débats parlementaires et des courses des plus importantes circonscriptions électorales. On explore ensuite l'environnement litigieux des libertés civiques de la Saxe. De cette façon, l'ambiguïté des alignements politiques régionaux est examinée d'une façon que des études au niveau national ne peuvent atteindre. D'un autre côté, cet article soutient que la cruelle occupation prussienne pourrait avoir contribué à la lenteur du progrès de l'idéal libéral démocratique en alimentant le ressentiment contre le "mal" des politiques de masse.

Cette façon de faire semble particulièrement fructueuse pour l'historien qui s'intéresse au-delà des résultats d'élection. En examinant l'interaction des données électorales dans un contexte particulièrement historique et en suggérant que le concept d'une "culture électorale" mérite d'être examinée d'une façon plus approfondie, cet article jette un jour nouveau sur l'évolution plus générale des cultures (au pluriel) politiques allemandes. En conclusion, une perspective Prussocentrique n'est plus adéquate pour explorer les continuités d'étendant à travers la ligne historique de 1866.



Carl von Behrenberg. "Entry of Prussian Troops into Dresden, 18 June 1866"
(Dresden Stadtmuseum. Reproduction courtesy of Sächsische Landesbibliothek and Deutsche Fotothek)

James Retallack

**“WHY CAN’T A SAXON BE MORE LIKE A PRUSSIAN?”
REGIONAL IDENTITIES AND THE BIRTH
OF MODERN POLITICAL CULTURE
IN GERMANY, 1866-67¹**

You can't be universal without being provincial.
—Robert Frost¹

I

In the summer of 1865, a writer in one of Saxony's local newspapers extolled the kingdom's special virtues in euphoric tones. “Large states are not as lucky as little ones,” wrote this contributor to the *Budissiner Nachrichten*. “We have a constitutional life, which Austria and Prussia do not have yet. Harmony reigns between king and people. Everywhere in the land we have prosperity, low taxes, and good finances. Higher . . . cultural pursuits are not neglected by us, nor are the interests of our larger Fatherland [*Gesamt Vaterland*]. All fantasies entertained by the large states cannot disturb our well-being, for there is room enough in the smallest hut for a satisfied heart.”² With this view of their homeland as a lucky little state, many Saxons (perhaps the majority) agreed.

A year later, and just a few weeks after the Saxons shared Austria's defeat by Prussia at the Battle of Königgrätz, the liberal historian and publicist Heinrich von Treitschke offered a very different picture. A native of Saxony but already a fanatic advocate of Prussian hegemony in Germany, Treitschke characterized his homeland not as a lucky little state but as a *despotic* one:

The tyranny of the petty German prince is more genial and therefore more pernicious for our sleepy people; it creeps in softly and knows how to smother all character without a sound. The Saxon court will return,

¹This is a revised version of a paper delivered at the Universities of Cologne and Düsseldorf (May 1994), at the Institute of Historical Research in London (June 1995), and at the annual meeting of the German Studies Association in Chicago (Sept. 1995). I am grateful to Richard J. Evans, Martin Geyer, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Christoph Nonn, Wolfgang Schieder, Wolfgang Schwentker, and other listeners for their lively discussion; to Alfred Kelly for his insightful commentary at the G.S.A.; to Timothy Brook and Helen Graham for their critiques; and to the *Canadian Journal of History's* anonymous readers. For financial assistance I am indebted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the DAAD, the SSHRCC, the Free University Berlin, the Connaught Fund, and the University of Toronto.

²Cited in Peter Steinbach, “Politisierung und Nationalisierung der Region im 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Probleme politischer Partizipation im Modernisierungsprozeß*, ed. Peter Steinbach (Stuttgart, 1981), 321-49, here 321. Steinbach's essay addresses questions about the activation, politicization, incorporation, and polarization of voters in the processes of nation- and state-building.

³*Budissiner Nachrichten*, 11/15 June 1865, cited in Herbert Jordan, *Die öffentliche Meinung in Sachsen 1864-66*, ed. Johannes Hohlfeld (Kamenz, 1918), 14-15.

with its heart full of hatred and revenge; it will politely accommodate itself to the current situation and quietly begin to spin its fine web toward the Hofburg in Vienna . . . Then the gendarmes will pull out the lists of those who are friendly to Prussia . . . ; the most important offices will fall into the hands of those subjects . . . [loyal to] King Johann . . . ; [and] the [Saxon] military's *esprit de corps* will give rise to . . . particularistic traditionalism and spitefulness. Above all, a restoration promises the moral ruin of the people through the spirit of lies and hypocritical loyalty.

The Philistine spirit in Dresden, Treitschke concluded, provided "the most shining proof for the numbing effect of parochialism [*Kleinstaaterie*]. Bless the day when a fresh breath of political wind may finally sweep into this stifling atmosphere."³

Before 1866 was over, Saxon politics had been wrenched out of the complacency reflected in the *Budissiner Nachrichten*. Saxony's peace treaty with Prussia forced it to enter the new North German Confederation, thereby significantly reducing its sovereignty in military, commercial, and diplomatic affairs. Saxony was also compelled to send twenty-three deputies to sit in the Constituent Reichstag of the North German Confederation, and those delegates were to be elected for the first time under universal manhood suffrage. Hence the political breeze that swept through Germany in 1866-67 was not just a breath of fresh air that gently buoyed the prospects for political reform. It was a howling whirlwind of change, a fundamental restructuring of the rules of the political game in ways that many Germans were unable to understand or unwilling to accept.

Many aspects of this story have generated relative consensus in the historical literature. Others continue to fuel lively debate. For example: Bismarck's decision to introduce universal suffrage for all adult males is considered by some historians to have established a "political mass market."⁴ Other historians insist that the age of mass politics and the accompanying trend toward demagogic politics began only after 1890.⁵ Similarly, the persistence of extreme particularism among the southern

³Heinrich von Treitschke, *Die Zukunft der norddeutschen Mittelstaaten* [30 July 1866], 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1866), 22-23; see also idem, *Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe*, ed. Karl Martin Schiller, 5 vols. (Meersburg, 1929), 3:170-81, 272-88.

⁴See inter alia Theodore S. Hamerow, "The Origins of Mass Politics in Germany 1866-1867," in *Deutschland in der Weltpolitik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Imanuel Geiss et al. (Düsseldorf, 1973), 105-20; Klaus Erich Pollmann, *Parlamentarismus im Norddeutschen Bund 1867-1870* (Düsseldorf, 1985), 66-92; Markus Mattmüller, "Die Durchsetzung des allgemeinen Wahlrechts als gesamt-europäischer Vorgang," in *Geschichte und Politische Wissenschaft*, ed. Beat Junker et al. (Bern, 1975), 213-36; David Blackbourn, "New Legislatures: Germany, 1871-1914," *Historical Research* 65, no. 157 (1992): 201-14. Although Hans Rosenberg's term "political mass market" has been fairly criticized as infelicitous, it informs such excellent studies as Peter Steinbach, *Die Zähmung des politischen Massenmarktes*, 3 vols. (Passau, 1990).

⁵David Blackbourn, *Populists and Patricians* (London, 1987), 222; Geoff Eley, "Notable Politics, the Crisis of German Liberalism, and the Electoral Transition of the 1890s," in *In Search of a Liberal Germany*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones (New York, 1990), 187-216. Critiques can be found in Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "Voter, Junker, Landrat, Priest: The Old Authorities and the New Franchise in Imperial Germany," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 1471; James Retallack, "Anti-Semitism, Conservative Propaganda, and Regional Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany," *German Studies Review* 11 (1988): 377-403, esp. 378; and idem, *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II* (Basingstoke, London, New York, 1996), 51-52.

German states has been said to reveal the “failure” of the federal empire. Other historians argue that the eventual triumph of a new form of “imperial nationalism” (*Reichsnationalismus*) retarded Germany’s political modernization after 1871.⁶ This essay cannot consider the problem of German nationalism in its larger contours. It nevertheless explores connections between state-building and local perceptions of democracy from a number of different perspectives. To do this it concentrates on the Kingdom of Saxony, Prussia’s unrivaled junior partner in the emerging Germany.⁷

Frontiers of sovereignty can be defined in many ways. In 1866-67, Bismarck’s redefinition of the political nation forced Saxons and other Germans to consider two kinds of frontiers: those bounding the political elite that had traditionally conducted politics behind closed doors, and those bounding individual states’ rights. This essay explores both kinds of frontiers as they were simultaneously renegotiated in a crucial political watershed. Its working hypothesis is that this dual contest over disputed sovereignties made Germans deeply anxious — anxious about the kind of nation-state that might ultimately emerge, but anxious too about the impact of universal suffrage on the formation of a new political culture.

In identifying 1866-67 as the birth of a “modern” political culture in Germany, the following analysis considers four key developments, but it tries to avoid the trap of conflating them into a common pattern of change. The first of these was the process of founding a nation-state, thereby modernizing Germany’s political structure. Sometimes referred to as Bismarck’s “revolution from above,” this process involved far-reaching constitutional, legal, and economic reforms during the era of unification (roughly 1866-74). The second development was the working-out of new methods of political mobilization by the major political parties in order to maximize their showing at the polls. Regardless whether they welcomed or feared the sudden expansion of the electorate and high turnout rates, all parties were forced to take up new methods of electioneering and propaganda. Larger constituencies, more rapid communication, the penetration of national issues into local campaigns, the emergence of supra-regional alliances, the need to keep voters politically active between elections — all these developments compelled political parties and voters alike to rethink what casting a vote actually meant. These new challenges in turn conditioned the third development: changing perceptions of democracy. Such perceptions included, but were not restricted to, reactions to universal manhood suffrage. The fourth development was the arrival (or imminent arrival) of a whole set of cultural orientations we now associate with “the modern.”⁸

⁶George G. Windell, “The Bismarckian Empire as a Federal State, 1866-1880: A Chronicle of Failure,” *Central European History* 2 (1969): 291-311; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, 3 vols. to date (Munich, 1995), 3:938-61, 3:1067-71.

⁷Prussian territory comprised almost 350,000 sq. km. after the annexations of 1866; Saxony’s territory was just under 15,000 sq. km. In 1867 Saxony’s population was approximately 2.4 million, one-tenth of Prussia’s twenty-four million. Of 297 deputies sitting in the North German Reichstag, 236 were elected in Prussia and only twenty three in Saxony. But no other federal state sent more than six deputies to Berlin.

⁸See further references in Geoff Eley, “German History and the Contradictions of Modernity: The Bourgeoisie, the State, and the Mastery of Reform,” in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, ed. idem (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996), 67-103. Socio-economic modernization is considered in

Distinctions among these four developments — political modernization, mobilization, democratization, and cultural reorientation — often got muddled in the thinking of contemporary Germans. They should not in ours. Modernity cannot be taken as simply a metaphor for change. And implementation of a new suffrage does not by itself produce converts to the democratic principle, let alone a political regime responsible to the people. Yet these developments had a mutually reinforcing impact on Germany's political evolution over the *longue durée*. The trick is to pull them apart and to see how they influenced the actions of particular groups of people in a specific historical context.

Germans in 1866-67 were generally aware that the vessel of modern German political culture had yet to be filled with political content. Bearing this in mind helps us assess how contemporaries viewed issues of power, identity, and solidarity together. We want to know how Germans perceived their own frontiers of sovereignty, and also how those perceptions limited available options for political reform. An appreciation of historical contingency seems especially important in an era when Germany's political culture was, in the words of one historian, "more fluid . . . than at any other time until the upheavals of 1918 — perhaps even until 1945."⁹

Although Treitschke wished it otherwise, the regional identity of the Saxon electorate contributed little or nothing to a sense of nationhood in the new Germany. Quite the contrary: most Saxons appear to have believed that unification under Prussian hegemony was a backward step, not an advance, in Germany's national mission. Of course it will not do to allow the long-term evolution of German nationalism to disappear from view entirely. By 1900, "imperial nationalism" was so pervasive that foreign diplomats in Dresden often remarked on the surprising *lack* of particularist feeling among the Saxon population.¹⁰ A fuller examination of German particularism is not possible here. Nor can we chart in any detail the trajectories linking political innovations in 1866 to developments after 1890. Nevertheless, taking a reading for the 1860s may provide evidence to chart the evolution of German political culture in a later era.

Each of the five sections below takes up these principal themes in a different way. Section II offers a brief consideration of Saxony's social, economic, and constitutional uniqueness, as well as the political threshold it had reached in 1866. This brief resumé illustrates why we should be skeptical in accepting characterizations of Saxony as either harmoniously happy or stiflingly parochial. Section III examines how the Saxon public sphere was energized in the course of 1866-67 and how the Prussians' occupation of Saxony influenced the strategies of all political parties during the campaign. Section IV considers this transformation from another

Richard J. Bazillion, *Modernizing Germany: Karl Biedermann's Career in the Kingdom of Saxony, 1835-1901* (New York, 1990).

⁹Anderson, "Voter," 1449.

¹⁰After witnessing Dresden's Sedan Day festivities in September 1895, the British chargé d'affaires observed bluntly: "Particularism is dead: the people may almost be described as Germans first, Saxons afterwards." George Strachey to British Foreign Office, London (hereafter FO), no. 24, 3 September 1895, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Kew, FO 68, No. 80, unfoliated; see also James Retallack, "Liberals, Conservatives, and the Modernizing State: The *Kaiserreich* in Regional Perspective," in *Society, Culture, and the State*, ed. Eley, 221-56.

perspective, arguing that a special regional consciousness is neither natural nor predetermined, but in part a discursive construct. Section IV also advances the hypothesis that Saxons may have identified the “epidemic” of National Liberalism with the “disease” of mass politics. Section V examines the election campaign itself, in order to illustrate how the new demands of mass politics were (and were not) accommodated by individual candidates and party organizations. The aim is to penetrate beneath the level of aggregate statistics in order to show how varying responses to new political challenges affected individual races, often in surprising ways. Some concluding remarks ask: Why *should* a Saxon be more like a Prussian?

II

Proceeding from the proposition that regional political cultures evolve in conjunction with regional identities, what did Saxons in 1866 regard as unique to their political heritage, and what did they believe should be preserved? Certainly Saxons were aware that their state was a relative latecomer to the German family of constitutional monarchies. The constitutions granted in southwestern Germany shortly after 1815, which provided the foundation for strong democratic movements in subsequent decades, came to Saxony only after 1830. And whereas the revolutions of 1848 brought a liberal regime to power in Saxony too, its lasting accomplishments were few. Instead the failed Dresden uprising of May 1849, brutally put down with Prussian troops, stuck in the Saxon imagination as the climactic event of the revolutionary era. After that date Saxony’s leading minister, Count Friedrich von Beust, proved adept at repressing dissent and taming Saxony’s state parliament (Landtag). As 1866 dawned, the status quo in Saxony did not appear to be endangered by its critics at home.

Saxony’s middle-class liberals on the other hand could be justly proud of their state’s pioneering achievement in the economic sphere. Based on its geographic position on trade routes between northern and southeastern Europe, and fueled by a rapidly growing population, Saxony experienced early and rapid industrialization.¹¹ In the 1860s Saxony was one of Europe’s most densely populated and thoroughly industrialized regions. Although the preponderance of small- and medium-sized firms oriented toward exports made Saxony’s economy highly vulnerable to trade fluctuations, since 1834 Saxony had benefited from incorporation into the German Customs Union (*Zollverein*). During the 1850s, periodic crises over tariffs and squabbles over reform of the German Confederation had brought the headstrong Beust into conflict with Prussian ministers on a number of occasions. In the 1860s Beust’s wish for self-aggrandizement continued to feed his dream of leading a “third Germany” independent of both Prussian and Habsburg domination. In seeking this middle path, Beust and the Catholic Wettin dynasty he served could draw on genuine sympathy for Austria, even among Saxony’s mainly Lutheran population. Yet the profitability of the Customs Union left no doubt that cultural affinities to Austria should not detach Saxony from its commercial ties to the north.

¹¹See Hubert Kiesewetter, *Industrialisierung und Landwirtschaft* (Cologne, 1988); Frank Tipton, Jr., *Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany During the Nineteenth Century* (Middletown, 1976).

Saxony's moribund political culture on the eve of 1866 therefore seemed oddly out of step — with the rest of Germany, and with Saxony's own social and economic development. Even the Prussian Conservatives' minimal efforts at organization and recruitment in the early 1860s were left undone in Saxony, *not* because conservatism was unpopular but because it had few serious challengers. The German National Association (*Deutscher Nationalverein*) had only a minuscule following in Saxony. Neither the General German Workers Association associated with Ferdinand Lassalle, nor the homegrown variety of social democracy under the leadership of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, had yet generated the mass following that later conjured up the epithet "Red Saxony." And the Saxon Progressive Party, founded in 1861, still clung to the sterile argument that Beust's *coup* of 1850 against the Landtag left the state without any legal parliament at all. To be sure, Progressives struck a popular chord among Saxony's working classes and petty bourgeoisie with their claim that nothing less than "the whole Germany" (including German Austria) was acceptable. But the Progressives had patently failed to transform Beust's repressive system from within. The same could be said of pro-Prussian businessmen and academics in Saxony, found mainly in Leipzig. Alleged to have centralizing ambitions and a mercenary outlook, these National Liberals could only try to see the lighter side of their quasi-conspiratorial existence on the political margins.¹²

Nevertheless, evidence on the eve of the Austro-Prussian conflict showed that Saxony's political dormancy could not last forever. Social upheaval and economic uncertainty in particular darkened the political horizon. After restrictions on freedom of occupation were removed in 1861, Saxony's artisan class had become more mobile, but also more beleaguered. During the American Civil War, Saxon weavers and textile workers experienced a severe economic downturn, while a printers' strike in Leipzig in 1865 enhanced the profile of the nascent labour movement. Building on these developments, the social democrats Bebel and Liebknecht stepped up their agitation throughout Saxony during the spring and summer of 1866. This agitation soon bore fruit with the founding of the Saxon People's Party (*Sächsische Volkspartei*) in Chemnitz on 19 August. Meanwhile National Liberals began to argue more vehemently that Saxony's backward political culture was a German embarrassment. Although voiced principally in town halls and small liberal newspapers, such sentiments also laid the groundwork for a major political breakthrough: the founding of a regional National Liberal party on 26 August. Hence, even before the first Reichstag campaign properly got underway, left-wing interlopers had upset the quiet complacency of Saxon politics.

After Austria's defeat, Saxony was powerless to resist Prussian hegemony in the North German Confederation. Even though the expected annexation of Saxony by Prussia did not occur — the matter remained in some doubt until mid-October 1866 — it was with almost physical relief that National Liberal journalists believed they were closing the book on the reactionary Beust era. "Never in my life," wrote Julius von Eckardt, co-editor of the *Grenzboten* in Leipzig, "did I breathe fresher,

¹²See Larry Ping, "Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel: Novels, Liberalism and History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1994), 225; Friedrich Schulze, "Der Kitzing — ein politischer Kreis um 1860," *Schriften des Vereins für die Geschichte Leipzigs* 13, no. 1 (1921): 16-28.

more invigorating air than that which blew across the north of Germany in the late fall of 1866. . . . [T]he moderate warmth of the political temperature. . . , penetrating to the marrow, had a quiet magic which could not be compared with any other. We stood on the threshold of a new period, of a time 'which still promised wonders'."¹³

How are we to evaluate the significance of these blows against the spirit of Saxon particularism? Was Treitschke right to warn even *after* Königgrätz that liberals should not be complacent in their struggle against Saxon tyranny? And how did this uncertain situation play out during the run-up to the Reichstag elections of 12 February 1867?

During the campaign the conflict between National Liberals and their many Saxon opponents *seemed* to boil down to a yes-or-no vote for the North German Confederation. But the Confederation was not the same thing as Prussia. Therefore it was possible for Saxon parties to be in favour of the Confederation on principle, and yet to disagree on related issues. How closely would the federal states be tied to Prussia? Would the Reichstag foster or impede political reform in Saxony? Might Saxony's Landtag be reduced to a rump parliament or abolished altogether?¹⁴ Virtually all Saxon parties were in favour of extending the new Confederation south of the Main river as soon as possible. Yet Conservatives tended to stress diplomatic and dynastic reasons for looking toward Austria, and they generally endorsed Bismarck's arrogant attitude toward the Prussian Landtag. Progressives and social democrats tended to emphasize Bismarck's domestic tyranny. But whereas the Progressives advocated a policy of no-compromise with the northern neighbour that had crushed the 1849 Dresden uprising, Saxony's social democrats focused on Prussian military and police despotism in the present.

The complexity of this situation suggests why we should not dress up Treitschke and other National Liberals as white knights. To be sure, they offered cogent critiques of authoritarian practices. We also know that National Liberals' "modernizing project" foresaw a civil society imbued with the principles of secularism, rationalism, parliamentarism, constitutionalism, nationalism (based on a mixture of centralism and universalism), a liberal-individualist formalism, and the rule of law.¹⁵ Saxony's National Liberals in particular always believed they were pursuing a two-pronged strategy to push Saxony along the same path as the rest of Germany and into the modern age. They were striving to defeat the tyrannical Saxon state that had kept them politically in chains since 1848-49 (and in some instances actually in prison). And they wished to modernize the parochial outlook of the Saxon people. Both strategies, they believed, would contribute simultaneously to modernizing Germany's political culture as a whole. Nevertheless, the National

¹³Julius von Eckardt, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1910), 1:56-7; Theodore S. Hamerow, *The Social Foundations of German Unification*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1972), 2:295.

¹⁴[Karl Biedermann], *Die reactivirten Stände und das verfassungsmäßige Wahlgesetz in Sachsen* (Leipzig, 1866).

¹⁵Two recent works suggest the power of this vision: Andreas Biefang, *Politisches Bürgertum in Deutschland 1857-1868* (Düsseldorf, 1994); and Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, 3: 228-47 (947 for the following). The National Liberal Ludwig Bamberger understood that unification and modernization were patently long-term projects incorporating party-political and regional antagonisms: "The national banner in the hands of Prussian Ultras and Saxon guildsmen," Bamberger wrote in the late 1870s, "is a caricature of what it once signified."

Liberals' modernizing project was also marked by stark elitism. Where they spoke about the virtues of democracy, National Liberals concealed a preference for social disparities of interest and power. After the election one of them even wondered whether the will of the Saxon electorate should be respected at all: "Our absurd hatred of the Prussians has played a nasty trick on us."¹⁶ So there are good reasons to ask why Saxony's National Liberals were quite so intolerant toward "parochial" traditions and local self-autonomy. A number of recent studies have shown that the idea of localism did not operate in the nineteenth century only as a metaphor for backwardness; it could also serve the cause of "national memory" and "provincial modernity."¹⁷ Knowing what we do about National Liberalism's later contribution to the spirit of chauvinism in Imperial Germany, it might even be to the credit of the Saxon people that they rejected parts of this modernizing project in 1866-67.

For their part, Saxony's government ministers and Conservative parliamentarians understood that the National Liberals' modernizing programme had to be resisted. Hence they agreed that a constitutional go-slow policy was needed, and during the election campaign they tried to cool down, not heat up, the temper of the Saxon electorate. This tactic, too, was part of a two-pronged strategy. At home it was necessary to defeat the National Liberals and the social democrats to prevent liberal agendas and popular grievances from threatening the status quo. But in Saxon diplomacy, a strategy of reconciliation with Prussia was needed just as urgently, to dispel the threat that Saxony would be swallowed up by the victors of Königgrätz. The problem, as we shall see in the next section, was that Prussian officials functioned as patrons of the National Liberal movement in Saxony. In this role they even defended freedoms of speech and assembly — at least pro-Prussian speech and assembly — against incursions by conservative Saxon officials. This produced some real dilemmas for Saxon ministers trying to survive the occupation period with their authority intact. During the election campaign in particular, the Saxon government tried to paper over the awkwardness of its position by declaring its unflinching loyalty to Prussia and the North German Confederation on the one hand, but implicitly condoning the defamation of National Liberals on the other. In the end the Saxon electorate provided the government with little guidance on this issue. The protest vote of February 1867 failed to reveal whether Saxons voted against National Liberals because they hated Prussia, because they hated liberalism, or because they hated change itself.

III

The process of energizing Saxony's public sphere actually began in May 1866, when social democrats and National Liberals first tried (unsuccessfully) to rally public

¹⁶*Constitutionelle Zeitung*, 20 Feb. 1867, cited in Albert Richter, "Die öffentliche Meinung in Sachsen vom Friedensschluss 1866 bis zur Reichsgründung" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leipzig, n.d. [1922]), 76.

¹⁷Including Jennifer Jenkins, "Regional Identity and Provincial Modernity in Hamburg, 1890-1914," unpublished paper presented to the annual meeting of the German Studies Association, Chicago, September 1995; Alon Confino, "The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Heimat, National Memory and the German Empire, 1871-1918," *History and Memory* 5 (1993): 42-86; and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkeley, 1990).

opinion against Beust's disastrous policy of joining a war against Prussia. It continued through a second Reichstag election, held on 31 August 1867. Yet the single most compelling issue in the autumn of 1866 — Saxony's forced entry into the North German Confederation — was highlighted when the Prussian envoy in Dresden reported in December 1867 on eighteen months of political upheaval: "Political life, which everyone concedes did not exist at all here before, has come alive with Saxony's entry into the North German Confederation."¹⁸ Political newcomers were especially apt to emphasize the dramatic transformation of the Saxon public sphere in 1866-67. National Liberals, as we have seen, hailed the dawn of a new age, at least initially.¹⁹ Liebknecht and Bebel were equally astounded by the changes they observed. Also looking back from the perspective of late 1867, they observed that People's Associations and Workers' Associations had "shot up out of the ground like mushrooms."²⁰

Whereas we know a good deal about how the events of 1866 benefited the Saxon People's Party, it is less clear why Saxony's National Liberals initially failed to build upon this auspicious beginning. Were they responsible for attracting the resentment felt toward the occupying power of Prussia during the Reichstag campaign? Or were they innocent scapegoats of resentful Saxons who refused to read the writing on the wall?

The diaries of Eduard Stephani, deputy mayor of Leipzig, document the beginnings of National Liberal confidence and also its repeated frustration by conservative officials in Saxony. Stephani had two close allies. The first was the mayor of Leipzig and a member of Saxony's upper house, Dr. Karl Wilhelm Koch. The second was Koch's son-in-law, Karl Biedermann, a liberal professor and publicist in Leipzig who had served as vice-president of the Frankfurt National Assembly in 1848. Biedermann had experienced Beust's repression first-hand: his academic career was interrupted, his newspaper was banned, and he was banished from the state, returning only in 1865.²¹ When the Prussian Interior Minister invited Stephani and Koch to Berlin in mid-July 1866, the intention was to discuss plans for the upcoming national elections. Revealing the narrowness of their political room to manoeuvre, Stephani and Koch dutifully applied for permission from Saxon officials to attend these meetings. That permission was promptly denied. Biedermann, however, refused to operate within such constraints, and in making this trip he established the pattern of appealing directly to Prussian authorities for the legitimacy the National Liberals still lacked at home. Prussia's civilian governor,

¹⁸Friedrich von Eichmann to Otto von Bismarck (confidential), no. 95, 18 Dec. 1867, Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (hereafter P.A.A.A.) Bonn, I.a.a.m, Sachsen (Königreich) (hereafter Sachsen) 39.

¹⁹On National Liberal leaders and their activities at this time, see Friedrich Boettcher, *Eduard Stephani* (Leipzig, 1887), 69-87; Karl Biedermann, *Mein Leben und ein Stück Zeitgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Breslau, 1886), 2:287-94; Bazillion, *Modernizing Germany*, ch. 5; and Hans Blum, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1907-8), 1:259-72.

²⁰Günther Ebersold, "Die Stellung Wilhelm Liebknechts und August Bebels zur deutschen Frage 1863-1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Heidelberg, 1963), 151-54.

²¹There is speculation that these two men were natural half-brothers; see Bazillion, *Modernizing Germany*, 68-69.

Lothar von Wurmb — later notorious as Berlin's police president — was more than willing to help.

From the very first week of the occupation, conservative (and socialist) newspapers were suppressed by Prussian censors in Saxony. Those same censors channeled money to sympathetic newspapers edited by National Liberals instead. Later the charge of *lèse majesté* was also suspended by Prussian authorities to allow National Liberals to editorialize against the continuance of the Wettin dynasty. Such measures directly affected peace negotiations in Berlin. In mid-August the Saxon negotiators were shocked at being forced to agree to a general amnesty for all political crimes committed during the occupation — not as part of the final peace agreement, which would have been normal diplomatic practice, but as a *prerequisite* for the beginning of talks. A few days after they agreed to this request, the Saxon negotiators received reports from Saxony that National Liberal agitation in favour of outright annexation by Prussia had suddenly become more aggressive. Those negotiators, conversely, were outraged to discover that Saxony's National Liberals were using their ties to the Prussian crown prince in order to convince him that Saxony could be induced (“voluntarily”) to relinquish all or part of its territory to Prussia.²²

The mixed success of Wurmb's interventions on behalf of their cause directly influenced the National Liberals' propaganda. By mid-summer, celebration of Prussia's historic achievement at Königgrätz was mixed with thinly-veiled threats against the Saxon establishment if the National Liberal Party were not allowed to compete politically on a level playing field. Certainly the immediate fate of Treitschke's blockbuster pamphlet of 30 July (cited at the outset of this essay) showed how much remained to be done. This pamphlet, advocating the outright annexation of Saxony and the other middle-German states, was initially seized by the Saxon police acting under orders from the conservative Leipzig prefect Carl von Burgsdorff. Only Wurmb's intervention ensured that it was released to the public a few days later. Subsequently Burgsdorff tried to suppress all meetings of Leipzig's National Liberals, whereupon Biedermann appealed again to the Prussians.

The National Liberals' opponents meanwhile found that they shared a mutual interest in resisting Prussian incursions into Saxony's domestic politics. This brought together the strangest of bedfellows. Social democrats, Progressives, and Conservatives all championed the cause of Saxony's political autonomy during the occupation. So of course did Saxony's own Provisional Government, led by Beust's successor, Baron Richard von Friesen. Occasionally this situation took on the character of farce. When Liebknecht was banished from Prussia and arrived in Leipzig, he wrote to Friedrich Engels in London that he had been welcomed by the Saxon police in a “*most friendly manner* as the ‘enemy of Bismarck’.” Liebknecht's family had even been encouraged to make their home in Leipzig permanently.²³ When the conservative editor of the semi-official *Sächsische Zeitung*, Cäsar Dietrich von Witzleben, was censured by Wurmb for denouncing Saxony's National Liberals,

²²Including either Leipzig and its environs, or the southern part of Upper Lusatia; Richard von Friesen, *Erinnerungen*, 3 vols. (Dresden, 1882-1910), 3:325-6.

²³Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel mit Deutschen Sozialdemokraten*, ed. G. Eckert, 2 vols. (Assen, 1973), 1:90.

Liebknecht published a defence of Witzleben in his *Mitteldeutsche Volkszeitung*, which was then promptly banned too.²⁴ During the final phase of the Reichstag campaign, it was noted that Conservatives and Progressives, who normally mixed “like fire and water,” were co-operating closely in Dresden’s municipal council.²⁵ The Saxon public sphere, in short, was being energized in ways that seemed out of joint — at least for those accustomed to the traditional opposition of left and right.

As political and administrative chicanery continued through the summer and autumn of 1866, Treitschke seemed to be vindicated in his assertion that petty Saxon officials would find a way to undermine the National Liberals’ modernizing project for Saxony. Consequently National Liberal propaganda continued to reiterate three main points: 1) that Saxony had been heading for disaster from 1849/50 onward; 2) that domestic reform had to “get up to speed” to keep pace with national developments; and 3) that liberals must stand on principle during the campaign, even when that stance promised to deliver few voters in the short run. Interestingly, the Conservatives’ position was the exact inverse of the National Liberal one. In their pamphlets and speeches on the hustings, Conservatives consistently gave priority to the same three themes, but with the opposite valence. They offered: 1) a defence of Saxon statesmen (both current and recently departed) and an endorsement of their past performance in domestic and foreign policy; 2) a grudging acceptance of new realities within the Confederation, though without acknowledging any need for reform at home; and 3) an attempt to win the most possible leverage during the election campaign by adopting a conciliatory tone and appearing to bury the political hatchet. Contrasting these two campaign strategies, we might applaud the National Liberal’s dedication to principle. But we also have to acknowledge the Conservatives’ tactical savvy.²⁶

Another important feature of this campaign was the widespread belief among Conservatives that the mobilization of public opinion was among the ugliest features of Germany’s new political culture. Many Conservative candidates refused to make any concession whatsoever to the new style of politics — and were elected anyway. These successes provided evidence that the politics of notables did not die out overnight, notwithstanding the novelty of the principle “one man, one vote.” Especially in the countryside, relatively few Conservatives participated in their own campaign at all. Public rallies were infrequent, and most candidates left it to their local supporters to place an announcement in the local gazette (*Amtsblatt*) a few days before the election. The sixty-eight year old Heinrich von Thielau, a local official in the region of Lusatia (2: Löbau; see Table 1), categorically refused to address his voters publicly. As one conservative writer noted with obvious approval: “[Thielau] is not a market crier, and he hasn’t even read the draft constitution.”²⁷ Yet it was not

²⁴August Bebel recalled in his memoirs that political co-operation between social democrats and Conservatives made perfect sense in Saxony. “Our particularists at that time were driven by an unbounded hatred of Bismarck; they would have made a pact with the devil to be rid of him.” Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 3 pts. (Berlin, 1946), 1:116-24.

²⁵*Constitutionelle Zeitung*, no. 4, 5 Jan. 1867, 3.

²⁶See also James Retallack, “Die ‘liberalen’ Konservativen? Konservatismus und Antisemitismus im industrialisierten Sachsen,” in *Sachsen im Kaiserreich. Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Umbruch*, ed. Simone Lässig and Karl Heinrich Pohl (Weimar, Cologne, Vienna, 1997), 134-50.

²⁷*Budissiner Nachrichten*, 5 Feb. 1867, cited in Richter, “Meinung,” 73.

always possible to remain so aloof in the cities, as we shall see. Especially in urban constituencies where National Liberal or socialist candidates were speaking frequently at large public rallies, considerable political engagement was required of Conservative candidates. Such engagement almost always increased their resentment toward the new politics even further.

When the Saxon public sphere shed its insular character inherited from the Beust era, it did so virtually overnight. Just as the Reichstag campaign in Saxony was heating up in October and November 1866, public debate was fueled by the signing of the peace treaty with Prussia (21 October), the return of King Johann from Austria (26 October), and the opening of the Saxon Chamber of Deputies (15 November). In these weeks, as in July and August 1866, a tidal wave of pamphlets was rushed into print, and soon the Saxon public faced an unfamiliar flood of reading matter.²⁸ Petition campaigns were launched in a matter of days by liberals and conservatives alike, and the frequency of public assemblies staged by all political groups rose dramatically. Local campaigns for municipal elections, generally held in the last six weeks of the year, provided another vehicle for Reichstag campaigning. Municipal associations suddenly reconstituted themselves as Reichstag electoral associations, and they broadened the scope of their activities significantly.

In the process some dramatic political shifts occurred. The most notable of these was the liberals' stunning loss in the Leipzig municipal elections held in December. The liberal association (named Truth and Right), which had garnered roughly two-thirds of the vote in 1865, was defeated for the first time in over fifteen years by the conservative Patriotic Association.²⁹ (This defeat convinced Biedermann that he stood no chance of being elected in *any* Saxon constituency.) When speakers' duels broke out in municipal parliaments in October and November 1866, they likewise provided familiar settings for developing campaign themes more relevant to the national Reichstag election campaign. And when members of the Saxon Chamber of Deputies, who only since 1864 had begun to group themselves into loose party blocs, suddenly turned their attention to questions of national importance such as the draft constitution and the new suffrage, they fell all over each other trying to demonstrate that their concerns were national, not parochial.

That *Saxon* politics no longer attracted the exclusive attention of these deputies or their voters was amply demonstrated by the extraordinarily low turnout rates for the Landtag elections held between late September and early November 1866. These elections were undertaken for overtly partisan purposes. Whereas the Prussians instructed the Provisional Government in July to begin preparations for the Reichstag elections, Friesen and his colleagues were determined to give priority to Landtag elections. They thereby intended to stress the continuity of constitutional and political life in Saxony and at the same time to assert their own authority as leaders of what remained a sovereign power. Yet the lack of interest with which Saxon voters greeted this undertaking was even more pronounced than it had been during the 1850s. In the only local race that elicited any public resonance at all, only

²⁸Jordan, *Meinung*, passim.

²⁹See Jordan, *Meinung*, 43-5, also on Dresden and Chemnitz elections.

167 of 508 enfranchised voters turned out to the polls. One can safely assume that the vast majority of other contests fell far short of this participation rate.³⁰

By the time the Landtag was convened in mid-November, the intemperance of political debate about *national* affairs was arousing widespread comment. Progressives in the lower house continued to insist that the Saxon government, if it were to make its own “inner peace” with the opposition, should do so “on liberal principles” and in the manner of an indemnity, as in Prussia. They therefore proposed that the Saxon Landtag should voluntarily disband itself and hold new elections based on the universal manhood suffrage of April 1849. This dramatic proposal only galvanized Conservatives in both houses of the Landtag, who immediately attacked National Liberal (not Progressive) “impertinence.” During a single day’s debate in the upper house, a series of speakers criticized the sudden introduction into Saxon politics of “party passions,” “provocations,” “insinuations,” “incitement,” “rancor against Prussia,” “fanatical hatred of Prussia,” and “provincial egoism.” It is no accident that these slurs were hurled during debates on the universal Reichstag suffrage — debates that took a decidedly unwelcome turn for Friesen’s government when National Liberals began to attack Saxony’s own estate-bound Landtag suffrage.³¹

IV

Are passions, provocations, and insinuations the legitimate concern of scholars interested in elections? Political scientists in particular have suggested that the quality of political rhetoric illuminates the “world views” that determine election outcomes. According to this argument it matters little whether such world views are apprehended on the level of common sentiment, through the interplay of symbolic representations, or with respect to explicit ideologies: *all* these elements of regional political cultures deserve attention. Historians meanwhile have recently developed the concept of “electoral culture” (*Wahlkultur*) to identify similar patterns of political behaviour. The historian of electoral culture must also discover the social-psychological ambiance of a system of rule, the relationship between the state and its citizens, and countless other unarticulated assumptions that members of a given polity take for granted.³²

Now, it may be true that we are sometimes restricted to plumbing the mentalities and rituals of prominent politicians only, never reaching the politically unengaged

³⁰For the preceding information I am indebted to communications from Wolfgang Schröder and Christoph Goldt. Cf. Goldt, *Parlamentarismus im Königreich Sachsen. Zur Geschichte des Sächsischen Landtages 1871-1918* (Münster, 1996). A large gap will soon be filled by Andreas Neemann, “Parlamentarismus im Königreich Sachsen während der Reaktionszeit 1849/50 bis 1866” (Ph.D. diss. in progress, University of Tübingen, 1997).

³¹*Mitteilungen über die Verhandlungen des ordentlichen Landtags im Königreich Sachsen während der Jahre 1866/67, Zweite Kammer*, 4 vols. (Dresden, 1867-68), 1:37-73 (28 Nov. 1866); *Mitteilungen . . . der Jahre 1866-1868, Erste Kammer*, 2 vols. (Dresden, 1868), 1:15-25 (3 Dec. 1866).

³²Karl Rohe, “Regionale (politische) Kultur: Ein sinnvolles Konzept für die Wahl- und Parteienforschung?,” in *Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Dieter Oberndörfer and Karl Schmitt (Berlin, 1991), 17-37, esp. 21; for a similar plea, see Steinbach, “Politisierung und Nationalisierung.”

masses at all. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis of political preferences among large groups of voters can help in this regard. Examining how the routines of power are embedded in local election campaigns and parliamentary life offers another way to consider those underlying values and how they operate. In each case, the goal is to discover how specific groups of people assess electoral systems, how they participate in the political process, even how they perceive the hundreds of regulations associated with casting a ballot.³³ Students of electoral culture, in short, concentrate on the cultural *inputs* that shape political consciousness, not just on election outcomes. They recognize that the act of voting, no less than other cultural practices, may involve ritual, performance, and “affirming” habits of mind.³⁴

To test the usefulness of this perspective for our examination of Saxon regional identity, we can begin with the Prussian occupation itself. By twentieth-century standards the Saxon population suffered little during the Austro-Prussian War.³⁵ No fighting occurred on Saxon soil. The Saxon army received deserved praise for its courageous engagement at Königgrätz. And the final peace ensured Saxony’s territorial integrity. But a different picture emerges when one considers the combined psychological impact of political upheaval, economic hardship, and proximity to death.

The Saxon population, expecting a quick Austrian victory, was initially more frustrated than enraged by the Prussian invasion. When the first Prussian patrols reached Leipzig, they were stoned and insulted. Soon the Prussian governor Wurmb was making countless demands of the Provisional Government, demands that drew little distinction between military and political objectives. Besides requisitioning horses, wagons, provisions, and medical supplies, Wurmb ordered the immediate dismissal of Dresden’s police director, and he refused to let the Provisional Government drag its feet regarding preparations for the national elections.

The Prussian envoy in Dresden described the effect of these measures on the Saxon population as a kind of psychological trauma. He wrote: “The drawn-out military occupation, the dissolution of the [Saxon army], the subordination under the victorious Prussians, the incorporation into a political system that . . . is contrary to the traditions of Saxon particularism . . . — all this was, and is, a necessity with

³³Thomas Kühne, *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preussen 1867-1914* (Düsseldorf, 1994), esp. 26-38; idem, “Entwicklungstendenzen der preußischen Wahlkultur im Kaiserreich,” in *Wahlen und Wahlkämpfe in Deutschland*, ed. Gerhard A. Ritter (Düsseldorf, 1997), 131-67; see also James Retallack, “Politische Kultur, Wahlkultur, Regionalgeschichte: Methodologische Überlegungen am Beispiel Sachsens und des Reiches,” in *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und Politische Kultur*, ed. Simone Lässig, Karl Heinrich Pohl, James Retallack (Bielefeld, 1995), 15-38.

³⁴Cf. Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill, 1985); Anderson, “Voter”; and Brett Fairbairn, *Democracy in the Undemocratic State: The German Elections of 1898 and 1903* (Toronto, 1997).

³⁵See Friesen, *Erinnerungen*, 2:162-356; Jordan, *Meinung*; Richter, “Meinung”; and Richard Dietrich, “Preußen als Besatzungsmacht im Königreich Sachsen 1866-1868,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittelund Ostdeutschlands* 5 (1956): 273-293. Important materials are also found in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter GStAPK) Berlin-Dahlem, III. HA, Auswärtiges Amt, I.A.A.m, Sachsen 37, Nrn. 764-5, and *ibid*, Rep. 92, Nachlaß Karl Ludwig Zitelmann, Nr. 46.

which one is able to come to terms [in Saxony] only through painful resignation.”³⁶ The Bavarian envoy in Dresden agreed. On a number of occasions during the election campaign, he noted that the popular mood in Saxony could hardly have been more sour.³⁷ The British chargé d’affaires in Dresden, Sir Charles Murray, was naturally less partisan than his Prussian and Bavarian colleagues. But Murray, too, suggested that although Prussian soldiers and Saxon citizens were temperamentally inclined to recognize each other as fellow Germans, the Saxons’ hatred of the Prussian military-political system was almost universal:³⁸

English readers of the *Times* [reported Murray] will of course believe that the Prussians are welcomed here as brothers . . . [A]s regards the individuals composing the mass of the population and the soldiery, . . . they felt that they were speaking the same language and formed part of the same German People, and scores of the soldiers openly avowed that they abhorred the war and the authors of it; but towards the Prussian Govt. and the military authorities who represent it here it is impossible but that the poor Saxons should feel the most intense hatred . . . The Prussians yesterday demanded three thousand spade labourers and they are about to throw up earth-works and intrenchments [sic] to the S. & S.E. of the town, and for some time they have been blasting chambers in the Piers of the two beautiful bridges over the Elbe, preparatory to blowing them up if necessary . . . [T]he first of these measures is fruitless labour and the latter barbarous and useless spite.

In subsequent reports Murray’s successor informed the Foreign Office in London that the Prussians’ occupation measures were sure to have long-term political consequences.³⁹ Of those measures, none elicited more outrage from the Saxon population than the decision to build massive fortifications around Dresden. Some sixteen hundred “deadbeats” were transported from Berlin to Dresden in the first week of July to build an extensive complex of barricades, which some Prussians conceded were militarily unnecessary. After having demonstrated their unsuitability, the Berlin workers were sent back (not before they committed various misdemeanours in Dresden). But the residue of resentment was palpable, increasing through the summer as the Prussians insisted in desecrating cemeteries and devastating the beautiful trees in the *Großer Garten* for this pointless construction.

For the general population, one hardship may have outstripped all others during the occupation: the devastation of cholera.⁴⁰ First appearing in Leipzig on 24 June, cholera was rampant among the Saxon populace by mid-July. The Prussian army’s

³⁶Eichmann to Bismarck (confidential), no. 17, 12 Mar. 1867, in P.A.A.A. Bonn, Sachsen 39.

³⁷Baron Max von Gise to the Bavarian Foreign Office, no. 9, 18 Jan. 1867, in Bayrisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Munich, Abteilung II, MA III, Sachsen, Fortlaufende Berichte, Nr. 2841, 1866, unfoliated.

³⁸Charles Murray to FO, no. 36, 28 June 1866, in PRO Kew, FO 68, No. 142, f. 208ff.

³⁹Charles Eden to FO, nos. 1, 6 and 16, 12 and 27 July and 4 Sept. 1866, in *ibid.*, f. 251ff.

⁴⁰This and the following paragraphs draw on Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg* (Oxford, 1987), 226-30, 261, 470-4; Friedrich Prinzing, *Epidemics Resulting from Wars*, ed. Harald Westergaard (Oxford, 1916), 184-8; and Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London, 1987); see also Theodor Fontane, *Der deutsche Krieg von 1866*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1870-1, rpt. Düsseldorf, 1979), 2:307-11.

line of march through Saxony invariably left behind large numbers of sick soldiers, and by the middle of August the epidemic reached its height. We lack reliable estimates of how many Saxons may have been infected. But as late as mid-September, an official count for Leipzig alone reported between fifty and sixty deaths daily.⁴¹

In Saxony, above-normal temperatures, apart from worsening the physical suffering, charged the political atmosphere too. The National Liberals' first state-wide convention — held on 26 August after a week of feverish political infighting that soon led to a temporary ban on all public meetings — was said to have convened on a day when the “oppressively humid summer heat” was particularly extreme.⁴² Just three days earlier, Wurmb had told Eduard Stephani that he was going to dismiss the notoriously arch-conservative Leipzig prefect Burgsdorff. Stephani himself was designated to be Burgsdorff's replacement. Stephani refused to go along with Wurmb's plan. But he later confided to his diary: “dreadfully wretched day: cholera and politics mixed up together, and all conceivable municipal affairs too.”⁴³ The height of the cholera in August, then, coincided exactly with the establishment of the Saxon People's Party and the regional wing of the National Liberal Party. It occurred not only at the very moment that the party landscape in Saxony was being fundamentally transformed, but simultaneously with the most contentious phase of the Prussian occupation, when no one could be sure what agitation would be permitted under a succession of civilian and military governors.

Building on the methodological observations made earlier, let us consider five further factors that suggest why the Saxon population may have regarded illness as a metaphor for its economic, political, and military misfortunes in 1866.

First, many Saxons surely recalled that cholera had struck twice before when Saxony's political modernization stood on a threshold: in 1831-32, when Saxony's constitutional era was about to begin, and in 1848-49, when revolution again opened unimagined future possibilities. Second, reference to the horrors of cholera functions extremely well as a means to designate certain individuals as vulgar or sordid. Before cholera induces death, it subjects its victims to uncontrollable vomiting and diarrhea — humiliations that were particularly horrifying to bourgeois Germans in the nineteenth century. Yet the arrival of cholera in Saxony was also personified quite literally by the invading armies from the north who also brought military and political humiliation. Third, cholera not only reinforces the sense of sudden calamity; it also strikes with remarkable unpredictability. (Provisional Government leader Friesen, among other Saxon notables, believed he had contracted cholera in mid-August.) Cholera can be studied — fourth — in the manner of modern social psychology as a “massive social trauma.” As Charles Rosenberg has written, a

⁴¹U.S. Consul in Leipzig, F.Y. Dickinson, to US Secretary of State William H. Seward, 14 Sept. 1866; National Archives and Records Administration, T-215 (microfilm), Despatches from United States Consuls in Leipzig, reel no. 1, unfoliated. Other sources suggest that somewhere between 5,200 and 6,400 Prussian soldiers died of cholera, compounded by perhaps 115,000 civilian deaths. In Habsburg lands an estimated 165,000 deaths occurred.

⁴²See Jürgen Kirchner, “Die Landesversammlung der sächsischen Liberalen vom 26. Aug. 1866 und die Entstehung einer Nationalliberalen Partei in Sachsen,” *Wissenschaftliche Studien des Pädagogischen Instituts Leipzig* 3 (1966): 123-27.

⁴³Boettcher, *Stephani*, 78.

severe epidemic “necessarily evokes responses in every sector of society. . . . Values and attitudes, especially in the areas of religion, of traditionalism and innovation are . . . inevitably displayed during an epidemic.” Fifth and lastly, Susan Sontag has noted that the “sickness” of democracy has been a recurrent theme in European conservative thought since the eighteenth century. “Disease imagery,” writes Sontag, is often “used to express concern for social order.” Moreover, “[d]isease metaphors are used to judge society not as out of balance but as repressive.” As the nineteenth century wore on, disease metaphors became “more virulent, preposterous, demagogic.”⁴⁴

Examining the political rhetoric of late 1866, we find that Saxon writers did indeed identify the advent of mass politics with the calamities brought by the Austro-Prussian conflict. This equation was drawn with more or less subtlety depending on the individual writer. But almost always the National Liberals were the intended political victims. In fact, simultaneous identification with the ravages of war, occupation, and disease arguably destroyed the National Liberals’ prospects at the polls even before the Reichstag campaign properly got underway. Of course Biedermann and his National Liberal colleagues actively contributed to their utter unpopularity. Treitschke’s polemic from July 1866 was followed by a wave of similar tracts that hailed Prussia’s victory over Saxony as either predestined or the result of divine intervention.⁴⁵ These tracts underlined the National Liberals’ highhanded insistence that they alone could restore Saxony’s political culture to good health.

One such pamphlet sprang from a competition sponsored by the co-editor of the *Grenzboten*, Gustav Freytag, and other National Liberals in Leipzig. Worried that the preliminary armistice made too many concessions to Saxon sovereignty, these men announced on 11 August that they would award a prize of two hundred Thaler to the author who — within nine days! — could write the best short work on the following theme: “The necessity of a political and economic absorption [*Einordnung*] of the Kingdom of Saxony into the Prussian federal state.”⁴⁶ The winning entry, written by Freytag himself and published at the beginning of September 1866, was entitled: *Was wird aus Sachsen?* (What is to Become of Saxony?) This work struck all the notes that dominated National Liberal propaganda during the subsequent Reichstag election campaign. It pushed into the foreground the economic benefits of the German Customs Union and extolled other Prussian virtues. It attacked the pernicious spirit of parochialism. It charged that the Saxon government was (and would remain) out of touch with Saxon public opinion. It called on Saxon diplomacy to abstain from looking to Vienna or Paris for support. And it took the bold step of suggesting that King Johann should renounce the Saxon

⁴⁴Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York, 1978), 58 and 72-87.

⁴⁵G[ustav] F[reytag], “Die Zukunft des Königreichs Sachsen,” *Grenzboten* 25, Bd. 3 ([mid-August] 1866): 241-8; cf. [Cäsar Dietrich von Witzleben], *Sachsen und der Norddeutsche Bund* (Leipzig, [Sept.] 1866); *Sachsens Gegenwart und Zukunft. Ein Mahnruf an das Sächsische Volk* (Leipzig, [Oct.] 1866); *Sachsens Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, von einem Sachsen (Berlin, 1866). Also Karl-Georg Faber, *Die nationalpolitische Publizistik Deutschlands von 1866 bis 1871*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1963), 2:94-103 and 2:183-197; Hans Rosenberg, *Die nationalpolitische Publizistik Deutschlands*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1935), 2:947ff.; Jordan, *Meinung*, 192-202; and Richter, “Meinung,” 58-75.

⁴⁶[Gustav Freytag], *Was wird aus Sachsen?* (Leipzig, 1866).

throne. In one more respect it resembled other National Liberal propaganda. When thousands of copies of this pamphlet were sent out to Saxon local authorities with the request that they be passed on to the public, the backlash was stronger than the intended effect. The back pages of the conservative *Leipziger Zeitung* were soon filled with testimonials from conservative schoolteachers outraged that the civil service and the monarchy should be drawn into party-political wrangles. More than once the National Liberals were condemned for their “satanic” call to treason against the king.⁴⁷

Conservative propaganda also tended toward polemical references to the infection of National Liberalism. One example was a stinging broadside that tried to establish a connection between Saxony’s forced entry into the North German Confederation and the sudden invigoration of Saxon party politics at home.⁴⁸ Its title was revealing: *Die sogenannten National-Liberalen Leipzigs unter dem Mikroscope der öffentlichen Meinung* (Leipzig’s So-Called National Liberals under the Microscope of Public Opinion). Sexual and biological allusions jumped off the page as the Prussian “rape” of Saxony and the “political prostitution” of Leipzig at the hands of the National Liberals were juxtaposed with the advent of mass politics. According to this brochure, the universal suffrage was one of Bismarck’s most unfortunate concessions to the National Liberals. Almost in the same breath, however, Bismarck and the National Liberals were accused of striving to establish the unitary state (*Einheitsstaat*) under the cloak of “Caesarism.” From this premise the author proceeded to accuse Leipzig’s “Borussian-Saxon” National Liberals of political deceit: they had assumed the black-white colours of Prussia only in order to win a “warm little niche” in both the Leipzig city council and the North German Reichstag. The author complained later in this pamphlet that with the end of the Beust system, the Saxon police were “no longer permitted to turn the gas off” when National Liberals gathered in their favourite pub (the “Kitzing” in Leipzig) to discuss politics. But he promised that the autumn frosts would bring some unpleasant surprises: other means of “disinfection” would be found to eliminate the “current National Liberal epidemic.”⁴⁹

As a final example of such political rhetoric, we can turn to the campaign diaries of a prominent Conservative candidate, Carl Gerber. Gerber’s later service as Saxon minister of culture proved that he was less parochial than most other Conservatives.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, although he recognized that elections under universal manhood suffrage would cut through the complacency of previous elitist practices, Gerber believed that the age of mass politics would lead Germany down demagogic paths.

On 31 December 1866 Gerber confided to his diary: “What will the new year bring? One finds a world full of disquiet and partisanship. On the one side, forcible revolution from above, on the other, philistinism, particularist pettiness, and egoism.” Two weeks later Gerber agreed to be drafted as a candidate in the constituency of 13: Leipzig-County, which included working-class neighbourhoods

⁴⁷*Dresdner Nachrichten*, 14 Sept. 1866, cited in Jordan, *Meinung*, 193-94.

⁴⁸Leipzig, [Oct.] 1866; see esp. 3-7 for the following

⁴⁹See also [Ludwig von Zehmen], *Die Patrioten und die Nationalen* (Leipzig, [Oct.] 1866).

⁵⁰Gerber was professor of law at Leipzig University, and Saxony’s minister of culture from 1871 to 1891; he was ennobled in 1878.

of Leipzig and its outlying suburbs. But soon he discovered that his political sensibilities and his personal honour were offended in equal measure by the style of modern politics:⁵¹

The whole business here is abominable. The noble rabble wants [Heinrich] Wuttke,⁵² the vilest of democratic traitors to the Fatherland. In the [*Leipziger*] *Tageblatt* one finds in print everything that is vulgar and sordid. It really is a disgrace! An upright man who does not want to allow himself to be vilified and led around for weeks on end by the scoundrels of the press withdraws [from the race] and leaves the field to the scum [*den Lumpen*], and these should then be dignified as the tribunes of the people and allowed to pass legislation! Will Germany ever again be freed from this sickness of democratic and parliamentary desires? Or will it be driven to ruin?

V

Most members of the Progressive Party and the Saxon People's Party supported each other's candidates at the polls on 12 February (and in the subsequent run-off ballots). And the National Liberals supported Progressive candidates where they had no chance of electing their own nominee. Yet there was considerable uncertainty as to how these alliances would influence individual constituency contests. As Table 1 shows, there are too many gaps in the evidence to provide full coverage of the twenty-three constituency races (see also Figure 1). It therefore makes sense to examine selected constituency races to consider the relative significance of local, regional, and national factors in determining voter alignments.

⁵¹Marie von Gerber, "Aus den Briefen Carl v. Gerbers vom konstituierenden Reichstag des Norddeutschen Bundes," *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte* 60 (1939): 224-79, esp. 225-26. Compare Gustav Freytag's description of his own (later) Reichstag campaign: "From all sides come the demands of my voters that I come to them and provide them with an evening's entertainment, and the correspondence with influential lawyers and innkeepers is becoming enormous. Oh, this general suffrage ruins a man's character. For fifty years I did not worry about popularity, and now I send a bouquet of flowers to a woman in childbed without knowing whether she had a boy or girl, and I shake the hands of a hundred good friends whose names I do not know and never will know. Fie Bismarck, that was no master stroke! Worst of all, no one knows whether he will be elected." Cited in Ping, "Freytag," 409.

⁵²See Joachim Müller, "Das politische Wirken Heinrich Wuttkes" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leipzig, 1960).

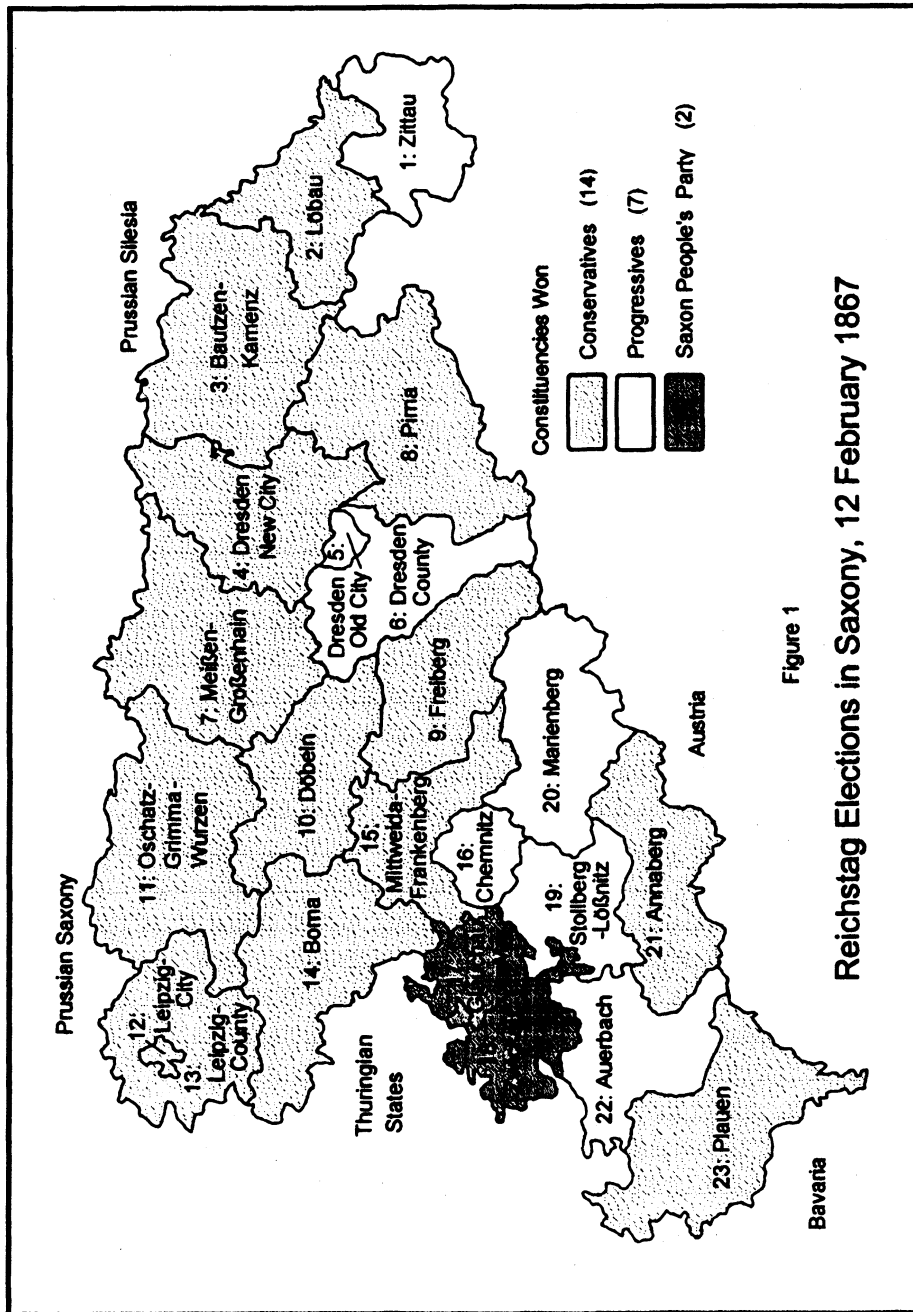


Figure 1

⁵³This computer-generated map was drawn by the author from the *Sächsischer Vaterlands-Atlas*, ed. Bruno Krause, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, n.d. [1912]), 22. Simone Lässig kindly provided the reference to this atlas.

Table 1⁵⁴

Elections to the Constituent Reichstag of the					
Constituency (Winners in <i>bold italics</i>)	Popu- lation 1867 (000s)	Eligible Voters 1871	Votes Cast 1867 (Est.)	Conservatives	
				Candidates	Votes
1: Zittau	100	22,705	15,823	Häberkorn	?
2: Löbau	101	20,229	15,537	v. Thielau	7,783
3: Bautzen-Kamenz	111	21,746	14,777	v. Salza	13,299
4: Dresden-New City	109	19,978	13,433	Schwarze	10,180
5: Dresden-Old City	109	22,381	14,279	Tauberth	5,259
6: Dresden-County	101	19,791	12,521	v. Berg	?
7: Meißen-Großenhain	100	18,644	13,552	v. Zehmen	9,064
8: Pirna	101	20,149	14,476	Reuning	7,584
9: Freiberg	111	21,360	12,646	Sachße	6,365
10: Döbein	104	19,399	14,785	v. Oehmichen	11,750
11: Oschatz-Grimma	100	17,827	13,293	Günther	11,024
12: Leipzig-City	91	19,113	9,159	Wächter	3,288
(12: Run-off ballot)			9,937	Wächter	5,434
13: Leipzig-County	114	23,399	11,174	Gerber	6,378
14: Borna	105	20,721	14,355	Gebert	11,539
15: Mittweida	108	21,132	14,775	Häberkorn	8,065
16: Chemnitz	109	24,488	14,870	Friedrich	1,805
17: Glauchau-Meerane	106	22,847	13,609	Martini	2,536
(17: Run-off ballot)			12,203	v. Wirsing	1,082
18: Zwickau	113	22,857	14,845	Uhde	2,119
(18: Run-off ballot)			14,121		
19: Stollberg-Lößnitz	101	18,275	9,349	z. Lippe-Thun	4,127
(19: Run-off ballot)			10,346	z. Lippe-Thun	4,062
20: Marienberg	107	19,502	13,118	v. Einsiedel	?
21: Annaberg	103	15,668	10,751	Herbig	7,399
22: Auerbach	108	20,938	12,536	Seiler	2,825
23: Plauen	109	19,725	12,758	Braun	7,921

Notes: Prog (Progressive); NL (National Liberal); SPP (Saxon People's Party)
Lass ([Lassalleian] General German Workers Association)

⁵⁴This table was compiled from sources too numerous to cite here, including the local press, Reichstag debates on contested elections, parliamentary handbooks, and memoirs; partial statistical results are also found in Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, Nr. 5375.

North German Confederation, 12 February 1867

Constituency	Liberals		Socialists	
	Candidates	Votes	Candidates	Votes
1:	Riedel (Prog)	8,449		
2:	v. Aehrenfeld (NL)	7,679	Vahlteich (SPP)	?
3:	Fahnauer	?		
4:	Schaffrath (Prog)	2,871	Försterling (Lass)	257
5:	Wigard (Prog)	8,251	Försterling (Lass)	531
6:	Schaffrath (Prog)	9,031	Auerswald (Lass)	655
7:	Rentzsch	?	Riha (Lass)	c. 400
8:	Schreck (Prog/ NL)	6,892		
9:	Kugler	?	Försterling (Lass)	3,081
10:	Niethammer	?		
11:	Rose; Dietel	?		
12:	Stephani (NL)	4,307	Wuttke (Prog/ SPP)	355
	Stephani (NL)	4,503	Würkert (Lass)	951
13:	Joseph (NL)	?	Fritzsche (Lass)	?
	Wuttke (Prog/ SPP)	?	Frese (Prog/ SPP)	?
14:	Meischner	2,730		
15:	Jungnickel	?		
16:	Rewitzer (Prog)	9,198	Weiß, Sr. (Lass)	2,586
	Pornitz (NL)	871		
17:	Stauß (Prog/ NL)	2,753	Bebel (SPP)	6,376
	Uhle (NL)	622	Fritzsche (Lass)	206
	Stauß (Prog/NL)	4,281	Bebel (SPP)	7,922
18:	Streit (Prog/ NL)	5,515	Schraps (SPP)	6970
	Streit (Prog/ NL)	5,907	Schraps (SPP)	8,071
19:	Minckwitz (Prog)	3,304	Liebknecht (SPP)	1,918
	Minckwitz (Prog)	6,284		
20:	Evans (Prog)	7,788		
21:	Stauß	?		
22:	Heubner (Prog)	9,667		
23:	Heubner	?		

In rural areas, where socio-economic change was slow, government influence tended to reinforce pre-existing structures of authority. This produced some very one-sided contests. In 3: Bautzen-Kamenz, for example, the Conservative candidate was Hermann von Salza-Lichtenau, a 37-year old estate owner who occupied the key office of district governor (*Amtshauptmann*). Salza-Lichtenau's victory in February 1867, with roughly 90 per cent of the popular vote, may be ascribed to the same factors that helped Conservative candidates in other rural areas. It did not seem to matter whether such candidates were district governors themselves or whether they were merely the preferred candidate of the local administrative apparatus.⁵⁵ The local government newspaper, if it reported on the election at all, was likely to juxtapose official news of the campaign and notices supporting Conservative candidates. Moreover, Conservatives often began rumours that transportation links would be improved if the local population favoured the district governor with its support on polling day. (Thus newspaper notices were sponsored by "thankful communities" even before the fact.)

Three other groups exerted decisive local influence in rural areas. Protestant pastors urged voters to support the candidate most dedicated to preserving the church and other institutions of authority. Members of village councils took an active part in the campaign, usually supporting Conservative candidates. And some school-teachers let their pupils practice their lessons by writing the local candidate's name on blank ballots.⁵⁶ When National Liberals complained about these practices, Conservatives replied acidly that the same things (or worse) went on in their beloved Prussia.⁵⁷

The sum effect of Conservative influence-peddling was considerable, as one National Liberal noted in his diary when he traveled outward from Leipzig to reconnoitre the political hinterland:⁵⁸

Yesterday afternoon and today [I took] a trip into the countryside . . . The result was not promising for the parliamentary elections. The great mass of rural people are . . . wholly under the influence of officials and pastors, who are motivated in part by romantic attachment to the [Saxon] dynasty, in part by fear that a strict brand of Prussianism will demand a great deal of work from them and disturb their sleepy laxness in the conduct of business, and in part from worry that they will offend [and] compromise themselves . . . Some energy is being expended only by the opponents of Prussia, mainly through boasting and complaining.

In urban areas, the mix of factors affecting the election outcome was very different. Of all Saxon constituencies, 13: Leipzig-County was the largest, with about 114,000 inhabitants. The Conservative Gerber can therefore be excused for believing that his campaign there revealed the worst features of the universal

⁵⁵Conservative officials included Landesältester Heinrich von Thielau (2: Löbau), Oberinspektor Tauberth (5: Dresden-Old City), Oberforstrath von Berg (6: Dresden-County), Bürgermeister Arwed Martini (17: Glauchau-Meerane), Kreisdirektor Uhde (18: Zwickau), Amtshauptmann Kurt von Einsiedel (20: Marienburg), and Amtshauptmann Dr. Braun (23: Plauen).

⁵⁶See also Hamerow, *Social Foundations*, 2:394.

⁵⁷Richter, "Meinung," 74-75; Blum, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 1:265.

⁵⁸Moritz Busch, *Tagebuchblätter*, rev. ed., 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1902), Anhang, 3:552-3.

suffrage. Yet the election contests in 12: Leipzig-City, 5: Dresden-Old City, and 6: Dresden-County also emerged as key races. A combination of political considerations induced all parties to show the flag in these constituencies. Dresden was the seat of government and of the royal court; Leipzig was a centre of trade and publishing. And both cities were undergoing rapid socio-economic change. As a result, these constituencies were targeted by political interlopers who hoped to break down the traditional predominance of Progressive and Conservative forces, thereby achieving victories of more than just local significance.

A fierce campaign in 12: Leipzig-City illustrated how the stakes were raised whenever the National Liberals entered the fray. The National Liberals only barely avoided the odium of two party nominees and united behind Deputy Mayor Stephani. But at some point late in the contest Stephani wrote a confused letter in which he claimed he would “not lift a finger” in his own campaign. This letter fell into the hands of the *Sächsische Zeitung*, whose editor used it to embarrass Stephani and aid the cause of the particularist Conservative candidate, Carl Wächter. On the extreme left, similar problems prevented a united campaign in 12: Leipzig-City. One of Liebknecht’s organizers, believing that “we cannot spare even one vote,” urged him to rush to Leipzig: “We will have succeeded if we can prevent Stephani from winning an absolute majority on the first ballot.”⁵⁹

Given this array of opponents, Stephani’s showing for the National Liberals was anything but embarrassing. He outpolled his Conservative opponent by more than a thousand votes on the first ballot and came within a hair of the absolute majority needed for victory. Yet just as Liebknecht’s supporters expected, in the run-off ballot Wächter drew to his side most of those who had not voted on the first ballot, as well as the majority of Progressive and Lassallean voters and — according to Liebknecht — every single People’s Party voter as well.⁶⁰ Roughly thirteen hundred votes had been cast for the democratic candidates on the first ballot, and Wächter’s total rose by over two thousand votes in the second ballot. Now completely isolated, Stephani could muster only about two hundred more votes on the second ballot, and so he lost the race.

That Conservatives and socialists were willing to offer each other support was illustrated most clearly in the three constituencies of southwestern Saxony contested by the Saxon People’s Party: 17: Glauchau-Meerane, 18: Zwickau, and 19: Stollberg-Lößnitz. In each of these contests the People’s Party was hampered by an almost total lack of funds and suitable personnel to undertake an organized campaign.⁶¹ Otherwise the party would gladly have targeted other constituencies too. Even these three districts presented different organizational challenges. For example, whereas Bebel could campaign mainly in the towns of Glauchau and Meerane, which dominated the entire constituency, Liebknecht’s constituency lacked any focal

⁵⁹See Boettcher, *Stephani*, esp. 77-86; Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel*, 1:203-6.

⁶⁰Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel*, 1:209-10.

⁶¹See Wolfgang Schröder, “Sozialdemokratie und Wahlen im Königreich Sachsen 1867-1877,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 36, no. 4 (1994): 3-18. Limits of space prevent me from discussing the hard-fought campaign in Chemnitz; see Ernst Hofmann, “Die Chemnitzer Arbeiterbewegung 1862 bis 1867” (Ph.D. diss., PH Dresden, 1984), 149-70; Ernst Heilmann, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Chemnitz und dem Erzgebirge* (Chemnitz, n.d. [1911]), 31-39.

point for agitation. Yet a number of factors favoured the People's Party in this region of Saxony: the mixed urban-rural make-up of the district (where many workers and artisans operated from home workshops); the high rate of population increase; and the abject poverty of local miners, weavers, and other textile workers.⁶²

Because both the Lassalleans and the liberals had already generated a local following in 17: Glauchau-Meerane, Bebel faced no fewer than five opponents: the city councillors Friedrich Uhle (National Liberal) and Wilhelm Stauß (Progressive); the mayor of Glauchau and member of Saxony's Chamber of Deputies, Arwed Martini (Conservative); a government councillor from Zwickau, Karl von Wirsing zu Schwarzenberg (Conservative); and the Lassallean leader Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche. Local industrialists hoped to build on traditions of elite politics in Glauchau, which one observer described as their "parochial fiefdom."⁶³ In the more industrialized Meerane, however, Bebel outpolled his opponent by a significant margin. And in the run-off ballot against the Progressive candidate Stauß, who was promised National Liberal support, Bebel won almost two-thirds of the total vote. It was an open secret that in the run-off ballot the Conservative supporters of Wirsing and Martini flocked to Bebel's side and helped tip the balance in his favour.

In 17: Glauchau-Meerane, Bebel recalled that his itinerant campaign found him sleeping in the humble homes of his supporters, either in the marriage bedroom itself or with the family cat on the sofa. Liebknecht in 19: Stollberg-Lößnitz wrote of the extreme physical demands of walking for hours from town to town through the winter snows, delivering campaign speeches at each stop, and sleeping fitfully in between. For all but the last three weeks of the campaign, Liebknecht had to look on from prison in Berlin, and so he could assist with only the last phase of his (unsuccessful) election bid.⁶⁴ But both Bebel and the third Saxon People's Party candidate, the Dresden lawyer Reinhold Schrapf, reached the run-off ballot in their constituencies, and eventually carried the day. They thus became the first social democrats to sit in a German national parliament.

Historians have recently stressed the plebiscitary nature of the February 1867 contest.⁶⁵ Even so, plebiscitary elections can have very different contexts and meanings. They can mitigate uncertainties about untried voting practices, by making the choices seem reassuringly simple. Or they can heighten one's sense of taking a leap in the dark, by stressing the irreversibility of the outcome. Voter turnout in Saxony on 12 February 1867 was higher than in Prussia and most other parts of the North German Confederation. Dresden's *Constitutionelle Zeitung* reported a Saxon turnout of just under 70 per cent. This figure is substantiated by information

⁶²Klaus Erich Pollmann, "Arbeiterwahlen im Norddeutschen Bund 1867-1870," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15 (1980): 164-95; Bebel, *Leben*, 1:151ff.; Günter Benser, *Zur Herausbildung der Eisenacher Partei* (Berlin, 1956), ch. 5.

⁶³*Glauchauer Tageblatt und Anzeiger* (Extrablatt), 11 Jan. 1867, cited in Benser, *Herausbildung*, 64; see also Richter, "Meinung," 76.

⁶⁴On Liebknecht's campaign, see GStAPK Berlin-Dahlem, I. HA, Rep. 81, V Nr. 46, esp. *Anzeiger für Stollberg und Umgegend*, no. 11 (6 Feb. 1867): 1-4.

⁶⁵The extremely detailed election analysis in Pollmann, *Parlamentarismus*, 139ff., together with the overviews in Hamerow, *Social Foundations*, 1:382-99, 2:302-36, and Steinbach, *Zählung*, 1:138-48, offset the fact that a systematic comparison between Saxony and the other federal states cannot be included here due to limits of length.

provided in Table 1. For both Saxony and the Confederation as a whole, turnout in February 1867 was higher than in 1848 or for elections to the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, and was not equalled until the Reichstag elections of 1887. This participation is all the more remarkable considering the hasty preparations, the winter weather, and the unfamiliarity of the whole exercise.

In Saxony and in the territories annexed by Prussia, large numbers of enfranchised voters entertained grave reservations about the North German Confederation. There were many good reasons to remain away from the polls, of course: for workers, the loss of a few hours' wages was hardly insignificant. But in these regions thousands of voters were motivated to trek to the polls because they still held a grudge against the outcome of 1866. Due to such sentiments, but also due to the active campaigning of those who sought to win their support, the protest vote in February 1867 more than made up for any feelings of apathy among voters.

Bismarck and the Conservatives in Prussia were more than a little surprised at the favourable outcome on 12 February. A writer in the Conservative *Kreuzzeitung* noted with relief that the first exercise of the universal suffrage had *not* led to the election of "uneducated little people."⁶⁶ The election outcome was less surprising in Saxony itself. Observers there had predicted that Conservative candidates stood a good chance of winning more than half of the twenty-three seats in the state. And they did — fourteen seats, won with approximately 51 per cent of the total votes cast.⁶⁷ The Progressives won seven seats, with about 39 per cent of the popular vote, while the Saxon People's Party elected two of its three official candidates, Bebel and Schrap, with about 6 per cent of the total vote. The Lassalleans received only about 3 per cent, matched by the other allegedly "unitary" party, the National Liberals. This, then, was a protest vote with a vengeance. The Conservatives and Progressives in Saxony had assumed (at best) a mistrustful wait-and-see attitude toward the North German Confederation. Yet these two parties had elected twenty-one of twenty-three Saxon deputies to the Constituent Reichstag. The deputies of the Saxon People's Party rejected the Confederation outright. And the party that could legitimately claim 1866 as a vindication of its modernizing project across the board — from its war against parochialism in Saxony to its advocacy of representative institutions for the nation — had come up empty.

In Saxony the press reactions to this outcome were predictable. A writer in the conservative *Leipziger Zeitung* declared categorically that "the vast majority of the Saxon population wants to have nothing to do with the annexationist party." The National Liberal *Constitutionelle Zeitung* naturally took a different line. The election outcome, one of its writers claimed, was lamentable, even laughable.⁶⁸ More interesting was the government's reaction. Considering King Johann's oath of loyalty to the Confederation and Friesen's honest efforts to help fashion a workable constitution for it, perhaps we should not be surprised that these two men were ambivalent about the result. After the election results became known, King Johann described the fourteen victorious Conservatives as "decisively friendly to the [Saxon] government." Yet court and government circles in Dresden were allegedly

⁶⁶*Neue Preussische Zeitung*, no. 44, 21 Feb. 1867, 1.

⁶⁷Richter, "Meinung," 75.

⁶⁸Both cited in *ibid.*, 76.

“very upset” that particularists and Progressives had been elected in Leipzig and Dresden. Friesen conceded that things might have been worse. Despite the relatively high turn-out in Saxony, he observed, it was not as high as expected (for example, in Leipzig). King Johann was not so sure the worst had been averted. He said he had “always considered these elections to be a very dangerous experiment whose outcome is impossible to predict, and this now seems to have been confirmed.” The Prussian envoy concurred that the future remained wide open. Only “the parliamentary debates in Berlin,” he reported, “will determine whether the Saxon or the German tendency remains dominant in the land.”⁶⁹

The subsequent history of Saxony’s reluctant entry into the German empire cannot be told here. But some intriguing questions point to the uncertain outcome of this tale. If Friesen was really seeking to gain Bismarck’s confidence, why did he not sever his ties to the Conservatives or improve his relations with the National Liberals? Would doing so have buried Bismarck’s fears about Saxon particularism? These questions were anything but moot in 1867, when relations between Saxony and Prussia stood on a precipice and when German parliamentarism was about to be tested in practice.

VI

Three final points can be drawn from the preceding argument. 1. A narrow focus on the role of the Prusso-German state is patently inadequate to explain contemporaries’ ambivalent views about German unity or political modernization. It is also questionable whether the period 1866-71 can be characterized broadly as “a brief interlude between a struggle against old traditions and a struggle against new challenges.”⁷⁰ This essay has tried to demonstrate that in 1866-67 the old order and the new beginning coexisted in the outlook of contemporaries. This tension between the new and the old is as significant as any “spontaneous bonding” of the German people, about which National Liberal historians wrote so much after 1871.

Popular attitudes toward building the nation-state, moreover, like the manifestation of power itself, were always rooted in the complex interplay between local traditions, national myths, individuals’ expectations for the future, and the rules of the political game. In 1866-67 many Germans were impatient with the progress of the national enterprise. National Liberals in particular were eager to get on with their modernizing project. But millions of other Germans wanted to slow down the tide of history, not speed it up. These Germans recognized that they needed time to assimilate the disorienting impact of political upheaval. In this respect, an observation by Immanuel Kant seems relevant. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant recognized that people need familiar touchstones from the past to make future possibilities palatable. “The people of Germany,” he wrote, “accept

⁶⁹See Landsberg to Bismarck (draft), nos. 4, 10, and 11, dated 26 Jan., 14 and 15 Feb. 1867, in GStAPK Berlin-Dahlem, I. HA, Rep. 81, IV A, Nr. 29a, f. 10-21; Eichmann to Bismarck, no. 14, 19 Feb. 1867, P.A.A.A. Bonn, Sachsen 39.

⁷⁰Hamerow, *Social Foundations*, 2:337, cited in Pollmann, *Parlamentarismus*, 11.

prevailing conditions, are slow to question the established order, and [are] reticent to invent new forms of social and political life. *And this is their good side.*"⁷¹

2. Much of the rhetoric examined in these pages was base rather than Olympian. It is no less significant for that. When Saxons decried the "prostitution" of their smaller homeland at the hands of the Prussians, when they examined the "bacillus" of parliamentarism and the "poison" of party enmity under the microscope of public opinion, when they railed against the "epidemic" of democracy and tried to "inoculate" themselves against its ravages, they helped establish psychological and cultural orientations that made the progress of the liberal democratic ideal in Germany so difficult. These observations suggest that we should try to understand a given polity in terms of how its participants understood it, and we should pay attention to the images their language conveyed.

3. This brings up the double allusion in this essay's title, which corresponds to one of the songs in the musical "My Fair Lady," derived from G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*. In the musical version, the professor of regional dialects Henry Higgins sings a ditty entitled "Why Can't a Woman be More Like a Man?" Here Higgins expresses his frustration that his linguistic student, Miss Eliza Doolittle, is proving reluctant to follow his lead. Perhaps the love-hate relationship between these two individuals, star-crossed by conflicting cultural assumptions about their own identities, is analogous to the complex relationship between Prussia and Saxony in 1866-67. But this essay's title is also derived from a review essay in which David Crew called on historians to abandon their attempts to shoe-horn the history of peasant politics into moulds originally cast for the urban labour movement.⁷² Instead, Crew argued, we should pay attention to rural politics for its own sake: we should give it historical legitimacy by considering its unique dynamics, special rituals, and unpredictability. This same plea can be made for the individual German states and their populations as they struggled to define their own frontiers of sovereignty in the nineteenth century. Perhaps we can even look forward to the day when the Eliza Doolittles of the federated empire — to the muted accompaniment of Henry Higgins in the guise of Prussia — are occasionally allowed to sing the lead refrain.

University of Toronto

⁷¹Cited in Michael Brint, *A Genealogy of Political Culture* (Boulder, 1991), 143; emphasis added.

⁷²David Crew, "'Why Can't a Peasant be More Like a Worker?' Social Historians and German Peasants," *Journal of Social History* 22 (1989): 531-39.