

# FRIEDRICH EBERT IN GERMAN POLITICAL MEMORY

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In 2003, ZDF, one of two major public television channels in Germany, asked its viewers to vote for the 200 most important national personalities, past and present. The results were hardly surprising: Konrad Adenauer was chosen as the greatest German in history, followed by Martin Luther and Karl Marx. Two more chancellors were among the top ten, namely Willy Brandt and Otto von Bismarck. Both had memorial foundations established in the 1990s.

Leading political and religious figures were not the only ones who made the list. In the top 200 were teen idols like Daniel Kübelböck (number 16), Las Vegas stage stars Siegfried and Roy (149), athletes like Michael Schumacher (26), Steffi Graf (32), and NBA star Dirk Nowitzki (64). Theodor Heuss, the first president of the FRG, placed 114, right behind Rosa Luxemburg and Bertolt Brecht, but just above Kaiser Otto I and Sigmund Freud. The chancellor of German reunification, Helmut Kohl, belongs to the front-runners; he placed 13. The sitting chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, had to accept number 89, which did beat Kaiser Wilhelm II (130).

Friedrich Ebert, president of Germany from 1919 to 1925, did not make the ZDF hit parade of the 200 greatest Germans [Figure 18].<sup>1</sup> The poll, of course, is only a snapshot of Germany's cultural memory in 2003, not a broad consideration of Ebert's long-term role.<sup>2</sup> Here, I will survey Friedrich Ebert's changing image in four chronological steps. First, I will examine how he tried to influence his own image during his lifetime when he was president. Next, I will explore his image after his death in 1925, considering both the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. The third part explores Ebert's image after World War II and in the two German states (1945–1989). Finally, I will discuss how Ebert has been viewed since Germany's reunification.

To understand Ebert's self-portrayal as the Weimar Republic's first president, we should recall that during the Kaiserreich, the monarch was automatically accepted and honored by the majority as the head of state. Ebert, however, did not have this bonus. Nor did he possess the "leader's nimbus" of his successor, General Paul von Hindenburg, who was able to transform his military reputation into political charisma after the breakdown of the old system in 1918.<sup>3</sup> Ebert had no symbolic or political capital when he took office in February 1919. His policies as the leader of the revolutionary interim government between November 1918 and February 1919 were controversial.

Moreover, the monarch had been prepared since childhood to be-



**Figure 18. Reich President Friedrich Ebert at his desk in the Presidential Palace, 1924.**

come head of state, whereas Ebert was a Social Democrat from a modest background. He was relatively unprepared when he made the leap from party chairman to head of state. He was unlike Kaiser Wilhelm II or Hindenburg, who intensively practiced their poses in order to create a picture for the present and for posterity. Ebert did not have a penchant for self-portrayal, nor was he eager to paint his own historical portrait. He represented the republic in a reserved way and avoided any kind of personality cult. In his speeches, he always stressed that he wanted no personal homages. He wanted the audience to cheer for the republic, for Germany, or for the Reich, but not for the president.

Moreover, Ebert did not travel much. In his six years in office, he only went on thirty trips throughout Germany. Most of these were in 1922, in connection with the presidential election (which was eventually postponed). In 1921, he only left Berlin once in an official capacity.<sup>4</sup> Ebert once wrote in a private letter that official presidential trips were no pleasure for him.<sup>5</sup>

Ebert did not have a systematic publicity strategy: he had no court photographer or court reporter. Very few of Ebert's photos are captivating. In most pictures, he appears stiff, even prudish, and he always dressed correspondingly; not a single picture shows him with his sleeves

rolled up. Only rarely did the public get a glimpse of the president's private life—few pictures of his family were ever printed in the newspapers. Ebert refused several press requests to do a story on “a day in the president's home.” Only one article exists about his youth in Heidelberg; it was published in January 1925, several weeks before Ebert died, but was in no way sponsored by his office.<sup>6</sup>

Not much is known about the effect of Ebert's reserved self-portrayal on the public. But one picture, taken in the summer of 1919, did have an immediate, and negative, impact. The August 1919 cover of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* showed a photograph of Ebert and Minister of Defense Gustav Noske (SPD) standing in the Baltic Sea, dressed in bathing suits. It was the same day that Ebert swore his oath on the new constitution. The “bathing suit picture” became notorious; it angered all who regretted the downfall of the Kaiserreich to see the new republic's head of state nearly naked. The picture became a model for acrimonious caricatures.<sup>7</sup>

Moving pictures, used so aptly by Wilhelm II, were also absent from Ebert's “advertising strategy.” Few celluloid images of him exist. When Ebert came to Dresden in September 1919, a film team was sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But only a few very short sequences from Ebert's arrival at the railway station were shot. The longest sequence (several minutes) in the film archives was shot at Ebert's funeral in March 1925. Very few *Wochenschau* shots exist. By contrast, Wilhelm II was often filmed at military maneuvers or at public appearances. Ebert did not make much use of mass media.

Ebert's lack of concerted public relations did not help combat the deep prejudices against him. For conservative monarchists, he remained a figure of the hated revolution. To them, Social Democrats were traitors to the fatherland, their opponents during the Kaiserreich. Ebert was still an interloper who had illegitimately become head of state.<sup>8</sup> Ebert became the victim of an unprecedented smear campaign. The president defended himself by taking the defamers to court. In 1924, one verdict—out of nearly 200 cases that he initiated—even found him guilty of high treason for his wartime policies.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas conservative antirepublicans accused him of having betrayed the country, the radical left (Communists and left-wing socialists) felt he had betrayed the working class in the revolution. The majority of the liberal bourgeoisie, however, respected him for his nonpartisan policies as head of state. After he was elected president, Ebert sought to run his office independently of any party doctrine, as an “agent of the whole German people, not as a leader of a single party.”<sup>10</sup> Because of this political course, frictions with his own party inevitably emerged, which culminated in an attempt by some in the party to dismiss the former

chairman in 1924.<sup>11</sup> Only in the course of the defamation campaign against Ebert did his party close ranks behind him again.

After his tragic early death in February 1925 following protracted appendicitis, all past differences were forgotten. The SPD stood by "their" Ebert once again. But it soon became apparent that the quarrel about Ebert would continue. Immediately after his death, the government prepared a bill for the state to pay the costs for Ebert's funeral—a funeral for the head of state who died in office. The parliamentary debate was contentious: Communists and National Socialists rejected the bill. Hermann Remmele (KPD) fulminated against Ebert as a dictator who had suppressed the proletariat and a criminal who had betrayed the working class—precisely the picture the Communists had painted before. The bill passed, nevertheless.<sup>12</sup>

Friedrich Ebert's funeral ceremonies were the first republican act of state in German history, attended by nearly one-million citizens.<sup>13</sup> Alive, Ebert had been unable to mobilize such masses. His burial place was modest—no pantheon, no mausoleum. According to his family's wishes, he was laid to rest in a simple grave in his hometown of Heidelberg. The grave site did not become a general place of pilgrimage. Only the SPD and the "Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold," an organization dedicated to the defense of the republic, held annual celebrations there. In 1925, when the SPD convention met in Heidelberg, members assembled at the Bergfriedhof. Hermann Molkenbuhr, who had worked with Ebert in the party leadership from 1905, delivered a commemoration speech in which he compared Germany's first democratic president to George Washington.<sup>14</sup>

Ebert did not become a legend after his death—in contrast to Bismarck or Hindenburg, who had already become icons in their lifetime.<sup>15</sup> The former chancellor Hans Luther claimed in his memoirs, published in 1960, that Ebert's name was soon forgotten.<sup>16</sup> This may have been true for the political right, but not for the SPD and the republican center.<sup>17</sup> Just after Ebert's death, the party set up a foundation for his commemoration, the "Friedrich Ebert Foundation." For the presidential elections in March 1925, the SPD designed a poster for their candidate Otto Braun with the motto "a solid course for the republic." It depicted a "ship of state" steered by a captain standing under a portrait of Friedrich Ebert.

Commemorations initiated by the SPD and the Reichsbanner were attended by nearly 50,000 people in 1926, and about 30,000 in 1927. On such occasions, Ebert was celebrated as a man of the people, a democrat, and the founder of the republic. The party press hailed him as a symbol of social democracy. Ebert appeared all the more positive compared with the current head of state Hindenburg, a man of the old system—undemocratic imperial Germany.

Ebert also became a symbol for centrist republicans. The first issue of

*Deutsche Republik*, a magazine published by Ludwig Haas (DDP), Joseph Wirth (Zentrum), and Paul Löbe (SPD), was dedicated to "our first president, Friedrich Ebert."<sup>18</sup> However, Ebert was never accepted, let alone revered, by all parties. Still, schools, streets, and housing estates were named after him. "Ebert commemoration stones" were erected in many places, mainly on the initiative of the SPD and the Reichsbanner.<sup>19</sup> Memorial coins and reprints of paintings were advertised in the social democratic press.

It is noteworthy that Ebert's family did little for his public remembrance. In 1926 and 1927, Ebert's eldest son published three volumes of his father's speeches and notes, but that was all.<sup>20</sup> Other attempts were made to popularize him. A social democratic vicar from Bremen, for instance, wrote a "Fritz Ebert novel,"<sup>21</sup> and a commemorative book was published in 1926 with articles by Ebert's friends and other politicians.<sup>22</sup> No academic analysis of Ebert's life and work, but only short biographical articles, were published during the Weimar years, however.

During the Weimar period, the government only did what was expected. Hindenburg never visited Ebert's grave. Each year on the anniversary of his death, the chancellor sent a wreath but did not attend the ceremony in person. Some regional governments also sent wreaths until the election that brought Hitler to power in 1933.

In 1927, a bust of Ebert was erected in the Reichstag at the same time that a statue of the current president Hindenburg was dedicated. A stamp with Ebert's portrait was issued in September 1928, but again the recognition of Ebert only went forward with a simultaneous honor for Hindenburg. The stamp showing Ebert was banned by the National Socialists in April 1933. When the National Socialists came to power, they immediately tried to extinguish the memory of the so-called "November criminals." For the Nazis, Ebert symbolized the despised Weimar Republic. Ebert streets were renamed and memorials destroyed.

Nevertheless, Ebert's name lived on in resistance circles and among exiles. In 1935, on the tenth anniversary of his death, a social democratic resistance group published an illegal pamphlet called "In Remembrance of Friedrich Ebert" that commemorated the first president as a man of the people. In March 1945, German exiles held a ceremony in honor of Ebert in New York as well.<sup>23</sup>

The fate of the Ebert statue in Frankfurt's Paulskirche is symbolic. The monument was unveiled on August 11, 1926, which was Constitution Day during the Weimar Republic. Thousands of people attended the ceremony. Immediately after Hitler's election, the statue was covered; it was dismantled in April 1933. In February 1950, five years after the end of the Second World War, a new Ebert statue was ceremoniously unveiled on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death.<sup>24</sup>

The line which divided Germany after the Second World War also split the Ebert family. Friedrich Ebert's widow Louise lived with one of her sons in Heidelberg, West Germany, until her death in 1955, and her eldest son Friedrich became successful in the GDR as mayor of East Berlin and a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). In the GDR, an image of Ebert as a traitor to the working class predominated, the same basic picture that the Communists had created during Ebert's lifetime. Ebert became a cipher for the failures of the SPD during the revolution of 1918–19 and during the first republic. It is not known how Friedrich Ebert, Jr.—a leading SED member—reacted to this. Georg Ebert, the son of Friedrich Ebert, Jr., stated in a 2004 interview with *Neues Deutschland* that his father had never appreciated the “traitor” label but shared the critical view of his father's role during the revolution. Friedrich Ebert, Jr., was a member of the GDR Historical Commission, and many debates were said to have taken place over the official historical portrayal of Ebert.<sup>25</sup>

Ebert's East German descendents were not able to influence his image in the GDR. Yet, the West German branch of the family did not undertake any noteworthy activities to influence Friedrich Ebert's image. They were never interviewed. His widow remained in the background, as she had always done during her husband's lifetime. Louise Ebert was invited to memorial ceremonies, but not a single historian interviewed her to find out more about Ebert's life.<sup>26</sup> Her rare interviews with journalists did not provide new insight into Ebert's character or politics. None of Ebert's sons has published memoirs.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other hand, Ebert was celebrated as a pioneer of German democracy. For many Social Democrats in the FRG who had grown up in the Weimar years, Ebert remained a symbolic figure, especially for state presidents like Wilhelm Kaisen (from Bremen) and Christian Stock (from Hessen). Others SPD members were sharply critical of Ebert, such as Wilhelm Dittmann, a former chairman of the dissident USPD (1917–22). Dittmann declined to write an article for the SPD paper *Vorwärts* in honor of Ebert in 1950. But such disagreements did not develop into large controversies. In public, the SPD did not treat Ebert critically. The SPD even tried to resurrect the memorial ceremonies in 1950. These events were themed “Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit” (unity, law, and freedom)—lines from the “Deutschlandlied” by Hofmann von Fallersleben (“Deutschland über alles”), which Ebert had established as the German national anthem in 1922. Thus, Friedrich Ebert received a key position in the memorial tradition of postwar social democracy.

In a speech in honor of Ebert in 1950, the first president of the Federal Republic Theodor Heuss (FDP), a former liberal member of the Reichstag

during the Weimar Republic, called him the “Abraham Lincoln of German history.” As Lincoln was killed by bullets, Ebert had been killed by defaming words.<sup>27</sup> Heuss was not the first to draw this parallel. An English newspaper, *The Observer*, had compared Ebert with Lincoln in 1923.<sup>28</sup> Others, however, saw Ebert as “the Stalin of German social democracy.”<sup>29</sup> Even though this judgment is completely unjustified, it was often repeated to garner attention. “A German Lincoln or the Stalin of the SPD?” was the provocative title of a commemorative article published in *Die Zeit* in 1975.<sup>30</sup> A similar title even appeared in *Vorwärts* in 1989.<sup>31</sup>

The postwar commemoration of Ebert did not, however, firmly secure his place in the political and historical perception of most Germans. The early historical research, which was mainly conservative, portrayed Ebert as the key figure in preventing a Soviet-style dictatorship in Germany. This assessment prevailed in West German history textbooks until the late 1970s. But as the revolutionary period of 1918–19 was reexamined, the view of Ebert changed. New studies written in the 1960s revealed that the majority of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils were not as radical or communist as had been supposed and had, in fact, supported the creation of a parliamentary democracy. Consequently, the revolutionary phase was not simply a struggle between democracy and bolshevism. In the new perspective, historians emphasized that the revolutionary government, and Ebert in particular, had missed opportunities to stabilize democracy.<sup>32</sup>

Still, in 1988 Willy Brandt claimed that the failures of 1918–19 were fundamental mistakes which led to the breakdown of democracy in 1933.<sup>33</sup> In 1989, however, historian Peter-Christian Witt persuaded the SPD to finally accept Ebert as an ancestor of the current party and of German democracy.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, another historian who is personally close to the SPD, Heinrich August Winkler, held that Ebert should not even be considered a statesman.<sup>35</sup> The SPD clearly had serious, lingering difficulties with its former chairman, Friedrich Ebert.

Outside academia, the general public still honored Ebert as a democrat and a statesman who had taken responsibility in Germany’s darkest hours. This appreciation was also shared by the members of the middle class. The CDU used Ebert as a symbol of opposition to the SPD government’s Ostpolitik in the early 1970s. The CDU remembered Ebert as a key figure who guaranteed the nation’s unity in very difficult times, as they accused the SPD of forsaking German unity with the new Ostpolitik. By contrast, the SPD invoked Ebert’s memory in order to deflect attacks against President Gustav Heinemann (SPD). Several weeks before Ebert’s hundredth birthday (February 4, 1971), Heinemann had given a controversial speech for the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the German Reich.<sup>36</sup> He stressed that he did not see the Federal Republic in

the tradition of the Reich of 1871. The conservatives were furious; they accused Heinemann of rejecting the basis for the constitution. Herbert Wehner, on the other hand, the chairman of the SPD parliamentary caucus, cautioned against a defamation campaign directed at a German president, given the example of the smear campaign against Friedrich Ebert.<sup>37</sup>

Even though Ebert was remembered less as a person than a symbol, it is noteworthy that in spite of the mass of literature on the Weimar Republic, there is still not a single academic study on Ebert as president. There are several reasons for this. First of all, Ebert's private papers were lost to historians: they were burned in a bomb attack in 1943. The second main reason for the lack of a comprehensive biography of Ebert is Ebert himself. He was not a charismatic politician. Former president Johannes Rau once said that Ebert did not possess "the aura of an extraordinary man . . . which usually fascinates historians."<sup>38</sup> Ebert did not illuminate his office with glamour, pathos, poses, passionate speeches, or symbolic acts. His appearances were demure; he was described as staid. He rarely issued statements about political strategies or visions. He contributed no distinctive expressions to political language. The lack of early academic studies of Ebert left a vacuum filled by simple pronouncements, such as the comment by left-wing writer Kurt Tucholsky that Ebert was a "paperman,"<sup>39</sup> a drab bureaucrat lacking flesh and blood, "personally clean and professionally dirty."<sup>40</sup> Such judgments were primarily aimed at Ebert's political persona but hit at his private person; their stylistic brilliance has even colored the academic discussion of Ebert.

Ebert was not as charismatic as other politicians of his age, such as Gustav Stresemann.<sup>41</sup> All in all, Friedrich Ebert has always been remembered less as president than as a man of vital importance during the revolutionary phase. His historical image is heavily influenced by clichés about his attitude towards the revolution.<sup>42</sup> In 1971, on Ebert's hundredth birthday, Günter Arns stated quite rightly that one could only refer to marginal historical notes when trying to evaluate Ebert's presidential policies.<sup>43</sup> As with other anniversaries, Ebert's centennial inspired new academic research. The first representative publication with photos and original handwritten documents was published in 1971.<sup>44</sup> That same year, Peter-Christian Witt published what he modestly announced as a "biographical attempt."<sup>45</sup> It was the first book on Ebert's life and work which was based on broader source material and has since been expanded. In the wake of the hundredth birthday, many articles were published on aspects of Ebert's career. Yet a detailed academic examination has yet to be undertaken.

Despite the different academic judgments of Ebert, a real "historians' controversy" about him never took place, as some anticipated might

occur in connection with the seventieth anniversary of his 1919 election.<sup>46</sup> His image in studies on the Weimar Republic has always been blurred. Nonetheless, Heinrich August Winkler softened his earlier judgment in a survey of German history published in 2000: "It would be wrong to call Ebert a great statesman."<sup>47</sup> Now Ebert is a statesman after all, just not a great one. What explains this modification?

The events of 1989 and the following years cast a different light on the revolution of 1918–19 and the first years of the Weimar Republic. German reunification took place in 1990 in a peaceful Europe, when the Federal Republic was economically stable. But the problems which emerged during reunification have reopened the question of how the foundation of a democracy in 1918, at the end of a lost war, has to be assessed. From this perspective, Ebert's policies appear much more positive. Ebert's successes are emphasized: a parliamentary democracy despite military defeat, hunger, and social disintegration. But this new view has not yet prevailed in the historical research.

After reunification, some schools and streets in the former GDR were named after Ebert; commemoration stones that had been destroyed under the Nazis were rebuilt.<sup>48</sup> In 1989, when the GDR regime broke down, the "Reich President Friedrich Ebert Memorial Foundation" was inaugurated. The foundation's history, however, dates back to the 1960s.

During the Weimar Republic, only a commemorative plaque was installed on the house where Ebert was born in 1871 as a son of a tailor. In 1960, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Bonn) and the City of Heidelberg initiated a plan to turn Ebert's birthplace into a memorial. The opening of the small museum in May 1962 was attended by President Heinrich Lübke.<sup>49</sup> In 1982, the first efforts were made to set up a national memorial foundation, again initiated by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the City of Heidelberg. In the run-up to the memorial's inauguration, it became apparent that Ebert was not one of the universally respected personalities in German history. The current chairman of the Green Party Reinhard Bütikofer, for instance, who was at that time a member of the district council of Heidelberg, called Ebert "a dead weight for democracy."<sup>50</sup> The law creating the memorial foundation was passed by the Bundestag in December 1986 against the votes of the Green Party.<sup>51</sup> The aim of the foundation is to preserve the memory of Friedrich Ebert and to contribute to an understanding of German history during his lifetime.

The memorial foundation signifies the institutionalization of the memory of Friedrich Ebert in the Federal Republic of Germany. On February 11, 1989, the memorial and its permanent exhibition were opened to the public in the presence of President Richard von Weizsäcker. The polemical debates about Ebert now belong to the past. Germany's first

president has finally found his place in history as a pioneer of democracy and a founder of the republic.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For Ebert's biography, see Walter Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert—Sein Leben, sein Werk, seine Zeit. Begleitband zur ständigen Ausstellung in der Reichspräsident-Friedrich-Ebert-Gedenkstätte* (Heidelberg, 1999). For a short introduction, see Walter Mühlhausen, "Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925)," in *Die Weimarer Republik. Portrait einer Epoche in Biographien*, ed. Michael Fröhlich (Darmstadt, 2002), 139–52.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. my recently finished study: Walter Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert 1871–1925. Reichspräsident der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Wolfram Pyta, "Paul von Hindenburg als charismatischer Führer der deutschen Nation," in *Charismatische Führer der deutschen Nation*, ed. Frank Möller (Munich, 2004), 109–47.

<sup>4</sup> Bernd Braun, "Integration, Kraft, Repräsentation—Der Reichspräsident in den Ländern," in *Friedrich Ebert als Reichspräsident. Amtsführung und Amtsverständnis*, ed. Eberhard Kolb (Munich, 1997), 157–87.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of February 7, 1921, in *Friedrich Ebert und seine Familie. Private Briefe 1909–1924*, ed. Walter Mühlhausen (Munich, 1992), 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Das Illustrierte Blatt*, January 11, 1925 (Frankfurt/Main).

<sup>7</sup> The bathing suit picture and some of the caricatures are reprinted in Mühlhausen, *Ebert—Sein Leben*, 326–8.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Mühlhausen, "Strategien gegen den Systemfeind—Zur Politik von Staat und Gesellschaft gegenüber der Sozialdemokratie im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871–1914," in *Freiheitsstreben—Demokratie—Emanzipation. Aufsätze zur politischen Kultur in Deutschland und den Niederlanden*, ed. Horst Lademacher and Walter Mühlhausen (Münster, 1993), 283–329.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Birkenfeld, "Der Rufmord am Reichspräsidenten. Zu Grenzformen des politischen Kampfes gegen die frühe Weimarer Republik 1919–1925," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 5 (1965): 453–500.

<sup>10</sup> Speech of February 11, 1919, quoted in Mühlhausen, *Ebert—Sein Leben*, 227.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Mühlhausen, "Reichspräsident und Sozialdemokratie. Friedrich Ebert und seine Partei 1919–1925," in *Friedrich Ebert als Reichspräsident*, 259–310, 305 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Mühlhausen, *Die Republik in Trauer. Der Tod des ersten Reichspräsidenten Friedrich Ebert* (Heidelberg, 2005), 62–3.

<sup>13</sup> Mühlhausen, *Die Republik in Trauer*, 38–61; Volker Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern in Deutschland. Von Wilhelm I. bis Franz Josef Strauß. Eine Studie zur politischen Semiotik* (Stuttgart, 1990), 78–9, 245–8.

<sup>14</sup> Bernd Braun, *Hermann Molkenbuhr (1851–1927). Eine politische Biographie* (Düsseldorf, 1999), 360.

<sup>15</sup> See Christian Jansen, "Otto von Bismarck: Modernität und Repression, Gewaltsamkeit und List. Ein absolutistischer Staatsdiener im Zeitalter der Massenpolitik," in *Charismatische Führer*, 63–83.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Luther, *Politiker ohne Partei. Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart, 1960), 329.

<sup>17</sup> Bernd Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und der Kampf um die politischen Symbole in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2001), 354–60

<sup>18</sup> *Deutsche Republik* 1 (Nov. 1926): 2.

<sup>19</sup> See Werner Plum, *Gedenken an Friedrich Ebert in der darstellenden Kunst. Provisorischer Katalog* (Bonn, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Ebert, *Schriften, Aufzeichnungen, Reden. Mit unveröffentlichten Erinnerungen aus dem Nachlass* (Dresden, 1926); Friedrich Ebert, *Kämpfe und Ziele. Mit einem Anhang: Erinnerungen von seinen Freunden* (Dresden, 1927).

<sup>21</sup> Emil Felden, *Eines Menschen Weg. Ein Fritz-Ebert-Roman* (Bremen, 1927).

- <sup>22</sup> Löbe, Paul et al., *Friedrich Ebert und seine Zeit. Ein Gedenkwerk über den ersten Präsidenten der deutschen Republik* (Berlin-Charlottenburg, 1926).
- <sup>23</sup> Ludwig Richter, ed., *Rückbesinnung und Neubeginn. Eine Gedenkfeier zu Ehren Friedrich Eberts am 2. März 1945 in New York. Eine Dokumentation* (Heidelberg, 1995).
- <sup>24</sup> Dieter Rebentisch, *Friedrich Ebert und die Paulskirche. Die Weimarer Demokratie und die 75-Jahrfeier der 1848er Revolution* (Heidelberg, 1998).
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with Georg Ebert, *Neues Deutschland*, November 19, 2004.
- <sup>26</sup> Friedrich Winterhager, *Louise Ebert (1873–1955). Von der niedersächsischen Häuslerkate zum Präsidentenpalais in Berlin* (St. Augustin, 1995).
- <sup>27</sup> Theodor Heuss, *Die großen Reden. Der Staatsmann* (Tübingen, 1965), 118.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Observer*, November 11, 1923.
- <sup>29</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Die große Spaltung. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie von 1905 bis 1917* (Berlin, 1981), 167, originally published as *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA, 1955).
- <sup>30</sup> *Die Zeit*, February 28, 1975.
- <sup>31</sup> *Vorwärts*, February 11, 1989.
- <sup>32</sup> Peter-Christian Witt, "Friedrich Ebert. Stadien der Forschung nach 1945," in *Friedrich Ebert und seine Zeit. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung*, 2d ed., ed. Rudolf König, Hartmut Soell and Hermann Weber (Munich, 1991), 11–33.
- <sup>33</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, Vol. 2, *Deutsche Geschichte vom "Dritten Reich" bis zur Wiedervereinigung*, 3d ed. (Munich, 2000), 462.
- <sup>34</sup> *Vorwärts*, February 11, 1989, 31.
- <sup>35</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924 bis 1930* (Berlin, 1985), 232.
- <sup>36</sup> Gustav W. Heinemann, *Zur Reichsgründung 1871—Zum 100. Geburtstag von Friedrich Ebert* (Stuttgart, 1971).
- <sup>37</sup> Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948–1990* (Darmstadt, 1999), 262.
- <sup>38</sup> Johannes Rau, "Vorwort," in *Friedrich Ebert und seine Zeit*, ed. König et al., 7.
- <sup>39</sup> Kurt Tucholsky, "Die Rolle des Intellektuellen in der Partei," in *Gesammelte Werke in 10 Bänden*, ed. Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz (Reinbek, 1975), 7:16.
- <sup>40</sup> Tucholsky, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:402.
- <sup>41</sup> See Jonathan Wright, *Gustav Stresemann. Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford, 2002); John P. Birkelund, *Gustav Stresemann. Patriot und Staatsmann. Eine Biografie* (Hamburg, 2003).
- <sup>42</sup> Detlef Lehnert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Parteienstaat und Massengesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1999), 247.
- <sup>43</sup> Günter Arns, "Friedrich Ebert als Reichspräsident," *Historische Zeitschrift*, Supplement 1, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Theodor Schieder (Munich, 1971), 1–30, 1. It is notable that early on, North American historians contributed studies on Ebert, such as Dieter Kurt Buse, "Friedrich Ebert and German Socialism, 1871–1919," Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1972. Subsequently, Buse, a Canadian, published instructive essays and monographs on Ebert, including *Friedrich Ebert—Sein Weg zum Politiker von nationaler Bedeutung (1915–1918)* (Heidelberg, 1994); "Reichspräsidentschaft und neue Exekutive 1919: Friedrich Ebert und die Wendepunkte deutscher Geschichte" in *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Dietrich Papenfuß and Wolfgang Schieder (Cologne, 2000), 109–33.
- <sup>44</sup> *Friedrich Ebert, 1871–1925*, 2d ed., with introduction by Peter-Christian Witt (Bonn, 1980).

<sup>45</sup> Peter-Christian Witt, *Friedrich Ebert. Parteiführer—Reichskanzler—Volksbeauftragter—Reichspräsident*, 3d ed. (Bonn, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> *Vorwärts*, February 11, 1989.

<sup>47</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, Vol. 1, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik*, 3d ed. (Munich, 2000), 457. Helga Grebing has also recently changed her view of Ebert. Cf. Helga Grebing, *Friedrich Ebert. Kritische Gedanken zur historischen Einordnung eines deutschen Sozialisten* (Bonn, 1971), and *Friedrich Ebert: Von der Verantwortung für die Demokratie in Deutschland* (Heidelberg, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> This happened, for example, in Schwarzburg (Thuringia), where Ebert signed the constitution on August 11, 1919. The commemoration stone was rebuilt in 1994. See Landkreis Rudolstadt, ed., *Friedrich Ebert in Schwarzburg. Aus Anlaß des 75. Jubiläums der Unterzeichnung der Weimarer Verfassung* (Rudolstadt, 1994).

<sup>49</sup> Stadt Heidelberg and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, eds., *Die Friedrich-Ebert-Gedenkstätte in Heidelberg* (Heidelberg, 1962).

<sup>50</sup> *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, October 25, 1985 (Heidelberg).

<sup>51</sup> During the debates in the Bundestag in 1986, Hans-Christian Ströbele (Alliance 90/The Greens) railed against the bill to create a national foundation, whereas Hartmut Soell (SPD) defended the initiative. It had been introduced by CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP. See *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages: 10. Wahlperiode, Drucksachen*, Vol. 344 (Bonn, 1986), 6642; *Stenographische Berichte*, Vol. 139 (Bonn 1986), 18669–72; and Vol. 140, 19892–4.

Friedrich Ebert's life was entwined with the birth and the death of the German Empire. On 18 January 1871 Wilhelm I of Prussia was proclaimed German Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles in a ceremony intended to humiliate a France recently defeated in war. On 4 February 1871 Ebert was born in Heidelberg into a tradesman's family. At the age of 48, he succeeded the last Hohenzollern Emperor, Wilhelm II, as the head of the German state, the first commoner to hold that position. Ebert's father, Karl, was a master tailor, successful, relatively prosperous, a Roman Catholic with [View Friedrich Ebert Research Papers on Academia.edu for free.](#) This volume emerged from the conference [Access-Presentation-Memory: The Presidential Libraries and the Memorial Foundations of German Politicians](#) held at the German Historical Institute, Washington DC. Facilitating dialogue across disciplinary boundaries as well as the Atlantic, it brought representatives from the U.S. presidential libraries, the with professors, archivists, and members of public interest groups. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is the oldest German political foundation. It is closely affiliated to the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which is currently part of a governing party coalition in Germany. Like all political foundations, the FES is strongly interwoven with the party although it is an independent voluntary association. It serves as a think tank for the SPD. **Brief History.** Founded in 1925 as a foundation of the SPD, FES was named after Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925), a social democrat and the first President of the German Democratic Republic. Originally, the main concern of the found [The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung \(FES\)](#) is the oldest political foundation in Germany with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to its foundation in 1925. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. The work of our private independent political foundation focuses on the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity. This connects us to social democracy and free trade unions. As a non-profit institution, we organise our work autonomously and inde [Hunt, – Friedrich Ebert and the German Revolution,](#) p. 347, avoids the major question when he quotes Ebert proclaiming to Scheidemann that he had no right to declare the republic, because at issue is not whether Ebert was correct or incorrect in this assertion, rather why he reasoned Scheidemann had no right to do so. For Ebert the choice between Independents and military was not a moral issue but a matter of political tactics; for Ebert the mode in which power was employed was the moral issue, and he had very strong moral qualms about the use of force. In addition to the literature cited in notes 53, 57, and 69 above see [Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics](#), p. 22.