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RICHARD E. FRANKEL

BISMARCK'S SHADOW

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For my family …

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Introduction

> The example of a great man can effect more changes in the world than all the social legislation. But beware, if the example be misunderstood! Then it may happen that a new type of man may arise, who sees in severity and repression, not the sad transition to humane conditions, but the aim of life itself. Weak and pacifistic by nature, he strives to appear a man of iron because, in his conception, Bismarck was such a man. Invoking without justification one higher than himself he becomes noisy and dangerous.
>
> Heinrich Mann, *Der Untertan*[1]

In a Berlin pub around the turn of the century a group of devoted Bismarck followers met every Wednesday evening to reminisce about the recently deceased Reich Chancellor. At one of these meetings, Maximilian Harden – baptized Jew and publisher of the journal *Zukunft* – sat with a contemptuous look upon his face, listening as each sought to outdo the other with anecdotes of their common hero. Finally he leaped to his feet and yelled, "You with your Bismarck! What was so special about him? I first made him great." After a moment of awkward silence, the man sitting across from him, a Pan-German named Wilhelm Kollmann, rose to his feet, grabbed a wine bottle and yelled, "you damn Jew!" as he slammed the bottle on Harden's head, nearly fracturing his skull. In relating this story, Kollmann reassured his listener that Harden was fine. He had just given him a 'lesson'. Kollman felt himself fully justified: "Such a fellow wanted to lay his hands on Bismarck." [2]

This story helps illustrate a fascinating historical phenomenon – the critical role of Bismarck in German political culture from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth. Here we have a group of solid middle-class Germans meeting to discuss Bismarck. But this was not a homogenous group. While Harden was certainly a strong German nationalist and concerned himself intensely with issues of national power and prestige, he was no Pan-German, and men such as Kollmann had any number of issues that divided them from the baptized Jewish journalist. And yet Bismarck brought them together – but not completely. Despite their shared admiration for the Iron Chancellor, and their shared hopes for German greatness that were embodied in the symbol of Bismarck, they fought over him. Max Harden challenged the claims of those around him to be the true disciples of Bismarck and the rightful executors of his will by himself claiming to have 'made' Bismarck into the towering figure to whom they all bowed down. But his challenge

was violently dismissed by another from that circle who refused to accept Harden's attempt to define this national symbol and in response proceeded to nearly shatter the man's skull. The emotions exhibited here go beyond a case of mere barroom bravado – they reflect on a small scale the very real struggles going on over the meaning of the nation and the contours of German political culture.

At the heart of these struggles stood Bismarck, or more accurately, a series of Bismarck images, each with their own meaning and their own lessons. Defining Bismarck in a very real sense meant defining the nation. To the victor went the opportunity to determine just what Germany would look like and what path it would follow. The violence with which Herr Kollmann reacted to Harden's assertion provides a small glimpse into one of those potential future Germanies: a Germany in which violence, based on Bismarckian precedent, is a perfectly viable and legitimate option for solving political disputes. And while all of Germany would feel the consequences of these battles, it was largely a fight among the German Right – mainly middle-class, but also aristocratic, Germans fighting over the symbol that, for them more than for other groups in German society, had the most resonance. But those fighting over Bismarck in the bar scene described above were not in power – their decisions did not make or break national policy – at least, not yet.

The fight for Bismarck would not remain for long on the level of the beer hall. These men were serious and they were not content to continue in the role of what Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow would derisively label as *Bierbankpolitiker*, or beer hall politicians. With a fervor that, as we shall see, could be described as religious, Bismarckians would carry their icon into battle not only against other 'misguided' followers, but against a government increasingly seen to be out of touch with the 'spirit of Bismarck' and leading the nation in dangerous directions. If at the time of the Harden–Kollmann confrontation such efforts produced few tangible results, it would not be too much longer before these people would be moving from the margins of German politics to center stage. With a new brand of populist, radical nationalist politics espoused in Bismarck's name, they would break down the doors of *Honoratiorenpolitik*, or the politics of notables, that had barred them from national political roles. Leading new organizations with Bismarck as their founding inspiration, they would soon be brokering deals with political parties that had previously looked down upon them. Soon they would be pressuring the government with an effectiveness that made the chancellor's position an even more difficult one than before, with dangerous implications for German foreign policy. Eventually, Bismarckians would be in the government itself, having moved from the beer halls to the halls of power. The role that the Bismarck image and the cult that grew up around that image played in this process of developing and legitimizing a new style of right-wing politics is at the heart of this study.

From Bismarck to Hitler? The Nature of the Project

Few figures in history can match the scholarly attention devoted to modern Germany's founder and first chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. A look at the thousands of studies of him is clear testimony to that.[3] Otto Pflanze has noted that only two figures can claim to have inspired more historical investigation, both of whom have some connection to Bismarck: Napoleon, whose defeat at Waterloo in 1815 occurred the year Bismarck was born, and Hitler, whose Third Reich was meant to be a successor to Bismarck's creation, but in the end brought about its ultimate destruction.[4] And while the connection to Napoleon is more coincidence than anything else, the relationship between Bismarck and Hitler requires some discussion, both for the historiographical issues it raises as well as for the purposes of clarifying what this study is truly about. For while a great many Bismarck studies were produced before the world had ever heard of Adolf Hitler, much of the writing on the Iron Chancellor has involved an effort either to demonstrate or to disprove a link between the first chancellor of the Second Reich and the *Führer* of the Third. As it has with most areas of German history, the issue of Hitler's rise and success and the crimes committed in his name has settled over the field of Bismarck scholarship. In some sense, then, Bismarck scholars can be said to have been working in *Hitler's* shadow.

The question of the 'Bismarck to Hitler' connection occupied historians almost immediately following the fateful night of January 30, 1933, when the Nazi leader was named chancellor. Most of those early judgments recognized the connection and viewed it favorably. The defeat and devastation that followed the Second World War, however, led some to raise the question of continuity – just how much of the Third Reich could be seen to have already been developing in the Second? In *The German Catastrophe*, Friedrich Meinecke wrote that "the staggering course of World War I and still more of World War II makes it impossible to pass over in silence the query whether the germs of the later evil were not really implanted in Bismarck's work from the outset."[5] At first, the predominant response came from German nationalist historians such as Gerhard Ritter and Hans Rothfels, who answered in the negative.[6] In doing so, they sought to cleanse the German past of its Nazi stain by severing the Iron Chancellor from the *Führer*, depicting Bismarck as a man of morals and moderation – qualities completely absent from Hitler – and thus a truer product of German development. A new generation would take a new look and end up finding those connections between the Second and the Third Reich to which Meinecke alluded, and therefore between Bismarck and Hitler. In particular, the findings of Fritz Fischer and those who followed him with regard to the continuity in war aims from the First to the Second World Wars helped revive the debate.[7] The issue of continuity remains a critical element of German historical inquiry, and certainly this study will have something to say about it. But it will

do so not through a direct comparison of the two men or even of the institutions of the Second and the Third Reich. This is a different kind of study.[8]

While it does deal in part with Bismarck's own impact on German political culture, overall this project takes a different approach in seeking to understand the particular path Germany followed during the first half of the twentieth century. In doing so, it asks not only what Bismarck did to Germany, but even more importantly *what Germans did to Bismarck* and what they did with the Bismarck they created to help shape a political culture in which someone like Hitler and a movement like National Socialism were not only possible, but considered viable candidates for power.[9] There is, however, much more to this story than simply the issue of Hitler, for the thirty-five years between Bismarck's death and the Nazi leader's appointment as chancellor were extraordinarily eventful years in their own right. And so the history of Bismarck's shadow should not be seen merely as a prelude to the Third Reich. Instead, it provides valuable insights into the development of several issues that are critical to a fuller understanding of German political culture, including a chronic leadership crisis, both real and perceived, and the transformation of the German Right, both in terms of its legitimacy and its radicalism, from the 1870s to the 1930s. The impact of these issues would be felt well before Hitler gained the chancellor's office.

The main issue this project seeks to address is a broad one, of which the rise and success of the Nazis is only one part, albeit an important one. At its heart it seeks to understand what Geoff Eley has described as the dramatic transformation, or metamorphosis, of the Right's character from the 1870s to the 1920s, particularly in terms of the drastic radicalization of its ideology and political style.[10] That the transformation did occur is beyond dispute – in the end, there did arise a German fascism. The question has been *how* it occurred. Hans-Ulrich Wehler and others in the Bielefeld School felt that they had found the answers in the failure of the bourgeoisie to unseat the Prussian feudal elite following unification. An anachronistic situation thus emerged whereby the old elites sought to cling to power through the use of a series of manipulative strategies including social imperialism and *Sammlungspolitik*, or the rallying together of the conservative elite forces in the empire.[11] In response to that interpretation, Eley and others looked to the tension between the ruling elites and more marginalized groups among the German middle classes and how those marginal groups, rather than being manipulated into nationalist stances, often were the ones leading the nationalist charge. In his own study of the German Right, and particularly the Navy League, Eley showed how the tensions brought about by the frustrated ambitions of middle-class Germans led them to develop a new populist style of politics – a politics of national opposition – that represented a radicalization of these groups and thus contributed to that more general transformation of the Right.[12] The question, though, is what mechanisms enabled these middle-class Germans to break the bounds of

Honoratiorenpolitik and stake out a new position within German political culture from which they could make their own play for political power and influence?

Here we need to look at the issue of political culture generally and then that of the German Right more specifically. Broadly defined, political culture can be seen as "the set of fundamental beliefs, values and attitudes that characterize the nature of the political system and regulate the political interactions among its members."[13] In effect, then, it involves the cultural parameters, or the framework, in which politics is played out. The cultural component of this definition is closely tied to the role of symbols in limiting and guiding political action. Symbols serve as outward expressions of those basic assumptions which guide people in their political activity by defining the borders within which politics may be practiced. They can limit the range of options open to political actors just as they can empower them to carry out a certain range of policies by bequeathing their legitimacy to that particular political persuasion. This is not to say that the structure of a nation's political culture is all powerful, leaving individuals in a straightjacket without the ability to affect their own destiny. Just as the features of a nation's political culture are not static, the properties of the symbols that make up that political culture also change over time. And they change as a result of a variety of factors, some of which are external – the result of calamities such as war, revolution, or natural disasters – and others which are the result of individual action. Thus the relationship between a nation's political culture and the individuals within it is one of give and take. The structure of a political culture acts upon individuals, making certain courses of action more likely than others, while at the same time individuals may act in certain ways, claiming and thereby shaping central political symbols or ideas, which result in a permanent alteration of that country's political culture.

While defining political culture has been described as trying to 'nail pudding to the wall', the challenges in using such a concept go beyond mere definition to the issue of setting boundaries.[14] For to speak about German 'political culture' can, in a sense, be deceiving, since it implies a uniformity which for the most part did not exist. In reality, Germany was a highly fragmented society, and the political culture reflected that condition.[15] From the Empire's founding in 1871, the nation was beset by regional, confessional, and class divisions which left their imprint on German politics for the next seventy-five years. Following the lead of recent scholarship in electoral studies, and in particular the work of Karl Rohe, it makes more sense to speak of a number of lager, or sub-cultures, which compete with each other for political influence.[16] Much is known about the Social Democratic and Catholic sub-cultures with their own organizations and self-contained worldviews.[17] The importance of such sub-categories within German political culture becomes particularly apparent when discussion turns to the early 1930s and attempts are made to explain the attraction or immunity to Nazism. But what about

the other major sub-groups, the Protestant middle classes of white-collar workers and professionals, particularly the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as well as the conservative agrarian lager? These were the groups from which the Right drew its strength and where the overwhelming majority of Bismarckians were to be found. What role did the Bismarck image play for the people in these lager? Did the Bismarck Cult perform a similar integrating and insulating function to that of Marxism and Catholicism for the other major lager?

This leads us to one of the key themes of this book – the phenomenon of political religion, which I intend to show played a substantial role in helping those on the right to formulate and express political ideals and goals.[18] Out of the tension with the established political elites, as well as with a government increasingly unresponsive to those fearing a dangerous departure from Bismarckian precedent, there emerged a new form and style of political practice centered around a former political leader now raised to the level of political god.[19] Numerous groups and individuals channeled Bismarck's oppositional potential into new forms of expression that clearly combined the political with the religious in ways that could potentially galvanize an otherwise disparate movement. With new forms of monumental expression, speeches in the form of sermons delivered by a new priestly caste of German academics, and a world-view that combined a gospel-like story of good and evil, fall and redemption, and a promised land of national community and world power, the Bismarck Cult dug deep furrows, decade after decade, into the ground of German political culture.

It is also one of the assertions of this work that a full understanding of the dynamics of the Right's transformation is impossible without an analysis that takes those decades upon decades into account – that is to say, it must take a longer term view than anything that has been attempted previously.[20] This is as true for understanding Germany's crisis of leadership as it is for understanding the rise and success of Nazism. One cannot fully explain the development and acceptance of the political religion of National Socialism without a full picture of the political culture in which it took root – a political culture shaped for decades by the political religion of the Bismarck Cult.[21] This study can trace continuities and note important transformative moments that could not receive such treatment in shorter works. The remarkable duration and lasting intensity of the Right's fascination with Bismarck essentially requires such an approach.

The Development of an Obsession: Bismarck and the German People

"The present condition of our parliamentary life is a legacy of Prince Bismarck's long domination and of the nation's attitude toward him since the last decade of his chancellorship. This attitude has no parallel in the reaction of any other great

people toward a statesman of such stature. Nowhere else in the world has even the most unrestrained adulation of a politician made a proud nation sacrifice its substantive convictions so completely."[22] Max Weber made these observations towards the end of the First World War in a series of articles outlining the problems of German political life of the past several decades. The focus of his wrath was the unique position of Bismarck in German political culture. The obsession he pointed to had already helped drive the nation into the war they were about to lose. It would cause even more problems in the years ahead as Germans sought to establish democracy on the ruins of the Bismarckian Empire. The relationship that Weber was describing between Bismarck and the German people is a rather fascinating phenomenon of modern history – the idolization, or more accurately the deification, of recently deceased political leaders. There have certainly been a number of cases of political leaders becoming idolized after their death. Napoleon, Lincoln, and Lenin are among the first to spring to mind.[23] For the Germans, their fascination with Bismarck proved extraordinarily intense and long-lasting, with consequences for both the nation itself and the wider world that would turn out to be regrettable.

Over the course of his many decades in office, Bismarck received a remarkable number of honors and awards.[24] During the wars of unification he rose to the level of prince. He became colonel general of the cavalry with the rank of field marshal though he had only one year of army service behind him. The Kaiser, in fact, awarded him every medal available along with at least one that had to be created just for Bismarck. From the public he received an equally remarkable number of awards and honors. Universities granted him honorary degrees, while dozens of cities made him honorary citizen. Paintings of Bismarck became a cottage industry and images of him could be found all over the country. His seventieth birthday and the twenty-fifth anniversary of his appointment as minister-president became national celebrations. During his years in office Bismarck did little to cultivate this unparalleled popularity. He rarely, if ever, spoke to public gatherings outside of parliament, preferring instead to exert influence through the print media. This silence, and even embarrassment, in the face of public acclaim, however, were not to last.[25]

With his unceremonious dismissal in March 1890, a major change took place that resulted in the expansion of Bismarck's legendary status still further, while at the same time it provided headaches for those in Berlin trying to fill his shoes. Bismarck now began to speak out. His estate at Friedrichsruh became the site of numerous pilgrimages by admirers of all kinds. Between March 1890 and 1895 he received and spoke to about 150 different groups of anywhere from dozens to thousands of people. Whatever the particular purpose of the visit, political issues often found their way into Bismarck's speeches. And whatever their relation to his actual policies while in office, he now tailored his message for the purposes of

shaping a new image – in particular, a patriotic image. Exposure to the 'new' Bismarck was not limited to those in attendance, as newspaper reporters brought his words to a much wider public.[26] Bismarck's eightieth birthday gave an idea of the extent of Bismarck devotion in Germany. Between March and June he received more than fifty delegations of visitors, one of the largest being a group of over four thousand university students. Around 10,000 telegrams and 450,000 postcards arrived as well. And the celebrations were not limited to Friedrichsruh. In Berlin, as well as in many other cities and towns across the Reich, Germans celebrated Bismarck's birthday as a major national holiday.[27]

With his death in 1898, the pace of Bismarck's sacralization increased to the point where we can now speak of a new political religion: a Bismarck Cult. His followers transformed the anniversaries of his birth and death, as well as the *Sonnenwende* (summer solstice), into nationalist high-holidays. For those who could not make the most significant act of devotion – the pilgrimage to Friedrichsruh – local celebrations across the country provided the opportunity to participate. As the Cult developed, so too did a whole repertoire of ritual practices. Whether they were at his grave or in their hometown on the high-holidays, Bismarckians would attend ceremonies during which speeches were delivered in major halls, at Bismarck monuments, or at the newest expression of Bismarck worship – Bismarck fire-towers, which were planned and constructed at an amazing rate.[28] In both their numbers and their financing, these expressions of a new style of politics testified to the populist, spontaneous nature of Bismarck idolatry. Practically year in and year out newspapers of even mild nationalist persuasion published some form of tribute article on one or more of these key dates. And the language used at these ceremonies and in these articles mixed the political with imagery and emotion normally reserved for religious affairs. Over the years he was transformed from the flesh-and-blood chancellor to the hero; the heaven-sent liberator and savior; the leader who brought his people out of the pre-national wilderness to the promised land of national unity only to be sacrificed by an uncaring monarch and a jaded public. Talk grew of the time when there would arise a new Bismarck who would lead his people out of the division and disgrace of post-war Germany to a new promised land of unity in the long-sought-after 'national community'. In the meantime, Bismarck served as a model – a model of Germanness, of the 'correct' national politics. The 'spirit of Bismarck' would guide the Germans through this wilderness until they had once again raised themselves to the level of national consciousness where they would be deserving of a new leader.

This small glimpse into the various forms of Bismarck obsession suggests the question: Why Bismarck, and why Germany? Why did Germans elevate an aging, physically deteriorating, often grumpy politician, viewed by many at the time of his dismissal to be out of touch with the times, to the level of demi-god? And why

did this occur in Germany? In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany was the most modern, advanced industrial country in Europe. Why did it embrace a phenomenon that turned its back so dramatically on the modern world, a phenomenon of such seemingly irrational character? These are questions that must be investigated before we delve into the actual analysis of the Bismarck legacy. But, broadly put, the Bismarck phenomenon reflects a serious crisis of German political culture.

Defining the Nation: Bismarck and German National Identity

German unification occurred in the midst of the age of nationalism and the impact of that ideology on the new nation and the particular shape it took helped determine the course of German and European history for the next seventy-five years. While most European nationalisms contained strong elements of the irrational, German nationalism had a number of additional factors that gave it its particular characteristics. Unified only in 1871, the Second Reich lacked the long, sustained history enjoyed by countries such as Britain and France. In this age in which nationalism was quickly becoming the dominant ideology for unifying peoples and granting legitimacy to national governments, Germany needed to fashion its own identity as a legitimate nation-state equal in stature with the more established powers. Its belated arrival on the national scene led, in many respects, to a more boisterous form of nationalism – as cover for a perceived inadequacy of national credentials.[29] The particular means by which Bismarck unified the country – through three successful wars – also helped color the way many Germans viewed their nation. In addition, Germany underwent modernization at an extremely rapid and often disquieting pace. Such dramatic change led many to seek a haven in which their problems and uncertainties would be solved. That haven was the German national community, and its particular features were forged in the public discourse of the post-unification period.

Myths and symbols played a critical role in the forging of this national identity, serving to unify the people and giving them a sense of shared values and a common past.[30] The meaning given to those myths and symbols therefore played a critical role in determining the nation's characteristics – what it meant to be German, and what kind of role Germany should play in the world. It is obvious, then, that the right to define the national symbols is of immense value, since that right enables a group to imprint their own world-view upon the nation's political culture.[31] The struggles fought out in the German public sphere over this right were marked by an intensity which reflected the combatants' awareness of the benefits of victory and the price of defeat.

The spread of nationalism and the development of national identity through such battles depended upon a development which was well under way by the

second half of the nineteenth century and was dramatically changing the face of European society – the expansion of the print media.[32] In the case of Germany, Volker Berghahn points out that "the culture of the *Kaiserreich* was a culture of the written and spoken word."[33] It is true that new media were being developed at this time, and that film and radio would play an increasing role during Weimar, but still "the press remained the most important medium through which people informed themselves about their locality or the wider environment and through which ideas and opinions were spread."[34] It was this central component of the public sphere which served as the battlefield for control of the national symbols, the right to define them, and thus the ability to give direction to the nation.

During the first half of the century there were few greater prizes in this struggle to define the nation than the first chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. His pivotal role in the wars of unification and his status as the founder of the Empire guaranteed him heroic stature. His next twenty years as leader of the nation and fulcrum of European politics served to solidify his historical position. The only question then was: what would the symbol Bismarck look like? While in office, the positions he took and the policies he enacted served to shape the growing legend. Though no longer in office after 1890, his stature remained a potent force, and its use in support of, or against, the government would have vital repercussions on the course of German politics at the outset of the Wilhelmine period. With his death in 1898, the situation changed once again. No longer able to play an active role in shaping his own legend, Bismarck now passed completely into the public domain. Clearly a name with tremendous symbolic power, the battle was now joined by all those who sought to claim this national hero for their own cause, define it based on their own political outlook, and thereby acquire the legitimacy for their program that such a symbol bestows. The victors in this struggle would thereby gain a powerful weapon for their arsenal, which they could then use to help drive German politics in their desired direction. It was a struggle within the Right itself, between the Right and the government, and between Bismarckians and anti-Bismarckians. Looking at the big picture, how did this struggle help define the nation in the years to come? More specifically, how did the tensions between the various parties to the conflict help shape the culture of German right-wing politics in the decades after his death?

Charismatic Authority and the Crisis of Leadership

"It is my fate always to stand in the shadow of the great man."[35] When Leo von Caprivi, Bismarck's successor, made this statement in June 1892, he was acknowledging the existence of a serious flaw in Germany's political structure that would haunt it until its demise in the Second World War. Emerging even during Bismarck's tenure, a crisis of leadership, both real and perceived, became a central

feature of German political culture. A sense of frustration developed with the men who followed Bismarck as chancellor. The absence of anyone even approaching his political abilities combined with the government's actual, or imagined, inability to solve Germany's problems added to such concerns. As the process of national self-definition continued, the development of the symbol Bismarck combined with the fears of those in the Protestant bourgeois and conservative agrarian lager to give shape to another crucial feature of German political culture – the role of the charismatic leader. The wish to solve the problems facing them steadily contributed to the desire among many Germans for a savior – a charismatic leader who would end the crisis of leadership, as well as the dislocation and uncertainties of the modern world.

To gain an understanding of charismatic leadership, we must turn to the sociology of Max Weber. In its most basic sense, Weber defined charismatic leaders as "the bearers of specific gifts of body and mind that were considered 'supernatural' (in the sense that not everybody could have access to them)."[36] Such leaders shun any rationalized, regular source of income and are not bound by traditional rules, values, or systems of authority. In fact the charismatic leader is by nature a revolutionary figure. He is not elected by any traditional or rational system of selection but achieves his position through his belief in his own gift of grace (charisma) and his sense of mission. "The bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a mission believed to be embodied in him; this mission has not necessarily and has not always been revolutionary, but in its most charismatic forms it has inverted all value hierarchies and overthrown custom, law and tradition."[37]

It is true that, while in office, Bismarck did not fulfill all of the criteria of the charismatic leader – his constitutional subordination to the monarch would be just one example. And in fact, by the end of his career, any charismatic features that he did have had all but left him. One of the most popular catchphrases circulating in the last year of his chancellorship, "nothing succeeds anymore," indicates the fragile nature of charismatic authority and the means by which it is lost. In addition to the belief the leader must have in his own gift of grace, the followers must also be convinced of his extraordinary abilities, and when the leader can no longer prove his powers, his charismatic hold on the people is lost. His mission ends "and hope expects and searches for a new bearer."[38] In the case of Bismarck and the aftermath of his dismissal, however, something remarkable happened. Instead of fading into the pages of history, the Iron Chancellor soon took on new life, beginning in the years of his retirement, but then taking off with even more strength following his death. Gradually, Bismarck became 're-charismatized' as more and more of the attributes of the true charismatic leader were applied to him. He had become the "new bearer" for whom the German people were searching.

To help explain this phenomenon we must understand the situations in which charismatic authority comes about. Weber wrote that "[c]harismatic rulership . . .

always results from unusual, especially political or economic situations, or from extraordinary psychic, particularly religious states, or from both together. It arises from collective excitement produced by extraordinary events and from surrender to heroism of any kind."[39] Seeking a more specific application of the concept of charisma, M. Rainer Lepsius developed the notion of the 'latent charismatic situation'.[40] It is only when the two criteria of the latent charismatic situation are met that a charismatic leader may arise. First, there must be a tendency to impute charisma – the culture must be such that there exists a belief that supernatural abilities can directly influence human fate and that these powers can be represented in human beings. Both German and European nationalism contained elements of myth and other quasi-religious features. As we move forward, a look at the particularities of the Bismarck Cult will help shed light on the potential for a 'latent charismatic situation' in the case of modern Germany. The second criterion for the existence of a latent charismatic situation is the perception and experience of a crisis. "The awareness of the incapacity to overcome the crisis delegitimizes the existing political institutions."[41] The consciousness of this inability leads to the expectation that a great leader will arise to change the situation. The key to remember here is the necessity for both of these criteria to be present. What role did the Bismarck image play in the crisis of German leadership? Could Bismarck have served as a charismatic leader for the nation in the years following his death and what did that mean for German politics over that time? What role did he play for the German Right? Was the image of this charismatic leader and the cult that built up around him one of the main unifying elements of an otherwise hopelessly fractured Right? And finally, could the legacy of Bismarck be seen to have played a role in transforming a latent charismatic situation into a manifest charismatic situation, thus contributing to the rise and success of Germany's most infamous charismatic leader, Adolf Hitler?

The Role of Bismarck in German Political Culture: Method and Structure of the Project

A study of the Bismarck image in German history runs the serious risk of growing beyond manageable proportions. The pervasiveness of the Iron Chancellor was such that he touched on almost all areas of life in Germany, from politics to literature, to the arts and to a whole cottage industry of Bismarck commercialization. Rather than provide a close analysis of those popular cultural elements of the Bismarck phenomenon, this project seeks to analyze the big picture of German politics as a whole in what should be a much more compelling study. German history, however, over the period of time covered by this project was remarkably eventful, to say the least. Limitations are thus critical. Rather than minutely tracing the details of the changes in Bismarck's image over this time, I will seek to bring

out broad trends and tendencies with regard to his place in German political culture and, in particular, the relationship between the Bismarck Cult, the crisis of German leadership, and the transformation of the Right from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth.

This project involves the analysis of a phenomenon that unfolded in, and took its particular shape as a result of, the transformed public sphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The primary arena for this public sphere was the newspaper press. Newspapers representing various political shadings as well as regions therefore serve as the major source base.[42] These have been augmented by published speeches held at the countless Bismarck ceremonies held on his birthday, the anniversary of his death, or the *Sonnenwende*, as well as speeches at other national celebrations such as the 'Day of the Founding of the Reich' (*Reichsgründungstag*) or Sedan Day. In addition, election materials as well as the minutes of Reichstag debates have proven to be profitable sources. Using these materials, I have looked at the features attached to the symbol Bismarck. What kind of imagery did various groups and individuals use to describe him? Where was he made to fit along the spectrum of German right-wing politics? Finally, I looked for the concrete political issues of the day where Bismarck was used to advance the position of a particular party or individual. How did Bismarck fit into German political battles? The language used to describe him, whether of a more purely rational-political nature or some form of quasi-religious discourse, helped shed light on particular characteristics of German political culture over this period. The rather long time span that this project covers will provide a good sense of change over time with regard to the Iron Chancellor's various incarnations, as well as their position within the changing fabric of German political culture. The result should be a broadly based account of the role Bismarck played in German political discourse over a period of more than five decades.

The structure of the project is based on a chronological account of the development and usage of the Bismarck image. The first section of the book deals with the initial rise and early impact of the legend. The first chapter covers its emergence, development, and transformation from state-supporting symbol to icon of the national opposition thanks to the circumstances of his dismissal and the actions and inactions of the regime in dealing with what was becoming an alternative pole of national allegiance. The second chapter opens with the rise and development of the Bismarck Cult as a new political religion. In particular it traces the emergence of the rituals, monuments, and rhetoric that gave the movement its particular force and allowed it to legitimize the new populist brand of radical national opposition that had been developing since the 1890s. The third chapter examines a critical turning point in the development of the image and its role in German political culture. The crisis decade from 1914 to 1923 saw Germany experience a devastating war, a shocking defeat, a revolution, and a violent five-year civil war. Thus