

HOTEL BERLIN:
THE POLITICS OF COMMERCIAL HOSPITALITY IN THE GERMAN
METROPOLIS, 1875–1945

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the institution of the grand hotel in Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi Berlin. It is a German cultural and business history of the fate of classical liberalism, which in practice treated human beings as rational, self-regulating subjects. The major shareholders in the corporations that owned the grand hotels, hotel managers, and hotel experts, through their daily efforts to keep the industry afloat amid the vicissitudes of modern German history, provide a vantage point from which to see the pathways from quotidian difficulties to political decisions, shedding light on how and why a multi-generational group of German businessmen embraced and then rejected liberal politics and culture in Germany.

Treating the grand hotel as an institution and a space for the cultivation of liberal practices, the dissertation contributes to the recent body of work on liberal governance in the modern city by seeing the grand hotel as a field in which a dynamic, socially and culturally heterogeneous population tried and ultimately failed to determine the powers and parameters of liberal subjectivity. In locating the points at which liberal policies became impracticable, this dissertation also enters a conversation about the timing and causes of the crisis of German democracy.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. The first covers the period 1875 to 1914, between the opening of Berlin's first grand hotel and the start of World War I. Chapter 1 examines the invention of the grand hotel and its arrival in Berlin, as well as

the ways in which the presence of women and employees challenged hoteliers in the enactment of what they understood as a liberal project. Chapter 2 focuses on the ten years before World War I and analyzes the tensions between cosmopolitan and nationalist imperatives, especially with respect to American tourists, as hoteliers negotiated the demands that Berlin be seen both as a “world city” catering to guests from across the globe and the capital of a newly unified and increasingly self-assertive nation.

Part 2 covers the period 1914 to 1933, from the beginning of major shortages of labor and material as a consequence of war to the destruction of the Weimar Republic. Chapter 3 focuses on the grand hotel at war, particularly the abrogation of liberal practices in face of authoritarian impulses and the slow evaporation of hoteliers’ hopes for a return of the prewar liberal order. The next chapter locates the particular postwar struggles and frustrations that led the majority of Berlin’s hoteliers to abandon liberalism and the pro-Republican parties. The last chapter establishes the extent of the reemergence of liberalism in Weimar’s “golden years” of relative stability as well as why, after that period, the board of directors of the principal hotel corporation in Berlin decided to let Hitler continue to use their flagship property as his Berlin headquarters. An epilogue extends into the Nazi period, when every last grand hotel burned to the ground.

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Introduction

On September 15, 1932, the crisis of German democracy checked in at the Hotel Kaiserhof in Berlin. The owners, almost all of them opposed to Nazism and half of them Jewish, had the chance to boot Adolf Hitler from the premises, but they balked. In the ensuing four and a half months, Hitler and his henchmen accomplished the assumption of power. The Kaiserhof was their Berlin headquarters, in full view of the Chancellery across the square. Hitler needed only glance out the window of his corner suite to see the object of his conquest and disdain, the executive seat of the Weimar Republic, for which popular and elite support had eroded to the extent that even a group of Jewish liberals saw no option by September 15, 1932, but to let the brownshirts overrun the Kaiserhof and then, by extension, the Republic itself. Why? How? This dissertation seeks to answer these questions by examining the connections between the basic, quotidian struggles and the shifting political commitments of the owners and managers of Berlin's grand hotels.

"Hotel Berlin" narrates the rise and fall of the grand hotel in the German capital, while attending in particular to the perspectives of its managerial population. Up to 1914, these men saw the grand hotel project as essentially liberal, dependent as it was on the free movement of people and goods; on an unwritten, unspoken contract, which held guests responsible for their own well-regulated good behavior; and on the assumption that without some form of hierarchy, the trade unionists might prevail, to the detriment of all. That commitment to liberalism wavered after 1914 and evaporated under the hyperinflationary conditions of 1923. In the following decade, those hoteliers who made

political statements were consistent in their anti-Republicanism and anti-liberalism such that by September 15, 1932, the liberal approach was unavailable to the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft (Hotel Business Corporation). Although William Meinhardt, chairman of the board, claimed that allowing the Nazis to remain at the Kaiserhof was in fact a sign of his liberality, his was now a liberalism that could only really defend its right to consume itself.

Although September 15, 1932, is this history's vanishing point, the advent of the Third Reich is only a small part of the picture.¹ In recovering and assessing the twists and turns that produced such a decision as whether to let Hitler stay at the Kaiserhof, this study reaches as far back as 1875, the year that the Kaiserhof opened as Berlin's first grand hotel. I reconstruct the hierarchies and practices that shaped the business until the outbreak of World War I, the end of an age of relative equipoise among groups of people—owners, managers, workers, and guests, many from outside Germany—who would soon come into spectacular conflict. The war and its aftermath exposed class and cultural cleavages that managers had had more success concealing in the time of the old regime. Now, the grand hotel was a crucible of social, economic, and political dislocation, the subject of the last two chapters of this dissertation and the context in which Meinhardt and the board had to come to a decision on what to do about Hitler and his henchmen. I argue that long-term weaknesses of the business model, which depended on the exploitation of thousands of workers downstairs and, upstairs, the peaceful accommodation of foreigners who could easily turn into belligerents, as well as the

¹ On the “vanishing point” metaphor, see Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Celia Applegate, “Metaphors of Continuity: The Promise and Perils of Taking the Long View,” *German History* 27 (2009), 433–439.

perception of social, economic, and political crisis after 1918, created the conditions for a particularly harrowing postwar experience. With class animosities and political violence out in the open, hoteliers' saw no way to reestablish the equipoise of prewar hotel society.

More than any other calamity, however, it was the hyperinflation of 1923 that caused a group of Berlin's most influential businessmen—many of whom sat on the boards of Germany's biggest corporations, including Schultheiss brewery and Osram electrical—to believe that their interests and the interests of the Republic would never—indeed should never—align. The period of relative stability (1924–1928) did little to quell their anti-Republicanism. Instead, stabilization indicated that the monarchy was gone for good, foreclosing the possibility of a return to prewar authoritarianism. Stabilization taught the hoteliers to look elsewhere for solutions. When the Great Depression descended and the Republic fell apart, the board did not actually support Hitler—not directly. But it did tolerate him. Moreover, Meinhardt and the majority of the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft preferred the presence of Hitler in the Kaiserhof to the uncertainty over what might happen if he were ejected from it. The dynamics of this decision follow the broadest currents in the modern history of German political culture.

In examining Germans' shifting political commitments since the 1870s, historians have tended to take the oblique perspective. Their sources usually consist in propaganda, newspapers, and election results. Although valuable for historians trying to understand the appeal of Nazism, these sources can only get at that appeal indirectly. Propaganda tells about how Nazis framed their appeal; newspapers tells us how journalists responded; election results tell us the levels of support in particular areas and, sometimes, among

certain groups of voters. None of these sources can help the historian connect quotidian struggles to shifting political commitments. Propaganda does not indicate specific grievances of particular groups; propagandists could only try to speak to the grievances they perceived. Newspapers do not indicate these grievances, either; journalists can only listen for, select, and interpret them. Not even election results, combined with what we know about the composition of particular districts, point directly to individual grievances; aggregate results can only indicate the likelihood that particular grievances were present or absent among voters.

My sources, the writings and reports of a managerial cadre, can do two things that the traditional sources could not. First, my sources can show the validity of connections among specific economic dislocations and the abandonment of liberalism among businessmen in Germany. Second, they can indicate the evolution in real time of these men's stated political beliefs. Their papers are rich with explicitly political content. On the basis of these sources, I offer a qualification to the consensus among historians of Weimar Germany that the Republic, if not doomed from the start, was done in by the Great Depression. Instead, I suggest, the hyperinflation of 1922–1923 discredited the Republic to the extent that a representative sample of bourgeois elites—in this case, the hoteliers of Berlin—hoped and often advocated in public for Weimar's immediate destruction. Their anti-Republican diatribes reached a fever pitch in late 1923—a pitch that was sustained down to Hitler's transfer from the Kaiserhof to the chancellery, on January 30, 1933. With a higher degree of precision and clearer sense of causality than existing works on businessmen's shifting political commitments in modern Germany, this

history connects concrete difficulties in daily life to the rightward drift in German politics before 1933.

These difficulties are usually hard to pin down. In one way, this dissertation makes no attempt to do so. Struggles issue and recede throughout the text below, just as they do in the sources, just as they did for the hoteliers. In the prewar period, hoteliers were most concerned with maintaining hierarchy and managing guests' experiences. At other intervals, such as 1918–1922, labor relations took pride of place. For 1924–1928, it would be taxes. Elsewhere, particularly during World War I, the focus lands on price levels. Crime, competition, and the hardships arising from municipal regulations also appear in turn. So does the mounting incivility among the clientele after 1918. Each of these areas of grievance plays a role in hoteliers' conception of the political between 1918 and 1933—of what the state should do to stabilize the social and economic order. And as Eric Weitz has noted about the nature of political discourse in Weimar Germany, these conceptions quickly turned into indictments of the Republic itself.² It became, over the course of the 1920s, uncommon for hoteliers to criticize the policies of the state without also calling for the destruction of the Republic, in both direct and indirect terms. In these indictments, particular grievances came and went, as they will in my analysis—an analysis which establishes with uncommon precision the interval at which, say, taxation mattered most to businessmen, and the extent to which, in that time of concern over taxation, those men drifted ever closer anti-Republicanism.

Although it is as much a cultural and social history as anything else, this dissertation joins a growing body of scholarship in business history that uses the

² Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 403.

traditional sources of the field to answer questions in cultural and social history. What do ways of running a business tell us about shifting relationships of power? Where do we see signs of political and cultural discontinuity and change? In their edited volume, Pamela Swett, S. Jonathan Wiesen, and Jonathan Zatlin have compiled several essays in the German history of consumption, but from the perspective of selling rather than buying.³ Many of the contributors use corporate sources to get at cultural-historical questions about the rise of consumerism and the role of consumption in Germans' violent confrontation with what they understood as modernity in the twentieth century.⁴ Such studies expose interactions at the micro-level, often invisible without recourse to the kinds of internal corporate documents that point to the patterns of systemic dynamics of continuity and change: personnel records, meeting minutes, and memoranda.⁵ In this way, Heinrich Hartmann and Hermann Berding uncover surprising similarities and key differences between German and French firms in the chemical, metallurgical, and retail industries.⁶ For this dissertation's contribution to business history, however, the model has been Jeffrey Fear's *Organizing Control: August Thyssen and the Construction of German Corporate Management* (2005).

³Pamela Swett, S. Jonathan Wiesen, and Jonathan Zatlin, eds., *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 17.

⁴ See especially Kevin Repp's essay on anti-Semitism in Berlin's publishing industry. Kevin Repp, "Marketing, Modernity, and 'the German People's Soul': Advertising and its Enemies in Late Imperial Germany, 1896–1914," in *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 12.

⁵ This approach owes a great deal to the work of sociologists in the field of corporate systems. Cf., Michel Crozier and Eberhard Friedberg, *L'acteur et le système* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977).

⁶ Heinrich Hartmann, *Organisation und Geschäft: Unternehmensorganisation in Frankreich und Deutschland, 1890–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2010). For a British example of the new business-cultural history, see Timothy Alborn, *Regulated Lives: Life Insurance and British Society, 1800–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). For Parisian retail, see Robert Proctor, "Constructing the Retail Monument: The Parisian Department Store and Its Property, 1855–1914" *Urban History* 33 (2006), 393, where careful analysis of the documentation of corporate real estate transactions sheds new light on the nineteenth-century tendency to pursue monumentality.

Fear was among the first business historians to break open the “black box” of a German firm in order to assess the processes, patterns, and conflicts that shaped the corporate leadership’s strategies of growth, organization, and control. He reads meeting minutes and public statements against the grain for clues about the extent of authoritarian leanings among the managers of the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke*, much in the same way that I use similar sources for Berlin’s hotel corporations in roughly the same period. However authoritarian they were (not very, it turns out), Fear’s actors evinced the same tendency toward blaming, against all evidence, all of their difficulties after 1918 on workers and taxes. This move excused managers from their key responsibility: to helm a large, complex enterprise over the choppy waters of an increasingly competitive and global economy. It also served to obfuscate these men’s avoidable mistakes, especially with respect to disadvantageous borrowing, misguided plans for long-term growth, and sometimes poor accounting.⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising that Berlin’s hoteliers spoke Thyssen’s language. Many were industrialists first and hoteliers second. Yet my study not only confirms Fear’s findings but shows the great extent to which the kind of thinking that prevailed among Germany’s industrialists infected the service industries as well. It was endemic.

These business owners tended to be bourgeois and liberal in the imperial period and well into Weimar, yet liberalism failed spectacularly in Germany. For some historians, this failure has indicated the existence of a special path or *Sonderweg* that diverged from the Anglo-American experience of social, political, and economic modernization. In the 1950s, even before the formal introduction of the *Sonderweg* as a

⁷ Jeffrey Fear, *Organizing Control: August Thyssen and the Construction of German Corporate Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 591.

concept in German history and its application to the German history of liberalism more specifically, Leonard Krieger attributed Germany's illiberal turn to a deficiency in Germans' particular concept of liberty, a result of the unhappy encounter between western liberal ideals and a Central European obsession with the state. Liberalism without much respect for the individual was indeed no liberalism at all.⁸ In the next decades, Fritz Fischer added a structural framework to the argument as a generation of German historians worked to track German liberalism's course down the proverbial special path.⁹ Then in the 1980s, Geoff Eley, David Blackburn and others cast doubt on what had become a *Sonderweg* orthodoxy. The character of German liberalism in the imperial period took center stage in their critiques and revisions.¹⁰ Even where liberals behaved illiberally, they did so in the expected ways, restricting the franchise to property holders in German cities in order to maintain control over local governments, for example. Like their British counterparts, it turned out, German liberals were also afraid of revolution.¹¹ The gap between theory (equality among men) and practice (exclusion from political participation) made Germany look more like its western counterparts, not less.

⁸ Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 3–4 and 469–470. Historians such as Percy Schramm recognized certain local exceptions, but these were exceptions that tended to prove the rule. Percy Schramm, *Hamburg: Ein Sonderfall in der Geschichte* (Hamburg: Christians, 1964). See also Helmuth Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation: Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 1959); Gerhard A. Ritter, *Deutscher und britischer Parlamentarismus: Ein Verfassungsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1962); Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1616–1815* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

⁹ Fritz Fischer, *Bündnis der Eliten: Zur Kontinuität der Machtstrukturen in Deutschland, 1871–1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979).

¹⁰ See David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in 19th-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). See also Richard Evans, ed., *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London: Routledge, 1978); Geoff Eley, *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

¹¹ Hartmut von Strandmann, "The Liberal Power Monopoly in the Cities of Imperial Germany," in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany*, ed. Larry Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 344.

In the 2000s, Margaret Lavinia Anderson showed that Imperial German political culture, like its western counterparts, made plenty of space for democracy but with a key German peculiarity: the prevalence of social coercion, where employers in all sectors tended to control how their workers voted. Still, in a political culture that did not see voting as a private, individual act but rather a public, communal one, employers' pressure looks somewhat less like a subversion of liberal ideals and more like one characteristic of a German liberalism that had a different conception of the relationship between voting and individual choice. At any rate, Anderson exonerates the state, which, it turns out, did not engage in significant coercion of voters. Moreover, the rules of elections in Imperial Germany served to force political actors, even the conservative ones, to accept the foundational principles of democratic political culture in Germany—namely, to recognize the legitimacy of the opposition; to accept the existence of political conflict; and, by the Wilhelmine period, to make peace with the inclusion of previously excluded groups, such as Catholics and Jews, the latter having fared well in this quasi-parliamentary regime.¹²

¹² Margaret Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 141. See also Elun Gabriel, *Assassins and Conspirators: Anarchism, Socialism, and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (DeKalb, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 3. Cf. Robert Arsenschek, *Der Kampf um die Wahlfreiheit im Kaiserreich: Zur parlamentarischen Wahlprüfung und politischen Realität der Reichstagswahlen, 1871–1914* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003), 256, who considers the system of ensuring fair elections to have gone “bankrupt” in the moral sense by 1910. The problem here lies not with Arsenschek’s reading of the evidence but rather with the tendency to hold German liberalism to an ahistorical and indeed unattainable standard, as well as in the assumption that at all times, in all places, the extent of democratic liberalism can be measured solely by the sanctity of elections. For something similar, see Hartwin Spenkuch, *Das preußische Herrenhaus: Adel und Bürgertum in der ersten Kammer des Landtages, 1854–1918* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998), which, focused on the upper house of the parliament of Prussia, finds archconservative conspiracy more or less exactly where one would expect. On the contrary, Anderson’s book takes a broader view of the practices of German democracy and the social relations that complicated it, while also comparing the German case with conditions on the ground in non-German parliamentary or republican contexts of the same period. On exclusivity and Central European liberalism, see Dagmar Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Baden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Lothar Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler: Die deutschfreiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs, 1882–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993). Cf., Jonathan Kwan, *Liberalism and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1861–1895* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Imperial Germany had come to look decidedly liberal, both on its own terms and, other historians now suggested, in terms of a transnational liberalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even if the Teutonic variant did have its peculiarities.¹³

One peculiarity was German liberals' obsession with the Catholic Church, which among other things helped them establish their stances on the ideal nature of Germany's political economy, social structure, and sexual mores. Now even the *Kulturkampf*, which, according to the orthodoxy, had been illiberal on its face, came to look liberal to its core. Indeed, as Michael Gross demonstrates, liberals not only went along with the persecution of Catholics under Bismarck but even instrumentalized it by casting the struggle against Catholicism as the struggle against unreason and backwardness: "In an age demanding productive labor and efficiency, monasteries were the model of waste."¹⁴ Yet if Protestantism and liberalism were so tightly bound in Germany, that fact only pulls German liberalism closer to its British counterpart.¹⁵

In recent years, while probing the links between liberal intellectual history and the history of imperialism, British historians have begun to identify liberalism with white supremacy. Since the publication of Uday Mehta's 1999 *Liberalism and Empire*, more

¹³ Rudy Koshar's *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) is an emblematic example here. He argues that even in an area as far from national elections as tourism, a kind of "Baedeker liberal individualism" prevailed and therefore calls into question the *Sonderweg* position on the absence or inadequacy of German liberalism (204).

¹⁴ Michael Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 173; David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Cf. Róisín Healy, *The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2003).

¹⁵ On Protestantism, British liberalism, and imperialism, see Alan Sykes, *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism, 1776–1988* (London: Routledge, 2014), 23ff; Hugh McLeod, "Protestantism and British National Identity," and Peter van der Veer, "The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India," both in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 15–43 and 44–70. See also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 22–29, 43–48, 326–353.

and more British historians of liberalism have been persuaded of the evils of the predominant political creed of the nineteenth century. Mehta argues that imperialism and liberalism sat well together because exclusiveness and megalomania (the will to dominate the world, borne of liberalism's universalizing mission) lay at the heart of the liberal project and liberal ideology.¹⁶ Although not all historians are ready to accept that the brutalization of non-Europeans was immanent in the universalizing discourse of European liberalism, the contention that imperialism had roots in liberal ideals appears to have become the new orthodoxy.¹⁷ The civilizing mission in all its brutality is now firmly yoked to liberal universalism.¹⁸

For German historians, this new orthodoxy has opened the way for a radical reinterpretation of the roots of Nazism. Many historians, such as Isabel Hull, had already probed the sources for possible links between Nazism and imperialism when Jens-Uwe Guettel came out with his provocative monograph on the origins of Nazism in the American South (*Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776–1945*).¹⁹ Guettel asserts that German liberals after 1850 learned racism from American examples, first the

¹⁶ Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2, 11–13, and 20.

¹⁷ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 260, treats many of the same intellectual-historical sources as Mehta but comes to an opposing conclusion: that the drive to conquer the world was not a function of the logic of liberalism but rather of its perversion by certain heirs to an eighteenth-century liberal tradition—namely, James Mill and John Stuart Mill in England and Alexis de Tocqueville in France.

¹⁸ See Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880–1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ See Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), especially part 1. Cf., Woodruff Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 238–254; Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4–6ff; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 146–147, 180–181; idem., *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 3–5, 581–604.

institution of slavery and later the legal framework of Jim Crow.²⁰ Although other historians do not feel comfortable taking quite so long a leap as Guettel, they nonetheless have found Nazism's seeds in the fruit of liberalism. In examining the records from German liberals' colonial adventures in Latin America after 1848, Matthew Fitzpatrick finds that these men had little difficulty reconciling the exigencies of colonial domination with the ideals of laissez-faire economics and liberal nationalism. On the contrary, they were actually able to use imperial experiences and imperialist visions to articulate a characteristically liberal, trade-based view of German national power and therefore effectively counter the vision, peddled by conservatives, of a path to national greatness along agricultural and aristocratic lines. There is nothing new about drawing attention to the nationalist or racist elements among German liberals, of course, but the difference now is that historians are arguing that German liberals came to racism and nationalism by way of liberalism itself. These were not impositions or even perversions but rather manifest conclusions to a logic resting on liberal foundational principles.²¹ If we accept this line of reasoning on the constellatory relationship among racism, nationalism, and imperialism and attribute that relationship to some liberal design, then where we arrive, in the end, is the *Sonderweg* revived, for it was only in the case of Germany that the path of liberal imperialism led to Auschwitz.²²

²⁰ Jens-Uwe Guettel, *Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 222.

²¹ See for example Marcel Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 9, where it is argued that Treitschke's anti-Semitism "develops from within; it is not a challenge coming from somewhere outside that society and its values."

²² For an example of the *Sonderweg* revived in this way, see Eric Kurlander, *The Price of Exclusion: Race, Nationalism, and the Decline of German Liberalism, 1898–1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 2 and 7 where the Germans, unlike their French and British counterparts, eschewed universalism for "a racialist (*völkisch*) worldview" borne of an "ethnicized conception of national identity" particular to the political culture of Wilhelmine Germany.

The historiography on German liberalism is now something of a minefield, and this dissertation will appear at first to avoid it by joining an alternative conversation: the large and growing body of work by British scholars on liberalism as a way of life. My use of the term liberalism follows the example of the historiography of liberalism in the United Kingdom, particularly as it relates to how people set up institutions where human beings could attain the maximum capacity for self-regulation. I see the grand hotel as just such an environment, as the liberal institution *par excellence*, not only because its managerial class was obsessed by orderly flows and internal discipline, but because the grand hotel exposed the flipside, the irony of liberalism—namely, that a good liberal society necessarily had to cast some of its members into relationships of exploitation and domination. Workers were needed to support the functioning of the institution, which, because it also strove for profit and progress, ensnared an underclass of skilled, semiskilled, and sweated laborers whose experience of grand hotel life was one of confinement to windowless workrooms and fetid sleeping quarters. In creating the liberal institution *par excellence*, grand hoteliers also created a crucible of social and economic forces that would eventually overwhelm the efforts of the liberal management.

I take my cues here from Mary Poovey's application of Althusser's definition of ideology as a set of beliefs that reside in "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." The hotel and its people were indeed real, as were the concrete, if porous, barriers that delineated hierarchy. Yet the hoteliers themselves made decisions based on how they understood the challenges they faced. I will argue that this understanding was essentially liberal in that it assumed the subject's capacity for self-regulation even as it denied the rights of liberal subjectivity to most of the people in the

building, the workers. In this view, the hotel was a dynamic institution that concentrated the “practices and social institutions that govern people’s social relations,” as Poovey might see it.²³ The focus here is on how liberals lived according to their ideology and how they filtered what they saw through a logic that helped them find liberal solutions to social dislocations. So in the hotel, the task of the managers was not only to conduct themselves according to the precepts of an abstract liberal individualism; they also had to create and maintain the conditions under which guests and even workers would want to “live into” the abstraction, a process that Elaine Hadley has characterized as “lived abstract embodiment” or liberalism being “lived.”²⁴ In relying on sources produced in the service of running a hotel day in and day out, this dissertation builds on the intellectual and cultural histories of liberalism just as it was lived on a quotidian scale.

British historians of liberalism on the quotidian scale have focused on the urban environment, urban infrastructure, and urban hierarchies. To varying degrees, they apply the Foucauldian concept of governmentality to a source base that appears to reveal the rationales behind processes of urbanization in the era of industrial capitalism. Although this historiography is relatively young, Asa Briggs observed as early as 1970 that interventions in the metropolis were not based solely “upon the facts, but upon the imaginative power with which people arranged the facts in a pattern.”²⁵ More recently,

²³ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2 and 3. See also Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

²⁴ Elaine Hadley, *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 23.

²⁵ Asa Briggs, “The Language Of ‘Class’ In Early Nineteenth-Century England” in David Daiches and Anthony Thornby (eds.) *Literature and Western Civilisation, The Modern World*, vol. 2, *Realities* (London: Aldus, 1972), 11. See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). For sustained and in-depth treatment of the urban imaginary landscape, see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in the Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Seth Koven, *Slumming:*

historians have defined that pattern as thoroughly liberal. What concerns these historians are the bourgeois strategies of social control contained in what were ostensibly and sometimes effectively programs of urban improvement. Although success could sometimes be elusive, the very ways in which Victorians arranged space in, say, a public bar or music hall could reveal bourgeois attempts to control what Peter Bailey has called the “flow of sexuality,” in this case the give-and-take between a barmaid and her male customer. The bar itself and the rules of comportment are both, in Bailey’s view, two examples, albeit subtle, of the middle-class managers’ attempt to contain the dangers of urban life.²⁶ But at the heart of the bourgeois-liberal social control thesis lies a paradox. The actors in question—reformers, activists, philanthropists, journalists, medical professionals, urban planners, architects, and engineers—felt they had to get people to consent to coercion, or, in other words, accept that increased freedom of movement and self-actualization in the city depended in large part on the proliferation and intensification of regulation and surveillance.²⁷

Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). For German examples, see Leif Jerram, “Bureaucratic Passions and the Colonies of Modernity: An Urban Elite, City Frontiers, and the Rural Other in Germany, 1890–1920,” *Urban History* 34 (2007), 390-392; Esther Sabelus, *Die weiße Sklavin: Mediale Inszenierungen von Sexualität und Großstadt um 1900* (Berlin: Panama, 2009).

²⁶ Peter Bailey, “Parasexuality and Glamour: The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype,” *Gender & History* 2 (1990), 162; Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 43, where the author does question the “social control” by showing working-class ways of foiling middle-class attempts to regulate behavior. For other examples of the “social control” thesis, see Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: Norton, 1992), 314; and David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (New York: Taylor & Frances, 2003), 57.

²⁷ Chris Otter, “Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City,” *Social History* 27 (2002), 1. Of course, governmentality, by Foucault’s formulation, did not always have to be liberal in modality, Reuben Rose-Redwood, Anton Tantner, and others have shown in a special section of *Urban History*, on house numbering: Reuben Rose-Redwood, Anton Tantner, “Introduction: Governmentality, House Numbering, and the Spatial History of the Modern City,” *Urban History* 39 (2012), 607.

This paradox would have been familiar to Berlin's hoteliers, who depended on a regime of regulation, sometimes subtle and sometimes quite explicit, in order to maintain an environment in which guests could circulate freely and without fear of theft or violence. Moreover, hoteliers had to protect themselves and their properties from a range of guest behaviors, the most serious of which were murder and theft, that could damage the chances of a hotel's continued success. Yet it was always crucial to mask these regulations as thickly as possible. The hotel could not appear to be a prison or a hospital, however many characteristics hotels shared with those institutions.²⁸

Patrick Joyce explores similar contradictions and slippages, which he attributes to a characteristically Victorian and liberal modality of governmentality, the ways in which middle-class people used specific technologies, such as running water or public parks, to create good liberal subjects, capable of self-regulation and therefore deserving of the right to move freely about the city.²⁹ While this dissertation takes regulation more literally (to mean rules and conventions), it does combine the strands of this British historiography on the urban imaginary and social control by treating the sources that hoteliers produced—memos, reports, letters, accounts, marketing materials, petitions, and business plans—as products of an imaginative engagement with the very real social dislocations produced by Germany's rapid industrialization, its late unification, and the political chaos after defeat in 1918. Although Joyce, Foucault, and others caution against collapsing older forms of naked coercion into these newer examples of *consensual* coercion, I find that in the case of the institution of the grand hotel, it makes the most

²⁸ Andrew Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 222-223; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Random House, 1977), 301.

²⁹ Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), 3ff and 121.

sense to emphasize the coercive nature of bourgeois-liberal governance—coercion that helped prefigure and produce the violent conflicts of the interwar period.

It should not be surprising that Berlin's grand hoteliers of the Imperial period tended to be liberal, given their class position as members of the commercial bourgeoisie, and so, to the extent that this is a history of hoteliers, it is also a history of a subset of the German middle class and its role in the modernization of Berlin. Hotels were, after all, enmeshed in urban, regional, national, and international networks. As extensions of railway stations, in many cases, grand hotels were central nodes of urbanization. Moreover, as Brian Ladd, Friedrich Lenger, and Despina Stratigakos have shown, the city became the principal field of action for middle-class efforts to reshape German society, politics, and administration.³⁰ Yet many historians of Germany, unlike their British counterparts, continue to be impressed with the improvements wrought by these bourgeois reformers, planners, and activists.³¹ Andrew Lees maintains that, in the main, these efforts at improvement succeeded on the level of having enriched the lives of a good many German urbanites in the period 1850 to 1914.³² Likewise, Jan Palmowski finds that liberal social programs in Frankfurt were largely free of the will to power that

³⁰ Brian Ladd, *Urban Planning and Civic Order in Germany, 1860–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 139; Friedrich Lenger, "Bürgertum, Stadt, und Gemeinde zwischen Frühneuzeit und Moderne," *Neue Politische Literatur* 40 (1995), 14; Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Sylvia Schraut, "Burghers and other Townspeople: Social Inequality, Civic Welfare and Municipal Tasks during Nineteenth-Century Urbanism," in *Towards an Urban Nation: Germany since 1780*, ed. Friedrich Lenger (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 164; and Lothar Gall's discussion of bourgeois support for municipal projects in *Walther Rathenau: Porträt einer Epoche* (Munich: Beck, 2009).

³¹ Cf. Yair Mintzker, *The Defortification of the German City, 1689–1866* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Andrew Lees, "Between Anxiety and Admiration: Views of British Cities in Germany, 1835–1914," *Urban History* 36 (2009); Claus Bernet, "The 'Hobrecht Plan' (1862) and Berlin's Urban Structure," *Urban History* 31 (2004), 419.

³² Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees, *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 131.

Foucault and others seem to attribute to the middle class. Palmowski's urban reformers and planners are supposed to have been "progressive," "innovative, pragmatic, and politically astute."³³ But my hoteliers also fancied themselves urban impresarios, stage managers who even helped direct the process of urban planning and who were convinced of the grand hotel's social benefits. Keeping Berlin at the crossroads of industry and commerce should benefit all Berliners, the argument went, yet these hoteliers were concealing a more complex reality of contradictions and ironies behind baize doors: an army of exhausted workers standing in the dark place where liberal ideology, stark inequality, and middle-class urbanism cross paths.

In addition to liberalism, urbanism was a principal component of bourgeois culture in Germany and one that appears to have remained constant in the century or so between 1850 and 1945. Class, as Kathleen Canning has observed, must be central to the history of German cities, since it was in the cities first where "mass culture made visible new social inequalities that people felt they had to address."³⁴ The city was also where the middle class constituted itself to itself and others, where people made the consumer choices that conveyed the nuances of taste required for entry into the bourgeoisie, as Pierre Bourdieu explains, or the attainment of "status-based honor" (*ständische Ehre*) as Max Weber saw it at the time.³⁵ More recently, German historians have noted central tensions between the "gospel of labor," which eschewed luxury as an invitation to indolence, and the trappings of success, which included luxury and in some cases

³³ Jan Palmowski, *Urban Liberalism in Imperial Germany: Frankfurt am Main, 1866–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36 and 254.

³⁴ See Kathleen Canning's contributions to Dennis Sweeney et al., "Forum: Class in German History," *Urban History* 30 (2012), 429–451, at 445.

³⁵ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 535.

obviated the need to work at all.³⁶ The anxiety that attended this tension played out in the grand hotel, where “conspicuous consumption” and enterprising industriousness existed side-by-side.³⁷

Habbo Knoch, whose recent monograph analyzes the cultural meanings of grand hotels in Paris, New York, and Berlin, considers the important role grand hotels played in the “self-representation of an urban upper class,” which, over time, welcomed members of the middle class, too.³⁸ Yet what gets lost in Knoch’s account is the great extent to which this particular “upper class” had always been bourgeois, as well as the economic and social relations of power that suspended these pleasure palaces over the heads of the people laboring in the expansive yet labyrinthine cellars. In this dissertation, I make the effort to acknowledge these bourgeois hoteliers and guests as people who, in addition to constituting middle-class subjectivity by showing off to each other, also constituted middle-class subjectivity by establishing economic, social, and political dominance over the men and women who served them.³⁹

I also make the effort to attend to the disjunctures in German history that make telling this story from Berlin such a challenging proposition. The fortunes of Germany’s middle class and the fortunes of German liberalism go together, and neither the middle class nor German liberalism made it past the 1920s intact. This dissertation, especially for

³⁶ Warren Breckman, “Disciplining Consumption: The Debate about Luxury in Wilhelmine Germany,” *Journal of Social History* 24 (1991), 485–505; Sherwin Simmons, “Ernst Kirchner’s Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913–16,” *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000), 117–148. These debates shared similar themes with the reading debate of the eighteenth century: see Matt Erlin, “Useless Subjects: Reading and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Germany,” *German Quarterly* 80 (2007), 145–165.

³⁷ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 91.

³⁸ Habbo Knoch, *Grandhotels: Luxusräume und Gesellschaftswandel in New York, London und Berlin um 1900* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016).

³⁹ This approach takes to heart Jürgen Kocka’s call for more attention among historians to the economic dimensions of class. See Kocka’s contributions in Dennis Sweeney et al, “Forum: Class in German History,” *Urban History* 30 (2012), 429–451, at 430.

the interwar period, must pose its questions with a German inflection. How did this relationship of economic, social, and political domination change in face of the vicissitudes of German fortunes after 1918? In answer to this question, I align myself with historians of Germany who argue that the institutions—both formal and informal—of Weimar culture, society, and politics evaporated before the wind had even yet changed direction, round about 1930–31, when, as one of Peter Jelavich’s sources has it, a kind of “fear psychosis” seized the very people one would expect to resist the forces arrayed against the Republic.⁴⁰ In the Reichstag, Thomas Mergel observes a similar effect of Nazi intimidation tactics when after the electoral victories of the NSDAP in 1930, that party’s delegates adopted a language of moral absolutes and a strategy of outright disruption that undid parliamentary democracy even before the advent of the presidential dictatorship.⁴¹ We will see the managing directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft do the same, in 1932, when they choose, against their own policies and precedents, to let Hitler stay. The final job of this dissertation is to connect the experience and understanding of interwar dislocations to this process of decision-making. What was the logic that made giving up on the Republic seem like the best or only option?

The chapters below proceed chronologically, with some overlap, especially between the first two chapters, which cover a similar period but ask different questions. Chapter 1, on the origins of Berlin’s elite commercial hospitality industry, begins with the opening of the Kaiserhof and proceeds to the opening of the Adlon, one of the last grand

⁴⁰ Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xii.

⁴¹ Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik: Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002).

hotels to be built in Berlin. This chapter establishes a pattern of liberal logic and language among hotel builders and owners, even as they worked to reinforce hierarchy, restrict movement, and facilitate surveillance. The next chapter covers the period 1890 to 1914 and situates the grand hotels in the particular political culture of German and Prussian liberalism in order to explain how cosmopolitan and nationalist cultural imperatives sat so comfortably together in the grand hotel *mise-en-scène*.

The third chapter bridges the Imperial era of relative equipoise and the interwar era of social, economic, and political dislocation. It charts the rapid deterioration of the material supports necessary to the maintenance of hotel culture during World War I and shows that the war had uneven but ultimately deleterious effects on Berlin's grand hotel industry, not only with respect to the financial accounts, but also with respect to the stability of the hotel hierarchy. Total war worked to whittle away the niceties of grand hotel life and with them the cultural practices that had defined the prewar social scene. Over time, the relationship between staff and hotelier, on the one side, and guests, on the other, deteriorated such that by 1918, the atmosphere was one of mistrust and even anger. Chapter 4 assesses the impact of the peace—blockade, revolution, class animosities, and hyperinflation—on the industry and on hoteliers' renewed commitments to liberalism as a creed, which they all but abandoned in time for the era of relative stability, 1924–1928. This chapter traces the changing language of hoteliers' annual reports, internal memos, correspondence with the police, and communications with the public, which bore a semantic affinity to the anti-Republicanism of the right.

The fifth and final chapter examines the relationship between hoteliers' incorrigible pessimism after 1923 and their willingness to countenance the destruction of

the Weimar Republic. Here, I analyze the decisions of Berlin's most prominent hoteliers as they had to contend with the Great Depression and some of their own worst nightmares. Under the conditions of 1932, both within the industry and in German society, a liberal solution appeared to be unavailable, even to committed liberals such as Meinhardt, who chose not to complicate Hitler's rise to power, instead allowing him to remain at the Kaiserhof, a stone's throw from Chancellery. The epilogue tracks the consequences to Berlin's grand hoteliers of Hitler's assumption and consolidation of power down to 1945, when aerial bombardment and Russian artillery destroyed every last grand hotel in the city.

Chapter 1

The Grand Hotels of Imperial Berlin

The grand hotel was an institution that developed in the United States, Europe, and the European colonies in the nineteenth century. It provided accommodation and related services at the highest standards of the day, well beyond what would have been necessary for a simple overnight stay.¹ The emergence of grand hotels in cities followed nineteenth-century patterns of industrialization, commercialization, urbanization, and middle-class growth. First appearing in American cities, then in Paris, London, and Vienna after 1850, the urban grand hotel came to Germany in the 1860s. Berlin saw a late, intense, and sustained flowering of its hotel scene from the 1870s to World War I, a development that accompanied the transformation of a mid-sized *Residenzstadt* into the continent's premier industrial, commercial, and administrative metropolis. In those decades, a variegated, robust economy of hospitality developed to include not only grand hotels but also pensions, standard hotels, *hôtels garnis*, and specialty hostelries. Grand hotels sat at the apex of the market, reserved for the wealthiest Berliners and visitors.

Grand hotels were microcosms of society, “human terraria” on several floors.² Workers ate and slept on site, as did their well-remunerated managers, members of the commercial middle class. Hotel owners, paid tens of thousands of marks a year, frequently dined and boarded in their investments, while foreign and domestic royalty,

¹ Cf. Bettina Matthias, *The Hotel as Setting in Early Twentieth-Century German and Austrian Literature* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2006), 17; Moritz Hoffmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Hotels: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: A. Hüttig, 1961), 226.

² Justin Kaplan, *When the Astors Owned New York: Blue Bloods and Grand Hotels in a Gilded Age* (New York: Viking, 2006), 17.

aristocracy, and bourgeois populated the grand public and private spaces of the new hotels. Called into being by an increasingly mobile society, grand hotels nonetheless depended on and reinforced rigid hierarchies along the lines of class, gender, work, and leisure. Distinctions among groups were not only enshrined in the rules, regulations, and contracts that bound inhabitants in relationships of mutual obligation but were also delineated in the brick, mortar, and décor of grand hotels themselves.

In this chapter, I map the rise, proliferation, and apotheosis of the grand hotel in Berlin onto a trajectory of bourgeois class formation that takes as its steps the availability of capital and the coalescence of bourgeois subjectivities around acts of conspicuous consumption and sociability, on the one hand, and the relations of power, played out over space and through bodies, of the bourgeoisie to the working class, on the other.³

Ultimately, the grand hotel of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Berlin, which itself witnessed a spectacular swelling of the ranks of bourgeois citizens, provides a key site and case study with which to locate, describe, and assess bourgeois class formation and domination in the modern metropolis.⁴

This chapter uses conceptions of Berlin's earliest grand hotels as a lens with which to help scrutinize the words and deeds of a bourgeois, managerial class of hoteliers

³ On capitalism and hotels, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 188. On capital, urban space, and bourgeois class subjectivities, see David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 217-20. See also Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 43-62; and Michel Foucault, "Studies in Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell et al. (London: Harvester, 1991), 87-104. There, Foucault refers to governmentality as, in part, "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (102). An alternative translation would invert the word order as such: "which has population as its target, political economy as its principal form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical means."

⁴ For techniques, strategies, and tactics with relation to power, bodies, and the discourse on sexuality, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978), 103-106. See also Jeffrey Weeks, "Foucault for Historians," *History Workshop* 14 (1982), 115.

and architects. The term “managerial class” should not suggest a monolith but rather an association of men holding similar and related, not identical, views on how German urban society should be ordered, views that rested on a certain bourgeois *habitus*, views that I, in turn, read from that class’s architectural, commercial, and managerial creations as well as from the trade publications that formed the wider discourse in which they staked their claims.⁵ The focus is thus as much on the managerial class as it is on the grand hotel it conceived and operated.⁶

The Kaiserhof and subsequent grand hotels in Berlin provided this group of bourgeois men with a nearly comprehensive view of German urban society: skilled and unskilled workers, waiters, *Mittelständler* (petty bourgeois), white-collar employees, businessmen, propertied and professional bourgeois, and aristocrats populated its spaces.⁷ Indeed, there was no commercial urban institution more socially diverse than the grand hotel. Moreover, the grand hotel actually had to *house* many different groups, since workers and the manager tended to live on site. In this way, the grand hotel laid bare the pitfalls of social heterogeneity more clearly than such similar commercial enterprises as the department store and the restaurant.⁸ Just as the grand hotel charged the managerial class with finding strategies to mitigate the potential dangers of accommodating all classes in such close quarters, it now entreats the historian to peruse those strategies for

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus, Practices,” in *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52–79.

⁶ I use floor plans and architectural renderings to access particular ideologies. That these documents are ideological is an insight I owe to Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), chapter 1.

⁷ Hotel owners leased many hotel concessions, such as the newsstand and the barbershop. The leaseholders would have come primarily from the ranks of the shop-keeping “petty” bourgeoisie, the *Mittelstand*.

⁸ For a treatment of all these spaces together, under the auspices of one volume, see Habbo Knoch and Alexa Geisthövel, eds., *Orte der Moderne: Erfahrungswelten des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005).

answers as to how a group of bourgeois men understood and helped shape the social relations of Imperial Berlin.⁹ In other words, how did the managerial class conceive of and mean to run the grand hotel, and how do their choices confirm and refine our understandings of Imperial urban social relations, particularly between the working and middle classes?

The managerial class tried to impose rigid hierarchies, enforced by the delineation of space and the implementation of regulations, that reflected older forms of aristocratic authority over household workers, newer bourgeois distinctions between public and private, and the effects on social relations of modern industrial techniques of labor extraction.¹⁰ These men sought a model of efficiency and equilibrium that might counter

⁹ In a different period and place, then, I explore a new, commercial dimension to Carolyn Steedman's claim that "[t]he [household] service relationship provided a major means to conceptualise the social." See Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15. On the conscious efforts of middle-class Germans to shape the social relations of their cities in the Imperial period, especially in the context of the workplace, see Hartmann, *Organization und Geschäft*, especially parts 2 and 3; David Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce: Labor Administration from Bismarck to the Economic Miracle* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 14-22; William Hagen, *German History in Modern Times: Four Lives of the Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 343; Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), especially 216 but also throughout the book, which emphasizes the gender dimensions of these middle-class interventions. Cf., Albrecht Franz, *Kooperation statt Klassenkampf? Zur Bedeutung kooperativer wirtschaftlicher Leitbilder für die Arbeitszeitsenkung in Kaiserreich und Bundesrepublik* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2014), 258, which uncovers a small amount of room for maneuver when it came to workers negotiating daily hours. Nevertheless, Franz finds that the predominant patriarchal culture only afforded leverage to a very small group of employees.

¹⁰ On bourgeois delineations of space in the household, see Walter Bejmain, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2006), 89: "Different occasions would bring [different rooms] to life. The visit of a married daughter opened a dressing room long out of use; another back room received me when the adults took their afternoon nap; and from a third came the clatter of a sewing machine on days when a seamstress worked in the house." See also Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007); and Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). On contemporary and older forms of aristocratic authority over household workers, see Leonore Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick," *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979). On the gendered distinction between public and private, see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin* (op. cit.); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), who identify and complicate the ideology of separate spheres by showing its inherent contradictions, both in theory and in practice. For similar, see Carol Dyhouse, *Feminism and the Family in England, 1880–1939* (Oxford:

the dangers of social heterogeneity in grand hotels and the district, the Friedrichstadt, that housed them. Their project illuminates another side of urban modernity: behind one of the city's great new commercial enterprises stood a managerial class that in turns attempted to reproduce, refigure, and even reify the power relations and distinctions among the classes. Their visions produced grand hotels that were both invitations and antidotes to class conflict and reveal in microcosm the architectural and managerial mechanisms of bourgeois power in Imperial Germany, now in a new location and context: that of the modern urban commercial enterprise.¹¹

Bourgeois class subjectivities were complicated, diverse, and in unclear relationship to the other classes. Nonetheless, a pattern emerges within the sample of architects and managers who comprise the managerial class of the grand hotel. First, managers and architects had a conciliatory relationship to the aristocracy. They sought

Blackwell, 1989), especially 184–187; Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, especially chapter 6; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, especially 124, where an editorialist in *Queen* worried not only about bourgeois women in a middle-class public sphere but also in a working-class one, especially in train compartments. Cf. Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7, who argues that “the broadcasting of the language of separate spheres was almost certainly a shrill response to an expansion in the opportunities, ambitions, and experience of Georgian and Victorian women—a cry from an embattled status quo, rather than the leading edge of change.” Finally, for the effects of industrialization on the social relations of the modern metropolis, see Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, London, Berlin, 1840–1930*, trans. Pierre Imhof and Dafydd Roberts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), who shows that industrialization, and its attendant developments, created new tensions among models of urban governance and administration and new anxieties about the laboring classes, especially after dark. Andrew Lees and Lynn Hollen Lees consider the big city's inherent tendency to bring the classes of industrial capitalism into spectacular conflict, in *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe*. See also Andrew Lohmeier, “Bürgerliche Gesellschaft and Consumer Interests: The Berlin Public Market Hall Reform, 1867–1891,” *Business History Review* 73 (1999), 92; and Jürgen Kocka, “The European Pattern and the German Case,” in *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 17–19, who locates the special role of the Prussian state as mediating more actively than most other states among the economic dislocations that industrialization produced—an illiberal tendency that irritated many of Prussia's (and later Germany's) bourgeois urbanites.

¹¹ For particularly bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) visions of the urban social order, see Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany*; Ladd, *Urban Planning and Civic Order in Germany*; Lees, “Between Anxiety and Admiration”; Lenger, “Bürgertum, Stadt, und Gemeinde zwischen Frühneuzeit und Moderne”; Hans-Walter Schmuhl, “Bürgertum und Stadt,” in *Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Bürgertums*, ed. Peter Lundgreen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 224–248; Elizabeth Bartels, “Berlin's Tiergarten: Evolution of an Urban Park,” *Journal of Garden History* 2 (1982), 143–174.

and received honorary titles from royalty.¹² Managers were transnational, tending to do stints all over Europe and beyond. These foreign sojourns, and the language skills they afforded, became necessary ingredients of a successful career.¹³ Likewise, architects traveled in Europe as part of their training. Both architects and managers read widely in foreign and international trade publications. But architects and managers also differed in key ways, the most important of which was education and the social positions that different educations helped determine. Managers attended vocational high schools before accepting apprenticeships or internships. The stuff of their education was practical, practicality being a central value of the subclass to which managers belonged, the commercial bourgeoisie.¹⁴ Architects, on the other hand, were members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated bourgeoisie), and usually attended *Gymnasium* for education in the classics before going on to earn certifications from such prestigious state architecture schools as the Berliner Bauakademie.¹⁵ The architects of Berlin's first two grand hotels, Hermann von der Hude and Julius Henniske, both attended the Berliner Bauakademie in the 1850s before co-founding their own firm in 1860.¹⁶ They regularly

¹² Police files on the Hoflieferanten Hubert Schaurté and Leopold Schwarz, Landesarchiv Berlin (hereafter LAB), A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13390 and 13495.

¹³ Job applications for the position of hotel manager (*Direktor*) at the Fürstenhof, undated (ca. 1919), A Rep. 225, Nr. 1143.

¹⁴ David Blackbourn and Richard Evans, eds., *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1993), 6-7. For the education of the sons of the commercial bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century, see Hansjoachim Henning, "The Social Integration of Entrepreneurs in Westphalia, 1860-1914," in *The Entrepreneur, the Family and Capitalism: Some Examples from the Early Phase of Industrialisation in Germany*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (New York: Springer, 1981); Jürgen Kocka, "The Entrepreneur, the Family and Capitalism: Some Examples from the Early Phase of Industrialization in Germany," in Kocka, *The Entrepreneur, the Family, and Capitalism*, 59.

¹⁵ Yet architects' educations also set them apart from the rest of their subclass, a hallmark of which was university study. For the relationship between the *Bauakademie* and the university, see Anna Guagnini, "Technology," in *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 603. On professionalization and technical training, see Vincent Clark, "A Struggle for Existence: The Professionalization of German Architects," in *German Professions, 1800-1950*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad Jarausch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 143-162.

¹⁶ Eva Börsch-Supan, *Berliner Baukunst nach Schinkel, 1840-1870* (Munich: Prestel, 1977), 582 and 597.

partnered with members of the commercial bourgeoisie in order to realize their creations. The grand hotel was thus a key field in which the commercial bourgeoisie and the *Bildungsbürgertum* cooperated, and the effects could be particularly rewarding.¹⁷ One such reward was the seal of approval from the emperor himself, Wilhelm I, who attended the opening of the Kaiserhof in 1875.¹⁸

The First Grand Hotels

The etymology of the word “hotel” tells its own story of the democratization of travel in the nineteenth century. Where previously a *hôtel* designated an aristocratic residence within the walls of the city of Paris—a nobleman’s or noblewoman’s home away from home, with room for guests and all the luxuries of a principal seat in the country—a hotel in the nineteenth century came to mean a commercial establishment that rented individual guestrooms for a price and provided most if not all of the services of a functioning middle-class or elite household.¹⁹ Whereas in the early modern period, moneyed travelers had had to make do with shared rooms—shared beds, even—and the minimal services of inns, by the middle of the nineteenth century, every good-sized central and west European city had a hotel.²⁰ Some catered only to the aristocracy, as was

¹⁷ On the application of Bourdieu’s concept of the “field” to the study of commercial and other organizations, see Mairi Maclean, Charles Harvey, and Gerhard King, “Pathways to Power: Class, Hyper-Agency and the French Corporate Elite,” *Organization Studies* 35 (2014), 825–855.

¹⁸ Laurenz Demps, *Berlin-Wilhelmstraße: Eine Topographie preußisch-deutscher Macht* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2000), 124.

¹⁹ Max Wöhler, *Gasthäuser und Hotels: Die Bestandteile und die Einrichtung des Gasthauses*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: J.G. Göschen, 1911), 2:57. Matthias, *Hotel as Setting*, 30; and Carol Berens, *Hotel Bars and Lobbies* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997), 26. On the history of the Parisian *hôtel*, see Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 78.

²⁰ Mid-century guidebooks recommended hotels in every European city of interest. See for example J. H. Siddons, *Norton’s Handbook to Europe, or, How to Travel in the Old World* (New York: Charles B. Norton, 1860), 246–52. For more inclusive lists of hotels—many still labeled as “inns”—on the continent, see John Murray’s *A Hand-book for Travellers on the Continent: Being a Guide through Holland, Belgium, Prussia, and Northern Germany and along the Rhine from Holland to Switzerland*, 5th ed. (London: A. & W. Galignani, 1845). On the state of Berlin’s hotels before the 1870s, see Maria Wenzel, *Palasthotels in*

the case with England's first establishments, but an increasing number welcomed people regardless of rank.²¹ The advent of a sizeable bourgeoisie with money to spend, the fall of barriers to geographic mobility on the European continent, and an increasing internationalization of commercial and social life contributed in the 1820s and 1830s to the formation of an institution, the hotel, that could accommodate the influx of travelers these developments engendered.²²

The transnational emergence of a sizable bourgeoisie in the first half of the nineteenth century corresponded to the places where the first modern hotels appeared: the settled parts of the United States and its territories, German-speaking lands (and parts of the Low Countries), Great Britain, and France. Geneva's Hôtel des Bergues (1834) and Baur en Ville (1838/9), Zurich's Baur au Lac (1844), and Vevey's Grand Hôtel des Trois Couronnes (1843) featured imposing facades, dozens of private, well-appointed guestrooms, and several smaller parlors on the ground floor for conversation.²³ A generation earlier, the Badischer Hof (1809) in Baden-Baden had transformed a Capetian monastery into a resort complex of ballrooms, game rooms, dining rooms, baths, gardens, and galleries.²⁴ Two more spa hotels cropped up in the ensuing decades in Baden-Baden, as well as in Wiesbaden and other German and Swiss watering places.²⁵ These early spa hotels and their Swiss counterparts register two important developments in the history of

Deutschland: Untersuchung einer Bauaufgabe im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991), 93–98.

²¹ Elaine Denby, *Grand Hotels: Reality and Illusion—An Architectural and Social History* (London: Reaktion, 1998), 25.

²² Klaus Beyrer, "The Mail-coach Revolution: Landmarks in Travel in Germany between the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *German History* 24 (2006), 375–386; Wolfgang Kaschuba, *Die Überwindung der Distanz: Zeit und Raum in der europäischen Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004); Timothy Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648–1789* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), part 1.

²³ Michael Schmitt, *Palast-Hotels: Architektur und Anspruch eines Bautyps, 1870–1920* (Berlin: Mann, 1982), 42.

²⁴ Denby, *Grand Hotels*, 96.

²⁵ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 297–298; Schmitt, *Palast-Hotels*, 112.

the hotel: first, the import and ascendancy of the word “hotel” in early nineteenth-century Central Europe and, second, the increasing availability of commercial establishments catering to all functions of daily life. The hotel was becoming a place where, for a fee, a stranger could sleep, dine, socialize, entertain, and heal—under one roof and as if at home or, more often, as if at the great house that a guest might have wanted but had not inherited and could not otherwise afford. It was also a place for the standardization of bourgeois outlooks, attitudes, and behaviors—a place where bourgeois from all over Europe and the United States convened, conversed, and passed judgment. In this way, the hotel was also a reflection of and an instrument for the formation of a widespread, coherent bourgeoisie.²⁶

Hotels, particularly in the American case, even facilitated the accumulation of wealth and connections that members of the bourgeoisie required by offering a public place of free association at the intersection of multiple lines of communication, transportation, and capital: cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and New Orleans. As early as the 1830s, for example, Barnum’s Hotel in Baltimore supplied designated spaces for business meetings and commodities trading.²⁷ American hotels were centers of commerce and tourism, at the confluence of transport routes along which movement of materials and people contributed to the social, political, and economic

²⁶ I use the term “middle class” and “bourgeoisie” in the singular but with full recognition of the diversity of middle-class social, economic, cultural, and political positions. I disaggregate the bourgeoisie when the analysis requires it, such as the discussion here of the distinction between the educated middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*) versus the commercial middle class (*Kommerzbürgertum*). A similar distinction would be between the *Besitz-* and *Bildungsbürgertum*, discussed by David Blackbourn alongside other features that helped disparate members of the German middle class recognize some common ground, even if that ground shifted over the course of the long nineteenth century, in “The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction,” in Blackbourn and Evans, eds., *The German Bourgeoisie*, 8–10.

²⁷ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 50–52.

integration of the republic.²⁸ Hotels were particularly prevalent in port cities, on major north-south roads, and on east-west canals.²⁹ Most cities, however, had to wait for the railway to initiate the widespread development of hotels. The railway shifted hotel development to those cities at the intersections of multiple lines. In some cases, railway junctions created new towns, while in other cases the junctions concentrated streams of people and goods on established settlements. As travel times and expenses diminished, more people took to the rails.³⁰ These people needed places to stay along the great overland routes as well as at their destinations, heretofore ill equipped to house travelers in their thousands. The first urban grand hotels in Europe were the railway hotels of Great Britain, where railway networks spread earliest and fastest.³¹ By the 1860s, large railway hotels were common sights in London and Manchester.³² These urban hotels contributed to a bourgeois accumulation of wealth as well as to the increased ease and range of movement on which that wealth depended.

In the 1860s, the first urban *grand* hotels emerged. A denser transportation network and new technologies of construction, energy, and engineering—as well as the increasing internationalization of capital and credit—helped create the demand for *and* supply of ever finer hostelries until, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the grand hotel had become the site *par excellence* of conspicuous consumption.³³ Here was a place that promised to treat guests like royalty or esteemed visitors to a royal household

²⁸ Ibid, 31–43.

²⁹ Ibid, 69. See also Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 205–206 and 330; Denby, *Grand Hotels*, 35; and Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

³⁰ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.

³¹ Ibid., 42–43.

³² Denby, *Grand Hotels*, 47–48.

³³ Knoch, *Grandhotels*, 132, 384–388.

but where luxuries were taken in public and everyone knew the prices.³⁴ In levels of service, luxury, and technological innovation, moreover, urban grand hotels had surpassed the finest houses in Europe.

In this period, a pattern to hotel development emerged that can be converted into a six-part definition of the grand hotel.³⁵ First, a grand hotel had to have rooms numbering in the hundreds so that an economy of scale might pay for the representative public spaces on ground floors. Second, it had to use those varied, large, and sumptuous public spaces to outshine competitor hotels and even the finest houses to the extent that locals and travelers would opt for exchanges in the hotel rather than in private. Third, it needed to be among the most expensive hotels in the area in order to ensure an elite clientele. Fourth, it had to be technologically advanced. That meant relying on elevators, telegraphy, gas light, radiator heat, and the productive division of labor. Fifth, service must be thick on the ground so that elite guests missed none of the comforts of home. Sixth, and finally, it needed to serve fine food, wine, spirits, and coffee both to ensure self-sufficiency and to increase revenue. In short, the grand hotel had to be able to cater to a guest's every need and to do so at a cost that still promised profits. That meant finding economies of scale, putting a price on all services and products, and pursuing processes of vertical integration—for example, buying and running wine import and export businesses not only to control prices within the hotel but also to garner profits as both the retailer and the supplier of wine.

³⁴ Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*.

³⁵ My six-part definition is the product of information gleaned from far too many sources to enumerate, but for a similarly impressionistic, if more expansive, definition, see Knoch, *Grandhotels*, 15–19.

Although grand hotels were able to take care of all of their guests' needs in-house, hoteliers could not seal their establishments from surrounding neighborhoods, nor did they want to. The grand hotel pursued a close relationship with the world outside and indeed came to present itself as the best mediator between the city's demands and enticements, on the one hand, and the private needs of guests, on the other. In this way, urban grand hotels made the city intelligible, navigable, and accessible. In-house theatrical and railway booking agents, carriage and courier services, currency exchanges, and barber shops—these amenities helped a guest manage, interact with, and be ready for the world outside.

The comprehensiveness of their offerings made grand hotels particularly attractive in large cities, where a traveler might otherwise feel lost. By the 1870s, the grand hotel was a solidly urban phenomenon, embedded within intricate economies of leisure, complex circles of commerce, and immense transportation networks. And for visitors, those conveyed through this network for the purpose of leisure or business, the grand hotel began to supplant the railway station as the gateway to the metropolis. It also helped remake the city. Along with department stores, shopping arcades, restaurants, cafés, variety theaters, and wine houses, grand hotels conscripted city centers into the service of bourgeois pleasure-seekers and luxury consumers. With their help, late-nineteenth-century cities became sites of self-presentation through conspicuous consumption and bourgeois class formation.

Grand Hotels of the Friedrichstadt

Before the 1850s, the inns (*Gasthäuser*, *Gaststätte*) and hotels (*Hôtels*) of Berlin were still traditional hostelries in that they could not possibly accommodate those guests

for whom privacy, propriety, personal safety, luxury, and sociability were paramount: guests such as the respectable ladies and upstanding families of the bourgeoisie. A significant problem lay in the fact that all of Berlin's hostelrys occupied structures built first for residential use, ill equipped for their new function. Even at the finest establishments in the Friedrichstadt, single travelers could be asked to share a room with a total stranger. There is even evidence that the practice of bed sharing persisted well into the nineteenth century. Rooms did not feature doors with locks, in most cases, and some were accessible only by passing through another guest's space. There might be a parlor downstairs, or in the best houses, two parlors—one for men and one for women—but a large functional public space such as a ballroom or banquet hall was unheard of.³⁶ Finally, there were too few hotels by midcentury to host even those visitors who were willing to put up with such basic accommodation.³⁷

Beginning in the early nineteenth century and picking up speed in the 1850s, Berlin's profile in industry, commerce, transportation, and tourism grew rapidly.³⁸ Its population exploded, and its infrastructure expanded in every direction. With the unification of Germany and the transformation of Berlin into the Imperial capital came important changes to the laws governing how corporations could form. These changes made it possible to raise enormous amounts of capital for industrial and commercial

³⁶ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, eds., *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn, 1896) 1:29. For further, more detailed descriptions of the differences between the modern "*Palasthotel*" and Berlin's earlier establishments, see Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 93–98.

³⁷ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 1:350. Cf., "Verzeichnis sämtlicher Gasthäuser der Residenz-Stadt Berlin," police report of 1810, in LAB, A Pr Br Rep 030, Nr. 1569, f. 29; "Nachweisung der vorzüglichsten Gasthäuser auf der Station zu Berlin welche zur Aufnahme und Bewirthung höchster und hoher Herrschaften geeignet sind," police report of 1810, in LAB, A Pr Br Rep 030, Nr. 1596, f. 35.

³⁸ Herbert Schwenk, *Lexikon der Berliner Stadtentwicklung* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 2002), 162–3. On the growth of tourism in Berlin between 1860 and 1885: "Aus der Entwicklung Berlins in den letzten fünfundzwanzig Jahren," *Der Bär: Illustrierte Berliner Wochenschrift* 11 (April 25, 1885), 450–451.

enterprises while limiting the liability of shareholders—hence the contemporary name for the period 1871 to 1873: *Gründerzeit*. “The time of foundations” referred not to the naissance of the Empire as such but rather to the founding of thousands of limited liability joint-stock corporations.³⁹ A subset of these corporations built Berlin’s finest and first grand hotels.

Berlin’s first hotel corporation amalgamated in 1872.⁴⁰ Its planners meant to build a hotel that could compete with those recently opened in Vienna for the World Exhibition of 1873. The Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft (Berlin Hotel Corporation) quickly raised the money for its new venture. From 1872 to 1873, the corporation purchased a total of twelve lots on or adjacent to the Ziethenplatz.⁴¹ Moreover, the corporation successfully persuaded city authorities to allow the construction of a new street to the south of that intersection.⁴² Now the building would occupy an entire city block, the first hotel in Berlin to claim a freestanding structure.⁴³ The owners chose the name Kaiserhof (Emperor’s Court), which signaled the arrival of a hostelry in line with Berlin’s newly achieved status as the Imperial capital.

³⁹ Lawrence Demps et al., *Geschichte Berlins von den Anfängen bis 1945* (Berlin: Dietz, 1987), 415–417; Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 307; Schwenk, *Berliner Lexikon*, 162.

⁴⁰ For accounts of the formation of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft and other hotel corporations, see Habbo Knoch, “Das Grandhotel,” in Knoch and Geisthövel, *Orte der Moderne*, 31; Habbo Knoch, “Geselligkeitsräume und Societyräume: Grandhotels im wilhelminischen Berlin,” in *Berliner Villenleben: Die Inszenierung bürgerlicher Wohnwelten am grünen Rand der Stadt um 1900*, ed. Heinz Reif (Berlin: Mann, 2008), 329–330.

⁴¹ Demps, *Berlin-Wilhelmstraße*, 124. The Hobrecht Plan for the development of Berlin had been approved on July 18, 1862, and conformed to the Prussian Building Code (*Bauordnung*), which dictated the width of streets. The new Kaiserhofstraße was a significant anomaly, then, in that it bucked both the Code and the Plan. On both, see Bernet, “The ‘Hobrecht Plan’ (1862) and Berlin’s Urban Structure,” 404–408, 412.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ With Berlin’s particularly large blocks and the apparent reluctance to build streets out of step with official plans, the Kaiserhof would be the first and last freestanding hotel building before 1945.

For the first time, private citizens of the Prussian capital were able to change the direction and style of development in the city center; corporate capitalism allowed them to do it. Their project, the Kaiserhof, supplanted important buildings on the Ziethenplatz that had once housed the French and Italian embassies to the Prussian capital as well as several notable eighteenth- and nineteenth-century residences.⁴⁴ This was a district in transition. New government ministries, departments, and offices sprang up after unification, and many of them occupied buildings around the Kaiserhof.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, along the Friedrichstraße and Leipziger Straße, a short walk to the east and southeast, cake shops, cafés, stores, and theaters proliferated. In March of 1873, the Kaisergalerie, the first of the area's large shopping arcades, opened on the Friedrichstraße. This retail arcade with mixed-use units on its upper floors provided amusements for growing numbers of visitors to the city center.⁴⁶ Hitherto, the city's fine hotels had chosen sites away from commercial activity, typically farther north, on or near Unter den Linden, a representative boulevard that connected the royal palace to the Brandenburg Gate and which Karl Baedeker described in 1878 as perfect for visitors with plenty of money and in pursuit of leisure.⁴⁷ But the Kaiserhof, neither on the Linden nor adjacent to the railway termini, established itself in a burgeoning consumer district and thus acted not only as a hostelry but also as a place of respite for well-heeled Berliners, including

⁴⁴ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 1:352.

⁴⁵ The transformation of the Friedrichstraße, which entailed the intensification of commercial activity there, was already underway before the formation of the Empire. But the pace picked up after 1870. In 1872, Berthold Kempinski opened his first restaurant on the Friedrichstraße. His was among many new large-scale establishments to appear in the 1870s, including the Kaisergalerie shopping arcade in 1873, the Admiralspalast baths in 1874, the Café Bauer in 1878, the Stadtbahn station in the Dorotheenstadt in 1882, and the Wintergarten variety theater in 1887. See Peter Mugay, *Die Friedrichstraße: Geschichte und Geschichten* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1991), 37, 73, 117, 250, 256, 264.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁷ Karl Baedeker, ed., *Baedeker's Berlin, Potsdam und Umgebung* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1878), 3.

bureaucrats and businessmen. It anchored and helped engender what eventually became the central pleasure zone of Berlin, an area of town given over to shopping, dining, entertainment, and sexual commerce.

The Kaiserhof as an edifice did not so much complement the neighborhood as dominate it, attesting to the financial power of Berlin's new limited-liability corporations (fig. 1).⁴⁸ The rectangular façade had a perimeter of 310 meters and rose five floors above the pavement. A balustrade above the cornice provided additional height. The façade resembled that of an overgrown North Italian palazzo, with a *piano nobile* over the mezzanine and an arched colonnade, in relief, forming a first-floor frontage of mock rusticated stone (fig. 2). The Kaiserhof also resembled the gigantic residential buildings that had gone up in Vienna in the previous fifteen years, particularly the Heinrichshof apartment house on the Ringstraße.⁴⁹ A Berlin referent would be the royal palace itself, the grandest of the city's residences and, like the Kaiserhof, distinguished by its occupation of an entire city block. In the details, however, the Kaiserhof was considerably less austere than the royal palace. In keeping with the extravagance of the *Gründerzeit*, the Kaiserhof was more elaborately ornamented, particularly with respect to the second-floor parapets. These finishing touches, in addition to its proximity to noble residences and embassies, cemented the Kaiserhof's pride of place in the capital.

⁴⁸ Bourgeois Germans continued to use architecture, and particularly historicist styles, well into the twentieth century in order to signal arrival at a higher rung of the social hierarchy. See Dolores Augustine, "Arriving in the Upper Class: The Wealthy Business Elite of Wilhelmine Germany," in Blackbourn and Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie*, 51–52, 73.

⁴⁹ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 136–137.



Figure 1. The Hotel Kaiserhof, *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 28 (1877), 16. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.



Figure 2. Corner elevation of the Kaiserhof, *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 28 (1877), 20. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Contemporaries were conscious of the Kaiserhof's innovations in style and scale, its radical intervention in the cityscape. Critics were ambivalent. Before the hotel even opened, *Deutsche Bauzeitung* observed, "Obviously, the architecture of such a building, the outside of which reflects [the repetition] of rooms of nearly the same size within, can never quite be interesting."⁵⁰ The critic's misgivings reflected a more general response to the new large-scale commercial architecture. The utilitarian core of the Kaiserhof project was incompatible not just with precepts of beauty but also with any kind of architectural integrity: the façade in this case was an effort to mask what was un-beautiful—*utilitarian*—about the building's interior, a result of the architects' attention to function over form, utility over creativity.⁵¹ (Charges of an unbecoming commitment to the utilitarian also plagued Germany's commercial bourgeoisie in these years.⁵²) Once the hotel opened, however, on October 1, 1875, and with Emperor Wilhelm I in attendance, the public had the chance to see the sumptuous interiors and comfortable sitting rooms. Reviews were then overwhelmingly laudatory. Ten days later, a fire broke out in the building and spread through the upper floors. It destroyed most of the guestrooms as well as the areas behind the front entrance.⁵³ No one was injured, and the fire, in its way, generated some spectacular publicity and widespread sympathy (fig. 3).

⁵⁰ "Die Berliner Bau-Ausstellung 1874," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 8 (1874), 357. Also cited in Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 135–136.

⁵¹ Critics' dislike of overly utilitarian architecture, at one extreme, and overly baroque, at the other, as well as an abiding commitment to order, produced the design reform movement of Fritz Schumacher and other modernists in the German Werkbund at the turn of the century. Their battle against soulless utilitarianism and aristocratic decadence reflected a devotion to the ideal of harmony, both with respect to one's individual person and to society more generally. See Maiken Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism, 1890–1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 80–82.

⁵² Much of the criticism of the commercial bourgeoisie (or the *Besitzbürgertum*, as they were sometimes called), was to be found in the luxury debates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Warren Breckman, "Disciplining Consumption," 486.

⁵³ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 1:353.



Figure 3. Fire at the Kaiserhof, October 11, 1875. Illustration by Karl Röhling for the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, October 23, 1875. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Successful insurance claims, as well as the moral support of the emperor, ensured quick reconstruction. The Kaiserhof reopened on the anniversary of its inauguration, on October 1, 1876. That year, Baedeker described it as “the largest and most elegant of Berlin’s hotels ... , comfortably outfitted in the style of the greatest Parisian and London hotels.”⁵⁴ Newspapers emphasized the Kaiserhof’s many luxuries and its comparability to Viennese establishments.⁵⁵ The yearbook of the Architekten-Verein zu Berlin (Association of Architects of Berlin) dwelled on the property’s opulence while quietly bemoaning the destruction of a few “residential buildings of value.”⁵⁶ In 1878, the Kaiserhof appeared again in many of the capital’s periodicals because of its role as the hotel of choice for statesmen who were in town to participate in the Congress of Berlin, the proceedings of which took place on the other side of the Wilhelmplatz.⁵⁷ The Kaiserhof amplified Bismarck’s message to the delegates about Germany’s place in the new world order: the hotel was a showcase of Imperial bombast even as it reassured foreigners with offers of peace and civility.

Berliners and foreigners alike identified the city as the parvenu metropolis, comparable to Chicago in its heavy industry, building boom, and transport connections, according to a promotional book published by the Savoy Hotel.⁵⁸ Others were more willing to compare Berlin with Paris and London—and favorably. Walter Rathenau saw Berlin’s “Parvenupolis” as outpacing those cities, now old and tired.⁵⁹ Still others

⁵⁴ Baedeker, *Baedeker’s Berlin, Potsdam und Umgebung*, 1.

⁵⁵ Demps, *Berlin-Wilhelmstraße*, 124.

⁵⁶ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 1:352-53.

⁵⁷ The Congress of Berlin took place at Wilhelmstraße 77. See Demps, *Berlin-Wilhelmstraße*, 124.

⁵⁸ Promotional book for the Savoy Hotel, undated but likely the 1890s, in HAT, D060/11/01/900/SAV. References to Berlin as the “Chicago on the Spree” were commonplace in the Imperial period. See Daniel Kiecol, *Selbstbild und Image zweier europäischer Metropolen: Paris und Berlin zwischen 1900 und 1930* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Land, 2001), 256.

⁵⁹ Rathenau, “Die schönste Stadt der Welt,” 38.

complained of a lack of taste that accompanied the proliferation of buildings—and building styles—that came with an influx of French indemnity payments and the spirit of victory that pervaded the city after 1871.⁶⁰ In many cases, particularly in interior design, bourgeois Berliners opted for the idiom of the Renaissance, which was generally poorly executed and more attributable to the aspirations of the *nouveaux riches* and their “demand for luxury” in all areas than to a wish to celebrate a vaunted historical tradition.⁶¹ Outside, *Renaissancismus* vied with a diversity of styles, which produced neighborhoods that looked out of place in their host city and chaotic in their composition.⁶² To its critics, the city lacked pedigree. To its fans, that very lack opened up a range of new possibilities for the thousands of new middle-class Germans who flooded its gates.⁶³

To accommodate the influx, work began for another grand hotel, the Central, which would be Berlin’s first large-scale railway hotel, integrated almost seamlessly into the city’s intra- and inter-urban train lines. The Eisenbahn-Hotelgesellschaft (Railway Hotel Company) had formed in 1877 to finance the enterprise and soon acquired 9,000 square meters of land across from the Friedrichstraße station, which helped convey passengers from the city’s eastern and western ends as well as to points further afield, both national and international.⁶⁴ In the 1870s, Friedrichstraße itself was Berlin’s premier commercial thoroughfare and one of the longest streets in the city. It housed cafés, shops,

⁶⁰ Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 38–60.

⁶¹ On *Renaissancismus* among intellectuals, as well as its manifestation in interior design, see Martin Ruehl, *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 105–165, especially 124–125.

⁶² Johannes Gaulke, *Führer durch Belrins Kunstschatze: Museen, Denkmäler, Bauwerke* (Berlin: Globus, 1908), 165.

⁶³ Rathenau, “Die schönste Stadt der Welt,” 37; Ludwig von Nordegg (1907), quoted in Strohmeyer and Strohmeyer, *Berlin in Bewegung: Literarischer Spaziergang*, 2:98.

⁶⁴ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 152.

arcades, hotels, and the Admiralspalast, a modern bathing facility. The Central anchored this district in the north and complemented the Kaiserhof to the south. What made the Central different from the Kaiserhof was its position, directly across the street from a station entrance. This unparalleled proximity to the railway helped classify the Central as a *Passantenhotel*, or hotel for those passing through the city on short-term business or to stop a night before connecting to other trains.⁶⁵ Also contributing to this profile was the concentration of industry to the north and commerce and government to the south and southeast.⁶⁶ The Central was more American in style and function: it tied into commercial and transportation networks more tightly than the Kaiserhof.⁶⁷

The Central, like its southern counterpart, used its frontages to display the building's overwhelming massiveness and change the visual profile of the surrounding neighborhood. Indeed, the *Eisenbahn-Hotel-Gesellschaft* (Railway Hotel Corporation) had commissioned the Kaiserhof architects, von der Hude and Henicke, who devised a three-sided building of four floors divided into three horizontal zones (fig. 4). With few vertical elements to draw the eye upward, the building's lateral embellishments emphasized the expansiveness of the structure. Rounded towers at the two front corners, on either end of the longest frontage, drew the eye from the center of the building to the edges and thus further accentuated the Central's length. The name of the house was emblazoned in gilded letters on each of the towers, which featured state-of-the-art plate glass, half pillars, rich ornamentation, and wrought-iron balustrades. The towers and the rest of the exterior were vast and imposing but also appeared more penetrable than the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁶ Knoch, "Geselligkeitsräume und Societyräume," 332.

⁶⁷ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 242.

Kaiserhof's thick ground-floor façade of mock rusticated stone. Plate glass, multiple entrances, and large windows on upper floors helped integrate the building into the city outside—a move that von der Hude and Hennecke had eschewed for the Kaiserhof. The Central presented itself both as an extension of the pleasure zone and as its northern anchor and gateway.



Figure 4. The Central Hotel in Berlin, *Illustrierte Zeitung* 72 (1879), 480. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Another way that the outside came in was in the form of the Wintergarten concert hall (and later variety theater) and an adjacent banquet hall, restaurant, and café.⁶⁸ The combination of luxury accommodation, fine dining, and nightly entertainment had never been tried in Berlin.⁶⁹ The designation of so much space to dining and entertainment, at the expense of intimate parlors and conversation spaces, added to the hotel's profile as a

⁶⁸ Mugay, *Die Friedrichstraße*, 132.

⁶⁹ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 156.

place for short visits and quick pleasures, despite the availability of apartments upstairs. The “*Centralcomplex*,” as it came to be known much later, used moveable screens, walls, and windows to integrate the Wintergarten, dining rooms, and the restaurant and café into a visual whole.⁷⁰ The only interruption of this airy continuum was the ladies’ parlor, a modest refuge of 30 square meters. Some smaller spaces were also reserved for hotel services: corridors connected cloak rooms, toilets, a post and telegraph office, a ticket sales desk, and an additional café. Shops were accessible only from the street and were thus the element of the complex least integrated into the whole. Yet, the Central was a unitary complex nonetheless, an enormous entertainment, shopping, hotel, and dining facility the likes of which a German city had never seen. If the Kaiserhof had been a place for the bourgeois traveler to find privacy and peace, the Central provided stimulation and entertainment.

Technologies at the Central, as well as at the Kaiserhof, attracted a good deal of attention from critics and journalists. The Central’s promise of steam heat (still newsworthy in a city that relied on coal ovens to heat individual rooms), advanced ventilation systems, generous numbers of toilets and baths, and such in-room amenities as sleeping nooks and built-in cupboards all signaled the ability of the Central to provide the latest comforts.⁷¹ Critics also underscored the hotel’s foreign influences and its readiness to compete with French, English, and American counterparts. The Central was “a hotel in the English and American style in unrivaled proximity to the central station.” Indeed, “in scale, splendor, and comfort,” the Central equaled the grand hotels of “London, New

⁷⁰ “Ein Berliner Hotel und seine Geschichte,” *B.Z. am Mittag*, September 7, 1934; “Berlin im dritten Stock,” *Das 12-Uhr-Blatt*, September 22, 1934.

⁷¹ See Ernst Friedel on the excitement around displays of new technology, in Mugay, *Friedrichstraße*, 36. On the Central Hotel’s technologies, see Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 304.

York, and Paris”; its “magnificent Wintergarten,” moreover, ensured that the Central would be “one of a kind,” casting its “shadow over all things similar now in existence.”⁷²

A hyperbolic statement, of course, but it reflected a general conclusion of critics and observers: that the Central was one of Berlin’s ways of competing with other capitals for visitors, prestige, and supremacy.

Between the opening of the Central and the turn of the century, Berlin welcomed six more grand hotels, all in the city center. These were variations on the themes of the Kaiserhof and the Central, striking a delicate balance between models. The Grand Hotel Alexanderplatz (1884), close to the retailers and wholesalers of the Scheunenviertel, the commercial and financial institutions of the city center, the growing bureaucracy of the *Rathaus*, and the shops of the Breitestraße, had relatively small rooms that welcomed couriers, business men, and other single travelers.⁷³ Catering to a very different clientele composed largely of families and tourists was the Hotel Continental (1885), also across from a station. These were “noble, peaceful, and homey accommodations in the immediate vicinity of the *Zentral-Bahnhof*,” wrote one reviewer.⁷⁴ Fully fledged apartments, many with their own bathrooms and toilets, the Continental’s suites were the finest in Berlin. The Lindenhof, on the other hand, with its 1000-seat café and famed variety theater, gave over most of its space to entertainment and dining rather than bourgeois interiors and bathrooms. For its part, the Bristol (1891) attracted local elites and worldly travelers with its American bar, while the Savoy (1893) focused its energies

⁷² “Central-Hôtel,” *Illustrierte Zeitung* 107 (1879), 480. Quoted in Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 160.

⁷³ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 160–162

⁷⁴ “Berliner Neubauten: Das Hôtel Continental zu Berlin,” *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 20 (1886), 37: “zu einer vornehmen und ruhigen, wohnlichen Unterkunft in unmittelbarer Nähe des Zentralbahnhofes.”

on a “conversation area” (*Unterhaltungsbereich*) intended for Berlin’s rich and powerful, who, like their foreign peers, began to eschew older modes of commercial hospitality for the grand hotel.⁷⁵ By 1900, a variegated, robust grand hotel scene had coalesced in the city center, helping to make the grounds fertile for the bourgeoisie’s pursuit of luxury, penchant for spectacular consumption, and practice of new modes of urban sociability.

The transformation of Berlin into an industrial metropolis, and the middle class it spawned, spurred development of the western side of the city center, the Friedrichstadt and Dorotheenstadt, into an intensified zone of commercial activity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. An 1868 birds-eye view of these districts by the illustrator Robert Meinhardt adopts a perspective high above the Tiergarten, looking eastwards, that suggests an urban center of gravity no longer occupied by the medieval core (above and slightly to the left of center, outlined by the river’s system of canals), but by the neat, rectilinear streets and capacious boulevards of the Dorotheenstadt and Friedrichstadt (fig. 5). By 1868, and increasingly after 1871, these districts supplanted the medieval core as the commercial and administrative center of Berlin, Prussia, and now Germany.

⁷⁵ The Bristol began attracting Americans after a renovation and expansion in 1899. See Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 178. The quoted material comes from a commemorative book produced by the Savoy Hotel for marketing purposes, in Historisches Archiv für Tourismus (hereafter: HAT) D060/11/01/900/SAV, not paginated, undated but probably 1893.



Figure 5. Illustration by Robert Meinhardt, 1868, in LAB, F Rep. 270, A 2062. Landesarchiv Berlin.

Although bounded by rail lines and waterways, the Friedrichstadt nonetheless became the meeting place for Berliners of all districts. The Friedrichstraße station went up in 1878 at the northern frontier of the Dorotheenstadt, along the River Spree, in view of *Feuerland* (fireland, the industrial districts) and the *Mietskasernengürtel* (tenement belt) to the north. Somewhat to the east, the Spree also separated the Dorotheenstadt and Friedrichstadt from the island of the *Stadtschloss* (City Palace), home of the king and emperor, and the royal museums, but several bridges connected the palace and museums to the Friedrichstadt and eastern city center, near Alexanderplatz. Farther south of the island lay the *Reichsbank* (the national bank of Imperial Germany); to the southeast the Luisenstadt, home to apartment houses and the Görlitz station; to the south the handsome, aristocratic Belle-Allianz-Platz; to the southwest the Anhalt and Postdam railway

stations; and to the west the Tiergarten and the Reichstag.⁷⁶ The Leipziger Platz in the west was the confluence of myriad horse and then electric tram lines, which discharged passengers near Potsdamer Platz, one of the busiest squares in the Empire, and the Potsdam and Anhalt stations.⁷⁷ Further southwest, but sharing rails with both of the aforementioned stations, sat the enormous freight depot and one of the busiest ports of the Landwehrkanal. If not all, then most roads, rails, and waterways led to the Friedrich- and Dorotheenstadt, the undisputed center of the new Berlin.

Local, German, and foreign visitors arrived in increasing numbers to seek pleasure in the district's myriad entertainments. These lined the Friedrichstraße and the Leipziger Straße in the highest concentrations.⁷⁸ In 1904, the list of restaurants included those of the luxury hotels there, as well as the wine houses Rheinische Winzerstuben, Eggebrecht, and Zum Rheingau.⁷⁹ There were also the beer halls Augustinerbräu, Pschorrbräu, Sedlmayr zum Spaten, Weihenstephan, Tucherbräu, Münchener Hofbräu, and Dortmunder Unionbräu. More popular among women were the cafés and cake shops (*Konditoreien*), where "smoking is permitted only in certain rooms."⁸⁰ At least one café, the Buchholz, had the reputation of being "visited almost exclusively by women."⁸¹ The Viktoria-Café and the Kranzler occupied the most prestigious intersection of the Friedrichstraße, at the corner of Unter den Linden, while up and down that boulevard, Leipziger Straße, and the side streets lay plush concessions like the Café Klose, the

⁷⁶ The Meinhardt map predates many some of these monuments, such as the 1896 Reichstag building.

⁷⁷ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Wilhelm Ernst, 1896), 3:184.

⁷⁸ Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 93-94.

⁷⁹ *Baedeker's Berlin und Umgebung* (Leipzig: Baedeker's, 1904), 8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

Reichshallen-Café, and the Kaiser-Café.⁸² At the northern end of the Friedrichstraße, near the station and the Central Hotel loomed the Admiralsgartenbad (Admiral's Garden Baths), the grandest facility of its kind. For entertainment, there were several shopping arcades, including the Kaiser-Galerie, with its panorama, cabaret, and food and fashion concessions.⁸³ "The best shops" were in an area comprising the Friedrichstraße and Leipziger Straße. There were department stores and stores specializing in jewels, books, antiques, engravings, furniture, furs, glassware, hats, lace, leather, fabric, perfume, porcelain, silk, underwear, as well as all manner of black gowns and black accessories at the "Mourning Warehouse" of Otto Weber.⁸⁴ Circulating in close proximity were men, women, and children; consumers and clerks; foreigners and locals; prostitutes and bourgeois ladies; and aristocrats and thieves. The Friedrichstadt was heterogeneous.

But heterogeneity presented dangers and dislocations. Hans Ostwald, the editor of the *Grossstadtdokumente (Big City Documents)*, gave voice in print to the titillation of moral decline in the sexual-commercial city center. Moralists complained about prostitutes "openly" plying their "horizontal wares" as if the city's cafés were "stock markets," and the women merely brokers.⁸⁵ For their part, the police carefully collected information on the infractions of the Friedrichstadt's demimonde.⁸⁶ They harassed

⁸² Ibid., 11.

⁸³ Mugay, *Die Friedrichstraße*, 34-39.

⁸⁴ Baedeker's *Berlin and Its Environs* (Leipzig: Baedeker's, 1912), 32-34.

⁸⁵ "Unsere Budiker," *Deutsche Hochwacht*, July 7, 1904, clipped and included in police files alongside articles and complaints about alcohol consumption in department stores, possible houses of assignation, and the harassment of women, in LAB A Pr. Br. Rep 030, Nr. 1589.

⁸⁶ Authorities recognized the connections among theaters, hotels, cafés, dance venues, and prostitution when the Friedrichstraße took off in the 1850s, as the alarmist books and pamphlets in the possession of the Berlin police make evident: Th. Bade, *Über Gelegenheitsmacherei und öffentliches Tanzvergnügen* (Berlin: Friedländer, 1858); a booklet on the proliferation of prostitution in and around the Friedrichstraße, undated but likely published between 1866 and 1871; an article in the *Staatsbürger Zeitung* of May 9, 1884, which registered the plying of the trade even during daylight hours on the Friedrichstraße; and a supplementary section to the *Real-Encyclopädie der gesammten Heilkunde*, a reference publication for doctors. Aforementioned sources to be found in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 16927. On prostitution in German

women, respectable and not, circulating through the city, as did barkeepers, café maîtres d', and restaurateurs.⁸⁷ Urban reportage and fiction represented the Friedrichstadt as replete with vice, homosexuality, and sexual dangers—an area inhospitable to women, even as engraved invitations to the department store sales appeared on salvers in the finest ladies' drawing rooms.⁸⁸ The mix of vice and respectability, sex and commerce, danger and pleasure, was the neighborhood's defining feature.⁸⁹ Observers repeated the point that the maelstrom was both exciting and disorienting. "Ruthless progress" in the city had produced a "clumsy young giant with all the ungainliness that comes after too fast a growth spurt," a "world city in the constant state of becoming," "immoderate," and ready to "grab indiscriminately at the pleasures of life." It was "impersonal," a meeting point for "the unconnected."⁹⁰ These feelings existed not only as the flâneur's fabrication but also as pervasive responses to the rush of people, goods, and building that produced in the Friedrichstadt dynamic daytime and nighttime populations. The area's heterogeneity

cities and how urban authorities attempted to regulate it, see Lynn Abrams, "Prostitutes in Imperial Germany, 1870–1918: Working Girls or Social Outcasts?" in *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History*, ed. Richard Evans (London: Routledge, 1988), 190–205. On Berlin in particular, see Jill Smith, *Berlin Coquette: Prostitution and the New German Woman, 1890–1933* (Ithaca: N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013), which places the number of prostitutes on the streets on any given day at 20 to 50 thousand by 1900. (A large contingent would have been working on or near the Friedrichstraße.) On the definition of a pleasure zone, see Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 5. Berlin's police, who were responsible for licensing virtually all leisure establishments in the city, described the area around the Friedrichstraße as a pleasure zone, an area given over primarily or at least increasingly to entertainment and other forms of commercialized leisure. This kind of language appears in their discussions of whether to grant new licenses for bars, cafés, dance locales, and restaurants as early as the 1870s and 80s, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep 030, Nr. 1580–1584.

⁸⁷ Minna Cauer, Chairwoman of the Verein Frauenwohl, to Police President Georg von Borries, letter of August 13, 1904, in LAB, A Pr Br Rep 030, Nr. 1589, f. 233; Cf., "Ohne Herrenbegleitung," *Die Frauenbewegung: Revue für die Interessen der Frauen* 10 (1904), 107-108. On street harassment of women by police, see Judith Walkowitz, "Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London," *Representations* (Spring, 1998), 1–30.

⁸⁸ Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers."

⁸⁹ On the pleasure/danger dynamic of urban entertainments, see Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (New York: Guilford, 1998), 119; Schlör, *Nights in the Big City*; and Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*.

⁹⁰ Arthur Eloesser, *Die Straße meiner Jugend: Berliner Skizzen* (Berlin: Arsenal, 1987), 7.

and air of ephemerality ensured its success as an intensified commercial zone but alienated many observers. When, “in the main, the Berliner comes from Breslau or Posen and has no time,” as Kurt Tucholsky famously quipped, “the sense of home has...become transportable” and Berlin the capital of “the impersonal, the unconnected, strangeness [*Fremdheit*], and ambivalence.”⁹¹

The hotel as a refuge from the heterogeneity and instability of the city gained expression in one of the earliest artistic representations of the streetscape surrounding a grand hotel, the Central in 1879, a year before it opened. This illustration (fig. 4) by von der Hude and Henricke’s firm depicted a mix of people in the Friedrichstraße: porters, students, bourgeois couples, and workers (left to right, fig. 6); youths, female shoppers, military personnel, and men at leisure (left to right, fig. 7); workers, artisans, and tourists (left to right, fig. 8); and all manner of traffic in all directions. Above this social-typological *mis-en-scène* rests the Central. It dominates the arrangement and dwarfs its neighbors—the corner of a dormered, gabled, plain, eighteenth-century house can be seen, at right, to throw the ornate splendors of the Central into sharp relief (fig. 4). In its monumental scale, the Central seems ready to accommodate and enable the heterogeneity of the district by providing a refuge for the respectable and a site for the work that goes into the maintenance of their comforts and privileges.

⁹¹ Tucholsky quoted in Klaus Strohmeier and Marianne Strohmeier, eds., *Berlin in Bewegung: Literarischer Spaziergang* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987), 33.



Figure 6. Detail from a drawing of the Central Hotel in Berlin (op. cit., fig. 4).



Figure 7. Detail from a drawing of the Central Hotel in Berlin (op. cit.).



Figure 8. Detail from a drawing of the Central Hotel in Berlin (op. cit.).

Twentieth-Century Additions

The twentieth-century wave of hotel building occurred somewhat to the southwest of previous developments, around the Potsdam and Anhalt stations, in the direction of a new city center some three miles west of the Brandenburg Gate.⁹² The southeastern corner of the Tiergarten, where Potsdamer Platz joined major east-west and north-south thoroughfares, now proved advantageous for hotel developers. There was easy access to the fashionable west as well as to the city's railway stations and central districts. Finally, the quarter bordered Berlin's most elite residences between the southern frontier of the Tiergarten and the northern bank of the Lützowkanal. Hotels fit nicely into Potsdamer Platz's economy of pleasure and leisure, exemplified and facilitated by myriad theaters, beer halls, wine restaurants, and Wertheim's department store on the corner of Leipziger Platz and Leipziger Straße.⁹³ The area was indeed ideal for grand hotels: it featured multiple railway stations, streetcar crossings, and intersections of large thoroughfares; proximity to the genteel pleasures of the Tiergarten and adjacent residential quarters; accessibility on foot to the capital's main tourist attractions and centers of commerce,

⁹² Part of what drove westward expansion was the proliferation of villas for the bourgeoisie at points even farther west and south. The new western center of town thus emerged as a halfway point between elite suburban developments and the historic city center. See the essay by Dieter Radicke, "Verkehrsentwicklung und Suburbanisierung durch Villenvororte: Berlin, 1871–1914," in *Berliner Villenleben*, 50–52; Heinz Reif, "Einleitung," in *Berliner Villenleben*, 9–13.

⁹³ For an earlier, British example of the advent of the urban pleasure zone, an area of town almost universally identified with the pursuit of pleasure as well as danger, see Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 7ff. For a later, German example, which entailed a greater prevalence of the sex trades, see Julia Sneeringer, "'Assembly Line of Joys': Touring Hamburg's Red Light District, 1949–1966," *Central European History* 42 (2009), 66. On Wertheim's department store and the transformation of the Leipziger Platz and adjacent areas, see Kathleen James, "From Messel to Mendelssohn: German Department Store Architecture in Defence of Urban and Economic Change," in *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850–1939*, eds. Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 256; Alan Balfour, *Berlin: The Politics of Order, 1737–1989* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 93.

government, and finance; and adjacency to the central urban pleasure zone around the Friedrichstraße and Leipziger Straße.

Already home to dozens of hotels, the area still lacked a first-class establishment in the middle of the 1890s. But between 1898 and 1913, four grand hotels would replace the smaller structures of the neighborhood. First to open was the Palast-Hotel, with 100 rooms, 15 baths, a wine merchant, a banquet hall, a smoking room, a restaurant, and several *salons*.⁹⁴ Advertising materials showed the Palast-Hotel's pride of place on two of Berlin's most trafficked squares. As viewed from the apex of the V-shaped structure, the Palast appeared in its postcards to offer immediate access to the rush of Potsdamer Platz as it emptied into Budapester Straße—with the Brandenburg Gate and Reichstag in the background—as well as access to the octagonal expanse of the Leipziger Platz to the east.⁹⁵ These promotional postcards emphasized both bustle and calm, centrality and retreat, crowds and exclusivity—the best of all worlds. Next came the Excelsior, built across the street from Anhalt station between 1906 and 1908. The Excelsior's developers took the opposite approach to those of the Palast and managed to build the largest hotel in Berlin to date. By 1913, the property contained 550 rooms and cavernous public spaces, including multiple restaurants, anterooms, and a ballroom.⁹⁶ This was a *Passantenhotel* at its largest, twice the size of the Central and as near to a station as possible. With only a brief interruption, the Excelsior remained until 1945 the largest hotel in Germany and possibly the largest on the European continent.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Guest brochure produced for the Palast-Hotel, undated but probably 1911, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 345.

⁹⁵ Postcard, postmarked 1911, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 345.

⁹⁶ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 307.

⁹⁷ In virtually all its advertisements before the hotel was destroyed by bombing in World War II, the Excelsior claimed to be “the largest hotel on the continent.” I have not found anyone to challenge this assertion, but it would have been very difficult to confirm even at the time. Sources include: Grundbucheintrag des Hotels Excelsior, Königgrätzer Straße 112–113, Anhaltstraße 6–7, in LAB, A Pr. Br.

In the same years, the Fürstenhof went up across from the Palast, at the bottleneck separating Potsdamer and Leipziger Platz. Its balconied façade—a baroque and Jugendstil composite—was the most expansive of all the city’s hotels so far (fig. 9).⁹⁸ The ground floor was immense and contained several shops, two restaurants, a café, a cake shop, and an automat restaurant, as well as the requisite common spaces: the ladies’ common area, smoking and writing rooms, and a garden court.⁹⁹ The placement of closets on the hallway side of each of the hotel’s 300 guestrooms reduced sound, provided ample storage space for the personal possessions of longer-term residents, and ensured a barrier between the private and public lives of hotel guests.¹⁰⁰ Finally, and perhaps most appealingly, the Fürstenhof boasted the highly favorable guestroom-to-bathroom ratio of 3:1, ensuring the hotel’s popularity among American tourists.¹⁰¹ Yet Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, the corporation that built and owned the Fürstenhof as well as dozens of fast-food cafés for working-class Berliners, did not see a profit from this venture into elite commercial hospitality for at least a decade.

Rep. 030–07, Nr. 626; *Katalog der Bibliothek des Hotel Excelsior* (Berlin: Hotel Excelsior, 1926), in the archival collection of the Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (hereafter: SBB), Unter den Linden Ao 5710/10; front page of the *Excelsior-Zeitung* of November 1, 1929, a publication produced by the hotel, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 908; and frequent advertisements in the 1920s in foreign papers, such as *Le Matin* (Paris) and the *Daily Mail* (London), clipped, assembled, and available in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 643.

⁹⁸ Tax estimates for 1909, prepared by accountants for Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1175.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* For sound-blocking closets: Otto Sarrazin and Friedrich Schulze, “Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 28 (1908), 416, which cites the Fürstenhof as having had this feature first.

¹⁰¹ Tax estimates for 1909, prepared by accountants for Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1175.



Figure 9. The Hotel Fürstenhof, postcard (undated), author's collection.

The Fürstenhof's records are the only detailed accounts of how a grand hotel was financed, and it is in the details that the pitfalls of capital-intensive, speculative investment in early-twentieth-century Berlin become most clear. The Fürstenhof was a significant misstep for Aschinger's, which suffered the effects for at least a decade. Although the board blamed conservative trade policy and the burdens of fiscal reform, which fell heavily on the commercial sector, the corporation's weakness was mostly a function of the board's foolhardy forays into the securities and real estate markets, an explanation they concealed from shareholders.

When Aschinger's incorporated in 1900, its board used the influx of capital in order to raise even more capital on the stock exchanges, through speculation. Scarcely a year later, in 1901, stock prices collapsed.¹⁰² Aschinger's had already leveraged these bad

¹⁰² The German correspondent for *The Economist* explained in detail the impact on German stock markets when, in early 1902, the government's statisticians had to revise downward their estimates on the volume of trade, less bonded warehouse inventories and goods in transit out of the country, for 1901. The bubble burst almost immediately. "Germany (from Our Own Correspondent)," *The Economist* 60 (April 5, 1902), 534.

assets in order to make large investments in Berlin real estate for use as cafés, some of which took years to open. Moreover, revenues at the corporation's existing cafés began to slip as early as 1901, when national rates of unemployment among industrial workers more than tripled. Although joblessness among these workers declined in 1902, the rate of unemployment remained higher than it had been in 1900.¹⁰³ Still, Aschinger's charged ahead in 1905 with plans to purchase the Leipziger Hof and transform it into the city's most luxurious hotel to date.

Its new hotel open by the end of 1906, Aschinger's profits fell and did not recover until the end of the decade. According to the board, "the multiple and incessant stoppages [*Arbeitseinstellungen*] among the construction workers" at the site of the nascent Fürstenhof Hotel were to blame for these losses. According to the board, the stoppages had accounted for the eight-month delay in opening the premises to customers.¹⁰⁴ The cost of stoppages notwithstanding, it is extraordinary even for the period for developers such as Aschinger's to be caught unawares by the objections of the trade unions to having so many men work for so little pay on what was shaping up to be a veritable pleasure palace for the world's elites. Even more extraordinary is to have crafted a construction budget so tight that an eight-month delay could result in a 60-percent drop in profits when, in fact, the corporation's main areas of revenue were not and were not going to be the hotel but rather café concessions and rents on retail spaces throughout the city.¹⁰⁵ The managing directors had in effect robbed the corporation's profitable enterprises in order to pay for a mistake that was in part a product of their own imprudent speculation and

¹⁰³ Table 18 in Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 284.

¹⁰⁴ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for the year 1907, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 634.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, and annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1906, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 634.

real estate acquisitions dating back to 1901. The board deflected criticism by shifting the blame to political adversaries, in this case the socialists and workers, a move some of the very same men would repeat after World War I.

Nevertheless, profitable or not, the Fürstenhof and its neighboring competitors, on or near the Potsdamer Platz, facilitated the expansion of bourgeois society and culture outward from the center and in the direction of the “New West,” the secondary city center for the nouveau-riche of Imperial Berlin.¹⁰⁶ Yet even if the origins, ethos, and clientele of the grand hotels remained predominantly bourgeois, aristocrats had participated in the scene as guests, diners, and socializers since the beginning. In the twentieth century, however, and perhaps in response to the bloated counts of newly-minted elites that Berlin-as-boomtown had created, aristocratic and royal personages began to invest in hotels of their own. Shares in the Deutsche Hotel-Gesellschaft (German Hotel Company), which built the Esplanade between 1907 and 1908, were owned largely by members of such lines as Hohenlohe, Fürstenberg, and Henckel-Donnersmarck.¹⁰⁷ The corporation conceived of, outfitted, and priced the Esplanade to appeal to the aristocracy and upper reaches of the commercial bourgeoisie, making it the city’s most exclusive hotel.

Innovations for Berlin included the provision of a separate building for accommodating hotel staff, the use of electric bells for summoning servants, and the availability of

¹⁰⁶ The 1906 business report of Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft mentions the “seit Jahren bemerkbar machende Zug nach dem Westen und die allmähliche Konzentrierung des geschäftlichen Zentrums nach diesem Viertel Gross-Berlins,” in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 634. See also Arthur Eloesser, “Großstadt und Großstädter,” first published in 1909, reprinted in Eloesser, *Die Straße meiner Jugend: Berliner Skizzen* (Berlin: Arsenal, 1987), 31.

¹⁰⁷ The Deutsche Hotel Aktien-Gesellschaft, which owned the Esplanade and other properties, was part of a conglomerate known to bankers, investors, and the general public as the “Fürstenkonzern,” which ultimately went into partial receivership in 1913 and then liquidation in 1919. See Robert Liefmann, *Beteiligungs- und Finanzierungsgesellschaften: Eine Studie über den modernen Effektenkapitalismus in Deutschland, den Vereinigten Staaten, der Schweiz, England, Frankreich und Belgien*, 3rd ed. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1921), 175; Lothar Gall et al., *Die Deutsche Bank, 1870–1995* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), 137.

palatial conference rooms for business travelers and the associational lives of elite Berliners. The designation of 60 rooms for the household servants accompanying guests on their travels made the Esplanade particularly attractive to the very wealthy and the landed.¹⁰⁸ The building materials themselves signaled riches: marble floors extended to many of the guestrooms, exotic woods clad the high walls, and oriental rugs muffled the footfalls of hundreds.¹⁰⁹

But the crème of Berlin society and its guests opted after 1908 for the Hotel Adlon. The Adlon owed much to its location at the corner of Unter den Linden and Pariser Platz, next to the Academy of Art and steps from the British and French embassies, the Brandenburg Gate, and the Reichstag. The site had accommodated the Palais Redern, an aristocratic residence designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, for decades. When plans emerged for the destruction of the palace and its replacement with yet another grand hotel, a debate broke out in the city's dailies. Eventually, however, the weight of public opinion tipped in the project's favor, particularly after the emperor let it be known that his preference was for the hotel project and not the maintenance of the Palais Redern.¹¹⁰ So a new building, largely financed by the restaurateur and hotelier Lorenz Adlon himself, went up at this desirable address. The new property also incorporated the Hotel Reichshof, on a rear lot facing the Wilhelmstraße, lending the Adlon an extensive wing to the east.¹¹¹ Most of the building was five stories high and extended south and east from the western and northern façades on Pariser Platz and Unter

¹⁰⁸ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 226 and 306.

¹⁰⁹ "Das Hotel Esplanade in Berlin," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 47 (1913), 777, 780–781; Paul Damm-Etienne, *Das Hotelwesen* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1910), 61–62.

¹¹⁰ "Das Hotel Adlon am Pariser Platz," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 41 (1907), 693–694

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 694.

den Linden respectively. The ground level sported rusticated stone around large arched windows; above, half columns, generous windows, balconies of stone and iron, and relief sculptures formed the exteriors of the first through fourth floors. A balustrade ran along the top of the fourth story, above which a sloping roof rose behind a fence of iron. The whole was sober and understated, in keeping with the clean lines of the Brandenburg Gate across the square and a classic, older Prusso-Hohenzollern commitment to austerity and restraint.¹¹²

In degree and kind, the Adlon differentiated itself from all other grand hotels. Where paintings, ironwork, plaster moulding, stained glass, and sculptures adorned the courtyards of other hotels, the Adlon opted for intricate mosaic friezes. Where other hotels had installed decorative fountains of stone or metal, the Adlon installed a six-sided column of sculpted elephants with real ivory tusks. Where other hotels had designated five to ten rooms as parlors, the Adlon offered dozens, and each more sumptuously yet understatedly outfitted than in any other hotel. Throughout reigned a tamed rendition of the Louis XVI idiom, each element of interior design personally overseen by the famed

¹¹² “Ein amerikanischer Kunstkritiker über Berlin und New-York” *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 21 (1886), 2: “Schinkels grossem Einfluss und vielleicht noch mehr dem Geschmack Friedrich Wilhelms IV. wird das lange Fortbestehen der Pflege klassischer Bauweise verdankt, das in Berlin noch weit den Zeitpunkt überdauerte Erst vor 15 Jahren—als die gegenwärtige Periode reger Geschäftigkeit ihren Anfang nahm—verlor in Berlin der Klassizismus seinen Rückhalt.” According to Max Landsberg, 27 years later, the process was nearly complete: “Eine interessante Anregung für eine Umgestaltung des Leipziger Platzes in Berlin,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 22 (1913), 288, declared, “[E]ntstehende Bauten geben den Straßen Berlins den Ausdruck der Unkultur. Ganz besonders gleicht der Potsdamer Platz einem modernen Parvenü ohne Form. Die Kuppeln und Türme...gleichen einer Versammlung, in der ein jeder laut und aufdringlich seine eigene Sprache spricht, ohne von dem anderen angehört zu werden. Der Leipziger Platz war für...Berlin...ein idyllischer Ausgang in das Freie.” Landsberg was echoing Walther Rathenau, who, at the same spot but fifteen years earlier, had mused on Berlin as the parvenu metropolis: “Was einst der Stolz und die Schönheit der Stadt war, das ist heute erdrückt, veraltet, deplacirt Berlin ist nicht gewachsen, es ist verwandelt. Schinkel und Wertheim, Schlüter und Begas vertragen sich einfach nicht Spreeathen ist tot und Spreechicago wächst heran,” in “Die schönste Stadt der Welt,” *Die Zukunft* 26 (1899), 39.

furniture designers and interior decorators Wilhelm Kimbel and Anton Pössenbacher.¹¹³

The interior palm garden, open all winter, balanced the ostentation of mosaic floors and a giant skylight with informal, low-slung wooden chairs (fig. 10). In the reception hall, simple furnishings and a white coffered ceiling mitigated the impact of a magnificent staircase with its loud carpet and bold marble surfaces (fig. 11). In the “American Bar,” a heavy, dark ceiling presided over the simple, clean lines of wood panels and light parquet (fig. 12). And the Beethoven Parlor, with its ebony columns and heavy ornamentation, welcomed light by way of oversized French doors (fig. 13). The effect there and throughout was a harmonious, balanced whole in which guests might pretend that theirs was a sojourn at a place of taste and refinement rather than at a big-city hotel.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ See Alfra Schick, *Möbel für den Märchenkönig: Ludwig II. und die Münchener Hofschreinerei Anton Pössenbacher* (Stuttgart: Arnold, 2003); Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1927), s. v. “Wilhelm Kimbel,” 20:309.

¹¹⁴ Wilhelm Michel, “Das Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 6.



Figure 10. Palm garden of the Hotel Adlon, *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 12. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.



Figure 11. Reception hall of the Hotel Adlon, *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 13. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.



Figure 12. The American Bar at the Hotel Adlon, *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 16. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.



Figure 13. The Beethoven Parlor in the Hotel Adlon, *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 23. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

If the Adlon traded on the restraint and taste of the noble connoisseur, it guaranteed those modern fittings and fixtures that only the bourgeoisie had made a part of their everyday lives.¹¹⁵ For privacy and quiet, all rooms incorporated sleeping alcoves, a double set of doors, and concrete walls.¹¹⁶ For hygiene and convenience, most rooms connected to private bathrooms of marble tile, porcelain amenities, and nickel fixtures (fig. 14).¹¹⁷ For space and in the service of domesticity, apartments were available along the Unter den Linden front. With its well-appointed rooms, tasteful yet opulent spaces, and prime location, the Adlon soon became the favorite of diplomats, royals, aristocrats, and American society mavens.¹¹⁸ The emperor himself frequented the establishment and chose to house his personal and state guests there. (The court paid a yearly fee for the privileged access that even His Majesty could not expect to enjoy for free.¹¹⁹) Louis Adlon capitalized on this association with the court by letting it be known that he had instructed his chef de reception to let rooms to Germans only if they were of noble or royal blood.¹²⁰ It is doubtful he meant for that instruction to be heeded; its point was to advertise the Adlon's exclusivity, which, by any account, served to increase its popularity among the non-titled as well as the titled.

¹¹⁵ Gerd Kuhn, "Stile des Lebens: Distinktion und Technisierung—Aspekte großbürgerlichen Wohnens," in Reif, *Berliner Villenleben*, 279–280.

¹¹⁶ "Hotel Adlon in Berlin," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 28 (1908), 417.

¹¹⁷ Michel, "Das Hotel Adlon in Berlin," 51.

¹¹⁸ The correspondent stationed at the Adlon for the *New York Times* did an uncommonly thorough job of accounting for the comings and goings there: e.g., "Dr. Hill's First Reception: Monday Next in Honor of the Berlin Diplomatic Corps," June 25, 1908; "Kaiser at Banquet in Berlin Hotel," March 6, 1909; and "Guests of Kaiser Will Fill Hotels," April 27, 1913.

¹¹⁹ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 213.

¹²⁰ Cf. Hedda Adlon, *Hotel Adlon: Das Berliner Hotel, in dem die große Welt zu Gast war*, (Munich: Barrie, 1958), 8.



Figure 14. Ensuite bathroom at the Hotel Adlon, *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908), 51. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Even the Adlon and the Esplanade relied on bourgeois guests as their predominant clientele.¹²¹ Berlin's grand hotels were primarily built for and by the commercial bourgeoisie. Although some were more inclusive than others, grand hotels made it a pillar of their business to deny service to the majority of German society. Yet such exclusivity depended upon the presence of hundreds of working-class people who toiled, ate, and slept in the hotel. How was it possible to bring together and sustain a level of equilibrium among such vastly different social groupings, and what does the maintenance of that equilibrium tell us about the nature of bourgeois power in Imperial Berlin?

¹²¹ Cf., Knoch, "Geselligkeitsräume und Societyräume," 335.

The Grand Hotel Hierarchy

Hierarchies among hotel personnel both dispensed particular responsibilities to each individual and determined pay. The hierarchy itself relied upon and produced sharp distinctions of rank along lines of dress, comportment, access to space, and rights. By dress I mean uniform, while comportment connotes the relationship between body language and rank in the context of human interactions, not only among the staff but also between staff and management, between staff and guests, and between management and guests.¹²² *Access to space* refers to the privilege to be present in certain parts of the hotel; and rights encompass recourse to time off, to sleep, to good food, and to privacy, in addition to rights to issue orders to other members of the staff. The lowest ranks wore the most constricting and unassuming uniforms, kept their eyes cast down and heads bent in interactions with anyone but each other, worked in the smallest, most airless chambers with the harshest chemicals and most dangerous materials, and could not enjoy regular or sufficient sleeping hours, breaks, nutritious foods, privacy, or authority to issue orders.

Workers were many, their superiors few. At the apex stood the hotel manager and his bosses, the managing directors of the corporation, who could dress as they pleased and in the latest fashions of the best quality. These superiors stood straight and spoke clearly and directly to anyone they encountered, were welcome in almost any room of the hotel at any time, had regular time off for sleep as well as access to privacy and to the finest food in the city, and made a livelihood of issuing orders to an immediate staff of

¹²² Cf. Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (London: Harvester, 1980), 152.

dozens and an extended one of hundreds.¹²³ These hierarchies in the grand hotel laid bare the modes of social stratification of the outside world by assembling men, women, and youths of all classes under one roof, in one contained enterprise, fertile ground for the cultivation of class animosities.¹²⁴ But more so than in the outside world, the hierarchy of the grand hotel was fixed and non-negotiable; insubordination was a one-strike firing offense. The reality was a fairly closed universe in which distinctions of rank, class, and gender—women workers bore the burdens of low rank disproportionately—solidified to an extent that the outside world could not always countenance.¹²⁵ Labor agitation and intra-class animosities that so cleaved German society outside appear to have had less meaning in the hotel, where hierarchy worked well as what Foucault calls a “dividing practice,” the means by which agents of power created, enforced, and induced subject populations to internalize the categories to which they belonged, often by deploying the technologies of architecture and the authority of expertise.¹²⁶ Owners and managers had built the system and set the patterns by which it had to run; their inferiors had little time, recourse, or space to question it.¹²⁷ In that sense, the grand hotel was not so much a

¹²³ Employment contract between the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft and Ewald Kretschmar, February 10, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 987; employment contract between Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft and Hans Lohnert, May 23, 1911, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 396; Damm-Etienne, *Hotelwesen*, 103 and 111.

¹²⁴ Molly Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 133.

¹²⁵ The increasing incidence of female factory work worried many reformers in the late nineteenth century. See Mary Nolan, “Economic Crisis, State Policy, and Working-Class Formation in Germany, 1870–1900,” in *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 360–62; Karin Hausen, “Family and Role-Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century—An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life,” in *The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*, eds. Richard Evans and Robert Lee (London: Routledge, 1981), 51–83; Kathleen Canning, “Social Policy, Body Politics: Recasting the Social Question in Germany,” in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, eds. Sonya Rose and Laura Frader (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 219–229.

¹²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 95.

¹²⁷ On the spaces of worker resistance and the complex effects of employers’ use of the factory penal code as a means of imposing a particularly bourgeois moral regime, see Canning, *Languages of Labor and*

human terrarium or microcosm as a crucible of bourgeois power, a complex mix of techniques and technologies, including prescriptive architecture, knowledge gleaned from surveillance, and diffusion by regulation around and often into the bodies of the workers in their charge—a power that depended on the authority of a managerial class to determine the dress, comportment, location, and rights of a captive, subject population.¹²⁸

At the apex of the hotel hierarchy sat the owners (usually on a corporate board), the managing directors appointed by that board, and the individual hotel managers hired by those managing directors. Managing directors were entrepreneurial men of property such as Lorenz Adlon or skilled businessmen such as Hans Lohnert (the managing director of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft). Managing directors at this level—the corporate—oversaw managers of particular hotels. These managers, in turn, oversaw the day-to-day operation of their hotels. The individual hotel manager was the public face of the business, his name often gracing letterheads, brochures, and hotel menus.¹²⁹ All

Gender, 13 and 308. For the importance of space—both literal and figurative—to everyday modes of worker resistance, however subtle, see Alf Lüdtke, “Organizational Order or *Eigensinn*? Workers’ Privacy and Workers’ Politics in Imperial Germany,” in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 304–307. Although their conclusions about the potency of regulatory and coercive measures differ from Foucault’s and go a long way toward correcting his totalizing view of power dynamics among human beings, Canning and Lüdtke nonetheless speak to Foucault’s call for “a history... of *spaces*—which would at the same time be a history of *powers*—from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat, institutional architecture from the classroom to the design of hospitals, passing via economic and political installations,” in Foucault, “Eye of Power,” 148–149.

¹²⁸ Foucault has argued that the vectors of power extend in all directions at all times and determine the structures of human relationships but not necessarily in accordance with some stated plan or discernible intention. Other philosophers reached different conclusions and have cast doubt on Foucault’s hypothesis. Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, 17–18, zeroed in on the very spaces of people’s supposed subjugation in order to argue that people are engaged in a variety of “spatial practices” that actually help us lay claim to our environments and thereby acquiesce or not acquiesce to the power relations of our particular time and place. Similarly, Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 48 and 96, questions the reach of Foucauldian techniques of social control, particularly in cities, where the everyday urban life appears to have reintroduced certain “heterogeneous practices,” that is, the very elements of disorder that were supposed to have been eliminated by the impulse to conform, i.e. the reflex submission to regulation.

¹²⁹ Guest brochure and menu for the Palast-Hotel, undated but probably 1911, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 345; letterhead of the Monopol-Hotel, dated May 15, 1897, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13390, f. 11; newspaper advertisement for the Hotel Schaurté-Westminster, *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, August 13, 1910,

received honors from the emperor, usually in the form of the moniker “*Hoflieferant*” or “Purveyor to the Court,” akin to the British distinction “by royal appointment.”¹³⁰ Titles from other royal houses extended directors’ prestige still further. Moritz Matthäi of the Kaiserhof accepted from the King of Saxony the Knight’s Cross Second Class of the Order of Albrecht in 1899. Leopold Schwarz of the smaller Reichshof got the Order of the Siamese Crown from Prince Chow Fa Chakrabongse in 1906 for service to this personal guest of the emperor.¹³¹ Honors were important to these men and to the health of their business. First, a nod from the Imperial Court acted as adjudication of the hotel’s high standards. Second, orders from various royals of other houses confirmed status. More effective than these honors, however, was a hotel manager’s well publicized personal friendship with the emperor himself. Only Lorenz Adlon enjoyed this distinction, and his hotel benefitted accordingly.¹³²

Distinctions mattered to these individual hotel managers, many of whom before 1900 had risen up from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, working class, and peasantry. Emil Vollborth, for example, born in 1854, started as a waiter.¹³³ He learned several

in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13390, f. 47; bill from the Hotel Schaurté-Westminster, unused and undated but probably 1910, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13390, f. 53.

¹³⁰ In her book *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany, 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 326, Eva Giloi argues that commodifying the monarchy, in this case by buying and selling Hohenzollern paraphernalia, was a form of creative engagement with the Hohenzollerns that indicated the “social, even political confidence” of the bourgeoisie. For the politics of middle-class associations with the monarchy, especially liberals’ hopes for Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm and the “developing modern media system” that nurtured these hopes, see Frank Lorenz, *Our Fritz: Emperor Frederick III and the Political Culture of Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 270. Cf., Larry Ping, “Gustav Freytag, the *Reichsgründung*, and the National Liberal Origins of the *Sonderweg*,” *Central European History* 45 (2012), 607.

¹³¹ Leopold Schwarz to the Königliches Polizeipräsidium Berlin, letter of November 7, 1906, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13495.

¹³² The owners of the Adlon’s principal rival, the Esplanade, also had close connections to the Court. The difference is that the owners of the Esplanade did not actually manage it. The Adlon was special in that its owner, manager, and namesake were one and the same person.

¹³³ Polizeipräsidium zu Berlin to the Oberhofmarschall-Amt, letter of December 20, 1901, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13979, f. 20.

languages, became a regular contributor to the trade publication *Gasthofs-Gehilfen-Kalender (Hospitality Employees' Calendar)*, and published several booklets on gastronomy.¹³⁴ He worked his way from waiter to head waiter at hotels in Stettin and Pichelsdorf (near Berlin) before acquiring a building at Wilhelmstraße 44. There, Vollborth opened a hotel with thirty rooms and an apartment for himself, where he spent the rest of what appears to have been a comfortable, middle-class life.¹³⁵

Evidence of class mobility among hotel managers disappears for the period after 1900. Eduard Gutscher, one of the last to rise through the ranks, spent time at a number of intermediary rungs on the ladder before he could be master of the business. Stints as a waiter in London and Paris solidified his commands of English and French. Once in Berlin, Gutscher persuaded the Hotel Bristol to take him on as a secretary in the director's office. In 1899, he moved up and over to the Palast-Hotel as chef de reception there, one of the highest-ranking posts under that of the manager. Two years later, he stepped in as the new manager and lessee of the Palast. An erstwhile waiter from Graz, Gutscher now presided over 130 employees and managed a yearly revenue of 26,000 Marks.¹³⁶ Those managers born after Gutscher, however, tended to come from the commercial bourgeoisie and thus to start their careers in the hotels with white-collar work. Max Dörhöfer, for example, was born to a hotelier and wine merchant in Rüdesheim am Rhein in 1883, attended vocational high school, completed a certificate program in hotel management, worked in white-collar positions across Europe and in

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Information on Gutscher comes from a letter from the Polizeipräsidium zu Berlin to the Großherzogliches Sächsisches Hofmarschallamt, April 7, 1905, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 10359.

Cairo, ran the family hotel business, and then assumed the position of manager for a world-famous hotel.¹³⁷ Dörhöfer's trajectory is representative of this second generation of hotel managers who were born into the commercial middle class, fitted for the work through formal training, and most deliberate in their career choices.¹³⁸

At the next level down stood restaurant managers. These men tended to rise from the rank of waiter to head waiter to management. André Nett's career is typical. Born in the 1870s in Fürth, he traveled to London in 1895 to work as a waiter at the Langham—a position he held for two years.¹³⁹ Nett then assumed posts as sommelier in Paris and Switzerland.¹⁴⁰ He returned to service as a waiter shortly thereafter, this time in Bad Kreuznach and Zurich.¹⁴¹ Finally, in the 1900s, he obtained the rank of manager at the Café-Restaurant Bristol of the Hotel de l'Europe in Munich.¹⁴² The move to Berlin in the 1910s produced a slight demotion: there, Nett worked for larger, more prestigious establishments—the Weinhaus Kempinski and the Zum Rüdeshheimer—but again as a waiter and head waiter.¹⁴³ At two points, though, Nett managed to secure white collar hotel work, first as a secretary at the Hôtel de la Ville de Paris in Strasbourg and then as

¹³⁷ Max Dörhöfer to Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, letter including a curriculum vitae, undated, likely 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1143.

¹³⁸ Previous generations of enterprising young men of the middle class had received training through family channels, in the form of apprenticeships, internships, or even the working relationship of father to son, according to Jürgen Kocka, in the title essay for his volume *The Entrepreneur, the Family, and Capitalism*, 59. For continuity and change in the imperial period, see Hansjoachim Henning's essay in the same volume, "The Social Integration of Entrepreneurs in Westphalia, 1860–1940."

¹³⁹ Reference from Walter Gosden, manager of the Langham Hotel, London, March 15, 1897, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹⁴⁰ Reference from the manager of the Hôtel d'Iéna, Paris, June 30, 1898, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797; reference from the manager of the Hôtel Bonivard, Veytaux-Chillon, Switzerland, May 10, 1899, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹⁴¹ Reference from W. Reichardt, manager of the Hotel & Badehaus Kauzenberg, Bad Kreuznach, September 28, 1899, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797; reference from F. A. Pohl, manager of the Grand Hotel-Pension Bellevue au Lac, Zurich, March 28, 1900, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹⁴² Reference from Elise Schmöllner, owner of the Hôtel de l'Europe, Munich, April 17, 1901, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹⁴³ Reference from M. Kempinski & Co., Berlin, March 20, 1907, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797; reference from the Weinhaus "Zum Rüdeshheimer," Berlin, December 1, 1910, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

an accountant at the Grand Nouvel Hôtel in Lyon.¹⁴⁴ Neither of these tours, however, kept Nett from service for long, nor did they produce a promotion to the managerial levels of the hotel hierarchy. Those posts were filled by his social betters, men who had never been waiters.

Waiters, nonetheless, occupied pride of place as the highest-ranked members of a hotel-restaurant's service apparatus, even if the work was hard and the pay quite low. Where no one earned much more than anyone else, waiters maintained strict hierarchical distinctions among themselves. At the top stood the head waiters (*Oberkellner*). These were always men, normally without children. Their pay and their hours did not invite the establishment of a family, nor were employers keen on hiring and retaining family men.¹⁴⁵ Employers also requested that a head waiter be “representable, solvent, experienced, and conscientious.”¹⁴⁶ Below these masters of service and next in the chain of command were the staff waiters. Like the head waiter, staff waiters had to have a command of European languages: “perfect” French and English were a must. And only well turned out—that is, “representable”—men needed apply.¹⁴⁷ Next came the *sommeliers*, then the floor waiters (*Etagenkellner* and *Zimmerkellner*); the former assisted the waiters and head waiters in the restaurant while the latter provided room service. These workers tended to be younger than waiters and head waiters. Most of them strove for promotion within the hierarchy. Yet floor waiters and *sommeliers* were not

¹⁴⁴ Reference from the Hôtel de la Ville de Paris, Strasbourg, August 1, 1903, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797; reference from the Grand Nouvel Hôtel, Lyon, September 16, 1903, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹⁴⁵ From a supplement to the *Wochenschrift des Internationalen Hotelbesitzer-Verein*, April 20, 1907, in the Schweizerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, Basel (hereafter: SWA), B Verb. E10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

novices; job ads stressed that they must have experience in one of the “bigger houses” before taking on work at one of Berlin’s grand hotels.¹⁴⁸

Neophytes crowded the lowest level of the wait staff. These were the apprentices, an army of poorly paid or unpaid boys, ages 16 to 18, who rendered their unskilled services for anywhere from six months to two years. These boys did the heavy lifting: they delivered and cleared china and stemware, disposed of detritus, assembled trays, and performed any and all other services that head waiters, staff waiters, floor waiters, and sommeliers required. For all but the head waiter, service was an exceedingly difficult, physically demanding, poorly remunerated job, yet it was a career that held many advantages to factory work and domestic service. It allowed for a modicum of mobility that factory work and domestic service precluded.

Hotel service could also pay better than factory and domestic work. At the finest establishments, such as a *Weinhaus* in the Friedrichstadt around 1910, a waiter could expect to earn 15 Marks per month. Tips augmented his income at rates of ten percent of the bill for exceptional service and petty change in most other circumstances. A waiter thus earned between one and three percent of the salary of a general manager at the corporate level such as Hans Lohnert, who took home in excess of 50,000 Marks in 1911.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, waiters’ pay sustained substantial deductions: a monthly ten pfennigs for the dishwasher, 30 pfennigs for the cloakroom staff, one-half of a percent of a month’s wages for each broken glass, and financial penalties for lateness or other minor infractions.¹⁵⁰ Yet becoming a waiter represented an improvement for many career

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.; employment contract between Hans Lohnert and the board of directors of the Aschinger’s Aktiengesellschaft, March 2, 1911, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr 396.

¹⁵⁰ “Kellner-Misere: Die Zustände in den Berliner Restaurants,” *Berliner Zeitung*, March 16, 1905.

hopefuls, usually born into the peasant or working classes. Franz Haas, for example, born in Linz around 1860, had a stonemason for a father. Haas began as an apprentice and moved up to the position of waiter, a post he held onto for the rest of his working life.¹⁵¹

For white collar workers, upward mobility was considerably easier.¹⁵² Where a restaurant had only one head waiter, the white-collar hierarchy had several managerial positions into which a hard-working and lucky secretary could infiltrate. The highest position under the hotel manager was the chef de reception. In many cases, this post was preparation for the assumption of the post of manager. The chef de reception was in charge of bookings and enjoyed direct contact with the hotel's most distinguished guests. He was a master of customer service, enabled by a command of European languages, and carried his responsibilities with an easy dignity that signaled a grand hotel's uprightness and elegance.¹⁵³ Chefs de reception could earn a good deal of money. The Bristol's Robert Gonné took home 4,200 Marks per year in the early twentieth century.¹⁵⁴ Clerks, other accountants and bookkeepers, and lower-level managers of the kitchens and cellars came next. Finally, there were female office workers and female members of the lower managerial staff, who made little more than a waiter and occupied the lowest rung of the white-collar hierarchy.

¹⁵¹ Vorstand der Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to Franz Haas, April 14, 1923, congratulating him on twenty-five years of service to the corporation, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 150.

¹⁵² On the upward social mobility of white-collar workers, see Peter Bailey, "White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited," *Journal of British Studies* 38 (1999), 273-290; Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 237-238; Richard Evans, "Liberalism and Society: The Feminist Movement and Social Change," in *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. Richard Evans (London: Routledge, 1976), 197.

¹⁵³ Eduard Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1874), 144-146; Damm-Etienne, *Hotelwesen*, 102-103.

¹⁵⁴ Minutes of the meeting of the board of Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft of June 10, 1912, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 1.

The hierarchy becomes more complex in light of the fact that many people working *in* the hotel were not *of* the hotel. Hotels leased many of their services and concessions to outside agents, or *Pachträger*. These were normally the ticket sellers, barbers and hairdressers, flower sellers, cigar sellers, barkeepers, café owners, automat supervisors, porters, and cloakroom managers. *Pachträger* paid a monthly rent to the hotel for the privilege of collecting fees or tips for services rendered. Cloakrooms were consistently leased in this way, and usually to women. Martha Windisch held the cloakroom concession at the Fürstenhof at a monthly cost of about 830 Marks in 1913. With it, she earned enough money to pay for an apartment in the fashionable west, on the Lützowstraße. Even if not employed directly by the hotel, however, Windisch's cloakroom attendants, girls visible behind a window in the vestibule, were representatives of the hotel. They were among the first employees a guest saw, so "politeness" and "courtesy" were essential. Windisch's lease made clear that she may engage "only personnel of handsome and clean appearance." Moreover, these hirelings had to be women, wear a uniform, respond to guests' wishes, demand no tips, and above all respect their "social betters."¹⁵⁵ Through the terms of the lease, the Fürstenhof maintained control over the cloakroom personnel. Yet at the same time, the conveyance of this concession to a leaseholder meant that the hotel itself could claim a steady income from the cloakroom while outsourcing the risks and responsibilities of daily operation.

Like cloakroom girls, porters and pages often worked for a leaseholder rather than the hotel directly. When leased, the concession was usually held by a head porter. He employed a number of boys to do the heavy lifting. Like the cloakroom girls, porters and

¹⁵⁵ Contract between Martha Windisch and the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, December 21, 1912, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1162.

pages wore uniforms—livery, actually—and were bound to the house rules of politeness and deference. Boys as young as 12, and in rare cases younger than that, donned militaristic garb and took orders from the head porter more often than from individual guests (fig. 15). They carried luggage to the elevators, conveyed guests to the cloakroom, and passed colored slips of paper or, in some cases, painted wooden disks, to different members of staff—part of a complex system of accounting for which bags went where.¹⁵⁶ As guests relinquished their overcoats and checked in at reception, the luggage was ticketed and passed via hydraulic lift into the basement, where porters sorted it and waited for instructions from reception. A phone call or, before phones, duplicate tickets matched the luggage tag with a room number, and in a rush the bag would ascend by lift to the right floor. Another porter or page would remove the bag from the lift and rush it to the room of its owner in advance of the owner's arrival there. Tips were *de rigueur* but collected in full by the head porter, who first covered his own costs and then disbursed the surplus to his staff. This was conveyor-belt service and remuneration in which the lower workers served as cogs that turned the wheels that moved the guests and kept them provisioned, rested, and clean.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ “Pflichten des Portiers im Haus Hotel Palast,” internal memo of 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 348; Guyer, *Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 177–185.

¹⁵⁷ See Berger, *Hotel Dreams*.



Figure 15. Page boys at the Elite Hotel in central Berlin, ca. 1910, in LAB, F Rep. 290–02, v. Nr. 47231, I. Nr. 0276610. Landesarchiv Berlin.

Of course, porters were only one type of cog in the great machine; their service was as highly specialized as everyone else's. Another set of cogs was the servants, usually male, who acted as personal butlers to several guests at once. They were responsible for packing, unpacking, and connecting guests to other concessions in the hotel; a servant could, for example, purchase a cigar for a gentleman or order tea for a lady. Many of these servants were former porters or pages and most were still young. Only a few women served in this capacity, normally as for-hire ladies' maids. Servants' tasks were the least specialized of all in that they were expected to respond effectively to guests' varied whims. Yet, many tasks could be delegated to highly specialized providers

such as floor waiters, messengers, shoe shiners, hair dressers, barbers, seamstresses, and laundresses.¹⁵⁸ Finally, the machine relied on an army of maids. These women were typically in their late teens and twenties and worked directly under female housekeepers, the lowest managerial level. While these housekeepers earned as much as 60 Marks per month, maids could expect 12 to 15 Marks and the rare tip.¹⁵⁹ They had to clean rooms, hallways, public spaces, and the servants' areas and workrooms in the cellar and attic. They lived and ate on the premises and, like most lower hotel workers, had only a half day off every other week.¹⁶⁰ A maid in a hotel thus worked as hard as her domestic counterpart, with two important distinctions: a hotel maid would have a larger below-stairs community and at least the anonymity if not the freedom that were denied female domestics in household service.¹⁶¹

Still more women and girls found employ below stairs alongside skilled and unskilled male counterparts (fig. 16). Women cleaned dishes, polished silver, and took care of the laundry—mostly done with the aid of machinery that allowed loads to be processed faster but with little benefit to the worker. Women were also kitchen maids and assistants, slated for the most menial tasks. They worked among better paid men such as engineers, carpenters, furnace feeders, and haulers.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 185–192, 193–199. On the hair trades in particular, see Svenja Kornher, “Hairdressing around 1900 in Germany: Traditional Male versus Illicit Female Work?” in *Shadow Economies and Irregular Work in Urban Europe: 16th to Early 20th Centuries*, eds. Thomas Buchner and R. Hoffmann-Rehnitz (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 183–196.

¹⁵⁹ Guidelines in a supplement to the *Wochenschrift des Hotelbesitzervereins*, April 20, 1907, in SWA, B Verb. E10.

¹⁶⁰ Damm-Etienne, *Das Hotelwesen*, 111.

¹⁶¹ Lucy Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Davidoff, “Class and Gender in Victorian England,” (op. cit.); Simon Morgan, “Between Public and Private: Gender, Domesticity, and Authority in the Long Nineteenth Century,” *Historical Journal* 54 (2011), 1197–1210; Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost* (op. cit.).

¹⁶² Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 172 and 217–218; Damm-Etienne, *Das Hotelwesen*, 76.



Figure 16. Kitchen workers in the basement of the Hotel Esplanade, 1908, in LAB, F Rep. 290–02, v. 47245, I. 0199493. Landesarchiv Berlin.

These workers were not as unionized as their compatriots in industry, yet they did have a few organizations that took care of employment, working conditions, and workers' rights. One such group was the Verband Deutscher Gasthofsgehilfen (Union of German Hospitality Workers), founded in Geneva in 1877. A branch operated in Dresden and extended to hotel workers in Berlin.¹⁶³ The farther-reaching Verband der Gastwirtsgehilfen (Union of Hospitality Workers), with offices in Berlin, Paris, London, and Antwerp, was another option. Finally, the Kellner-Bund Union Ganymed (Waiters' Union League Ganymede), founded in Leipzig in 1878, represented waiters into the twentieth century.¹⁶⁴ However, these organizations made little progress in the fight for more favorable working conditions, higher pay, and increased awareness of hotel

¹⁶³ "Statut des Verband Deutscher Gasthofsgehilfen," pamphlet of 1901, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1723.

¹⁶⁴ Newsletter of the Deutscher Kellner-Bund Union Ganymed, Leipzig and Berlin, February 1903, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1723.

workers' plight. A replaceable and increasingly mobile workforce, divided by strict distinctions of rank, could not be particularly amenable to arguments for solidarity. Moreover, working conditions varied dramatically from place to place. For every worker in a grand hotel there were many more at lower establishments. These men and women, boys and girls, lived in misery, under staircases and adjacent to coal stores.¹⁶⁵ Probably their best hope—in some cases, their only hope of survival—was to find a job at one of the better hotels, where there would at least be a bed, a bath, and enough to eat.

For most hotel workers, the keeping or finding a job trumped all other concerns. And it did not necessarily matter to a jobseeker whether his or her employment agency belonged to a trade union or to the employers. An organization in the hands of hotel owners themselves did more to place workers than all the unions combined. The Internationaler Hotelbesitzer-Verein (International Hoteliers' Association) found hundreds of positions for workers in the early twentieth century, and rates were favorable: ten percent of male applicants and 40 percent of female applicants received work in 1906–07.¹⁶⁶ The higher figure for women relates to the difficulty hotel managers experienced in retaining female workers. In their roles as silver polishers, laundresses, kitchen assistants, and maids, these workers were exposed to physical dangers at every waking hour, whether from harsh chemicals, poor ventilation, open flames, boiling liquids, or lecherous male guests and staff. Rates of attrition for women were high relative to their male counterparts.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Abtheilung der Stellenvermittlung, Internationaler Hotelbesitzer-Verein, Cologne, unaddressed, undated, pertaining to "Stellenvermittlung vom 1. April 1906–31. März 1907," in SWA, B Verb. E10.

Why in all the years between 1875 and 1918 did workers never quite come together to change their situations? The question is misplaced. There was, in this system designed and imposed by a managerial cadre, no *space* and no *time* for resistance. The grand hotel was not the outside world: there were no taverns where workers might spread news and make plans, no apartment block courtyards or working-class boulevards, no communal kitchens or public parks, no street corners or soapboxes.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, when a worker in the outside world was fired, he would still exist in the community of employed workers, who might help him find a new job or even, out of sympathy, engage in everyday forms of resistance.¹⁶⁸ A fired hotel worker, however, dropped from existence—disappeared from the universe of the hotel. Perhaps he joined workers’ movements wherever he landed, but whatever his style of agitation or resistance, little news of it would come to light in the hotel cellars. Because many workers tended to live in the hotel itself and spend almost all their waking hours in workrooms there, managers could enact programs of surveillance through their agents down the hierarchy’s chains of command that left workers’ little privacy, independence, or recourse to action. Meanwhile, strict divisions among workers themselves—particularly spatial ones—impeded the development even of a common standpoint from which to build a sense of class consciousness and common purpose.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ On shop floors and spaces of working-class sociability and resistance, see Alf Lüdtkke, *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrung und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2015); Thomas Welskopp, *Unternehmen Praxisgeschichte: Historische Perspektiven auf Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 181–208; Cedric Bolz, “From ‘Garden City Precursors’ to ‘Cemeteries for the Living’: Contemporary Discourse on Krupp Housing and *Besucherpolitik* in Wilhelmine Germany,” *Urban History* 37 (2010), 113; Janet Polasky, *Reforming Urban Labor: Routes to the City, Roots in the Country* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹⁶⁸ Alf Lüdtkke, “Organizational Order or *Eigensinn*,” 303–310.

¹⁶⁹ On the “new microgeography of labor” in grand hotels, especially with respect to the delineation of space, see Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 269. Cf. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95.

Case Study: The Kaiserhof

The managerial and architectural vision for the Kaiserhof was that of a hierarchy undergirded by architecture and elaborated by regulation.¹⁷⁰ Architecture imposed delineations that reflected a preoccupation with the need to delimit the purviews of the classes. The building dispensed to its heterogeneous population starkly unequal levels of access to health, freedom of movement, and privacy. To similar ends, the managerial vision saw regulations the way the architectural vision saw spatial delineations. The managerial vision sought to impose a hierarchy that used regulations on dress, comportment, and access to space as the distinctions whereby heterogeneity could be managed.

The architecture of the grand hotel separated workers from each other, from staff, from the management, and from the guests. Where a worker did interact with guests—and only a minority did—the worker’s uniform and comportment rendered her only marginally visible: she was supposed to be an extension of a system or machine, an unavailable personality, more *of* the hotel than *in* it. The Kaiserhof’s cellar, as the principal locus of workers’ activities and used by them exclusively, became the model for the cellars of other grand hotels in Berlin. These subgrade areas could not turn a profit as hotel rooms and so satisfied the need for space for the Kaiserhof’s hundreds of workers that kept the hospitality machine running. The effect was to confine workers to the lowest grade, limit their access to the worlds upstairs and outside, and trap them with the heat,

¹⁷⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the sources for the architectural specifications of the Kaiserhof are the architects’ own figures, including floor plans, site plans, elevations, cross sections, and detail drawings. Although the originals do not survive, high-quality facsimiles are available in the *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen*, an official publication of the Königliche Technische Bau-Deputation (Royal Technical Deputation of Buildings) and the Architekten-Verein zu Berlin (Architects’ Association of Berlin), volume 27 (1877), 16–24.

fumes, and din of service on an industrial scale. Thus, management designated the cellars a degraded and degrading environment, fit for the lower rungs of the hierarchy. To be sure, the set-up of workspace in the cellar and sleeping space in the attic mirrored the allocation of space in bourgeois and aristocratic houses of the period.¹⁷¹ What was different was not only the degree to which work was specialized, monotonous, and dangerous but also the extent of the workforce itself—these were servants’ quarters with beds in the hundreds, kitchens built for dozens of maids. And the hotel workers, unlike their domestic counterparts, were not only pressed to keep a grand household running but also charged to help turn a profit out of housekeeping in some of the biggest houses on earth.

The Kaiserhof, built in 1875, incorporated a subterranean maze of 50 rooms for work, sleep, eating, storage, and machinery. The 1874 renderings by von der Hude and Henicke’s firm, particularly the floor plans, used black lines thick enough to call attention both to the solidity of concrete as well as social delineations. The cellar floorplan provided the image of immutable order to what could have been the chaos of the hotel’s below-stairs project (fig. 17). A cross-section makes a similar point about delineations, this time with respect to upstairs/downstairs, frontstage/backstage, and guest/worker dichotomies (fig. 18).¹⁷² Where staircase connections among the upper, guest floors are apparent, the connections between these floors and the cellar is not rendered. The omission emphasizes the separation between upstairs and downstairs as well as a key distinction between these two worlds—the ease of movement that a grand

¹⁷¹ Davidoff, “Class and Gender in Victorian England” (op. cit.).

¹⁷² Experts in the hospitality industry tended to refer to backstage departments as “inner” and front-stage departments as “outer,” where only the staff of the outer departments would interact with guests. See Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 177 and 192; Damm-Etienne, *Das Hotelwesen*, 102–104.

staircase afforded guests versus the limited movement determined by the location and layout of the cellar. And again, the architects used a thick black line, this time to illustrate the cellars' support for and figurative separateness from the upstairs zone. No such barriers cut through renderings of the upper floors, and the invisibility upstairs of vertical barriers in particular lends these levels an air of horizontal openness. These choices further accentuated the guests' ease of movement. In contrast, the cellar appears in the cross section to be a tomb or a trap, with segments of decreasing height from back to front and impenetrable barriers to access throughout.¹⁷³ But the hermetic seal between upstairs and downstairs was a fantasy; there were, in reality, myriad ways for workers to access the upper floors. Von der Hude and Hennicke obscured these ways, however, and in so doing created a floor plan and cross section that reflected bourgeois commitments to privacy, especially with respect to servants, as well as the bourgeois obsession with concrete barriers between middle- and working-class worlds.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ In *Das Hotel der Gegenwart*, 98, Guyer advised architects to design basements that in fact trapped as much noise and as many smells as possible. Four decades later, in 1910, Damm-Etienne, in *Das Hotelwesen*, 76, spoke more plainly. His only concern was that overheated and therefore sweaty workers might produce unwanted smells, and with unwanted smells comes the risk of food contamination, he reasoned. The solution, however, was not to install mechanical ventilation systems. Instead, Damm-Etienne advised hoteliers to provide more sinks and more soap.

¹⁷⁴ Cf., Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (op. cit.).

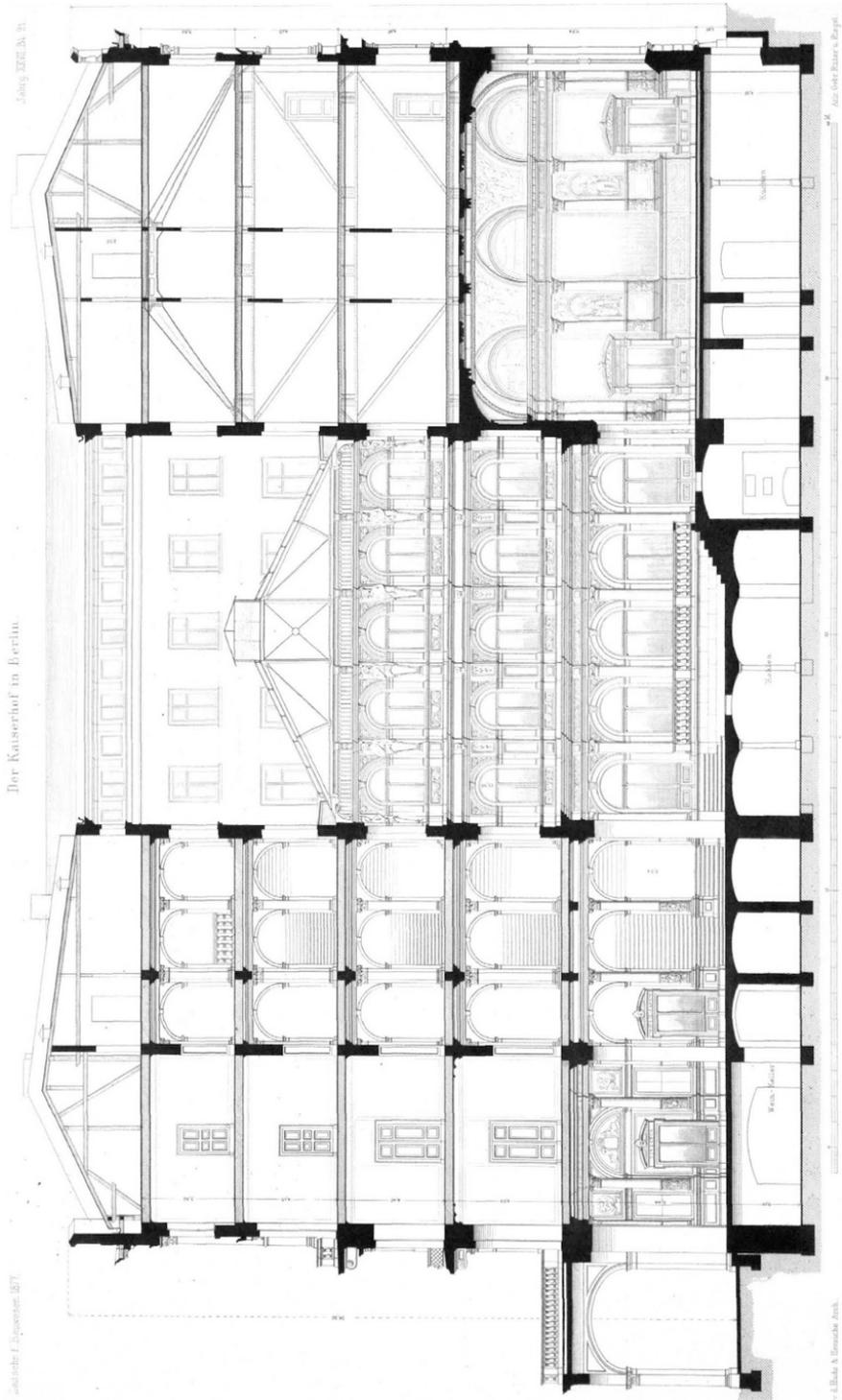


Figure 18. Kaiserhof cross section, *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 28 (1877), 21. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

But the Kaiserhof plans also reflected aristocratic ideologies of domesticity. The general openness of the upper floors, as well as the succession of grand rooms, harked to the *Herrenhäuser* (manor houses) of the eighteenth century, even if the hotel relocated all reception rooms to the ground floor (fig. 19). The provision of mixed-use spaces in the center and rear—the *Hof* (court) and *Festsaal* (banquet hall) could be used interchangeably as dining, dancing, or gathering places—borrowed the functional indeterminacy of the public rooms in a *Herrenhaus*.¹⁷⁵ Finally, the extent and specialization of the servants' below-stairs workrooms recalled the cellars of the Stadtschloss and other urban palaces. With ample, specialized workrooms in the cellar, mixed-use public spaces, and a general openness from the ground up, von der Hude and Hennicke illustrated an aristocratic domesticity that incorporated accessibility and greatness of scale, two elements that bourgeois domesticity eschewed.

¹⁷⁵ For stately homes' influence on grand hotel architecture, see Herbert Lachmayer, Christian Gargerle and Géza Hajós, "The Grand Hotel," *AA Files* 22 (1991), 34.

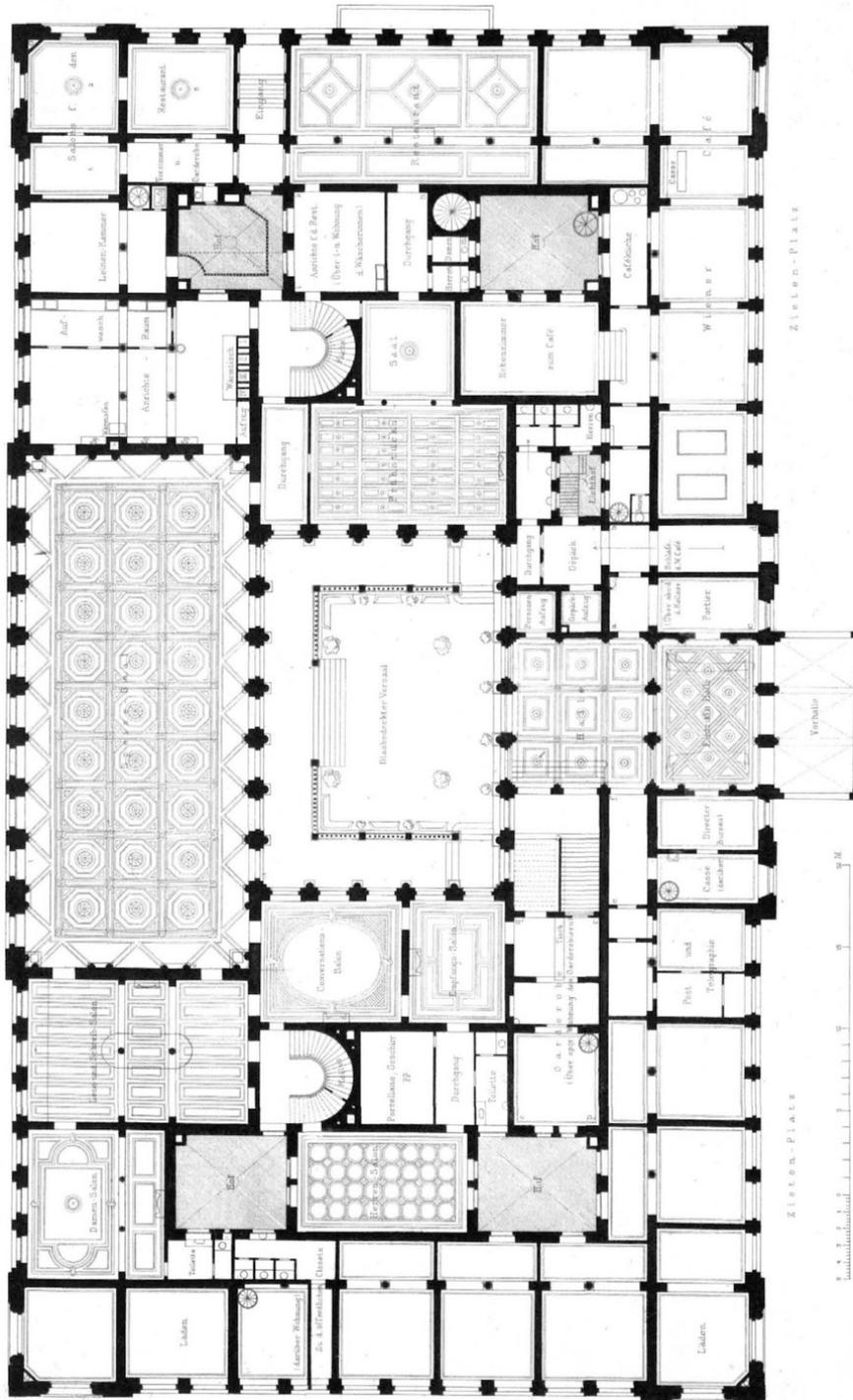


Figure 19. Ground floor of the Kaiserhof, *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 28 (1877), 18. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Aristocratic and bourgeois, the domesticity of the cellar was also something else: industrial. The sharp delineation of space, as well as the order in which von der Hude and Hennicke arrayed rooms and facilities, showed an abundant concern for the productive division of labor and for the qualitative distinctions between guest and staff space—distinctions which reflected the architects’ view of class relations. Their plans for the cellars would result in an environment that limited workers’ access to light, air, mobility, and privacy, the very privileges that the building afforded to their social betters upstairs. This was a vision of social differentiation that took as a metric of class belonging the extent to which a subject could maintain high degrees of health, freedom of movement, and privacy. In the service of productivity but also of the maintenance of class power, von der Hude and Hennicke’s cellar did nothing to spare workers a state of undignified living and unending toil.

Servants’ living quarters lacked space and air.¹⁷⁶ Their beds sat in the attic, which would have been frigid in winter and sweltering by June. This was technically the sixth floor of the building but under the eaves and invisible from the street on account of a high balustrade over the cornice. Sex-segregated quarters slept multiple people in small rooms under low, raked ceilings. Staircases connected the attic to the guest floors directly so that if need be, workers could be roused and allocated in the middle of the night. As in

¹⁷⁶ Statement of regulations of the Building Authority of the Polizeipräsidium (Abteilung III), undated (ca. 1880–1900), in LAB: A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1884, f. 9. The building code made it all but impossible for hoteliers to house workers in basements. The attics, on the other hand, were suitable so long as their ceilings were high enough. The police worried first about fire safety and second about the amorphous category of “air quality,” yet the code did not account for overcrowding as a possible fire hazard and definite contributor to poor air quality.

bourgeois and aristocratic households of the period, privacy and peace were luxuries only for the employers; servants had neither.¹⁷⁷

Extra sleeping areas lay in the cellar, on the left side, along the Mauerstraße. Other living spaces for servants included dining rooms for kitchen workers and bunks for the servants of hotel guests, booked to stay so long as their employers took rooms in the Kaiserhof. Along the narrow Kaiserhofstraße, these rooms had five windows between them that let in very little light, since all basement windows were below grade. Along with a workshop and chambers for the water and gas meters, bedrooms for hotel and kitchen workers spanned the eastern front; these had smaller windows below street level. Farther from the frontages lay rooms without windows or with only one window opening onto a largely lightless airshaft that had been given over to a steam pump. The only window, wedged into a corner, of the male servants' dining room faced this machine. This dining room would have to serve hundreds, in shifts, and it occupied less than 30 square meters (270 square feet). Across the hall and toward the center of the building was the female workers' dining room. It was somewhat smaller than the men's dining room and had no windows at all. It was surrounded by hot water heaters, air heaters, and food stores. The heat, noise, and crowding that female workers would have suffered points to the inferior position to which von der Hude and Hennicke had relegated them: where at least the men had one window and must contend with only one hot and noisome machine, women dined in a windowless chamber surrounded by multiple heat-producing

¹⁷⁷ On the legal predicament of household servants, including their right to privacy, see Jürgen Kocka, *Arbeitsverhältnisse und Arbeiterexistenzen: Grundlagen der Klassenbildung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1990), 125-130.

contraptions.¹⁷⁸ The plans thus delineated distinctions and hierarchy between the genders, too.

Most of the interior parts of the cellar housed such machinery and stores, like those around the women's dining room, as hot water heaters, wood and coal, air heaters, elevator wells, pumps, and foodstuffs. The plans ensured that dozens of people would work in an oubliette of the industrial age. They would stoke furnaces and operate heavy machinery that belched steam, heat, dust and fumes. They would sort, lift, carry and distribute goods and materials at all hours of the day. Von der Hude and Hennicke also designated major sites of production in the cellar center, and these would add to the adverse conditions. Bread and pastries would be prepared and cooked here in gigantic ovens, while dishwashers pumped in piping hot water for cleaning china by hand. Even the most detailed building plans do not incorporate a system of ventilation, save chimneys, for this harshest environment on the premises.

The only area to enjoy a modicum of light and air was at the right side of the cellar, facing the Wilhelmplatz, where von der Hude and Hennicke provided several large windows for the laundry. There were two expansive washing rooms; another cavernous chamber, with machinery for drying and clotheslines; and a set of large ironing rooms. All hotel linens would be laundered, dried and ironed here by an army of washerwomen, among the lowest paid of all workers. The heat of the cauldrons and the irons would have made the air here hot and close. Airlessness and darkness were the norm elsewhere in the cellar, too, where even a kitchen could be outfitted with everything but ventilation. The

¹⁷⁸ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und Seine Bauten* (1877), 354.

Viennese café concession had its kitchen in the cellar, adjacent to the ironing rooms, with only one window, which opened directly onto boilers at the base of an airshaft.

The hotel's main kitchens sat directly underneath the dining room, covered more than 600 square meters (exclusive of storage and a separate kitchen for the café concession), and were some of the most dangerous parts of the cellar. Additional kitchens included that for the workers, which acted as a reserve kitchen for big events; a prep kitchen off the main one; and a dish washing station. Silver polishers worked in the smallest space of all, a six-square-meter chamber with one window onto the bottom of an airshaft. Owing to the abrasive chemicals for removing tarnish, which would have hung in the close, stagnant air, this space was perhaps second in toxicity only to the coal stores. And although other parts of the kitchens were large, they were exceedingly crowded and quite dangerous. Nearly 100 people toiled elbow-to-elbow over open flames and scalding water. To the heat, noise, and danger of the kitchens, the front cellar provided a striking contrast. This was where the wine was stored, with whites on the eastern, darker, cooler side and reds on the western, warmer, and slightly lighter side. The store was extensive and commanded more square footage than the kitchen complex. In the relative cool and quiet of this side of the building, the cellar manager and technician had their offices. The plans of course spared these managers the working conditions for their inferiors in the rest of the cellar.

Von der Hude and Hennicke appropriated a good deal of space for the Kaiserhof's hundreds of workers, more than any other Berlin establishment in both absolute and proportional terms. These workspaces were also more rationally organized than those of the city's earlier hotels; they effected a division of labor and level of efficiency that made

the Kaiserhof categorically different from its competitors. It was up to the managers to use the space and its features to forge and maintain the hierarchy that would keep the cellars and the hotel running. Although the finer points of organization differed from property to property, a general pattern, based on the organizing principles of a grand household, existed by the 1870s.¹⁷⁹ With the caveat that the business and culture of commercial accommodation changed so fast as to make generalizations almost impossible, Eduard Guyer, a Swiss expert on the burgeoning tourism and hotel industries, published a chart of the ideal hotel hierarchy in his study *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart* (*The Contemporary Hotel*, 1874, fig. 20). In it, he elucidates the distinctions among the hierarchies of three different types of hotel, column two representing the urban grand hotels. Italicized letters connote a particular office's *Rangstufe* (grade or rank), a term that harked to the precision of orders within the military or a royal household.¹⁸⁰ A further level of distinction was that between "inner" and "outer" "*départements*," sometimes relating and sometimes intersecting.¹⁸¹ The outer comprised employees who dealt directly with *Fremden*, a word that meant guests as well as foreigners, strangers, or, in this case, people from the outside world. Members of the outer *département* included porters, concierges, and waiters. The inner *département* contained everybody else: maids and maintenance workers, laundresses, cellar workers and all of the kitchen staff.¹⁸² On the management and maintenance of the hierarchies within each *département*, Guyer advised that regulations pertinent to these divisions (*Reglement* and *Dienstordnung*) should be "binding"—that is, fixed and non-negotiable.

¹⁷⁹ Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 217–231.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, vi.

Uebersicht des Personals eines Hotels mit 250 Fremdenbetten, und verschiedenartige Zusammen- stellung der Competenz-Ver- hältnisse.	I. Saisonhotel (6 Monate) Privatbesitz			II. Jahresgeschäft (Stadt) Actienhotel			III. Curetablissement (Saison 4 Monate) Actiengeschäft		
	Rangstufe	Zahl der Personen	Salair per Saison	Rangstufe	Zahl der Personen	Salair per Jahr	Rangstufe	Zahl der Personen	Salair per Saison
Wirth (Gerant, Director etc.)	a	—	Fr. —	a	1	Fr. 10000	a	1	Fr. 6000
Wirthin	b	—	—	b	1	3000	b	1	2000
Oberkellner (Geschäftsführer)	c	1*	3000	b	1	2000	a	1	1500
Secretair oder Buchhalter...	d	1*	2000	b	2	5000	a	1	2000
Chef de cuisine	a	1	2500	a	1	3000	a	1	2500
I. (Ober-) Haushälterin ...	a	1*	1000	a	1	1000	a	1	750
Obersaalkellner	b	1	1000	a	1	2000	a	1	1000
Concierge	b	1	1000	a	1	1000	a	1	500
Kellermeister	b	1*	1000	a	1	1000	a	1	800
Zimmerkellner	a	4	2000	a	4	3000	a	3	1500
Saalkellner	b	6	2000	b	6	3000	b	8	3000
Küferkellner	b	1	400	c	1	500	c	1	400
Kellnerlehrlinge	c	2	—	c	3	—	—	—	—
II. Logenportier	a	1	250	b	1	300	—	—	—
Etagenportier (Hausknechte)	b	62*	1500	c	6	1500	b	8	2000
Conducteur	a	2	1000	c	2	1000	—	—	—
Lohndiener	b	2	—	c	3	—	—	—	—
Küchenhaushälterin	a	1*	500	a	1	500	a	1	400
Hilfssköche (Aides)	b	2	1500	a-b	4	2500	b	3	2000
Pâtissier-Entremetier...	b	1	600	b	1	750	b	2	1000
Gemüseköchin	b	1*	400	—	—	—	b	1	300
Caffeeköchin	b	1*	400	b	1	500	b	1	300
Küchenmädchen	c	41*	600	d	4	1000	c	4	500
Casserollenputzer	c	1	300	d	2	800	c	1	200
Kochlehrlinge	b	—	—	c	2	—	—	—	—
Zimmergouvernante	a	1*	500	a	1	600	a	1	500
Zimmernädchen	b	82*	1200	b	8	1600	b	8	1200
Lingère (Wäschbeschliesser.)	a	1*	400	a	1	500	a	1	500
Näherinnen	b	2*	600	b	2	600	b	4	1200
Angestellte Personen	54	25650		Angestellte	62	46650	Angestellte	65	32050
Brutto-Einnahme	per Saison Fr. 350000			per Jahr Fr. 720000			per Saison Fr. 310000		
Die Bedienung kostet also in Procenten der Einnahme	I. 7 1/3 0/0			II. 6 1/2 0/0			III. 10 0/0		

Die Buchstaben *a b c* und *d* bezeichnen die Rangstufen, jedoch nur innerhalb einer Abtheilung und soll diese Zusammenstellung nur die Möglichkeit nachweisen, die Competenzverhältnisse verschiedenartig zu ordnen.

Bei Saisongeschäften müssen natürlicher Weise einzelne Angestellte (mit * bezeichnet) das ganze Jahr im Dienste stehen, um das Geschäft im Stand zu halten und für die Saison vorzubereiten. Ferner ist bei dieser Tabelle voller Betrieb angenommen und vorausgesetzt, dass die Wäsche ausserhalb des Hotels besorgt werde.

Figure 20. "Overview of Hotel Personnel," in Edward Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart* (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1874), 172.

This was one of the pieces of practical advice that Guyer imparted to his audience, mainly “hoteliers, architects, managers, and hotel company shareholders.”¹⁸³ Both the 1874 original and the revised and expanded edition of 1885 evinced the same understanding of the hierarchy of the grand hotel as fixed and non-negotiable. The goal was a fairly closed universe in which distinctions of rank, class, and gender would solidify to an extent that society in the outside world could not manage to attain. Labor agitation and intra-class animosities that so cleaved European societies outside should have little meaning in the hotel, where owners and managers had built the system and created the patterns by which it had to run. They enacted a hierarchy, based on the application of the productive division of labor to the enterprise of commercial hospitality, that in theory was supposed to be unshakable.

The hierarchy facilitated and depended upon the ability of hotel managers to oversee the actions of, and interactions among, hotel workers. Indeed, Guyer went so far as to claim that the main role of the manager was to maintain “a total overview of all conditions and relations of business [*Geschäftsverhältnisse*].”¹⁸⁴ His gaze should easily capture disciplinary infractions, of which there could be many. Guyer also supplied a sample list of rules that produced sharp distinctions of rank along lines of dress, comportment, access to space, and rights. The rules even circumscribed workers’ bodies (“Every employee should always be dressed neatly and appropriately to his station”), access to spaces (“loitering in the staircases, corridors, in front of the hotel entrance, and particularly in the kitchen and cellar... is forbidden”), and personal liberty most generally

¹⁸³ Ibid., ix.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

(“Going out without special permission is prohibited”).¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the chain of command, rights, and privileges that bound the lowest workers to the highest directors distilled the formula for social stratification by assembling men, women and youths of all social levels under one roof, in one contained enterprise.

Upstairs, in the guest area, the vision was less total but equally concerned with the delineation of space, class, and particularly gender. The scale and layout of the Kaiserhof’s ground floor resembled that of another site of conspicuous consumption in the metropolis: the department store. Hotel architects used the same optics: upon entry, the guest’s gaze took in a seemingly limitless expanse of light, air, and luxury. She might cast her eyes from one rich detail to another, one option for respite and pleasure to another, before she settled on exactly what she wanted. And as at the department store, the guest entrance was easily recognizable, in this case with the house’s name affixed over the arches of a generous portico. Coming through this entrance, guests would have witnessed what made the Kaiserhof a hotel on par with the best of other, larger cities: the design and scale of the ground floor.¹⁸⁶ Never in Berlin had so much space and expense been afforded the public rooms of a hotel. The allocation of areas for shops evoked the arcade and shopping halls of Parisian, Viennese, and London hotels, while the provision of smaller social rooms for intimate conversation owed much to the Swiss example and lent a domestic scale and function to other parts of the ground floor.¹⁸⁷ Finally, the ground floor, organized around a central axis, facilitated motion.¹⁸⁸ By the 1870s, this axial

¹⁸⁵ From a sample of house rules, which distinguished between the “rules” that applied to workers (“*Dienstreglement*”) and the “rights” (“*Rechte*”) enjoyed by owners, in Guyer, *Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 175–176.

¹⁸⁶ Knoch, “Das Grandhotel,” 132.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁸⁸ Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 140.

layout was popular in Vienna, as apparent at the Hotel Metropole, which had its dining room at the back of an axis that included the glass-roofed central court, reception room or lobby, vestibule and front entrance. The Langham in London likewise employed this entrance-reception-court-dining axis.¹⁸⁹ Above all, the axis facilitated the movement of guests from the entry to the grandest spaces of the hotel, and the Kaiserhof used it to elucidate the grandeur and publicity of the ground floor as well as to facilitate guests' progression to the public, commercial spaces and semi-private, domestic spaces nearby.

The airiest, least domestic, most imposing feature of earlier grand hotels, particularly the Kaiserhof, was the glass-roofed courtyard (fig. 21). In the building plans, von der Hude and Hennicke, or their customer, labeled it a *Vorsaal* (anteroom) to emphasize its function as the meeting place before passage to the dining room, breakfast room, or parlors, all accessible from the court. Intended as a "reception room for the communal use of travelers," the court was a pass-through, a way station, and public.¹⁹⁰ This was the social and spatial center of the Kaiserhof. The architectural rendering in figure 9 shows a glass roof extending to the top of the second floor, shielding the 330 square meters below from rain and cold. Terraces surround on three sides a generous open floor. The décor is nationalist, monarchist, and opulent, appropriate to the room's public function as a showcase for status and a space for public heterosociability.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹⁰ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und Seine Bauten* (1877), 354.

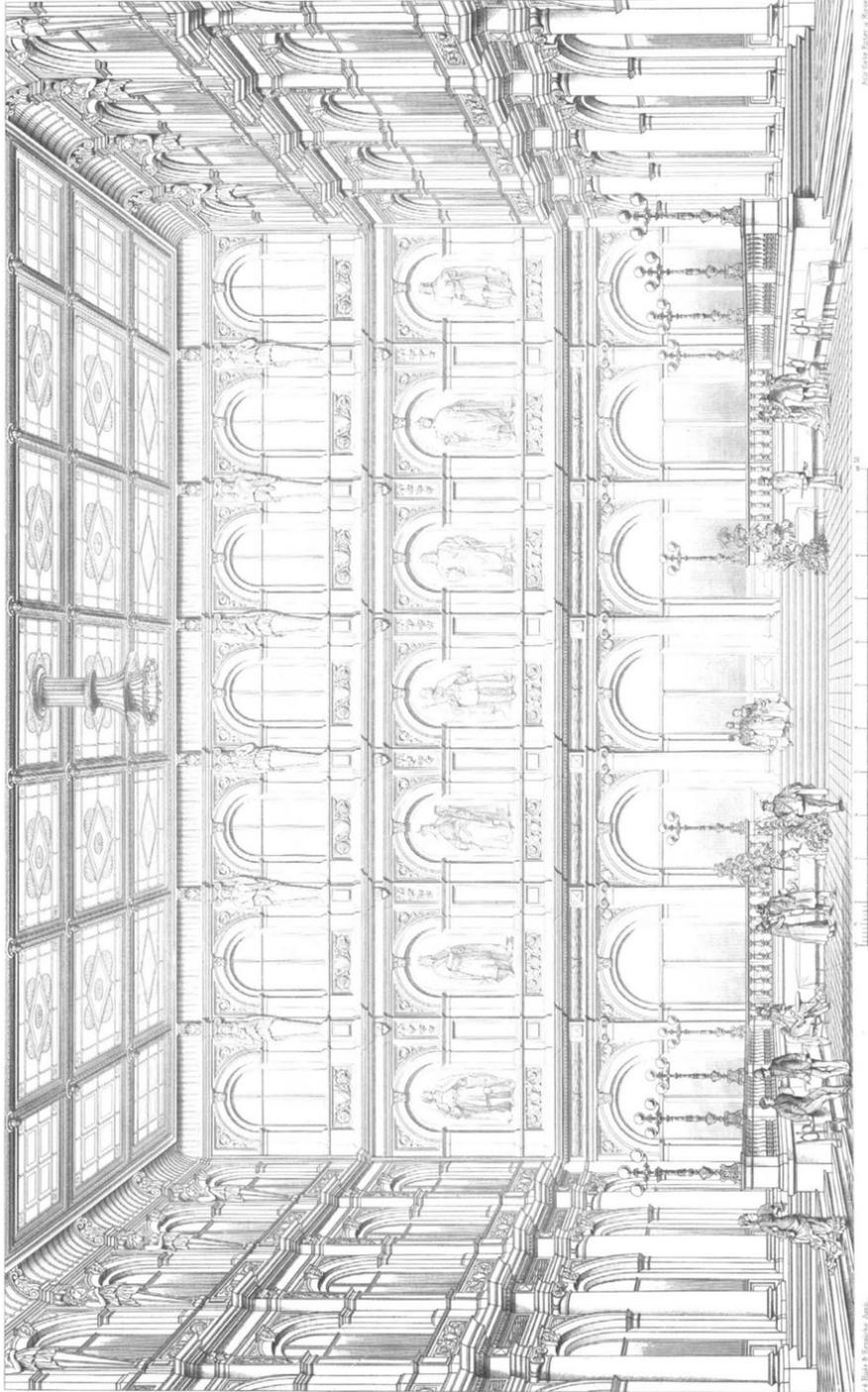


Figure 21. Courtyard of the Kaiserhof, *Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 28 (1877), 22. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Von der Hude and Hennicke supplied both masculine and feminine ornamentation, which signaled this heterosocial functionality. The Doric (severe, masculine) order balanced the Ionic (soft, feminine), while the seven full-body portraits of the emperor, Wilhelm I, in various military uniforms complemented the female caryatids in soft, flowing drape.¹⁹¹ Between these features were arched windows that opened into public rooms on the ground floor and guestrooms above, further complicating the courtyard's associations with masculinity and femininity, now along lines of public and private. Even the scale of the space was softened by its utter protectiveness. Gilt surfaces and under-floor heating likewise mitigated the outdoor aspect, achieved through the use of natural light and wrought-iron lampposts, and helped classify the court as an area of indoor-outdoor, public-private, masculine-feminine hybridity.

Off the axis, to the left and the right, were the rest of the public rooms, including a *Festsaal* (dining room and banquet hall) for 350 people, mixed sex to the extent the headwaiter would accommodate any woman on the arm of a man whom she could claim as her husband or other family member.¹⁹² Those to the left and right of the axis, accessible from the *Vorsaal*, the reception room, and the *Festsaal*, would not have accommodated women on their own, instead relegating them to a remote, rear-facing,

¹⁹¹ For how the Greeks, classicists, and architects gendered the classical orders, see Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 44-50; and Joseph Rykwert, *The Dancing Column: On Order in Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 237. For information on the portraits of Wilhelm I, see Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und Seine Bauten* (1877), 355.

¹⁹² On the topic of the lack of women's lavatories in the city center, the *Berliner Tageblatt* published at least two articles in one week: "Ein heikles Thema," September 10 and September 16, 1884. The articles singled out the relevant department of the Polizeipräsidium for having failed to include women's lavatories in the code on public, commercial buildings. Evidently, the police took notice of these complaints. Clippings of both articles, as well as other complaints about Berlin's central business district along the Friedrichstraße, are to be found clipped and pasted into the record, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1583.

small but comfortable *Damensaal* (ladies' parlor). In these rooms off the axis, architects delineated space as a means of reflecting and reifying the privileged status of certain guests over others—namely, men over women.

On the ground floor, the architects took pains to segregate men and women by providing women's and men's parlors and by placing the women's toilets a good distance away from the men's. (The latter strategy also extended to the upper floors, where men's and women's lavatories were rarely near each other.) Moreover, public rooms were only mixed sex to a limited extent: a woman must enter in the company of a male chaperone, also the case if she wanted to book a room. Women's range of motion and access to the hotel's finer public spaces and private rooms, well to the end of the nineteenth century, placed the female guest somewhere between guest and worker according to the logic of the hotel hierarchy. What she lacked in access to space, mobility, and range of acceptable comportment, however, the lady visitor made up for, to a limited extent, in her rights to make demands of staff, consume luxury goods and services, and sleep and dine as well as money could afford.

This was hospitality at a price, after all, and von der Hude and Henicke also designed the upper floors to reflect and reproduce divisions among guests, these based as much on class as gender (fig. 22). A few common factors united all four upper floors, with a total number of guest rooms at around 240, for as many as 400 people.¹⁹³ On each floor, nearly 100 rooms shared eight toilets and one bath, and no rooms were ensuite, a luxury on offer nowhere in Berlin so far.¹⁹⁴ But second- and third-floor ceilings were

¹⁹³ Architekten-Verein zu Berlin and Vereinigung Berliner Architekten, *Berlin und seine Bauten* (1877), 354.

¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, most bathing could be accomplished with washstands in each of the rooms, and servants were always on hand to fetch hot water and remove wastewater. Chamber pots and workers to service them

highest, and these levels contained the largest and most richly decorated guestrooms. In addition, the first two floors held six parlors, located at all four corners of the building, over the main entrance, and along one of the walls of the central court, respectively. Most of these parlors offered privileged views, either of the Wilhelmplatz, the Ziethenplatz, or the *Vorsaal*. Parlors could be combined with adjacent rooms via communicating doors. This feature also allowed the transformation of rows of guestrooms and parlors into apartments, ideal either for visiting families or long-term residents. Even if most of its guests were not traveling with children, the Kaiserhof earned the moniker *Familienhotel* (family hotel) through its provision of such suites on the lower floors. A further innovation came with the rooms off corner parlors, the Kaiserhof's finest bedrooms. These had a small private hall that connected the chamber to the public corridor and adjacent parlor. The private hall acted as a sound and light lock, minimizing the disturbances associated with such a large hotel and further ensuring the privacy of these rooms, suites, and apartments. By contrast, rooms in the rear of the first two floors had no such provisions and were far smaller and less expensive; the most modest of all either opened onto small light wells or were located on the building's upper two floors. Higher floors were more simply outfitted than the first and second floors and had lower-ceilinged, smaller rooms best suited to such single travelers as businessmen and couriers. Although all guests could enjoy the amenities of the ground floor, the levels above incorporated material and architectural distinctions of income and social position and ensured that the lower floors would be populated more by women and families, the upper

likewise made up for a paucity of water closets. These practices—the use of labor in lieu of plumbing—were common among the rich, who had yet to rely on the faucet and drain for the maintenance of their hygiene. Thus the Kaiserhof devoted more resources to water carriers than to pipes. On the relationship among class, labor, liberal self-governance, and plumbing, see Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*, chapter 2.

by single men.¹⁹⁵ For the Kaiserhof, von der Hude and Hennicke had borrowed the European apartment house convention that placed the finest rooms on the second floor, the middling rooms above that, and workers' and servants rooms higher still, with one added distinction: the Kaiserhof plan meant to segregate guests not only on the basis of class or income but also on the basis of gender, with the least dense areas reserved for women and families and the most tightly packed for single male travelers.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 354. Wenzel, *Palasthotels in Deutschland*, 140. Knoch, "Das Grandhotel," 132.

As much as the grand hotel was about bringing people together, its design suggested they would remain parted on lines of gender and class. Female guests would find their movements prescribed by gendered conventions of domesticity that required a chaperone in any of the spaces except the diminutive ladies' parlor at the back corner of the building. Workers would labor under surveillance in dank, dangerous, dirty, and quite literally toxic environments. Female workers—the maids in particular—would have been subject to the same deprivations with the added dangers of rape, sexual assault, and harassment. The extent to which these visions of a segregated society became reality, after the realization of von der Hude and Hennicke's plans, is not always possible to measure. Moreover, the visions themselves changed through the 1910s and produced modifications, both to the Kaiserhof and in the form of new hotels that reflected the managerial group's evolving approach to luxury commercial hospitality. Still, the managerial vision of hierarchy persisted and changed little before World War I. Max Wöhler, an authority on the hotel business and author of the popular, two-volume pocket manual *Gasthäuser und Hotels* (1911), devoted only one paragraph to workers' space. It was a pithy statement of the longevity of the managerial vision:

Staff quarters...should be placed on the highest floor For the headwaiter, the chef, and other better members of staff [*bessere Angestellten*], single rooms should be set up. For the rest, rooms with two or more beds should be set up. It is of the utmost importance that one or two baths and the necessary WCs be available next to the staff quarters.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Wöhler, *Gasthäuser und Hotels*, 1:47-48.

Conclusion

Berlin's grand hotel scene developed rapidly and with great success. Although smaller and specialty hostelries continued to turn profits and multiply, the grand hotels commanded ever larger market shares at the high end of the social scale. Four factors contributed to their achievements: First, the availability of credit and capital on a limited liability basis ensured that huge, expensive physical plants could be erected and maintained at a lower risk than before. Second, the human and physical technologies that such investment and innovation produced allowed grand hotels to run more efficiently than their smaller counterparts. Third, an increasingly mobile bourgeois society produced a growing demand for services and accommodation that only grand hotels could provide. And fourth, the maintenance of strict hierarchies, and hierarchies within hierarchies, kept peace and order to the advantage of the business as a whole and to the class of men who owned and ran that business. Bourgeois hotel owners, directors, managers, architects, and designers created out of this institution intended for the coming together of some people an institution that kept many others apart. While their efforts mirrored in microcosm the classed relations of power outside the grand hotel, hotel managers enjoyed such a higher level of control, through surveillance and the classed and gendered divisions of space, that the grand hotel as a social system flourished unimpeded by protest or resistance well into the twentieth century. It was only in the decade after 1914 that the system broke down as outside developments in German social, political, economic, and cultural life managed to shake those hierarchies and disturb the power equilibrium that had been in place since the opening of the Kaiserhof in 1875.

Chapter 2

Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and the Grand Hotel in Wilhelmine Berlin



Figure 23. Detail from a bill of the Hotel Schaurté, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 13390, f. 53. Landesarchiv Berlin.

This image is a detail from a bill form for the Hotel Schaurté from around 1900. It encapsulates the ironies and contradictions of grand hotel culture in the Wilhelmine era. In the foreground, a military parade traverses the frame, and in the background, a crowd of spectators are assembled in front of the hotel. A look at the latter reveals a mixture of cultural referents that in sum present both nationalist and cosmopolitan faces to the viewer. Festooned on the beaux-arts façade are advertisements for a “*restaurant français*” and “English grill room,” while at the same time the Imperial flag flies high over the

central section of the building, positioned to face the myriad spectacles of Prussian and national might along Unter den Linden. How was it that these dual and dueling imperatives—to be both nationalist and cosmopolitan—sat together so easily in the grand hotels of the early twentieth century?

The sources for this chapter include published accounts of grand hotel life, advertisements and other printed materials originating from the grand hotels themselves, images and analysis from architecture and design journals, trade publications, memoirs, and newspaper articles—most prominently, those of the *New York Times*. That paper, unlike most others, stationed correspondents in one of Berlin's grand hotels, usually the Adlon, for most of the period in question, and the reporter's main beat, it appears, was the hotel lobby. The *Times* bulletins detail the arrivals, departures, and exploits of Americans, along with the development of the luxury hospitality industry in Berlin more generally. European papers tended not to take such an interest in the grand hotel scene; they were largely silent on the matter. The result of my reliance on the *Times*, then, is that the chapter focuses predominantly on American custom and activity. However, there are attempts, where sources allow, to incorporate information about other national groups and perspectives. Still, to the extent that the American hotel industry and American visitors shaped the grand hotel scene in Berlin—which they did to a great degree—a focus on that national group, as well as Germans' engagement with it, allows the historian to see in detail those processes of Americanization at work on the ground in Berlin before 1914. It also provides a case study of how one group in particular participated in the mix of cosmopolitan and nationalist imperatives that characterized the development of Berlin's grand hotel scene in the decade before World War I.

In the early 1900s, American practices of foreign reporting in Europe became more professional and more reliable on account of a variety of forces internal and external to the journalism profession. Nevertheless, continuities with the older way of foreign reporting persisted. Although an American journalist's first transatlantic cable dispatch arrived in New York as early as 1866, the high cost still prohibited regular use at the outbreak of World War I. In 1866, 49 words had cost a staggering \$200 to transmit. As late as the 1930s, rates for transoceanic dispatches could still be as high as \$1 per word. Unless it was truly urgent—and nothing that the *Times* correspondent reported from the Adlon in this period could have been classified as particularly urgent—an article crossed the Atlantic in the usual way, by letter.¹ For the early twentieth century, this practice actually works in the historian's favor, since the need for excessive terseness, particularly characteristic of the war years, is absent in reporters' letters of the *belle époque*. That perennial concern of editors—space—was still the principal limiting factor in 1914. A further, less auspicious continuity has to do with credit to the journalist. It was not until the interwar period that *New York Times* correspondents received by-lines with any kind of regularity, which means that for the period 1908 to 1918, we do not know the identity of the correspondent. Adolph Ochs, the paper's owner, persisted in the belief that by-lines would compromise credibility. "The Business of the paper," he declared, "must be absolutely impersonal."² Even before Ochs purchased it, editors of *The Times* had been obsessed by objectivity. In 1895, they had gone so far as to fire their London correspondent George Washington Smiley for getting too comfortable with the British

¹ John Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 125.

² *Ibid.*, 225.

upper class. An enthusiasm for Savile Row suits and the races at Ascot were clouding his judgment, turning the objective journalist into a possible apologist for the expansionary foreign policy of the British government.³ The Berlin correspondents and others took this cautionary tale to heart and adopted a tone of bemused detachment, even if the reality was one of invested embeddedness.

Ochs's purchase of the *Times* in 1896 set the paper on a new course, particularly with respect to finances and foreign reporting. After having obtained higher revenues and a greater degree of fiscal discipline, Ochs began to reinvest profits in foreign bureaus, especially in Europe. Press historian John Maxwell Hamilton dates this pivot to 1908, the very year that the Adlon opened. The commitment to news from Europe did not actually produce very much hard-hitting journalism until the outbreak of war, it turns out. Until then, the foreign correspondent was "mainly a purveyor of gossip about Americans abroad," according to Will Irwin, a journalist and press critic. "A Pittsburgh playboy who broke the bank at Monte Carlo or a young blood of the Four Hundred who entangled himself with a showgirl in London was worth more space in Chicago and New York than Asquith's social legislation or the rise of Social Democracy in Germany," he quipped.⁴ This judgment certainly applies to the Adlon correspondents at *The Times*, who themselves seem to have been clueless even up to the last week of the July Crisis, when as if by an act of God the world's most terrible armies mobilized and took aim. Yet this apparent cluelessness, along with the attendant focus on what Irwin had rightly deemed frivolous, benefits the social and cultural historian. The Adlon correspondents dwelled on the minutiae of daily life in the hotels.

³ Ibid., 70.

⁴ Ibid., 139.

The *New York Times* was not the only paper to keep correspondents in Berlin, not by a long shot, but it was the paper that reported most on grand hotel life. Given readers' presumed interest in the activities of America's most well-to-do tourists, stationing oneself in hotel lobbies made the most sense. It also must have been the case that the *Times* correspondent embedded himself not only in a growing community of American journalists but also in the social network of American expatriates and tourists. Furthermore, it appears as if *Times* correspondents were among the first to use the Berlin's hotel lobbies as extensions of their foreign bureaus. Although the *Daily News* (Chicago) likely had even more correspondents in Germany than the *New York Times*, the correspondents from Chicago had much less to say about hotel life. The reason for this may be quite simple. While the *Times* correspondents were becoming fixtures of grand hotel life in Berlin, their counterparts at the *Daily News* were establishing a different business model. The Chicago paper outfitted its Berlin bureau at Unter den Linden 9 to look like a club, replete with the latest periodicals and comfortable seating arrangements. The idea was to attract Chicagoans and other American tourists to the bureau for the social scene it fostered and the ease with which a socialite might get himself noticed by the press.⁵ Leaving a first and last name ensured that the news of one's arrival would appear on the front page little more than a week later. In 1906, the Berlin correspondent of the *Daily News*, Frederick William Wile, complained that the newspaper itself provided little more than a front for the bureau-turned-club, the owner's principal and most cherished investment.⁶ (During World War I, Wile would become the chief Berlin correspondent for the *New York Times*.) Reliance on the bureau as a gathering place for

⁵ Ibid., 166.

⁶ Ibid., 165.

visiting Americans, the focus of almost all foreign reporting in the decade before World War I, naturally diminished the role that grand hotels would play in *Daily News* correspondents' processes of fact-finding as well as in the content of their reports. Conversely, *New York Times* correspondents ensconced themselves in the world of the grand hotel, and their reports reflect it.

What Ochs and others meant by objectivity was something like detachment, the cultivation and maintenance of one's own strangeness in a setting where the natural tendency was conformity. In this sense, the foreign correspondent was supposed to be what Georg Simmel described as the "stranger who moves on," who, by virtue of his outsider status and temporary presence, "often receives the most surprising revelations and confidences."⁷ In many cases, as this chapter and the next aim to show, the Berlin correspondent did indeed receive such confidences, though the stuff of his reporting was mostly a product of dutiful observation, on the one hand, and tentative participation, on the other. Objectivity for the *Times* journalist stationed at the Adlon "was by no means nonparticipation,"⁸ as Simmel would have put it, had he wandered into the Adlon to observe these American newspapermen in action. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that Simmel did not at one time or another take a seat in the hotel, just at the other end of Unter den Linden from where he held his lectureship at the University of Berlin.

The Sociability of Hotel Society

Simmel was born in Berlin in 1858 and came of age as the city's first grand hotels emerged. He attended the Friedrichswerdersches Gymnasium, which, while Simmel was

⁷ Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," trans. Kurt Wolff, in *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms—Selected Writings*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 403–404.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 404.

still a student there, relocated to a site across from what would become, in three years' time, the Central-Hotel. Just down the Linden stood the University of Berlin, where Simmel earned his degree and then lectured for most of the rest of his life. A Berliner through and through, he devoted his life's work to understanding how people in modernity fulfilled their various psychological needs in what were then quite new metropolitan formations, one of the most prominent of which, I suggest, was the urban grand hotel. Simmel's contribution to the advent of sociology as a discipline, as well as the significance of his work to the historian's effort to make sense of social dynamics in modern institutions, has been thoroughly mined by philosophers, social scientists, and historians—most notably Habbo Knoch and others in Moritz Föllmer's *Sehnsucht nach Nähe*.⁹ Here, I will try to use Simmel as a key witness to grand hotel society. Simmel's physical as well as social location place him among the grand hotel's patrons, even if explicit references to grand hotels are wanting in his work. For my purposes, then, the best point of entry is Simmel's opening speech to the German Sociological Society in Frankfurt in 1910.¹⁰ I use the speech here as a source that both exposes and elucidates the complex relationship between the rules of sociability on the one hand, which allowed hotel guests and managers to manage the dual and dueling cultural imperatives of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and liberal practice on the other, which can be seen as the quotidian actions and processes that allowed this hotel population to exist without any great conflict before 1914.

⁹ Habbo Knoch, "Simmels Hotel: Kommunikation im Zwischenraum der modernen Gesellschaft," in *Sehnsucht nach Nähe: Interpersonale Kommunikation in Deutschland seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Moritz Föllmer (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004), 87–108; cf., in the same volume, Armin Owzar, "'Schweigen ist Gold': Kommunikationsverhalten in der Wilhelminischen Gesellschaft," 65–86.

¹⁰ Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Sociability," trans. Everett Hughes, *American Journal of Sociology* 55 (1949), 254.

Simmel understood sociability as the “art or play of association,” where personal interest and, indeed, the personal itself gives way to “interaction not of complete but of symbolic and equal personalities.”¹¹ These are superficial interactions, then, that allowed hotel society to coalesce along non-confrontational lines, what Simmel understood as the delineation of “good form”—that is, the abnegation of personal interest and aggressive individuality in favor of lighthearted exchange.¹² Simmel’s understanding of sociability incorporated the liberal ideal of human beings as self-governing, rational beings, capable of following rules that balance self-interest with the needs of the community: “the pleasure of the individual,” he contended, “is always contingent upon the joy of others.”¹³ As such, then, sociability could only be practiced among recognized equals; status could not be in dispute.¹⁴

In the case of the grand hotel, practices of sociability depended on an army of workers to whom the art and play of association was off limits—people who were not, after all, to be treated as liberal subjects. Under these conditions of extreme inequality, then, the sociability of a few—the guests—could be felt as a “freeing and lightening,” a “simultaneous sublimation and dilution, in which the heavily freighted forces of reality are felt only as from a distance, their weight fleeting in a charm.”¹⁵ This is what was happening on the grand hotel scene. Americans, for example, could celebrate their elections, could raise their flags, could celebrate republican democracy in the Kaiser’s capital, but only if they did not take it too seriously, only if they also made efforts to build

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 255.

¹³ Ibid., 257.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 261.

a cosmopolitan community of like-minded transients, none exhibiting the self-interest that could have produced conflict amid the heterogeneity.

The Parvenu's Berlin

Hungry after the opera one night in 1912, Arthur Eloesser (1870-1938) and his friend from the provinces decided on a late dinner in the grill room of a first-class hotel. These were informal dining concessions, where patrons ordered à la carte. They were, however, luxurious. Eloesser's account inventories gilded mirrors, blue silk wallpaper, and "opulent" furnishings, as if the whole were the "intellectual property originating from the imagination of one of our more celebrated craftsmen." Yet the luxury was missing "that last stamp" of approval that always came with a sense of "peace," the "imperturbability of naturalness."¹⁶ The interiors had an aristocratic touch, to be sure, complemented by "waiters in the livery of court lackeys," but the evidence of an effort was too great; in other words, the grill room was trying too hard, and in the trying, it belied its authenticity as an informal space of noble repose.¹⁷ This assessment of the grill room's ultimate failure to be truly elegant, on account of the excess those efforts produced, provided for Eloesser a metaphor for Berlin itself, a city always trying too hard.

¹⁶ Arthur Eloesser, "Gedanken in einem Grillroom" (1912), in *Die Straße meiner Jugend*, 74.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.



Figure 24. Grill room and American-style bar, opened 1908, of the Esplanade Hotel, postcard (undated), author's collection.

In its relative informality, the grill room facilitated awkwardness and faux pas, Eloesser suggested. Describing another visit to perhaps a different grill room, he lights on the heterogeneity of attire. (The hotel restaurant demanded evening dress; the grill room did not.) At one table sat a group celebrating a birthday, each diner in the proper costume. “Not at all dressed,” on the other hand, was a series of other couples who appeared to have come directly from their homes. The effect was to have “next to a tailcoat ... a workday suit of a large checkered pattern; next to a plunging décolleté a blouse buttoned to the top.”¹⁸ Social station (*Klassenwesen*) became difficult to gauge in the midst of this sartorial cacophony: “what kind of people are these,” Eloesser’s friend from the provinces asked, “foreigners or locals, bourgeois or parvenus, business people or idlers or con artists?”¹⁹ Still, the informality and the hearty food ended up making Eloesser and his friend feel at home, “which you should never do in a strange place among strangers.” The spell vanished in the end with the cashier’s “purse, which opened itself discreetly” and took payment for the hospitality. This was, Eloesser reasoned, the big city, after all, where “everything can be bought and sold,” even the strange feeling of domestic tranquility among strangers.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., 74-75.

¹⁹ Ibid., 80.

²⁰ Ibid., 74, 78.

Eloesser's essay, "Thoughts in a Grill Room," uses the informal hotel dining concession as inspiration and fodder for a series of lighthearted musings on contemporary Berlin's loss of identity and stability. The tempo and rhythms had changed from an earlier "military and patriotic" regimen to new heights of unpredictability, as Simmel, too had noticed at the same time and place.²¹ Impatience and hurry were the only constants. The tempo was inelegant, with young Berliners in particular not having any sense of "self-regulation" (*die inneren Vorschriften*), each trying "to get his way, preferably in an emphatic and loud manner that gets answered with a surly irritability."²² Efforts toward urbanity were thwarted time and again by Berliners themselves, who never seemed "to know where [they] belonged and where [they] did not belong." The Berliner was the "most covetous" of all the world's big-city denizens, trying "to shake the fruit from all the trees at once," unsure otherwise what to do with the sudden bounty of uncommonly rapid urbanization.²³ The grill room, with its hungry, heterogeneous, unintelligible crowd, provided a favorable setting and subject for Eloesser's larger meditations on the idiosyncrasies of Berlin's urban modernity.

This was Berlin to Eloesser, then: a parvenu metropolis with an undisciplined, ravenous, inelegant citizenry. If "Hamburg has its harbor, London the docks and the Tower, Paris the *tour Eiffel* and Notre-Dame," he asked, then "what are our symbols specific to the history" of Berlin?²⁴ The ancient sights of those other cities found no parallels in Berlin, a city only too recently, to Eloesser's mind, having been a glorified

²¹ Ibid., 79; Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," trans. Kurt Wolff, in *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms—Selected Writings*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 324.

²² Eloesser, "Gedanken in einem Grillroom," 73.

²³ Ibid., 79.

²⁴ Ibid., 80.

garrison town. There was the space, then, for imitation of those older metropolises, the space, for example, for “a *Moulin Rouge* where no windmill has ever stood.” It was “mostly exotic flowers” that flourished in the “great swamp,” a geographical synecdoche for Berlin itself.²⁵ Nothing authentic had sprung from the city’s sandy wet bed.²⁶ We Berliners, Eloesser contended, “must work with [foreign] stimulants, with surrogates, with imitations,” in the futile effort “to catch up with the pedigrees of the older capitals.”²⁷ Berliners, moreover, had lost themselves in the effort.²⁸ For Eloesser, the grand hotel was the site of imitation and inauthenticity par excellence.

Berliners oscillated between seeing Berlin *Parvenupolis* (a portmanteau of parvenu and metropolis), as Rathenau put it, and a *Weltstadt* (world city).²⁹ The *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, a newsletter for Berlin’s Administration for Building, reported in 1907 that this “youngest of world cities” did not have enough hotels near railway stations, a problem that the Hotel Baltic, an establishment near the Stettiner Bahnhof and one of the “more dignified constructions in the *Weltstadt* Berlin,” attempted

²⁵ Cf., Andrew Webber, *Berlin in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁶ Eloesser, “Gedanken in einem Grillroom,” 77. Although Eloesser was not invoking anti-Semitism here, an anti-Semite might have been pleased to read about the inauthenticity of Berlin, the swamp. By the early twentieth century, anti-Semites had long associated Berlin with Jews and Jews with the inability to create something original and noble, with unbridled consumerism, and with deviant sexuality. See Richard Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1869), 35. See also Paul Lerner, “Consuming Pathologies: Kleptomania, Magazinitis, and the Problem of Female Consumption in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany,” *Werkstatt Geschichte* 42 (2006), 46–50; Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 2; Beth Lewis, *Art for All? The Collision of Modern Art and the Public in Late-nineteenth-century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1 and 15; Cf. Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt: Debatten über Judentum und Identität, 1822–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 208–211.

²⁷ Eloesser, “Gedanken in einem Grillroom,” 77.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁹ On the role of consumer culture—particularly the entertainment industries—in conceptions of Berlin as a *Weltstadt*, see the chapters by Tobias Becker and Kerstin Lange, in *Weltstadtvergnügen: Berlin, 1880–1930*, eds. Daniel Morat et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

to solve.³⁰ The understanding of Berlin as a *Weltstadt* redirected its development toward grander projects, as historian Peter Fritzsche has observed: “Truly an elaborate fabrication,” he writes, “the world city should be regarded as a social text that simultaneously reflected, distorted, and reconstituted the city.”³¹ An important piece of that reconstitution was the grand hotel scene, which saw a flurry of new construction in the decade before World War I.³² In his description of the new Hotel Adlon in 1908 for the publication *Innen-Dekoration*, Anton Jaumann celebrated the building’s representative potential: “it takes the competitive edge from those wonderful luxury hotels with which New York, Paris, and London used to show their superiority.”³³ Jaumann and others used the city’s grand hotels as signs and symbols not just of the city’s arrival on the world stage but also of its superiority to its most vaunted western rivals.

This municipal jingoism reflected an inferiority complex pervasive among Berliners’ celebrants and detractors alike. In an article on why Berlin did not need any more foreign visitors than it was already attracting, a contributor to the *Berliner Tageblatt* pronounced his city to be unsophisticated, not “broad-minded enough to become a city of foreigners [*Fremdenstadt*] like Paris.” In industry and growth, “of course,” Berlin had “been overtaking Paris throughout the last generation,” according to the Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes, but that fact did not ensure Berlin’s arrival on the world stage as a city welcoming to foreign elites.³⁴ Disjointed and rough around the edges, it was

³⁰ “Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” in *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 28, no. 61 (August 1, 1908): 415; Description of the Hotel Baltic in Berlin by H. Suhrbier, January 17, 1925, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 1077.

³¹ Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 10.

³² Anton Jaumann, “Das Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” *Innen-Dekoration* 19 (1908): 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 22, originally published in 1915.

“missing a merging point” for the great and the good.³⁵ Berlin’s own *beau monde* lacked the certain *je ne sais quoi*, too, in Julius Klinger’s esteem.³⁶ Referring to one of Berlin’s most celebrated advertising illustrators, Klinger had this to say: “In the Bristol at breakfast ... one can see the upstanding gentlemen and sophisticated socialites in the style of Ernst Deutsch—only, in their live form, they do not come close to attaining the charm of the illustrated” (fig. 25). There was a dissonance between representations of the city as Parisian, for example, and the reality. Eloesser, again, thought that Berliners were trying too hard:

The Berliner also wants to be loved, and he would like little more than to exchange the customary admiration of serious people for the affection of the international colony of leisure, particularly those who in London and Paris seek a climate for higher as well as lower pleasures.³⁷

³⁵ “Hebung des Berliner Fremdenverkehrs: Generalversammlung der Berliner Zentralstelle,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, May 9, 1914. The article refers to a meeting of the Zentralstelle für den Fremdenverkehr Groß-Berlins.

³⁶ Klinger was a graphic artist and writer from Vienna. See the exhibition catalogue *Julius Klinger: Plakatkünstler und Zeichner*, ed. Anita Kühnel (Berlin: Mann, 1997).

³⁷ Arthur Eloesser, “Großstadt und Großstädter” (1909), in *Die Strasse meiner Jugend: Berliner Skizzen* (Berlin: Arsenal, 1987), 35.



Figure 25. Advertisement by Ernst Deutsch (a.k.a. Ernst Dryden) for an informal restaurant on perhaps the most fashionable corner of the Friedrichstraße, the epicenter of Berlin’s central pleasure zone and, not coincidentally, the city’s thriving sex trades. Anthony Lipmann, *Divinely Elegant: The World of Ernst Dryden* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 40.

Something was being lost, then, in the effort to reimagine and remake the city into a world metropolis on the scale and at the heights of London, Paris, and New York. Too little remained of an earlier urban imaginary, old Berlin’s orientation toward discipline, philosophy, and high culture, Eloesser suggested. And in this new effort to be fashionable and to please the fashionable cosmopolitan set—in this new effort to do what they were not good at doing—Berliners appeared to be falling short. The Kaiser himself doubted profoundly the attractions of his city, neither seeing nor wanting to see Berlin transformed into a German Paris.³⁸ This negativity presented particular challenges to

³⁸ Wilhelm II, “Die wahre Kunst,” in *Die Berliner Moderne, 1885–1914*, ed. Peter Sprengel (Ditzingen: Reclam, 1987), 571–574. See also: Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II* (London: Routledge, 2013), 257–262; Lamar Cecil, “History as Family Chronicle: Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Dynastic Roots of the Anglo-

Berlin's tourism industry and its hoteliers, whose livelihoods depended on luring a limited number of moneyed tourists away from the *ville lumière*.

Berlin's hoteliers faced a shortfall in foreign custom in the several years before World War I. Although tourism to Berlin had picked up over the course of the new century, the duration of a single stay was short relative to those of visitors to Paris and London.³⁹ In June 1908, for example, hotels experienced an "overflow" of Americans, but most of them were using Berlin as a way station en route to and from spas in southern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.⁴⁰ In other cases, Berlin became the last stop of a European tour, truncated by the need to make the next steamer at Hamburg or Bremen.⁴¹ By 1913, according to the *New York Times*, Berlin had "degenerated into a mere way-station for American travelers."⁴² The city was not, for most Americans and other continental travelers, a destination in its own right.⁴³ This fact alarmed hoteliers and piqued their envy. Why should Berlin not hold its own against Paris and London?

When the Weltkongress der Internationalen Hotelbesitzer (World Congress of International Hoteliers) held its second ever meeting in Berlin, in 1911, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer (Association of Berlin Hoteliers) lobbied for support from the city government.⁴⁴ In advance of the event, Ernst Reissig, president of the Verein Berliner

German Antagonism," in *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations—The Corfu Papers*, eds. John Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106.

³⁹ "Hebung des Fremdenverkehrs," *Berliner Tageblatt*, (op. cit.), speaks to prewar conditions. See also "Berlin Seeking More Visitors," *New York Times*, May 22, 1910.

⁴⁰ "Americans Fill Berlin," *New York Times*, June 21, 1908.

⁴¹ "Berlin's Banner Season," *New York Times*, August 27, 1911; "Host of Tourists Invading Berlin," *New York Times*, August 17, 1913.

⁴² "Berlin Way-Station for Spa Visitors," *New York Times*, June 22, 1913.

⁴³ "Berlin Americans' Baseball Event," *New York Times*, July 12, 1914.

⁴⁴ The first *Weltkongress* had been in Rome in 1908, according to the "Resoconto Ufficiale del I.' Congresso Internazionale degli Albergatori," published in Genoa in 1909, in LAB, A Rep 001-02, Nr. 438; see also Ernst Reissig to the magistrate, letter of May 26, 1911, in LAB, a001-02 Nr. 438, f. 8.

Hotelbesitzer, wrote to the Oberbürgermeister and the magistrate to ask that they receive a delegation from the Congress. The mayor of Rome had, after all, done the same for the last Congress, Reissig wrote.⁴⁵ Here was a chance to impress a large group of important foreigners who might go home and give favorable reviews and recommendations of what they had seen in Berlin.⁴⁶

The program for the World Congress of 1911 aimed to impress: it included events at major hotels and tourist attractions, as well as a banquet and ball at the Zoologischer Garten.⁴⁷ The purpose, according to the participating institutions—the Fédération Universelle des Sociétés d’Hôteliers (Universal Federation of Hoteliers’ Associations), the Internationaler Hotelbesitzer-Verein, and the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer—was to provide an “international conference” that would “give testament to the sense of solidarity felt by all members of our profession,” regardless of nationality.⁴⁸ And this cosmopolitan pose would be modeled for prominent Berliners: in attendance stood dozens of them, including the Oberbürgermeister, the Bürgermeister, the president of the Centralstelle für den Fremdenverkehr (Central Office for Tourism), and the editors of the city’s largest newspapers.⁴⁹ Their presence also reinforced the city’s commitment to a stance of openness toward the foreign, on the one hand, and the desire to compete, on the other.

⁴⁵ Ernst Reissig to Martin Kirschner, Oberbürgermeister von Berlin, letter of April 18, 1911, in LAB, A Rep 001-02, Nr. 438, f. 3.

⁴⁶ Representatives of the Fédération Universelle des Sociétés d’Hôteliers, the Internationaler Hotelbesitzer-Verein, and the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer to members, letter of invitation to the Weltkongress der Hotelbesitzer of September 1, 1911, in LAB, A Rep 001-02, Nr. 438.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The Nationalist's Berlin

Berlin was replete with sites of local, Prussian, and national-Imperial pride, which were remarkable not only to Berliners but also to visitors. One way hoteliers appealed to a sense of national glory was to tout connections to royalty, both at the Imperial and at the individual state levels, even as the construction of new hotels and other buildings erased the traces of Berlin's past as one of the principal German *Residenzstädte* (royal seats). An English-German language guide to the city, published in 1897, provides illustrations only of royal and military symbols and personages: the statue of Berolina, the warrior-woman mascot of Berlin; Wilhelm I in military dress; the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great on Unter den Linden; a statue of the Duke of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm, the Great Elector; two images of Bismarck, one in civilian and the other in naval attire; the royal mausoleum at Charlottenburg; and other such icons of Prussian might and tradition.⁵⁰

“The royal castles and museums had to be admired most dutifully,” according to Eloesser, “as belonging to the curriculum [*Schulpensum*] on the history of the Hohenzollerns.”⁵¹

These sites were “holy,” but the rest of the city—the buildings and streets belonging to its citizenry (what Eloesser called the *Bürgerstadt*)—was not. Although royal Berlin was perhaps impervious to modernization, the rest of the old city succumbed to the pick axe. Thus the Mühlendamm, once the city's major commercial thoroughfare, lost its calling to the Friedrichstraße, and the old city hall gave way to a new, gargantuan building of little relation to the original.⁵² In the case of royal and noble residences that grand hoteliers pulled down in order to erect their new creations, on the other hand, there

⁵⁰ *Führer durch Berlin / Guide through Berlin* (Berlin: P. Killisch, 1897), in LAB, A 864 1897.

⁵¹ Arthur Eloesser, “Die Straße meiner Jugend” (1907), in Eloesser, *Die Straße meiner Jugend*, 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*

was a tendency to celebrate what had come before and establish some line of continuity. In a promotional book, the Savoy Hotel referred to itself as “a small palace,” although small it was not.⁵³ By virtue of location, it boasted a connection to the palace of Prince Louis Ferdinand, “the hero of Saalfeld,” the losing battle against Napoleon’s forces in 1806.⁵⁴ (The book was written in German and so presumably not intended for the audience of French guests that the Savoy also attracted.) Still, if other royal residences fell to the hoteliers, the Hohenzollern’s architectural contributions remained untouchable to Berlin’s developers, in part because the Court itself remained the primary “focus of political and social life down to the outbreak of war in 1914,” according to historian John C. G. Röhl, and hoteliers capitalized on that fact by referring when they could to royalty.

In addition to focusing on the Prussian tradition, hoteliers also highlighted the Imperial dimensions of Berlin’s power. The Adlon became a focal point of informal state activity, Prince Bülow having stayed there after his retirement in 1909 and granted audience not only to admirers but also to the emperor’s advisers.⁵⁵ To broadcast their pride of place in such official circles, the Adlon family made sure to fly the Imperial flag as high and prominently as it could, at the corner of the building facing the Brandenburg Gate and thus along the route from the emperor’s palaces at Potsdam to his residence at the other end of Unter den Linden.

As in the case of the Kaiserhof and Wilhelm I, the Adlon benefitted from its special relationship with Wilhelm II, and the proliferation of Imperial flags across the hotel frontages advertised that fact. It was in some respects, at least in the esteem of his

⁵³ Promotional book for the Savoy-Hotel, undated but likely the 1890s, in HAT, D060/11/01/900/SAV.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Kaiser Favors Buelow,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1909.

subjects, his majesty's hotel. Jaumann wrote of "all Berlin" following the process of construction because the Kaiser himself had given the project and building plans his precious attention. This attention Jaumann took to mean something profound: the Kaiser's own "acknowledgment and support of the international implications of the undertaking. It [the Adlon] should show the excellence Germany is able to obtain in all respects: in luxury, in comfort, in hygiene."⁵⁶ Inside, the Kaiser's likenesses graced fireplaces and niches, particularly prominently in the banquet hall, where a bust of Wilhelm II (fig. 26) complemented other images of the sovereign. Many showed him in warrior dress, thereby complicating the Adlon's commitment to a cosmopolitan pose, particularly as, abroad, the Kaiser came more and more to be seen as the "supreme War Lord" of Germany and Europe.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Jaumann, "Das Hotel Adlon in Berlin," 1.

⁵⁷ "Carnegie Reaches Berlin," *New York Times*, June 15, 1913. "Supreme War Lord" was actually an official title Wilhelm inherited upon the death of his father, Friedrich III—that is, "Oberster Kriegsherr des deutschen Heeres und Chef der Marine, Chef der [preußischen] Armee." On the title and the evolution of its meaning, see John Röhl, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Concise Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 36ff.



Figure 26. Bust of Wilhelm II in idealized military dress, in “Das Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” *Der Profanbau: Zeitschrift für Geschäfts-, Industrie-, und Verkehrsbauten*, December 1, 1907. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Elsewhere, nationalist imperatives hung more easily in cosmopolitan atmospheres, especially with respect to interior design. At the Central-Hotel, guests might pass through sumptuous public rooms outfitted in a pastiche of French styles en route to the “Zum Heidelberger” restaurant, a showcase of German regional décor (figs. 27 and 28). Several themed rooms borrowed from various local traditions and, as a whole, offered a grand tour of German beer hall interior design. “Zum Heidelberger” offered an alternative nationalism to that of the Adlon. Where other hotels, such as the Adlon, appeared to insist on Prussian hegemony in the German Empire, “Zum Heidelberger” served to remind customers of the richness of Germany’s regional histories and the

bygone days of an earlier, idealized Germany of loosely confederated principalities, united by a single language and shared traditions, free from the political machinations of Berlin.⁵⁸ This idiom made sense at the Central, a magnet for business travelers from all over the Reich. “Zum Heidelberger” was aimed at the commercial middle class of the central business district, not the political elites of the government quarter where the Adlon stood.



Figure 27. “Zum Heidelberger” beerhall at the Central-Hotel, postcard, undated (ca. 1900–1910), author’s collection.

⁵⁸ See Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 340. See also Siegfried Weichlein, “Regionalism, Federalism and Nationalism in the German Empire,” in *Region and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Joost Augesteijn and Eric Storm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 93–110.



Figure 28. “Zum Heidelberger” beerhall at the Central-Hotel, postcard, postmarked March 30, 1909, author’s collection.

The sign of “Zum Heidelberger” notwithstanding, the exterior of the building (1880) was decidedly French, and the French style, after the Parisian example, increased in popularity well into the twentieth century. One critic, writing for the *B.Z. am Mittag*, found the trend insupportable: “It so happens that we in Germany have the greatest of strengths at our disposal [for creating] buildings of the hotel and commercial variety,” and yet the use “of the French style” continued. The contributor saw this development as an insult.⁵⁹ He was not alone in his assessment. From the emperor right down to conservative publicists, the use of French and other foreign motifs in the architecture of the capital served to project a weakness that belied the might and achievements of the German Empire. Thus nationalist imperatives interfered with, and in the case of the Adlon’s sober façade, made an impact on hoteliers’ efforts to build in the cosmopolitan

⁵⁹ “In klassischem französischen Styl,” *B.Z. am Mittag*, March 5, 1914.

styles. There was always the pressure to revert to the idioms of the *Volk* or the Prussian tradition.⁶⁰ And yet these pressures counteracted still other nationalist ones: that Berlin be the German world city, the showcase of cosmopolitanism that would attract and retain the custom of a foreign set of well-to-do cosmopolitans.

The Cosmopolitan's Berlin

Guests' engagement with cosmopolitanism revealed itself in five categories: the cosmopolitanism of the aristocracy and royalty who visited; the accentuation and celebration of difference among national groups within the grand hotel; the practices of cultural exchange among groups; the phenomenon of intermarriage, particularly between American women and German men; and a proliferation of vice, which spread to hotels and which Judith Walkowitz has identified as one of cosmopolitanism's negative valences—the danger that was always pleasure's counterpart.⁶¹ What follows is not so much a narrative of how cosmopolitan culture developed and flourished in the grand hotels but rather various angles from which to view cosmopolitanism as a set of cultural poses, practices, and associations.

In many ways, Berlin's grand hotels, particularly the Adlon, Esplanade, and Continental, mimicked the cosmopolitanism of great aristocratic households.⁶² Maria

⁶⁰ On this pressure, see Uwe Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache, Rasse, Religion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 25; and the classic by George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1964).

⁶¹ Judith Walkowitz, "The 'Vision of Salome': Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908-1918," *American Historical Review* 108 (2003), 340–341.

⁶² Rita Krueger, *Czech, German, and Noble: Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19, who sees the Central European aristocratic identity of the nineteenth century as "the complex product of myriad interwoven loyalties to family, empire, province, church, estate, and eventually nation," even as "[c]osmopolitanism...reinforced consumption habits, travel, and the performance of status that were shared by European elites and that eroded rather than reinforced national boundaries." Such cosmopolitanism was not confined to the aristocracy, nor to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Margaret Jacob has shown in *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 2,

Dönnhoff remembered her reception and stay at a castle near Königsberg (Kaliningrad), “then still run in grand style,” where she found such amenities and luxuries as adjoining rooms, dozens of servants, and an “elegant breakfast served on a huge silver platter.” Just as in a grand hotel, there were “every evening formal dinners with guests” from nearby places as well as those who came in a “constant stream ... from the world of diplomacy, the upper nobility, and the intellectual elite.”⁶³ The Kaiser used Berlin’s finest grand hotels in similar fashion, especially for royal weddings.⁶⁴ For that of Princess Victoria Luise to Prince Ernst August of Cumberland in the spring of 1913, his majesty virtually “commandeered ... entire floors of fashionable hotels” for the accommodation of “so many different royal personages,” a situation which the *New York Times* described as “an aristocratic cosmopolitan galaxy of ladies and gentlemen in waiting on the rulers of Russia, England, Italy, Denmark, and Austria.”⁶⁵ This was a cosmopolitan moment, to be sure, but it involved a cast of characters who also stood above nationality, whose family connections and aristocratic customs often set them apart from national groupings altogether.

In addition to accommodating such aristocrats and royals, the grand hotel also had to tend to foreign commoners, a more reliable clientele from all over Europe and the world. This group liked to wear nationality more prominently than did royalty and the

where she argues that “in certain early modern circles and settings, with motives that could range from millenarian Protestantism to the desire for profit, some Europeans approached those distinctly different from themselves hospitably, with a willingness to get to know them, even to like them. From at least the sixteenth century such an expansive person was termed a *cosmopolite*, best defined as a citizen of the world.” In some cases, such as the internationalization of scientific inquiry, the subject of Jacob’s second chapter, the aristocracy was almost nowhere to be seen.

⁶³ Marion Dönnhoff, *Before the Storm: Memories of My Youth in Old Prussia*, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Knopf, 1990), 6.

⁶⁴ “Guests of Kaiser Will Fill Hotels” (op. cit.).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

high aristocracy. Thus, certain national groups gravitated toward certain hotels. The Baltic, for example, was popular among Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians.⁶⁶ At another hotel, an “English Club” established itself for the benefit of that country’s visitors and expatriates.⁶⁷ The Adlon, the Fürstenhof, and the Esplanade were particularly popular among Americans, including Jewish Americans.⁶⁸ And then there were the occasional visitors from further afield, as the *New York Times* reported in 1912, when “a touch of color was lent to the exclusively Caucasian guestlist at the Adlon this week by the arrival of the Indian nabob, Sir Rajenda Mockerjee [sic] and Lady Mockerjee [sic] of Calcutta.”⁶⁹ For all these types of people, concurrently, the grand hotel was responsible for creating a pleasant, secure, and peaceful home away from home.

No group made itself at home more insistently than did the Americans. For a time in 1908, the United States ambassador to Germany actually lived at the Adlon. (So, too, did the French ambassador while his embassy was closed for renovations.)⁷⁰ In May of 1910, the *New York Times* reported on a wave of American tourists, “now in full possession of Berlin hotels, shops, summer gardens, and all other establishments in the Kaiser’s town that cater for foreign patronage.”⁷¹ In June of that year alone, nearly 4,000 Americans had taken rooms in hotels and pensions, with the Adlon, Kaiserhof, Bristol, and Esplanade accepting the bulk of this elite custom.⁷² Such was the critical mass at the

⁶⁶ Description of the Hotel Baltic in Berlin by H. Suhrbier, January 17, 1925, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 1077.

⁶⁷ Protokoll der Aufsichtsratssitzung of June 6, 1910, in LAB, A Rep 225-01, Nr. 1.

⁶⁸ “Miss Farrar Again at Berlin Opera,” *New York Times*, September 13, 1908; “Americans in Berlin,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1910; “Tourists Shun Spas,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1909.

⁶⁹ “Berlin Is Popular Despite the Cold,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1912. Rajendra Mookerjee (1854–1936) was a Bengali Indian industrialist and engineer whose complexion (and perhaps accent) was the only outward feature differentiating him from an Englishman. He traveled extensively in Europe, delivering speeches on topics including corporate management, labor relations, imperial rule, and political economy. See Siddha Mohana Mitra, *Anglo-Indian Studies* (London: Longmans, 1913), 83.

⁷⁰ “Ambassador Hill Selects a Home,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1908.

⁷¹ “Berlin Seeking More Visitors” (op. cit.).

⁷² “Arrivals in Berlin Break All Records,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1910.

Adlon, Bristol, and Esplanade in July that a crowd gathered in the lobby of each to wait for the *Times* to broadcast the latest news of a boxing match in Reno.⁷³ American visitors did not shy away from making a spectacle of themselves, and hoteliers were all too eager to accommodate, given the depth of the American market and of individual Americans' pocketbooks.

The cosmopolitanism of the grand hotels both encouraged and depended on a high degree of formal, transatlantic cultural exchange. In 1911, the Adlon became a nexus of transatlantic entertainment when J. C. Duff and his wife arrived in pursuit of new acts for their lineup on Broadway. The hope, according to the *New York Times*, was that Max Reinhardt, among others, would be persuaded "to present some examples ... in the United States."⁷⁴ There was also exchange in the area of sports. In the early twentieth century, a group of American and British men founded the city's only golf club, which in 1912 "remain[ed] ... pretty much of a monopoly of the Anglo-American element." Where Germans had taken to the sport "reluctantly" at that time, however, two years later the club was "now largely Teutonic."⁷⁵ The Adlon and other hotels also hosted the American Luncheon Club, which connected American visitors and expatriates with prominent members of Berlin society.⁷⁶ Finally, in the years before World War I, there was a flurry of academic and philanthropic exchange.⁷⁷ When in 1908 Andrew Carnegie had a

⁷³ "Greatest Interest in Berlin," *New York Times*, July 4, 1910.

⁷⁴ "Duff Seeks German Plays," *New York Times*, April 16, 1911.

⁷⁵ "Americans Leaving Berlin for Italy," *New York Times*, March 8, 1914.

⁷⁶ "Thanksgiving Day Fete Day [sic] In Berlin," *New York Times*, November 13, 1914.

⁷⁷ In his introduction to a special issue of *Contemporary European History*, Pierre-Yves Saunier points to the central role of such meetings as the principal mode of international exchange in the fields of urban philanthropy and municipal reform. See Pierre-Yves Saunier, ed., *Municipal Connections: Co-operation, Links and Transfers among European Cities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Taking a wider view than just the European, Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany*, Sorcha O'Hagan, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3, suggests that the transatlantic philanthropy of Carnegie's variety actually constituted an early example of

diplodocus skeleton delivered to the Berlin Anthropological Museum, a representative of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, who had brought the dinosaur, was the special guest of honor at a celebratory dinner at the Adlon. Exchanges like these occurred down to the outbreak of World War I.⁷⁸ In 1913, a member of the Board of Lectureship of the First Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, gave a speech in German to a sizable crowd in the Adlon's Beethoven Parlor.⁷⁹ The following year, Dr. Archibold Coolidge, of Harvard University, and Dr. Paul Shorey and his wife, of the University of Chicago, attracted the "aristocracy of German intelligence" to the Adlon's Kaisersaal.⁸⁰ These were grand events that showcased transatlantic cooperation and good feeling among academic and moneyed elites.

There were, however, breeches to decorum, at which points members of the American Club of Berlin and other visitors took the opportunity to play police officers. One example illustrates this point particularly clearly. One night in August 1911, General Nogi Maresuke of the Imperial Japanese Army was dining in the Adlon restaurant. As he rose to leave the table, Nogi found himself being assailed by an American guest, who, in front of all the patrons, including a few dozen Americans, gave the general a slap on the back and exclaimed, "Good old Nogi! Hurrah for Japan!" Although Nogi's "[o]riental composure did not desert him," as the *New York Times* put it, many of the Americans present became incensed. A group of them met immediately to discuss the incident and

globalization, which itself helped shape the very "idea[s] of nations and nationalism in the Wilhelmine era."

⁷⁸ Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnography and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), who charts the international dimensions of the Germans' quest to build the world's greatest collections of ethnographic artifacts, which also involved Carnegie's collections in Pittsburgh.

⁷⁹ "Guests of Kaiser Will Fill Hotels" (op. cit.).

⁸⁰ "German Savants Honor Americans," *New York Times*, February 22, 1914.

find a way to tell “their effervescent fellow countryman what they thought of such an exhibition.” Such breaches threatened to tarnish the reputation of Americans in Berlin, and this particular group must have admonished their offending compatriot, for he traveled to Switzerland the next day.⁸¹ Cultural exchange had to happen along civilized, highly prescribed lines.

The culture of elite cosmopolitanism that Americans in particular fostered and policed at the Adlon had serious diplomatic implications. Here was a model for how world nations might get along and avoid war, and the model depended on precisely the kind of international commerce of which tourism was an integral part. At the 1909 annual banquet of the American Association of Trade and Commerce, held at the Adlon, the United States ambassador gave voice in his speech to the hope that international commercial exchange would silence “the voice of the ‘jingo’” and cause “passions to be still.”⁸² In 1911, the ambassador echoed the same speech in his farewell dinner at the Adlon, confessing that “we in America have hopes for a more closely united world” and that those hopes depended on what he called “the gift of mutual interpretation” of what was fair, right, and lawful. If he did not go so far as to propose a cosmopolitan vision of world citizenship, he did insist that “law, justice, and righteousness ... [were] things applicable internationally”—and this as the emperor’s foreign policy became ever more aggressive.⁸³ Under these conditions, Carnegie came to Berlin in June 1913 to present an address to the emperor on behalf of dozens of “American peace and conciliation

⁸¹ “American Slaps Nogi on the Back,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1911.

⁸² “Commerce as Peacemaker,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1909.

⁸³ “Farewell Dinner to Hill,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1911. On the Kaiser’s increasingly aggressive foreign policy after 1900, see John Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Der Weg in den Abgrund, 1900–1941* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2008), 50ff.

societies.” Carnegie stayed, naturally, in the royal suite of the Adlon, where so much had been said and continued to be said for a cosmopolitan worldview that favored international friendship and peace.⁸⁴

The Adlon’s cosmopolitan atmosphere fostered connections, too, of a more intimate variety—namely, engagements and marriages between German men and American women. In 1909, the widow Elsie French Vanderbilt became engaged to Count Wilhelm von Bentinck, a member of the Potsdam guards, but the agreement fell through when his relatives dissuaded him from what would have been something like a morganatic marriage.⁸⁵ Others found success, such as Ella Holbrook Walker of Detroit, the widow Mrs. Frederick Turnbull of Philadelphia, and the granddaughter of a former ambassador to Berlin.⁸⁶ Although the marriage ceremonies themselves happened in churches, it was common to hold the ball, banquet, and wedding breakfast at the Adlon or other such establishment.⁸⁷ The city’s grand hotels also became places where American wives of German and other European aristocrats could reunite with friends, display their new status, and help organize intermarriages for others.⁸⁸

Grand hotels, particularly the Adlon, also provided space for women to engage themselves in diplomatic circles, even more so as the century wore on. At the Adlon in 1908, the United States ambassador’s first Berlin reception barred women’s entry, “in

⁸⁴ “Carnegie Reaches Berlin” (op. cit.). For Carnegie’s contribution to international peace movements, see Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 930. On pacifism in Germany, especially among the Mennonites, before World War I, see Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 213–254, 407–441. On the advent of a “transnational lobby” for peace after 1890, see Sandi Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–90.

⁸⁵ “Hill to Entertain at Berlin Musicale,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1909.

⁸⁶ “Wedding the Event of Week in Berlin,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1913; “Host of Tourists Invading Berlin” (op. cit.).

⁸⁷ “Wedding the Event of Week” (op. cit.).

⁸⁸ “Americans Leaving Berlin for Italy” (op. cit.).

accordance with the strict rules of the Kaiser's capital."⁸⁹ But unofficial events were open to women and even came to be their distinct purview. In the relative privacy of her apartment in the Adlon, Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago entertained the United States ambassador and other prominent Americans and Europeans.⁹⁰ In 1913, two unmarried sisters from Washington, very much at home "in diplomatic circles on both sides of the Atlantic," enjoyed a dinner given in their honor by the French ambassador to Berlin.⁹¹ The grand hotel was thus a place where women, American women in particular, could entertain and be entertained by a diplomatic set otherwise off limits to them or only accessible to married women on the arms of their husbands.

The Adlon became the site of further association among women, whose collective activities brought them into the hotel's and Berlin's cosmopolitan scene.⁹² The American Women's Club held most of its meetings at the hotel and held many major events there. The year 1912 saw a "fashionable *matinée musicale*" and 1914 a *thé dansant* and fashion parade for the purpose of raising money for the club.⁹³ That event, too, pulled American women into the diplomatic circle, with the US ambassador and his wife acting as official patrons.⁹⁴

Although grand hotels and their public rooms became hospitable to well-to-do women in the early twentieth century, vice persisted there as elsewhere in the city center. Here was "negative valence of cosmopolitanism," its association with sex and even

⁸⁹ "Hill's First Reception" (op. cit.).

⁹⁰ "Berlin Is Popular Despite the Cold" (op. cit.).

⁹¹ "Americans Flit through Berlin," *New York Times*, August 10, 1913.

⁹² Cf. Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin*, chapter 1.

⁹³ "Americans Leaving Berlin for Italy" (op. cit.); "Berlin Faithful to Paris Fashions," *New York Times*, March 29, 1914.

⁹⁴ "Berlin Faithful to Paris Fashions" (op. cit.).

sexual danger.⁹⁵ Iwan Bloch, medical doctor and author of *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit*, attributed the increased publicity of vice to tourism and traffic: with greater mobility, the telegraph, and the press, sex played a “greater, more meaningful role in the public” than it had before. He noted as an example the phenomenon of men now taking out ads in newspapers in order to request the addresses of women they saw in the trains, trams, and omnibuses.⁹⁶ Prostitution, both male and female, also abounded, particularly in hotels, as Oscar Commenge noted for Paris in 1897 and Hans Ostwald observed for Berlin in his 1906 *Männliche Prostitution*—and this under the noses of respectable women and men in the cosmopolitan set.⁹⁷

Hotels of all classes became meeting points for homosexuals, and it is likely that hotels in Berlin were particularly popular in light of their location, none too far from the Friedrichstraße, a thoroughfare for cruising.⁹⁸ Gay men met at the grand hotels, too, many of which were a short walk from the “*schwuler Weg*” (gay path) in the Tiergarten, which, along with Unter den Linden itself, was one of the city’s “best recognized cruising locations for men seeking erotic male companionship, as well as for those prepared to buy or sell it,” as Robert Beachy has pointed out.⁹⁹ But it was events at a Berlin hotel, the Bristol, that precipitated, in 1902, the greatest homosexual sex scandal in Germany to

⁹⁵ Walkowitz, “Vision of Salome,” 2.

⁹⁶ Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1907), 778; Tyler Carrington, “Love in the Big City: Intimacy, Marriage, and Risk in Turn-of-the-century Berlin” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014), 1 and 60.

⁹⁷ Oscar Commenge, *La prostitution clandestine à Paris* (Paris: Schleicher, 1897), 88-89; Hans Ostwald, *Männliche Prostitution im kaiserlichen Berlin* (Berlin: Janssen, 1991), 58, originally published in 1906. See also Smith, *Berlin Coquette* (op. cit.).

⁹⁸ Ostwald, *Männliche Prostitution*, 113-116.

⁹⁹ Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 65; Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und Weibes* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1912), 698. Cf. Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures of the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1995).

date. There, the great industrialist Friedrich Krupp (scion of Alfred) was supposed regularly to have entertained a handful of Italian pages, hired by the manager for Krupp's private gratification. Such rumors attracted the attention of the Kriminalkommissar Hans von Tresckow, who launched an investigation.¹⁰⁰ Whereas the liaisons between Krupp and the staff at the Bristol came to light, there must exist scores of similar examples that did not—examples that featured not only connections between men of different classes but also between equals. The grand hotel, with its relatively permissive atmosphere and promise of anonymity, would have been an ideal meeting point for elite homosexuals, and, indeed, it was a place where those men might find satisfaction among male members of the staff.

Most efforts of hoteliers to attract a cosmopolitan clientele and foster a cosmopolitan atmosphere emphasized more innocuous pleasures. Advertisements tended to use foreign words and advertise the “international” profile of the clientele.¹⁰¹ Within the hotels themselves, large spaces were given over to businesses devoted to moving goods and people across vast distances. In 1912, the Adlon let the space of its grill room to the steamship company North German Lloyd. These were “magnificent corner rooms looking out upon the Pariser-Platz and Unter-den-Linden,” their position such that the company could “hoist its flag over the best corner in Berlin.”¹⁰² For its part, the Kaiserhof housed a branch of the Hamburg-based Havana-Import-Compagnie, where guests and visitors could buy exotic tobacco products.¹⁰³ The Savoy boasted twenty French cooks,

¹⁰⁰ See James Money, *Capri: Island of Pleasure* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 68; William Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp, 1587–1968* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968), 259-260.

¹⁰¹ Front-page advertisement in the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, December 29, 1898.

¹⁰² “Gets Fine Berlin Site,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1912.

¹⁰³ Nachtrag zu dem Mietvertrag zwischen der Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft und der Havana-Import-Compagnie of April 8, 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1052.

and the Palast-Hotel made sure to print its menus in both French and German, the former more prominently featured than the latter. Still, as if to temper this favoring of the foreign, the restaurant manager had the paper decorated with nine German royal seals.¹⁰⁴ Where hoteliers engaged in cosmopolitan cultural imperatives, they liked to balance the effects with local, national, and Imperial symbols.

Nowhere did cosmopolitan provisions seem so imperative as in the pursuit of pleasing Americans, particularly thirsty ones. In 1904, the Kaiser-Keller, a large gastronomy concern, opened an “American bar,” which the management nonetheless decided to call the “Kaiser-Büffet.”¹⁰⁵ One hotelier came to the United States in 1911 chiefly for the purpose of learning the art of American bartending. He “made the rounds of the new hotels in all the leading cities of the country, with a view to finding out the new drinks which make Americans feel at home.” The result was that, according to the *New York Times*, “[t]ransatlantic wayfarers who happen to put up at this particular

¹⁰⁴ Menu of the restaurant at the Palast-Hotel of June 7, 1912, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 345.

¹⁰⁵ Bericht über die Kaiser-Keller Aktiengesellschaft, Berlin by the Allgemeine Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft, July 9, 1928, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 941.

establishment will find it hard to believe that they had left ‘God’s country.’”¹⁰⁶



Figure 29. The American Bar in the grill room of the Hotel Esplanade, 1915, in LAB, F Rep. 290, Nr. 0249099. Landesarchiv Berlin.

This image shows in detail the re-creation, at the Hotel Esplanade, of an American bar, complete with billiards table. The amenity was as much for the gratification of American visitors as it was a way of showing that the Esplanade, like the Adlon and other properties with American cocktail bars, was as up-to-date and cosmopolitan as the next hotel. Where in the 1870s and 1880s the early grand hotels such as the Kaiserhof and the Central had balanced German art and symbols with French décor, now the grand hotels of Berlin added American offerings to the mix as part of the imperative, first, to appear welcoming to new sorts of visitors from much farther away and, second, to appear open to the foreign after the cosmopolitan fashion of the day.

This was as much a response to the fashion as it was an effort to entice American and, secondarily, British custom. The Savoy promised facilities that were up to the

¹⁰⁶ “Berlin to Provide American Drinks,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1911.

standards of any expert “hygienist,” for example, and this was code for bathrooms. As early as 1897, the architect Carl Gause, who would later design the Adlon, called for using American and British hotels as a model for how to include extra bathing amenities.¹⁰⁷ The increase in visitors from Great Britain and the United States, he contended, necessitated an increase in the number of ensuite rooms and apartments in particular.¹⁰⁸ And so, in the next decade, new hotels such as the Fürstenhof were done “after the American pattern,” with three hundred rooms and one hundred opulent private bathrooms, “practical, comfortable, and hygienic.”¹⁰⁹ These measures contributed to the “commonplace” impression “that, from year to year, Berlin is becoming more American.”¹¹⁰ For hoteliers, one of whom even established a New York office for the purpose of capturing potential guests before they set sail for Europe, Americanization meant great profitability.¹¹¹

In the spring of 1909, Louis Adlon, son of Lorenz Adlon, founder of the eponymous hotel, traveled to the United States on a fact-finding mission. He recorded and broadcast his impressions in a long article for the *New York Times* in May—an article which outlined the complex relationship between the American and Berlin hotel industries. In that piece, he referred to American hotels as the “university in which European hotel keepers complete their education. Not all European hotel keepers ... but the best, the most progressive, the most up-to-date.” He saw his visit as akin to “an

¹⁰⁷ “Mitteilungen aus Vereinen,” *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 31 (March 2, 1898), 162.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 162-163.

¹⁰⁹ “Hotel Adlon in Berlin,” 415; “5. ordentliche Versammlung des XVI. Vereinsjahrs,” *Brandenburgia: Monatsblatt der Gesellschaft für Heimatkunde der Provinz Brandenburg zu Berlin* 16 (1908), 449.

¹¹⁰ “Der erste Berliner Wolkenkratzer,” *National Zeitung*, January 22, 1911, clipped and included in LAB, A Rep 0010-02, NR. 16596.

¹¹¹ “Berlin to Provide American Drinks” (op. cit.).

American art student [traveling] to France to study art,” but in reverse.¹¹² Adlon even attributed to the Americans a “small revolution in Continental hotel fashions.”¹¹³ The extended interview was accompanied by a photograph of Adlon in evening dress and contained paeans to the American hospitality industry even as it asserted Europe’s competitive edge.¹¹⁴ It was equal parts a report of the visit and an advertisement for the Adlon.

If Adlon went to Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, and New York in order to understand what the *Times* referred to as the “fastidious American taste” in hotel design and amenities, he also did so in order to model and project his establishment’s readiness to please American visitors.¹¹⁵ It was, in other words, as much a reconnaissance mission as an exercise in good public relations.¹¹⁶ “We have our own engine room, running water, [and] laundry,” Adlon boasted, as well as “the American plan of bathrooms in individual rooms.” If many of Berlin’s hostelrys “still lack[ed] some of these things,” the Adlon did not. And American visitors to Berlin demanded all manner of things that Adlon promised to furnish: grapefruit and terrapin he planned to have shipped in, ensuite rooms he would build in ever increasing numbers, the American “characteristics of quick service, comfort, [and] intelligence” he would supply in good order.¹¹⁷ The Adlon was already and would continue to be, he contended, “an up-to-date American hotel, even the café being

¹¹² “American Hotels Lead,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1909.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ “German Bonifaces Eager for Tourists,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1909.

¹¹⁶ Louis Adlon also reciprocated the favors he received in the United States. In 1913, for example, R. J. Mailor, manager of the McAlpin Hotel in New York, stayed at the Adlon as Louis’s personal guest. The hope would have been both to help Mailor in his efforts to learn the European side of the business and to furnish him with the experiences on which he might report favorably at home. “Host of Tourists Invading Berlin,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1913.

¹¹⁷ “American Hotels Lead,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1909.

modeled after the cafés in the best American hotels.”¹¹⁸ Thus the Adlon was at once German and not German, entrenched in Berlin society and politics, yet tethered to American culture and custom.

In his interview, however, Adlon was careful to differentiate between European hotel culture and that of his American hosts. The Adlon and its European counterparts were more “homelike” than American hotels, which he saw as more spectacular and commercial. “When a man stops in an American hotel,” Adlon contended, “he retains all the time the feeling that he is stopping, not at home, but in a hotel—that he is buying the comforts that are showered upon him.”¹¹⁹ The Adlon family, on the other hand, tried harder to mask the exchange of money for hospitality: “We make friends of our patrons. That’s it. Here [in the United States] . . . , you do not do that.” The difference Adlon attributed to the United States’ large hotel-dwelling population and the scale of American hotels in general. Even if the staff was friendlier at American hotels, its members lacked that delicate touch, what E. M. Tierney, an American hotelier, referred to as “the maximum personal attention.”¹²⁰ Adlon was treading a fine line between presenting his establishment as Americanized, on the one hand, and promising a good dose of old-world charm, care, and refinement, on the other hand. When he spoke of amenities, Adlon emphasized the American; when he spoke of hotel culture, he emphasized his staff’s personal touch.

Hotel staff contained some truly transnational specimens. Ludwig Müller, head waiter at the Fürstenhof, had worked his way up the ranks as far away as Buenos Aires.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ “Here to See Our Hotels,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1909.

¹¹⁹ “American Hotels Lead,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1909.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, and “Hotel Men Profit by a German Tour,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1914.

¹²¹ References for Ludwig Müller between 1905 and 1926, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 1150.

Andrey Nett, whom we met in Chapter 1, had worked in four European countries before he applied to be a member of Müller's staff.¹²² Higher up the chain of command, hotel manager and Danish national Alfred Jensen listed, in addition to his native Copenhagen, three other countries where he had found employ before 1914.¹²³ Restaurant and hotel manager Hubert Lyon had a similar resumé. Both management and staff were expected to be proficient in several languages, and foreign stints were instrumental in fulfilling this requirement.¹²⁴ With some hyperbole, one hotel's promotional book described its head porter as being able to "speak Spanish like a Castilian, Italian like a Tuscan" and even that regional variety of French, originating in Gascony, with its "friendly, whirring rrr." Indeed, he "might [even] be said to muster a bit of *Orientalia*" when the situation required.¹²⁵ There existed a staff cosmopolitanism, then, that had less to do with a "privileged stance" toward the foreign than with the performance of openness toward foreign languages, manners, and customs, which served to make the cosmopolitanism of the elites easier to practice.¹²⁶

The American's Berlin

Wilhelmine Berlin inspired displays of nationalism among American hotel regulars, whose cosmopolitanism they tempered with outright jingoism in the manner of patriotic spectacle. The grand hotel thus facilitated the coming together of nationalities, but often to allow members of those nationalities to show off their differences. This was not a

¹²² References for André Nett between 1895 and 1910, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 644.

¹²³ Curriculum vitae of Alfred Jensen, undated, probably early 1930s, in LAB, A Rep 225, Nr. 1152.

¹²⁴ These stints did not tend to include the United States, however, possibly because American labor unions cautioned European workers against seeking jobs there. See the *Internationale Hotel-Industrie Vereinsblatt des Internationalen Genfer Verbadnes* of October 20, 1910, in LAB, A Pr Br Rep 030, Nr. 1723. On language requirements: Guyer, *Das Hotelwesen der Gegenwart*, 144.

¹²⁵ Promotional book for the Savoy-Hotel, undated, in HAT, D060/11/01/900/SAV.

¹²⁶ Walkowitz, "Vision of Salome," 4.

phenomenon specific to Berlin, but the city's militaristic-nationalist atmosphere not only attracted American visitors and inspired their awe for the rising German juggernaut but also may have threatened them and provoked their retaliation in the form of a flaunting of the lighter, brighter, more enlightened political culture and associational life of the United States.¹²⁷

In summer of 1913, the American critic James Huneker (1857–1921) published a long piece on Berlin in the *New York Times* in which he served the city a series of backhanded compliments that harmonized with some of his own countrymen's and countrywomen's assessments, as well as those of Eloesser. Understandings of Berlin as the parvenu metropolis of Europe pervaded the literature such that even Baedeker's introduction to the 1912 edition let the topic of the city's newness share pride of place with the city's cultural and historical aspects—Baedeker's customary emphasis—in the introduction:

Though Berlin does not compete in antiquity or historical interest with the other great European capitals, its position as the metropolis of the German empire and its wealth of art-treasures, both ancient and modern, invest it with high importance in addition to its special characteristic interest as the greatest purely modern city in Europe.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Cf., Brooke Blower, *Becoming Americans in Paris: Politics and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹²⁸ *Baedeker's Berlin and Its Environs* (1912), op. cit. The German-language version, a new edition of which appeared in 1904, had a similar prefatory statement but omitted the key word *compete*, opting instead for the more neutral language of simple comparison: "Gegenüber den älteren europäischen Hauptstädten mit ihrem Reichtum an berühmten Bauwerken und andern Kunstdenkmälern und ihren geschichtlichen Erinnerungen beschränkt sich das Interesse an der Vergangenheit in Berlin auf wenige Jahrzehnte des XVIII. und der ersten Hälfte des XIX. Jahrhunderts. Um so großartiger ist der Aufschwung,

The text did not elaborate on the meaning of “purely modern,” nor did Huneker in his *New York Times* critique of contemporary Berlin.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, both identified modernity as Berlin’s distinguishing characteristic. “Berlin proper is not imposing, its historic interest is scanty, but the new Berlin, Greater Berlin, is ... brilliant,” Huneker declared. He touted the “apartment houses with modern conveniences” in the south and southwest, while disparaging the “mean streets and rickety, ill-smelling lodging houses of Paris, Vienna, and London.”¹³⁰ In contrast to the new Berlin, the old center presented the city’s official face and had the concentration of grand hotels that could ensure it would remain the true, if maligned, “heart of Berlin.”¹³¹

Huneker maligned the city in other ways, too, obliquely but most biting when it came to the authorities. The police, for example, had “argus eyes,” the gaze of which “no one escapes.” Thus the compliment on the grassy median of the Hardenbergstraße became a comment on policing and on the obedience characteristic of German subjects: “Fancy our streets or parks in New York City thus adorned! Oh, for how many minutes would they endure before the raid of the hooligans!”¹³² Another American guest to the city also could not “help being struck by Berlin’s solid and orderly appearance ... , but isn’t everything forbidden?” he asked—“even blades of grass grow according to police regulations.”¹³³ In other ways, too, Huneker and the *Times* underscored Berlin’s

den die Stadt seit dem letzten Viertel des XIX. Jahrhunderts genommen hat, und die ständig wachsende Zahl moderner Sehenswürdigkeiten,” in *Baedeker’s Berlin und Umgebung* (1904), op. cit., v.

¹²⁹ Cf., Mark Twain, “The Chicago of Europe,” originally published in 1892, in *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 87–89.

¹³⁰ He did not find Berlin’s women as attractive as those of Vienna or New York, however.

¹³¹ James Huneker, “Huneker Prowls around Kaiser’s Jubilee City,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1913.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ “Berlin Draws Many Visitors,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1912.

association with authoritarianism. The headline identified the city, for example, as belonging to the emperor himself.¹³⁴

Yet Berlin's authoritarian spectacles were part of what drew Americans to the city in the first place. Huneker observed that "one of the chief 'sights' in the Tiergarten is the daily return of the Kaiser from Potsdam," accompanied by a bugler who played a "slight variant" on a Wagnerian theme.¹³⁵ The review of the Guards Corps at Tempelhof field in September 1913, according to the *New York Times* correspondent, was "the great ... social event of the year," with Americans, "as usual, much in evidence on the vast parade ground."¹³⁶ When in May of the same year Berlin hosted the king and queen of England and the czar of Russia at the same time, "countless exclamations of delighted enthusiasm in unmistakable transatlantic English broke forth" at the sight of the royal procession down Unter den Linden, past the Adlon and the Bristol. The *Times* correspondent approached this incident with some sense of irony: "a little royalty," he conceded, was "a dangerous thing for the patriotic sons and daughters of Uncle Sam."¹³⁷

A further touch of irony greeted this royal procession in the form of American flags hung from the balconies of Americans' rooms at the Adlon. "King George, Queen Mary, and the Czar," as well as the Kaiser and Kaiserin, might have mistaken Unter den Linden for "Broadway or Michigan Boulevard," the *Times* correspondent joked. These flags signaled support for the monarchies present, to be sure, but they also broadcast the

¹³⁴ The *New York Times* correspondent liked to refer to the city as the Kaiser's personal property, perhaps to emphasize and make light of the kernel of truth in the attribution.

¹³⁵ Huneker, "Huneker Prowls around" (op. cit.).

¹³⁶ "Americans Witness the Berlin Review," *New York Times*, September 7, 1913.

¹³⁷ "Americans Cheer Royalty in Berlin," *New York Times*, May 25, 1913. Huneker, too, found military spectacle stimulating: "It is pleasant to stroll and watch the airships and the military free balloons perform their evolutions." See Huneker, "Huneker Prowls around" (op. cit.).

presence of true republicans in the land of kings and queens.¹³⁸ The *Times* took pains to present this presence as the result of a proverbial invasion, Americans having “taken possession of ‘Kaiserville’” as early as 1909. “A look down the register of places like the Esplanade, Adlon, Bristol, or Kaiserhof” showed “an unending succession of New Yorks, Chicagos, Philadelphias, Bostons, San Franciscos, Wheelings, Leavenworths,” leaving the Germans “hopelessly in the minority alongside the tailor-made, broad-hatted women and the padded-shouldered, wide-trousered men, whose make-ups betray their nationality unmistakably.”¹³⁹ Americans were as ubiquitous on the hotel scene as they were conspicuous. The summer of 1912 found Berlin “swarm[ing]” with “transatlantic visitors.”¹⁴⁰ Some of the wealthiest chose to sightsee by automobile, where it was customary to affix small American flags to the dashboards.¹⁴¹ Many visitors from the United States chose, then, to advertise their difference, sometimes even with respect to political culture.

Since the 1890s, a small colony of American expatriates resident in Berlin had held celebrations for Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. In 1894, the grandest such event to date took place at the Kaiserhof, where the United States ambassador, Theodore Runyon, delivered a toast to both the emperor’s health and the “great republic” across the sea. He spoke of being “proud of our birthright” as Americans—presumably a reference to all men having been created equal and the suffrage that followed from such reasoning—in the same breath as he thanked the German people for their hospitality and

¹³⁸ “Americans Cheer Royalty in Berlin” (op. cit.).

¹³⁹ “Germans Are Rare,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1909. See also “Ideal Weather in Berlin,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1912: “A stroll through the lobby of any first-class German hostelry in the middle of July affords evidence that if some Napoleonic embargo were to be placed on American tourist travel in Europe about half of Europe would be headed for the bankruptcy court.”

¹⁴⁰ “Ideal Weather in Berlin” (op. cit.).

¹⁴¹ “Berlin Attracting Many,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1911.

praised the host country for “its splendid literature, its advanced art and science, and its military renown”—not, of course, its politics.¹⁴² Americans also celebrated Independence Day in the Kaiser’s capital—or at least near it, at Grünau on the banks of the Spree. The majority of attendees to this annual afternoon and evening of picnics and games were American nationals living in Berlin, but as the *Times* reported in 1914, the “crowd” of “five hundred patriots . . . was swelled during the day by the arrival of people, who came down from the hotels in automobiles or trains.”¹⁴³ At the celebration two years prior, the American colony had arrived in full ostentation by steamboat in order to celebrate, on the Kaiser’s soil, the point at which Americans had cast off the fetters of despotism.¹⁴⁴

Nowhere did Americans flaunt their republicanism more spectacularly than in the Adlon at the time of national elections. The practice started as early as 1908 when the United States ambassador and his staff decided to “camp out” on election night to await news by cable from the *New York Times*. The Adlon agreed even to display returns as they arrived on a large board in the lobby.¹⁴⁵ This was perhaps the first election party held “for the benefit of the Americans resident in the Kaiser’s capital.” Two hundred men and women assembled to wait and consume champagne, sandwiches, cigarettes, and coffee—all provided by the Adlon. When Taft’s victory seemed sure in the small hours of the morning, “the assembly rose to its feet and broke into thunderous cheers,” probably waking half the house. The women led everyone in patriotic song to the accompaniment of the orchestra, engaged to play “Yankee melodies” all night.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² “Thanksgiving in Germany,” *New York Times*, November 30, 1894.

¹⁴³ “Berlin Americans Enjoy Big Picnic,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1914.

¹⁴⁴ “Politics at Berlin Fourth,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1912.

¹⁴⁵ “Times Bulletins in Berlin,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1908.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Four years later, five hundred people attended the party on election night, when either Lorenz or Louis Adlon had the Marble Hall draped with American flags, under which, when the time came, there issued “a frenzied outburst of cheering and handclapping.” The orchestra, as before, played rags, marches, and other such “American compositions” until the party broke up after 3 o’clock in the morning when the *Times* called the election for Wilson.¹⁴⁷ In this way, the Adlon management and the *New York Times* facilitated the most remarkable display of American patriotism, bordering on jingoism, in Europe, allowing the American colony and American guests to flaunt their freedoms—particularly the potency of their republicanism in comparison with that of Germany—before an audience (one must assume that not all the guests were American) of impressed, or more likely bemused, Imperial German subjects.

When he wrote that “[s]uch scenes had never been witnessed in the memory of the oldest Berlin inhabitants,” the *New York Times* correspondent was correct in two respects: first, in that these were Berlin’s earliest American election parties, made possible by modern technologies of transoceanic telegraphy; and second, in that this was the first outburst in Berlin of bourgeois enthusiasm for democracy since 1848.¹⁴⁸ The election parties advertised the Americans’ particular success with republicanism in a town that had not quite managed to keep its king at bay some half century prior. Indeed, the election parties were jingoistic spectacles that flaunted before Berliners the privileges and rights that the present German constitution precluded. Finally, the election parties might be read as an answer to the Prussian and Imperial displays of power and prestige in the

¹⁴⁷ “Vigil in Berlin for Election News,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1912.

¹⁴⁸ “Times Bulletins in Berlin” (op. cit.).

Reichshauptstadt. The election parties might even have been a challenge. At any rate, and ironically, the patriotism of foreigners found a home in the Kaiser's metropolis that was itself famous, or notorious, for its own spectacular celebrations of national and Imperial glory.

But the balance did not hold. With the onset of World War I, cosmopolitanism ceased to function as a cultural imperative in Berlin's grand hotels. In the late summer of 1914, outside forces upset the balance of inside forces—tipped it, even, away from cosmopolitanism and toward a nationalist retrenchment that left Americans and others feeling unwelcome and unable to engage, within this newly serious atmosphere, in Simmel's brand of perfect sociability. A fairly tight-knit form of elite sociability, as Simmel understood it, which had been woven into norms and traditions by 1914, came apart almost immediately, when the "worldview" (*Lebensanschauung*) of grand hotel society—that is, the institutionalized and commercialized practices of spectacular cosmopolitanism—disintegrated in face of a different complex of representations and imperatives: the imperatives of the fortress.

Conclusion

On Monday, August 3, 1914, the day that Germany declared war on France and the news of the first battles on the Russian-German border emerged, a spy fever descended on Berlin. The papers were instrumental in this development.¹⁴⁹ With little to print in the way of details, editors instead opted for bogus stories of espionage against the fatherland. The country had been infiltrated, they contended, primarily by Russians and their agents, on the hunt for information and for ways to sabotage the fledgling

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 76 and 83.

mobilization.¹⁵⁰ A widespread, uncoordinated yet officially sanctioned hunt for spies ensued. The spy fever could not have come at a more unfortunate moment for the Adlon's foreign guests. The next day, August 4, saw the conflict metastasize into a world war, when the British Empire intervened on behalf of Belgium.

Already, German armies had invaded that country and Luxembourg. Those and other borders turned into war zones. The rest were sealed. Ship berths sold out and travel by sea became perilous.¹⁵¹ But to stay put could be just as dangerous. Many foreign nationals—British, French, Russian, Belgian—lost consular representation in Germany and thus had to rely on the goodwill of other missions. Most travelers did not even have state-issued identification, to say nothing of passports.¹⁵² These conditions left thousands of hotel guests in Berlin at risk of being apprehended as suspected spies.

Their fears turned out to be justified on the night of 4/5 August, when a mob attacked the British embassy, and then descended on the Adlon next-door, where an emergency meeting of American and British tourists was taking place. United States Ambassador James Gerard was in the process of assuring British nationals that their interests would be represented by the U.S. embassy when three policemen, sabers drawn, entered the hall, seized a correspondent for the *New York Times*, Frederick William Wile, and dragged him into the lobby—as the ambassador raised his voice in protest. They took him into the main reception hall and out the front door, where members of an angry mob

¹⁵⁰ "Achtung, Spione!" *Kölnische Zeitung*, August 2, 1914, reprinted in Eberhard Buchner (ed.), *Kriegsdokumente: Der Weltkrieg 1914 in der Darstellung der zeitgenössischen Presse*, (Munich: Albert Langen, 1914), 1:83. See also Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85–87.

¹⁵¹ "Army of Refugees," *New York Times*, August 3, 1914; "Anxiety Endures," *New York Times*, August 5, 1914; "Homecomers Sing Gaily," *New York Times*, August 13, 1914.

¹⁵² "Homecomers Sing Gaily" (op. cit.).

beat him with fists and blunt objects before the police pushed him into a waiting car and whisked him away.¹⁵³ Some minutes later, a German woman appeared at the reception desk to ask for Wile. The management had her arrested.¹⁵⁴

Soon, the spy fever began to infect the Adlon's staff. Charles Tower, correspondent for the *Daily News* (London) was denounced by his chauffeur and arrested.¹⁵⁵ The following week, New Yorker John Davis was apprehended on the basis of a statement by a maid.¹⁵⁶ The porter, not the manager or a member of his staff, accompanied a police officer, his gun drawn, to Davis's room. The spying, the call to the police, the absence of management, the drawn gun—all point to a breach in hotel decorum and a disturbance of the hotel hierarchy. Adlon staff members, along with the management in most other cases, implicated themselves in a contest between a nativist mob and privileged tourists. During the war itself, the Adlon and other grand hotels would become increasingly pervious to outside demands, their hierarchies increasingly susceptible to internal instability.

Had these vulnerabilities been latent in the prewar arrangement, or were they purely a function of the mass hysteria that seems always to attend a major crisis? Huneker, in his 1913 critique of the capital, hinted at it, his discussion gesturing towards the instability of the balance between nationalist and cosmopolitan imperatives, on the one hand, and between the social groups allowed access to liberal subjectivity and those who were denied it, on the other hand. Specifically, he confessed to feeling “at times as if

¹⁵³ “Newspapermen Arrested,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1914. The police likely believed that Wile was English. For an account of the explosion of Anglophobia in 1914, see Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁴ “Tales of Arrest,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1914.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ “Americans out of Berlin,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1914.

I was sitting over a big boiler that is carrying too much steam. If an explosion ever comes it will be felt the world over.”¹⁵⁷ The next chapter concerns the undoing of the grand hotel scene, the foreclosure of the possibility of the practice of sociability, and the end of a relative golden age in grand hotel society—an age in which cosmopolitanism and nationalism coexisted in a delicate, ultimately doomed equipoise.

¹⁵⁷ Huneker, “Huneker Prowls around Kaiser’s Jubilee City” (op. cit.).

Chapter 3

The Grand Hotel in Wartime

The Great War hobbled Berlin's grand hotels. A close look at the complex downward trajectory of the development of the city's elite commercial hospitality sector from 1914 to 1918 reveals the particular mix of forces that undid the economic, social, and political dynamics that had defined the German Empire. This chapter argues that war's shortages and dislocations prefigured the peace more tellingly than defeat on the fields or the Treaty of Versailles.¹ Although the focus here is on the grand hotel scene, the conclusions might be applied to a more general argument for the centrality of wartime shortages and dislocations to the destruction of the German Second Empire.

The war had three direct effects on Berlin's grand hotel scene—effects that compromised the imperviousness of this quintessentially bourgeois institution to the social, political, and economic instability characteristic of the decades between 1870 and 1933. The first effect was a shortage of goods, labor, and services; the second, a decline in the quality of those goods and services still available; and the third, a resultant deterioration of capital as shortages drove prices out of reach. Next, these shortages led to the death of spectacular conspicuous consumption in hotels and, in turn, to the disruption

¹ Of course, the defeat itself was determined on the battlefield, where the last offensive failed in face of superior Allied forces. On this and the limited impact of the Treaty of Versailles, see Sally Marks, "Mistakes and Myths: The Allies, Germany, and the Versailles Treaty, 1918–1921," *Journal of Modern History* 85 (2013), 632–659. On the significance of the homefront to the nature of the peace, see Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914–1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 275; Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 4ff; Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 5–7ff; Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berg, 2002), 130–131; Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 498.

of intra-staff and staff-guest hierarchies—the buttresses of bourgeois privilege and power, as Chapter 1 demonstrated. At the same time, hotels fell subject to state interference throughout and after the war, as well as to political violence at the war’s beginning and end.

The arrival of violence and state interference in hotel life reflected a new vulnerability to outside forces: violence reflected the hotels’ exposure to social unrest as well as endemic challenges to the hierarchies underpinning class privilege and power in Imperial Germany, while state intervention in hotel operations reflected hotels’ new susceptibility to outside interference as well as the increasing power and presence of the state in a time of total and civil war. Ultimately, the grand hotel failed to maintain the underpinnings of bourgeois power and privilege in pre-war Berlin—that is, the practice of conspicuous consumption on the one hand and rigid social hierarchy on the other.

Shortages

What so transformed the hotel industry were not only the shortages and closures as such but also the state’s slow, fitful takeover of the German economy. On August 4, 1914, the Reichstag passed an enabling act that transferred its remaining powers to the Bundesrat, an unelected delegation that would promulgate several hundred decrees by the end of the war.² At the same time, the Prussian Law of Siege wrested executive power from civil authorities and placed it in the hands of one deputy commanding general for each of the 24 military districts of the Empire.³ Four days later, on August 8, 1914, the war ministry established the Department of War Raw Materials (Kriegsrohstoffabteilung),

² Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 9–10.

³ *Ibid.*, 9; Volker Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 42.

which was supposed to coordinate the efforts of producers and manufacturers of the Reich but had very limited success in doing so. Hoteliers had to contend with the decrees of the Department of War Raw Materials as well as the ordinances and regulations handed down from the military, via the police presidium of Berlin (Polizeipräsidium zu Berlin).⁴ Individually and collectively, hotel owners tried to negotiate with their civil and military overlords. The main avenues open to them, however, were through the police, who rarely heard their protests sympathetically, and the magistrate and city council (Magistrat, Stadtverordnetenversammlung), who had very limited real power vis-à-vis the military-backed police bureaucracy.⁵

Starting on February 22, 1915, hotels were obliged to enforce a two-kilogram-per-week bread ration. Upon returning to their rooms the night before enforcement, guests would have seen a card pasted over the headboard of the bed which read:

The BREAD CARDS instituted by the authorities are to be found for each of our honored guests and good for ONE DAY ONLY at the Bread Card Desk in the lobby, to be obtained daily. The honored guests are reminded that from Feb. 22 bread may only be given at meals on presentation of this official bread card. We therefore beg guests always to keep this BREAD CARD by them and to give it back on paying bill [sic] on day of departure.⁶

⁴ Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, "Feeding the Cities," in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919*, ed. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 312; and in the same volume, Jean-Louis Robert, "Paris, London, Berlin on the Eve of War," 39 and 41–43.

⁵ On complaints to the authorities, see Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 238.

⁶ "Berlin Cheerful on Bread Ration," *New York Times*, February 23, 1915.

This notice was extraordinary. Behind the obsequious language of the hotelier was the portent of a sea change in hotel life. For the first time, consumption would be limited. By what factor, guests would find out the next morning. On the way to breakfast stood a man behind a table, the bread-card clerk. The Kaiserhof's clerk had a handlebar mustache and medals pinned to his chest—Wilhelmine patriotism personified.⁷ Guests lined up in front of him to have their names recorded in his ledger, whereupon they would receive from him a ration ticket that dispensed with the finer expressions of the previous night's notice: "Not transferable. Only good for Feb. 22, 1915. Not good unless bearing date. See back!" The reverse side contained information on what constituted bread under ration and what did not. The edges of the card were perforated and could be removed in pieces marked 25g each, adding up to the full ration for the day.⁸ This card, its presentation, and the regulations it signified and helped to enforce, represented a reversal of hotel dynamics. First, it admitted and responded to the reality of scarcity, a reality anathema to the culture of the grand hotel. Second, it required guests to wait in a line to speak to an official of the state, rather than the hotel, which both breached the hotel's defenses against outside interference and compelled guests to engage in a practice—queuing—that mirrored that of the rabble outside.⁹ Finally, and most radically, it positioned the hotel waiter, who would distribute the rations in exchange for coupons, as the gatekeeper between the guest

⁷ On the condescension of these officials, see Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, 465 and 482.

⁸ Cf., Herbert Swope, *Inside the German Empire in the Third Year of the War* (New York: Century, 1917), 118 and 163–170.

⁹ Belinda Davis, "Food Scarcity and the Female Consumer," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, eds. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 297–299. Cf., Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73–86.

and the objects of her demands. In other words, for the first time, a waiter could, would, and *did* say “No.”

Some four months later, in June 1915, came the decree against fixed-price menus, a mainstay of the hotel dining experience.¹⁰ (Indeed, none of the main dining rooms in Berlin’s grand hotels offered *à la carte* options at dinner; only two did so for lunch.) But the decree went further: it limited the number of dishes a patron could order. Where the fixed-price menu had guaranteed at least three courses, guests were permitted only one dish from the *à la carte* bill of fare. Hotel restaurateurs were also obliged to list the vegetable before the meat, to offer more boiled meat than roasted, fried, or braised meat, to reduce fat content, and to keep the serving of potatoes to a minimum. Ernst Barth, director of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, protested to the police against these measures, particularly the ban on fixed-price menus and the limit to one dish per guest, but to no avail.¹¹

Another four months later, in October 1915, a new regulation further disturbed the balance of relations between guests and staff: the meatless and fatless days had arrived. The restrictions were severe. On two days of the week, certain meats were banned from even appearing on the menu. On two other days of the week, the same went for certain kinds of fat. The fifth day forbade the sale of pork along the same lines, pork not considered a meat under the “meatless day” decree. On any day, however, guests could order organ meat, game, poultry, and fish, none of which fell under the category of

¹⁰ “Vereinsnachrichten: Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer,” *Das Hotel*, June 18, 1915.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

“meat.” Hoteliers and restaurateurs registered lower profits on the meatless days and weathered widespread patron confusion about the new definitions.¹²

A further difficulty stemmed from the unavailability of foreign goods and foodstuffs, particularly grain from Russia, exotic foods via Britain, fruits and vegetables from points south, and eggs, milk, butter, lard, and meat from neighboring countries and further afield. Replacements for such items that could be sourced locally were “extraordinarily” expensive and drove up costs significantly.¹³ Hotel restaurants circumvented some of the shortages and regulations by becoming creative with the menus. Game and fish proliferated on menus. *Déclassé* items came to guests in the form of sausage products and organ meat, also outside the meatless day ban. Overall, dishes were smaller and fewer. Whether with regard to the quantity or quality, deprivation was clear, if muted by comparison with the outside world.¹⁴ In the grand hotel, “you get your daily bread card [and] it gets you good bread,” wrote one *Times* correspondent. “It is a meatless day, the waiter tells you. For lunch there is sole and other fish, with plenty of potatoes, and dainty things in sauce.”¹⁵

The year 1916 marked a turning point, the year when the food and fuel situation deteriorated to the extent that hotels found few if any mitigating strategies. In February, the bread ration dropped by one-eighth. In March, the authorities limited the number of meat dishes hotels could offer on their *à la carte* menus to two; this applied to all five non-meatless days. In June, ration cards for meat arrived, and shortage and want became

¹² Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1915, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 76–92, 159–189.

¹⁵ “No Starvation in Germany,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1916; cf., Swope, *Inside the German Empire*, 162: “Germany is not starving, and she does not intend to starve Her food supplies are not varied and they are not abundant, but she has enough to provide for actual needs and still leave a margin of reserve.” (Swope left Germany before the effects of the “Turnip Winter” could be discerned.)

the defining feature of the hotel restaurant. The mix of regulations was exceedingly complex. Lamb, veal, beef, and pork were meat and could not be served on meatless days; a dish of lamb, veal, beef, or pork counted toward the limit of two meat dishes a hotel was allowed to offer on non-meatless days. Cold sausages and sandwich meats were not meat, not subject to rationing, not subject to meatless days, and did not count toward the limit of the two meat dishes a hotel was allowed to offer on non-meatless days. Poultry and game were now meat insofar as they were not allowed to be served on meatless days anymore. A poultry and game dish also counted as one of the two maximum meat dishes that could be served on one of the five non-meatless days. Yet, neither poultry nor game were rationed (i.e., you did not need to surrender a ration coupon at the point of purchase). Internal organs constituted another kind of quasi-meat. They were allowed on meatless days, they did *not* count toward the maximum of two meat dishes on *à la carte* bills of fare, and they *were* subject to rationing.¹⁶ The system did reflect, in its way, the real-life shortages of certain types and cuts of meat. Contemporaries found it nonsensical, however, and swollen with too many kinds of bans, guidelines, and limitations.

The *New York Times* correspondent for this period described for readers back home the experience of ordering under the new regime:

At the Berlin hotels and restaurants in many cases the gross raw weight of meat dishes is indicated on the bills of fare, in addition to the price, so that bargain hunters can convert their precious

¹⁶ "Simplified Menu Bewilders Berlin," *New York Times*, June 9, 1916.

coupons to the greatest advantage by choosing the heaviest courses offered.

With one meat coupon to last you all day and a limit of four a week, you face the prospect of eating meat only four times a week until you study the new ordinances carefully. They contain a little joker which opens brighter gastronomic prospects

Guests and waiters were putting their heads together today, trying to figure out which dishes did or did not require the production of meat cards.¹⁷

Although the tone of the piece is light, the humor serves as a comforting trivialization of the radical changes to daily life in Berlin's grand hotels since the implementation of the new rules of 1916. The reference to bargain hunters is tongue-in-cheek, to be sure, but in reality quite accurate. Where discussion of prices and cost had been always yielded to the assumption that whoever set foot in the grand hotel could afford the grand hotel, now penny and coupon pinching was the order of the day. Likewise, the appearance of the "little joker" both makes fun of and comments on the situation: the refinement and uprightness of the hotel dining room had given way to the below-board dealings of the gambling hall, obsessed by money, tricks, and greed. Further references, elsewhere in the article, to the whims of the Berlin magistrates, who "have fixed the meat ration" and determined what is "not meat within the meaning of the meat card ordinance," indicate the begrudging nod to arbitrary external authority whose representatives became a daily feature of the hotel experience. The observation of "guests and waiters putting their heads

¹⁷ "12 oz. Meat Week's Ration for Berliners," *New York Times*, June 7, 1916.

together” also touches on concepts of authority: the image, while humorous, is based in reality and depicts a hierarchy in trouble as early as 1916.

For the rest of the year, prices continued to rise. The cost of food, heat, textiles, and labor particularly burdened hoteliers.¹⁸ By November 1916, clothing would be rationed, too, putting a strain on the appearance of the staff. The shortages and rising prices meant that it now required a good deal of “effort” to come up with goods of even “limited quality.”¹⁹ Meat, fish, flour, potatoes, coffee, tea, chocolate, eggs, sugar, and beer were in extremely short supply. Block ice was harder to source. Moreover, shortages in materials for the office, for cleaning, and for cooking made day-to-day operations difficult. Widespread copper confiscations in 1916 left hotels with too few pots. Replacements were expensive.²⁰ Paper shortages led hotels to put all complimentary stationary away and to produce it only if asked by a guest.²¹

With rising costs of so many goods and materials, the authorities established Berlin’s first widespread board of price monitoring (Preisprüfungsstelle Gross-Berlin) to chart and even determine price movements, though to insufficient effect.²² At the end of the summer and carrying on through 1916, shortages—of milk and potatoes in particular—continued to drive prices up.²³ In September, the Department of Potato Distribution (Abteilung für Kartoffelversorgung) under the magistrate of Berlin announced that “owners of hotels, pubs, bars, restaurants, private lunch halls (Privat-Mittagstischen) and similar businesses who intend to store potatoes for the winter will be

¹⁸ Annual Report of the Berliner Hotelgesellschaft for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

¹⁹ Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

²⁰ Annual Report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 117

²³ Bonzon and Davis, “Feeding the Cities,” 321; Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 30–32, 50 and 162.

given the opportunity to buy their winter supplies, for the period November 20 to March 11, in advance,” provided the owner have the requisite storage capacity.²⁴ This system of sanctioned hoarding signaled an unequal distribution of resources that favored factory workers and the wealthy—those who ate in grand hotels and large restaurants and cafés or who took their lunch from a shop canteen—as well as the expectation that this winter would be a difficult one.²⁵

The potato crop for 1916/17 failed, and new shortages overwhelmed the war government’s ad hoc measures for transporting, rationing, and pricing foodstuffs and materials.²⁶ There would be so little food in the cold that the period became known as the Turnip Winter, on account of the Swedish roots that Germans and particularly Berliners had to eat in lieu of food fit for human consumption. (Swedish roots are largely indigestible without the accompaniment of fats, which were off the market by December 1916.) At the same time but starting as early as October, Berlin sustained a major coal shortage. In mid-December, the Bundesrat responded to the emergency by decreeing various coal-conservation measures. Public transportation would be reduced during the day and eliminated at night. Illuminated advertisements would stay dark. (It took hoteliers months to persuade the authorities to let them light their entrances, at least, for safety reasons during Berlin’s notoriously dark winter.)²⁷ Streetlight would be kept to a minimum, non-existent in most cases. The same went for shop window lights and the

²⁴ Draft of a notice sent by the Reichskartoffelversorgung department to hoteliers, as well as resulting correspondence, in LAB, A Rep. 013-01-08, Nr. 14.

²⁵ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 24–32; Bonzon and Davis, “Feeding the Cities,” 321–326 and 333–341; Armin Triebel, “Coal and the Metropolis,” in Winter and Robert, *Capital Cities at War*, 349–357; and in the same volume, Jonathan Manning, “Wages and Purchasing Power,” 257–260.

²⁶ On the authorities’ apparently abject failure to provision the capital with any degree of reliability, see Bonzon and Davis, “Feeding the Cities,” 339.

²⁷ Annual Report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

lights in the corridors and staircases of Berlin's apartment houses. The rising cost of transportation of goods, as well as the limited hours of daylight in which Berliners could purchase and market goods, applied still more upward pressure on prices.²⁸

A Silver Lining

The war had complicated effects on the grand hotels of Berlin. On the one hand, hotels benefitted from full occupancy after 1914. The concentration of war industries and administration on the capital, as well as the elimination of competition through government takeovers of hotel buildings, simultaneously increased demand and reduced supply. (The new war corporations needed office space, and hotel buildings, for their locations, size, and layout, were good for this purpose.) On the other hand, the exigencies of war made business as usual an impossibility. With overwhelming shortages of food, material, and labor, as well as increasing government intervention into the distribution and consumption of the stuff of everyday life, hotel staff were quite suddenly marshaled as gatekeepers between guests and the goods and services they demanded. Heretofore, staff and the luxury goods and services they had provided were the centerpiece of any successful hotel, and the hierarchical relationship between guest and staff, between the person who orders the thing and the person who delivers it, was enshrined in every practice and protocol of hotel life. The wartime reversal of this dynamic highlighted still more radical reversals: where there had been bounty, there was now shortage; where there had been luxury there was now austerity; where there had been a culture of service and privilege, there was now a culture of limits and rationing.

²⁸ Nonetheless, what historian Armin Triebel calls "the total breakdown of domestic coal supply" in Germany would not come for another year, in the winter of 1917/1918. See Triebel, "Coal and the Metropolis," 353.

But the changes arrived only incrementally. In the first months of war, the rising prices of wholesale foods and the efforts not to pass these costs to consumers occupied the attentions of chefs, restaurant managers, and corporate boards of directors. A dip in the number of guests limited hoteliers' ability to raise prices to cover mounting expenses. The general, industry-wide response was to hunker down for the duration by reducing liabilities and halting investment. Owners paid off loans, paid down mortgages, and canceled or postponed almost all renovations until "the arrival of normal conditions."²⁹

For September and October 1914, the grand hotels and high-end concessions in the city center largely succeeded in reducing risk and shielding guests from the unpleasantness of war. A certain Miss Clara Meyer of St Louis reported to the *New York Times* that "the Berlin cafes are doing business as usual despite the war" and that things "had not advanced in price."³⁰ November changed that picture. The word from another American guest at the Kaiserhof that month was that "social life appear[ed] to be at a standstill." Although the restaurants were still full, patrons abstained from prewar delicacies and expensive wines. And the hotels, accustomed to a flood of Americans for the Berlin social season, lost out this year: "I don't believe there is one American ... in the hotel Adlon, which was one of the most favored hostelrys for United States visitors in Berlin."³¹ On New Year's Eve, there were none of the customary "horns ... no bells ... , nor could any other noise-making contrivances be heard."³²

Despite this ominous beginning, 1915 appeared to promise a better year for the hotels, in part because of the return of the Americans. These, however, were not pleasure

²⁹ Annual Report of the Berliner Hotelgesellschaft for 1914, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

³⁰ "Wartime Scenes in German Cities," *New York Times*, September 29, 1914.

³¹ "Says Berlin Feels the Pinch of War," *New York Times*, November 28, 1914.

³² "Berlin Silent City on New Year's Eve," *New York Times*, January 2, 1915.

seekers and society mavens but rather businessmen and reporters. “Hotels again full,” reported the *Times*. “The palmrooms of the Kaiserhof and Adlon are crowded at 5 o’clock coffee and whiskey time.” As the year progressed, Americans arrived “in increasing numbers,” and they “gravitate[d] naturally to the American bar of the Adlon. About every other one is said to be ‘writing for the magazines.’”³³ Americans were not reliable in their attendance, however; by spring, they were “conspicuously not among those present.”³⁴ Military, diplomatic, and commercial attachés from the Central Powers formed the bulk of the hotel scene’s foreign company. There was a particularly “large number of Austrian officers whom you now [saw] about the Berlin hotels.”³⁵ Indeed, occupancy was way up by the spring of 1915, but that reality did not mitigate the mounting challenges facing hotelkeepers as the war progressed.

One challenge, of course, was shortages. A relatively quiet black market grew quite robust over the course of the Turnip Winter (1916/1917). Anything a hotel purchased “on the open market” was the exception to the rule, according to the business reports of the Aschinger’s Corporation, which owned the Fürstenhof and Palast.³⁶ Many other corporations would be prosecuted after the war for black marketeering.³⁷ From *New York Times* coverage of the delicacies, however limited, still on offer at the Adlon and Kaiserhof, it is clear that the government’s charges were well founded. There were “no painful shortages” in December 1916, according to a correspondent, even if saccharine

³³ “Berlin Nightlife under War Ban,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1915. See also Swope, *Inside the German Empire*, 167.

³⁴ “Berlin Calls Women to Tasks of Men,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1915.

³⁵ “Berlin Nightlife under War Ban (op. cit.).

³⁶ Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

³⁷ Report of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, January 13, 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 2; Heinrich Kreuzer, transcript, *Preispolitik im Hotelgewerbe: Vortrag gehalten auf der I. Hauptversammlung des Verbandes der Hotelbesitzervereine Deutschlands am 7. Dezember 1920 in Berlin*, undated but likely 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 893, f. 10.

crystals had replaced sugar cubes and skimmed milk had replaced cream, and prices were only “slightly higher” than in years past.³⁸ To pay the high costs of these items, largely unavailable by licit means, hotels moved money from funds budgeted for the regular purchase of new furniture, thus depleting the value of their inventories, and sold off the choicest bottles in their extensive wine stores.³⁹ These were short-term solutions with long-term consequences.

In their analyses, hoteliers imagined that their businesses were doing well. In reality, they were depleting inventories and capital reserves at a rate that would make the postwar period extremely difficult. In the short term, however, hotel managers saw full occupancy night after night, month after month, year after year, for the first time in their careers, and this in the face of traveler statistics that generally lagged behind 1913 numbers. What made this situation possible was the elimination of competition after so many hotels in the city center had closed shop and sold their buildings to the state or its agents.

Hotel owners consistently failed to account for the insidious costs of the conflict on the long-term health of the industry and its individual establishments. Managers who sold much of their wine stores at the latest, highest prices in order to generate revenue lost from dining concessions realized only after the war that they would never again be able to afford the bottles they had offloaded. Those who re-allocated cash from funds for new furniture to offset losses in food and drink sales, moreover, diminished the total assets of the corporation. And with the exception of the Palasthotel, which did have its

³⁸ “Germany Thriving, as Seen by Schurz,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1917; Swope, *Inside the German Empire*, 168.

³⁹ Annual Report of the Berliner Hotelgesellschaft for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

renovations finished during the war, all upgrade projects fell by the wayside, but managers failed to perceive the long-term costs their aging plants would incur. Finally, and most damagingly (if out of the control of managers and owners), was the personnel problem. The loss of armies of trained, experienced workers and white-collar employees represented the wanton destruction of capital of an irreplaceable sort. In the long term, Berlin's grand hotels were in trouble; short-term successes obscured that fact.

The End of Cosmopolitanism

Hotels owed their increased revenues, in large part, to the swell of foreign visitors to the capital after 1914, an effect of the concentration of the national economy on Berlin to an extent and with an intensity never before seen in German history. From 1915 to 1917, the number of visitors to the city grew by hundreds of thousands. A huge proportion of visitors reflected in these data, more than 90 percent, found accommodation in Berlin's hotels.⁴⁰ Guests came overwhelmingly from within the German Empire. In 1916, only 3 percent hailed from abroad. That figure dropped to two percent in 1917, when only 31,210 foreigners visited the city. The reason for the decline of 20,000-odd foreigners was a combination of tightened restrictions on travel, the state takeover of the economy, and the steady impoverishment of the Empire.⁴¹ It became more difficult to get into and out of Germany unmolested and with one's possessions intact.⁴² It became

⁴⁰ Annual report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer of 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

⁴¹ Report by the Polizeipräsidentium zu Berlin for the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, February 14, 1918 in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080

⁴² Swope, *Inside the German Empire*, 119–121; “Newspaper Men Arrested” (op. cit.); “Three Refugee Ships Arrive with More Tales of Hardship,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1914; “Americans Pack Trains to Paris,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1914; “Tourists’ Leaders Finding the Way,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1914; “Tells of Arrest as ‘English Spy,’” *New York Times*, August 9, 1914; “Many Send Word from War Zone,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1914; “American Girls Insulted,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1914; “Seized by Kaiser, Princes Escaped,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1914; “10,000 Refugees Still in Berlin,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1914; “How Germany Went to War,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1914; “Passenger Ships Immune,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1915; “How Germany Looks to George B.

harder to do business in Germany, as the state could and did reach into any deal an opportunist would try to make. These foreign businessmen had flourished in 1914 and 1915, but disappeared from hotels in the second half of the war.⁴³

These drawbacks did not stop foreigners from visiting the city altogether. Many came in official capacities as military, commercial, or diplomatic attachés. German and non-German reporters, business men, money carriers, and couriers helped fill the registers, too. Even German holiday makers and country elites, without access to foreign climes and uninterested in the largely empty spa resorts, came to Berlin in good numbers. They filled the spaces left by declining numbers of foreigners.

The period from 1916 to 1917 saw the most dramatic decrease in foreign visitors to the capital. Berlin had 2,625 fewer Austrian visitors in 1917 than in 1916, a reduction of 16 percent, on account of Austria's growing political and economic subordination to Germany. There were fewer opportunities for Austrians to make money in the capital and fewer instances in which Austrians were consulted by German decision-makers. The decrease in Dutch visitors was even more dramatic, down 53 percent in 1917. Swiss and Swedes stayed away at rates of 34 and 36 percent, respectively, of their 1916 levels. American visitors disappeared with the approach of their country's entry into the war. The year 1916 had 1,436 American registrations per year, an average of about 120 per month. About that many Americans arrived in Berlin in January 1917. In February, after the US Ambassador's departure and the attendant break in US-German formal diplomatic relations, that number fell to 87. (This figure itself was swelled by Americans arriving

McClellan," *New York Times*, September 20, 1915; "American Tells of Berlin Conditions," *New York Times*, February 9, 1917; Garet Garrett, "How Germans React to War," *New York Times*, January 26, 1916; "Many Americans to Stay in Germany," *New York Times*, February 9, 1917.

⁴³ Swope, *Inside the German Empire*, 78. The United States declared war on April 2, 1917.

from other parts of Germany, in a hurry to book passage out.) In March, 50 Americans came to the city (many also en route out of the country). April, the month that the United States declared war on the German Empire, 31 Americans turned up. May saw 11.⁴⁴ Even before the disappearance of Americans from Berlin's grand hotel scene—and Americans populated the grand hotels in disproportionate numbers—the *New York Times* correspondent noted that the Adlon was perceptibly “less cosmopolitan” than it had been in the first three years of the war.⁴⁵

The End of Conspicuous Consumption

Despite efforts, licit and otherwise, to mitigate the effects of the Turnip Winter (1916/17), life in hotels became considerably less comfortable than in the first half of the war. The lack of heat, light, and transportation removed the last opportunities for conspicuous consumption and bourgeois self-display in the capital—those opportunities on offer at the city's grand hotels. First, the shortage of coal limited heat and light in all the city's hotels.⁴⁶ With the near disappearance of motorized transportation and the scarcity of horses and other beasts of burden, those hotels farthest from the train stations lost considerable business; well-heeled guests chose second- and third-class establishments if a first-class railway hotel could not accommodate them rather than brave the windswept, pitch-black streets in search of a grand hotel in the urban interior.⁴⁷ The national rail network broke down, too. By April 1917, with the food crisis at its peak, railway planners found themselves unable to answer civilian needs for calories and coal. The result was another cut in the bread ration for Berliners—and that on top of the potato

⁴⁴ Annual Reports from the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1916 and 1917; A Rep 001-02, Nr. 2080.

⁴⁵ “Many Americans to Stay in Germany” (op. cit.).

⁴⁶ Annual Report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

ration of January 1917, which had limited effect since there were no potatoes to buy anyway.⁴⁸

A fresh lot of challenges to practices of conspicuous consumption bore down on the hotels in spring 1917, when the Hindenburg Program, which put Germany and Berlin on a total war footing, went into full effect.⁴⁹ What was effectively a dictatorship of the army high command, with Hindenburg and Ludendorff at the helm of state, enjoyed popularity among the general public, who hoped it would streamline and coordinate efforts to provision the populace.⁵⁰ The effects were rather more mixed than had been hoped, however. The Program called for the requisition of most of the horses in private service. Thus, in addition to having no fuel for motor trucks and vans, hoteliers lost their last remaining mode of provisioning and had to contend with steeply rising delivery costs and the inefficiencies of a system that relied on a skeleton crew of starving beasts.⁵¹ To save coal, Hindenburg leveled further restrictions on grand hotels by declaring that all restaurants and cafes would close at the hour the trams stopped running—11:30 p.m. This eliminated the late-night service that hotel guests had come to expect from restaurants and grill rooms; now a guest arriving at the hotel after 11:30 and desirous of a meal would have to take it in his room.⁵² Further regulations gummed up the works in the cellars. Bones, for example, had to be separated from the remaining gristle, boxed, labeled, and sent to the magistrate. The Reichsbekleidungsstelle (War Corporation for

⁴⁸ Jay Winter, *The Experience of World War I* (Oxford: Equinox, 1988), 15.

⁴⁹ On the Hindenburg Program and the advent of total war in Germany, see Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914–1918*, trans. Barbara Weinbrger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

⁵⁰ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 114-115; cf. Robert Asprey, *The German High Command at War: Hindenburg and Ludendorff Conduct World War I* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 320-321.

⁵¹ Annual Report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

⁵² Annual Report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

Clothing) took hotel use of textiles in hand and severely limited access to new linens in particular. Bedsheets frayed and blankets went threadbare. Paper also came under tight control. Having barely enough for bills and bookkeeping, reception clerks began to charge for stationary.⁵³ All these difficulties caused the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer to recommend price increases and to distribute placards to member hoteliers with the words, “In accordance with the decision of the association, a cost-of-living supplement of 10% of the room price will be added to hotel bills.” The brusque tone of this communication presents a clear break from the obsequiousness of the notice regarding the introduction of bread rationing two years prior. The rarified, hyper-polite culture of the grand hotel had been slowly, surely chipped away over the course of the war to reveal a set of relationships around a business model that was hardly surviving the ordeal intact.

The last year of the war, November 1917 to November 1918, was an unmitigated disaster for Berlin’s hotel scene, even as properties maintained full occupancy throughout. Increasing hardships as a result of shortage, regulation, and government interference; skyrocketing prices; steadily falling revenues; and mass closures of hotels as they were purchased by the state and war corporations for use as offices of an engorged bureaucratic corps—each of these factors helped dismantle the pre-war grand hotel. To make matters worse, the winter of 1917-18 saw a complete breakdown in the coal supply. The coke and hard coal that most hotels needed to fire their furnaces fell to one-third of their required levels.⁵⁴ Although supplies of these two types of coal reappeared at the end of January 1918, the shortage of brown coal briquettes, required to heat most of the city’s

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Triebel, “Coal and the Metropolis,” 354.

residential buildings, persisted.⁵⁵ The result was coal hoarding, a crisis of confidence, and widespread unrest. Half a million workers went on strike in January 1918, bringing to a head what was perhaps the greatest difficulty to visit wartime Berlin and its grand hotels: the shortage of labor.

The Hierarchy

Salaries and wages of hotel employees and workers generally increased during the war, though not always with respect to purchasing power.⁵⁶ The salaries of hotel managers and upper management staff rose the most and did so throughout the war, largely to reflect wartime inflation.⁵⁷ Hans Lohnert, the chief financial officer of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, made a spirited, yet typical request for a raise in 1917: "In light of the considerable increase in my activities ... , of the unusual growth of my responsibilities on account of myriad laws and regulations, and of annual profits having far exceeded those of all past years, I am ... requesting an augmentation of my income by way of [a bonus] corresponding to gross annual profits."⁵⁸ Although Lohnert was correct—profits had indeed risen—he had not accounted for the need, under these conditions, to divert profits away from salaries and dividends wherever possible. In the first place, these profits, in real terms, were paltry, and given wartime inflation as well as the uncertainty of the future, there was good reason to invest profits immediately in aging

⁵⁵ John Lawrence, "The Transition to War in 1914," in Winter and Robert, *Capital Cities at War*, 155.

⁵⁶ In many sectors, and especially in 1914 and 1915, real wages fell. By many measures, however, aggregate real wages increased in the second half of the war. See Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 26.

⁵⁷ Inflation was most marked in the last year and a half of the war. On its wide-ranging and long-reaching effects, see Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 33.

⁵⁸ Hans Lohnert to the board of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, letter of May 2, 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 396.

plants and furniture, as many hoteliers already understood.⁵⁹ Yet for Lohnert and men in his position, the war was an opportunity to argue for bonuses.⁶⁰ They were often successful. Indeed, it became almost standard during and particularly after the war for a portion of a hotel manager's pay to be tied to annual profits. In his new contract of February 10, 1918, Ewald Kretschmar, director of the Bristol, was promised a salary-plus-one-percent package, even though the new regimen would not apply until after the outbreak of peace between France and Germany—a clause also worked into many contracts.⁶¹ The request for higher wages, however, was not entirely opportunistic; with so many of their clerks, bookkeepers, and secretaries called up, hotel managers were doing more work for lower real wages.

Although none of the managers of Berlin's grand hotels served in the field, many of their white-collar subordinates did. Their absence proved a major difficulty. The mobilization of bookkeepers in particular made for hazy accounting.⁶² With the onset of conscription, still more white-collar employees of catchment age left for the front. Women replaced a small number of these men, but usually in back office roles.⁶³ The

⁵⁹ "Notstandsmaßnahmen für die deutsche Hotelindustrie," *Das Hotel*, December 31, 1915;

"Notstandsmaßnahmen für die deutsche Hotelindustrie," *Das Hotel*, April 13, 1917. Cf., "Die neuesten Vorschläge zur Umwandlung unseres Wirtschaftslebens," *Das Hotel*, January 31, 1919.

⁶⁰ On the uneven effects of wartime economic dislocations, see Matthias Blum, "War, Food, Rationing, and Socioeconomic Equality in Germany during the First World War," *Economic History Review* 66 (2013), 1065.

⁶¹ Contract between Ewald Kretschmar and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, February 10, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 987.

⁶² Centralhotel management to the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, letter of June 10, 1915, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 1.

⁶³ Verein Berliner Hotel Besitzer, employment figures for 1911-1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080. It does not appear as if very many women replaced men in Berlin's luxury hospitality industry. The phenomenon was uneven and perhaps less momentous than has previously been assumed. See Hagemann and Schüler-Springorum, *Home/Front*, 3; Berthe Kundrus, in the same volume, "Gender Wars: The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic," 159–179; and Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), who shows that the lasting change to the gendered division of labor (outside the household) had less to do with the numbers of women working but rather with the sectors in which women were to be found.

Kaiserhof presented an exception, however, in the form of female reception clerks.⁶⁴ Among hotel managers, the replacement of men with women was an act of desperation: the consensus among employers was that a trained man was always preferable to a woman, trained or not.⁶⁵ In practice, moreover, hoteliers tended to opt for the untrained man over the trained woman. For those male white-collar workers who retained civilian status and their jobs, salaries rose. Salaries did not keep pace with the rising cost of living, however, nor did they reflect the extra hours that understaffed managers demanded. What is more, these white collar workers, who, unlike much of the hotel staff, lived off-site and had to contend with the attendant deprivations of that reality, fell through the net of wartime relief directives. To make matters worse, these men of the petty bourgeoisie were least inclined to take handouts from the state. They went home to communities, some to wives, some to families, feeling cold, hungry, frightened, and proud.⁶⁶

Hotel workers sustained equally severe, if different, wartime dislocations. The increasing attractiveness of high-paying munitions-factory jobs lured some from positions of service, but it appears that Berlin's hotels, before the conscription of workers into the war industries, lost a relatively small proportion of workers to munitions work. The harshness of hotel working conditions and the punishing hours aside, hotel workers had the advantage of upward mobility, however limited and slow. Their present hardships could pay off later on, when a floor servant might be promoted to assistant waiter, an assistant waiter to waiter, a waiter to senior waiter, a senior waiter to head waiter, a head

⁶⁴ "Berlin Calls Women to Tasks of Men" (op. cit.).

⁶⁵ Verein Berliner Hotel Besitzer, employment figures for 1911-1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

⁶⁶ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 78-86.

waiter—in extremely rare cases—to a restaurant manager with an income to rival that of the hotel manager himself. In other words, leaving a job in hotel service, for some, had a high opportunity cost and looked like cashing in for the short term while cheating oneself out of long-term rewards.

When workers left, they did so largely to go to war, to the front, where many of them died. In 1916, the Fürstenhof, for example, lost forever three waiters, three servants, one elevator boy, one machine operator, one phone operator, and one window cleaner.⁶⁷ The deaths of so many workers, many of them trained, and the army requisition of many more ensured that finding workers would become by 1915 “the most difficult task so far.”⁶⁸ The business reports of all the major hotel corporations cite labor shortages as their greatest difficulty, above even food and fuel shortages and government regulations. Shortages of labor were also exceedingly difficult to conceal from guests: “This mustering-out process,” wrote a *New York Times* correspondent of the disappearance of workers from a Berlin hotel in mid-1915, “has been speeded up to such an extent that for the first time you can observe here and there a slight strain on the complicated machinery of modern life.”⁶⁹

Heavy conscription of workers placed insupportable pressure on the operations of a hotel. Many of those who were still civilians could not expect to remain as such for long.⁷⁰ The *Times* correspondent noted in June 1915 that “familiar faces have been disappearing with increased frequency. The elevator boy at your hotel grins hopefully and

⁶⁷ Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635. According to Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 5, the number of men who served for Germany between August 1914 and July 1918 was 13,123,011, or 19.7 percent of the population.

⁶⁸ Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1915, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

⁶⁹ “Berlin Calls Women to Tasks of Men” (op. cit.).

⁷⁰ On the “gloomy prospects” of conscription, see Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 8

announces that this is his last night on duty. He has been ‘eingezogen’ or pulled into the army.”⁷¹ The conscription age fell to 18 the following November.⁷² The result was the loss of many elevator boys, servants, and floor waiters. Then in December 1916, with the passage of the Auxiliary Service Law, boys and men ages 16 to 60 became susceptible to compulsory labor service in one of the war industries. Experienced porters, sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds, now disappeared in disquieting numbers. With its huge catchment range, the Auxiliary Service Law ensured that the bulk of the staff of a grand hotel stood to be conveyed either to the front or to the munitions factory.⁷³

As workers vanished, hoteliers scrambled to replace them. Many of the new workers were inexperienced and foreign; “equally [capable] replacements were not possible,” according to the employers at the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft.⁷⁴ The *Times* correspondent described in detail his dealings with new staff at the Adlon:

The casualties are particularly heavy among well-trained waiters, who put up with the gastronomic idiosyncrasies of Americans. Their places are taken by frailer, less efficient men whom you have to train all over again. The German barber who insists on making you look like a barbarian—he disappears, too; and the winds of war have blown you some good at last, for the 17-year-old youngster who takes his place—apparently a graduate of a correspondence school in haircutting—is at least willing to try and take instructions from you as to how they treat you on Broadway. And so

⁷¹ “Berlin Calls Women to Tasks of Men” (op. cit.).

⁷² As the war went on, the median age of soldiers slipped in either direction from 25, both toward older men and teenaged boys. See Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 8.

⁷³ The Auxiliary Service Law of 4 December 1916 did not apply to women. On the paradox of the Auxiliary Service Law—that “the only way to supply the soldiers at the front was to call them back to Germany,” see Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 14.

⁷⁴ Annual Report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1917, in LAB: A Rep 225, Nr. 635.

they go—these old familiar faces of Berlin; life becomes a series of good-bys [sic] to men and money. Everybody you ever tipped is either “eingezogen” [called up] or expects to be shortly.⁷⁵

The disappearance of experienced workers placed strains on interactions between staff and guests. When familiar waiters left service, the loss of such longstanding relationships, cemented through the practice of tipping, were felt by customers as the loss of the fruits of a long-term project. For the *Times* correspondent, it was as if the war had robbed him of the return on his investment: the pleasure of being waited upon by a man whom you had trained to respond satisfactorily to your requests. Instead, you had a “frail,” “old,” or “young” *ersatz*-servant, as yet unnourished by your remunerations and untrained, sufficiently malleable in the case of the young ones, but nonetheless wanting.

Yet, even as Berlin approached and attained full employment and as the standards of living decreased, there was little agitation from hotel workers for higher pay or better working conditions; the business reports, which usually consider these appeals, are silent on the subject. Outside, however, labor relations deteriorated spectacularly. By the implementation of the Hindenburg Program in 1917, 300,000 more workers were drafted into munitions production in order to meet the industry’s goal for this next phase of the conflict: total war. The Auxiliary Service Law had already given the government, led by the military, a free hand to coerce labor into posts in the armaments industry. The resultant pressure on the non-war-related labor market revealed itself in short order to the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, which had to raise premiums to cover the costs of its employee-placing service now that so few workers were applying.⁷⁶ By spring 1917, on

⁷⁵ “Berlin Calls Women to Tasks of Men.” (op. cit.).

⁷⁶ Annual Report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

the heels of the Turnip Winter, mass strikes claimed 200,000 workers in Berlin; the following January, when coal briquettes ran out, 500,000 would leave their posts.⁷⁷ And these disturbances were rehearsals for what would be massive, uncontained, and revolutionary strikes in November that would help bring down the regime.

That these events in the capital failed to register with hoteliers until after the war is remarkable. One set of explanations is that their workers had it relatively good. They enjoyed enough to eat on the job, some heat in their quarters, and steadily rising wages. Moreover, service workers fell outside the preoccupations of the major labor movements and socialist organizations. Finally, and most importantly, the proportion of workers of foreign extraction grew dramatically over the course of the war.⁷⁸ As early as spring 1915, the Association of Berlin Hotel Owners began placing job ads in Swiss papers.⁷⁹ A staff divided by nationality—as well as by levels of experience, skill, gender, and age—would not organize easily, especially not under the autarky that Germany was fast becoming. The composition of the hotel staff being polyglot and diverse, far more so than the munitions shop floor, a common standpoint among workers was difficult to find.⁸⁰

Combining Forces

Where workers declined to organize, their employers jumped at the chance. In the constant search for profitable ways out of wartime predicaments, success depended

⁷⁷ On strikes in 1917 and later, see Karl Führer et al., eds., *Revolution und Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland, 1918–1920* (Essen: Klartext, 2013); Hagemann and Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front*, 7; and Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 41.

⁷⁸ I have found no evidence of Berlin's grand hotels using forced labor, even though upwards of 500,000 Poles were under the German yoke by the end of the war, according to Jochen Oltmer, *Migration und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). The foreign workers of Berlin's grand hotels were recruited either from neutral or allied countries and were paid for their services.

⁷⁹ "Vereinsnachrichten: Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer," *Das Hotel*, May 21, 1915.

⁸⁰ Cf., Hedda Adlon, *Das Hotel Adlon: Das Berliner Hotel, in dem die große Welt zu Gast war* (Munich: Deutsch, 1998), 70.

increasingly on agreements among competitors. The Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer provided the forum and frameworks. A creation of the prewar period, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer continued to bring hoteliers together to work towards mitigating industry-wide problems, setting some prices, promoting limited regulation, standardizing policies, procuring materials, and finding staff for members. But before the war, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer had been the purview mostly of the owners of the city's mid-sized hotels; grander establishments such as the Adlon tended to opt out. The war changed that. Now, virtually all of the city's mid-sized and grand hotels laid hold of stakes in the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer and turned the association into a quasi-cartel: an association of hoteliers that kept prices high and stable and passed resolutions to restrict the tools with which members could compete for business. (Without antitrust laws, the state normally saw the development of cartels as harmless or even favorable.⁸¹) State and municipal bureaucrats communicated with all hoteliers through notices to the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, and the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer bundled the collective grievances and concerns of all hoteliers and brought them to the government as resolutions of the Association. Through its leader, Ernst Barth, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer also engaged in formal and informal negotiations with the police, the magistrate, and—by extension—the military command for the Berlin region. To accomplish all of this, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer began to meet monthly rather than yearly in 1917 and assumed more and more authority over its members.⁸²

⁸¹ William Henderson, *The Industrial Revolution on the Continent: Germany, France, Russia, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Routledge, 1961), 60.

⁸² Meeting minutes of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, February 2, 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr, 2080.

By 1916, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer roster included representatives from all the city's grand hotels. In 1914, the directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft joined the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer. By 1916, grand hotel directors Paul Ortmann (Bellevue), Oscar Crémer (Esplanade), G. Ott (Eden), and Ewald Kretschmar (Adlon) swelled the ranks.⁸³ Their participation ensured a united front vis-à-vis the authorities as well as the possibility of benefitting from and influencing collective negotiations and decision-making. In other words, even the big hotels needed help and saw in the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer the opportunity to get that help while continuing to lead the industry.

With far more capital, inventory, and access to economies of scale than their middling counterparts, grand hotels were nonetheless equally subject to the avalanche of regulations and ordinances that the Bundesrat, the magistrate, and the police heaped on the economic life of Berlin and the hospitality industry in particular. These hurt revenues dramatically. In the course of the war, authorities placed legal limits on “celebrations”: the timing, outlay, and magnitude of these events would now be prescribed by rules and susceptible to official scrutiny.⁸⁴ The authorities curtailed nightlife. They forcibly reduced public transport and banned many kinds of advertisements. These measures—in addition to the ordinances and regulations around food, materials, fuel, and labor—caused the board of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft to recognize that “the practical transfer of the private economy to the state economy” by way of “the pileup of laws and directives” had made it “impossible” to do business as usual.⁸⁵

⁸³ Annual report of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Annual Report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft of 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

The Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer tended to fail in efforts to have these policies reversed or modified. Where Barth, its leader, did succeed, however, was in the case of decrees that excessively inconvenienced guests. He managed to persuade the police to postpone the implementation of a proposed requirement to have foreigners go to the police station to register in person rather than fill out the customary police registration card with the hotel reception clerk. The police even dropped the proposed requirement that guests, foreign and domestic, go to offsite offices of the Bread Commission (Brotkommission) to obtain their daily ration cards. But with the arrival and progress of the dictatorship of the high command in 1916 and 1917, Barth's room for maneuver shrank considerably. Most appeals in 1917 and 1918 simply went "unheard," according to Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer records.⁸⁶ By 1918, Barth felt that almost every decision of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer had to be discussed with, and ultimately approved by, the police. He wrote them in September of that year to ask for permission to increase room prices. The police let him know that in this case the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer did not need official permission. Barth asked for that statement in writing.⁸⁷

The Disappearing Hotels

By the end of January 1918, Berlin had lost 21 of its larger hotels to government bureaucracy and war corporations. The latter were responsible for managing many of the challenges around production and logistics that the war had wrought. As these corporations proliferated, so too did government bureaucracy. The 21 hotels together counted a yearly average of 164,615 registrations since the outbreak of war, a more than

⁸⁶ Meeting minutes of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, February 2, 1917, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080. Letters between Ernst Barth and the Polizeipräsidium, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1594.

⁸⁷ Ernst Barth to the Poizei-Präsidium, Abteilung Gasthofspolizei, letter of September 13, 1918, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 1594.

ten-percent share of Berlin's total annual registrations. Losses coalesced along Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstraße, around the Reichstag and the Friedrichstraße station. This was the heart of the city, the heart of the hotel industry, and the heart of the Imperial and Prussian governments. It was also where a disproportionate number of grand and luxury hotels did business. Moreover, the larger the property, the more attractive it was to officials in search of office blocks. Thus grand hotels were particularly susceptible to offers from government buyers.⁸⁸

This situation troubled the city council. On February 13, 1918, an officer for the magistrate wrote to the Polizeipräsidium to ask for data. "The disappearance of a large number of hotels in Berlin, caused by the rental of space for various war corporations, fills us with concern," the magistrate's officer wrote, "about how to cover the need for accommodation for the flood of visitors (*Fremdensturm*), sure to arrive with the end of the war."⁸⁹ This worry reflected two preoccupations: first, the long-term effects of war on Berlin's economic health and tax base, and second, the nature of the peace and whether the city was even prepared for an end to hostilities.

Police Headquarters replied with a detailed list of hotel closures. The first to succumb, in 1915, were the Royal and the Minerva. The Royal had been in business since the 1850s and was Berlin's oldest luxury hotel, sumptuous but somewhat lacking in modern conveniences. Its closure might have occurred without the advent of war. For its part, the Minerva was small, with only 30 rooms, and did not excite comment when it disappeared. These two hotels, the only two to be purchased in 1915 for use by war

⁸⁸ Many hotels that continued to operate nonetheless let series of rooms to war corporations for use as offices, further reducing the number of beds available to guests.

⁸⁹ Magistrate to Polizeipräsidium, letter of February 13, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080, f. 10.

corporations, contained a combined 90 rooms and expected an average of 31 registrations a day. The loss was easy for the market to sustain.

The following year, 1916, was worse, when war corporations and other government bureaucracies took seven hotels out of commission and reduced the capacity for registrations by an average of 170 per day, 62,050 per year. This reduction coincided with a sharp increase in annual visits to the city for 1916. Five large and mid-sized hotels: the Windsor, National, Prinz Albrecht, Saxonia, and Ermitage closed their doors. The remaining closures were two of the city's grand hotels, the Monopol and the Grand Hotel Bellevue & Tiergarten, both of them less fashionable than their peers but still recognized by Baedeker's and other guidebooks as first-class properties.⁹⁰ The Monopol and Bellevue & Tiergarten counted between them 370 rooms and an average of 134 registrations a day. The loss of the Bellevue-Tiergarten put considerable pressure on other hotels near the Potsdam and Anhalt stations, particularly the Fürstenhof, Eplanade, and Palast, which saw full occupancy for the rest of the war.

In 1917, eleven hotels sold themselves to the state or war corporations, wresting by the end of the year several hundred rooms from the market. The Kleiner Kaiserhof, Hospiz (Budapester Str.), Reichstag, Terminus, Carlton, Kurfürstenhof, von Heukulum, Wiesbadener Hof, Brandenburg, Victoria, and Lindenhof were now closed to custom. The last was a grand hotel at Unter den Linden 17–18 with 120 rooms and nearly 15,000 registrations a year. The loss of the Lindenhof and the others resulted in a reduced capacity for registrations of nearly 85,000 per annum.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Author's calculation, based on data in a report by Polizeipräsidium of February 22, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080, f. 29.

⁹¹ Ibid. One more hotel, the Altstädter Hof, would close in February 1918; that brought the count down to 21.

These closures and the resulting pressure on the hospitality industry to accommodate the city's visitors finally came to the attention of the magistrate and city council in February of 1918, when the news broke that the Empire would purchase the Kaiserhof, Berlin's first grand hotel and among its two most famous. The Kaiserhof would be the largest property to close in this way. Its fame, its location, its size, and its revenues gave councilors pause. They met on February 14, 1918, to debate the question of whether to petition the Reichstag to cancel its deal. The debate put into the starkest of terms what was at stake: the maintenance of Berlin as a world city.

Councilor Ullstein was the first to speak. He described the financial implications of the closure as the loss of "a quite considerable sum in income taxes," but the issue went beyond concern about revenues. The shortage of hotel rooms had created a situation in which "in order to find accommodation, foreigners have to go from door to door until finally [reaching] a far outlying area, far from the center of the activity of the city. And then how is it going to be when the war is over?" Unlike most of the government's new offices, Ullstein contended, visitors actually needed to be in the city center. Moreover, the maintenance of Berlin as a "world city" (*Weltstadt*) depended on the availability of suitable lodging for foreigners. By extension, Ullstein suggested, the maintenance of the German Empire as a world power depended on the maintenance of its capital as a world city. This contention echoed prewar calls for the concentration of German national life on the capital. What had changed was the role of the state, now an impediment to, rather than facilitator of, Berlin's rise.⁹²

⁹² Meeting minutes of the Stadtverordnetenversammlung of February 14, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080, f. 11.

Next to speak was Councilor Franz, who agreed with Ullstein on all points. Furthermore, Franz emphasized the exceptionality of the Kaiserhof. Its site was ideal for a hotel. The neighborhood had in large part grown up around the hotel and ensured the health of its business; the underground station had been built to serve it and bore its name. The location on both the Ziethenplatz and the Wilhelmplatz—sites of the chancellery and various embassies—made the hotel popular with statesmen. To the other side lay the intersection of the Leipziger Straße and the Friedrichstraße, the epicenter of a zone rich with shopping, dining, and entertainment venues. At such a site as this, the Kaiserhof served an important function for the “public” (*Publikum*), whose space this clearly was. An economic ministry, with which the Reichstag planned to occupy the Kaiserhof, would have no “relationship with the public” and thus no business in this location. The Kaiserhof was indeed so well positioned, so large, and so important to the public and the needs of the city, so in keeping with the tenor of the quarter and the desires of its consumers, that its “disappearance” would “frustrate and hinder” (*erschweren und behindern*) tourism for the whole city.⁹³

At this point in the proceedings, a naysayer rose to speak. Councilor Dove positioned himself against any kind of intervention in what he saw as a private transaction between the Imperial government and a private company. He also doubted that asking the Reichstag to cancel the deal would result in the sympathy of its delegates. They might simply tell the commune to build its own hotels or, barring that, “establish a caravan colony at [its] own expense.” And the Reichstag would be right, Dove asserted. This drew loud protests from the house. Over the din, Dove tried to explain himself

⁹³ Ibid.

further: “[W]here the government departments are to be appropriately accommodated is not something that is to be decided here For the communal interest of the city of Berlin...is in itself not an interest of the Empire.” This refutation of Ullstein’s contention that what was good for Berlin was good for Germany met with more protest from the other councilors. The jeers betrayed a lack of consensus not only on the issue of the Kaiserhof, but on the role and nature of the state itself and how the state related to the Berliners it governed. Dove continued:

I cannot see how [our] interest [in space for travelers] is such a general one that we could expect legislation at the Imperial level to fall into line with it. As far as I am concerned, it is more in the interests of our city and its reputation *not* to take this course Unfortunately, the capital does not enjoy the greatest popularity. It can be said against us (rightly, in my opinion), “You are demanding here that your will and your special communal interests take precedence over those of the generality.”⁹⁴

The Reichstag, Dove suggested, represented the interests of the majority resident outside the capital, and that was as it should be, given the small share of the German electorate that Berlin was able to claim. Yet Dove went further, suggesting that Berlin’s communal government would do better to keep its grievances to itself than to petition a body of unsympathetic provincial delegates.

Councilor Ladwig assumed the podium to rebut his colleague. He argued that the Kaiserhof issue was not simply a local one. The Kaiserhof had been integral to the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

triumphs of German history. Bismarck had gone there regularly and praised it, diplomats made homes out of the rooms, and the edifice anchored one of the most important streets in national life, the Wilhelmstraße. “A hotel such as this,” Ladwig exclaimed, “should not so easily be allowed to disappear from the streetscape (*Strassenbilde*) of Berlin I am of the opinion that herein too lies the interest of the Empire.”⁹⁵

Finally, Councilor Mommsen concluded debate with a summary of the arguments for petitioning the Reichstag and in so doing raised a view of the nature of the Empire alternative to Dove’s. The city had a right, Mommsen said, to make sure its visitors be accommodated properly. Since total war had made the construction of new grand hotels an impossibility, the state should abstain from taking over those which already served an important purpose for the maintenance of the capital. Mommsen also asserted the right to demand that the Reichstag not buy certain private properties if the transfer was not in the interests of Berliners, in whose city those properties stood.⁹⁶ To Berliners like Mommsen and others, the needs of the city proved more pressing than the needs of the state—a state, even, in the final throes of total war.

Mommsen’s views, as well as those of Ladwig, Franz, and Ullstein, evinced the sea change in understandings of the role of the state vis-à-vis its subjects that Belinda Davis has located among working-class Berliners.⁹⁷ The state was not only responsible for mustering soldiers, but also for provisioning the populace. In this case, the argument went, the state should keep the doors of the Kaiserhof open for the good of all Berliners. The council voted and resolved to “impede” the process by which “the Hotel Kaiserhof

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, 238.

would be stripped of its extremely vital function” as Berlin’s keystone grand hotel.⁹⁸ The resolution produced a petition from the magistrate to the Reichstag, which ultimately dropped its bid.⁹⁹

The Kaiserhof issue had brought forth a spirited argument not only about the prosecution of total war at home, but about the nature of the peace after the firing stopped. The council’s ideas for how this postwar world would look were indeed nebulous and dissonant. They assumed a return to prewar modes of life while also acknowledging that nothing could ever be the same. After the war, “a hotel such as the Kaiserhof, in the center of Berlin, cannot in all probability be replaced,” Mommsen declared to cheers of “quite right!” from the councilors.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the councilors operated under the assumption that the immediate postwar period would bring some measure of normality back to the capital. They were mistaken.

Conclusion

The scarcity of food and materials, rationing and government decrees, and acute labor shortages presented great challenges to hoteliers. Rationing and government regulations around all matters of commercial life meant increased interference from the authorities. Enforcement was left up to hotel staff, however. This role effectively upended relations between staff and guests. Then, the disappearance of skilled, experienced workers and employees further disrupted relations not only between staff and guests but also among staff, the management, and the corporations that owned most of the city’s

⁹⁸ Meeting minutes of the Stadtverordnetenversammlung of February 14, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080, f. 11.

⁹⁹ Decision of the Stadtverordnetenversammlung, February 14, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080, f. 10; Magistrate to the Reichstag, petition of February 16, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080, f. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Meeting minutes of the Stadtverordnetenversammlung of February 14, 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 001–02, Nr. 2080, f. 11.

grand hotels. Owners' and managers' business strategies, which included cartelization, black marketeering, and the sale of precious inventories, were short-term solutions that compromised the viability of the businesses in the long run. While at present the managers could enjoy the elimination of competition after waves of hotel closures, they failed to see that this situation would not outlast the war and that its effects were actually detrimental to the health of the industry as a whole.

In war and defeat, the grand hotel scene became a microcosm of suffering. Shortages, arbitrary government decrees, loss of property, financial insecurity, the breakdown in social relations, and political violence characterize the period, though few individuals or institutions experienced all these phenomena. Grand hotels such as the Kaiserhof, the Eden, and the Adlon did. They are uncommonly good vantage points from which to view Germany's, and Berlin's, painful transformation from empire to republic, and they illuminate the everyday dimensions of phenomena most frequently treated separately. The story is specific to grand hotels in Berlin but provides answers to the general questions of how and why German social, economic, and political life entered the 1920s in utter disarray. Incrementally, outside forces attached to the war and its aftermath had corroded hotels' defenses against outside disturbances and had thus undermined their staff-management hierarchies, their capacity for luxury and service, their command of a labor force, their independence from state intervention, and their independence from one another. This steady breakdown of grand hotels' defenses continued until, by the end of the war, the hotels' cultures of cosmopolitanism, luxury commercial hospitality, and spectacular conspicuous consumption had fallen away.

Chapter 4

Hoteliers Against the Republic

An onslaught of disasters overwhelmed hoteliers' efforts to resume normal activities after World War I. There were threats from the left in the form of the revolution, the Spartakist revolt, and strikes, as well as threats from the right in the form of vandalism, looting, violence, and an unsuccessful coup d'état. Then there were threats that originated neither on the right nor on the left: material and labor shortages, high crime, inflation, and hyperinflation. For these economic, social, and political dislocations, many hoteliers blamed foreigners, workers, labor organizers, and the Republic itself—the scapegoats of the anti-Republican right. But in resorting to illiberal, anti-Republican tropes, Berlin's hoteliers compromised, and then broke, their commitment to the reinstatement of the liberal culture on which grand hotel society had depended. And except for the few members belonging to the pro-Republican German Democratic Party—most of them Jewish or of Jewish descent—the hotels' corporate boards of directors buried their prewar affiliations with the National Liberal Party and embraced a language and politics of extreme conservatism and even right radicalism. This chapter uncovers the progression from quotidian struggles to such political decisions, shedding light on how and why a group of German businessmen gave up on the Republic a full ten years before the right managed to dismantle it.

A Litany of Disasters

Upon the emperor's flight and the dissolution of his government in November 1918, SPD leader Friedrich Ebert assumed control even as Scheidemann, on his own,

proclaimed a Republic from the balcony of the Reichstag. The next day, November 10, Ebert agreed to exclude the far left wing of his party from government in exchange for the support of the army under Wilhelm Groener. The Ebert-Groener Pact helped prompt the foundation of the left-radical German Communist Party (KPD) on New Year's Day 1919. Within days, the Spartakist Revolt broke out, as communists took to the streets to fight against Groener's pro-government troops, the Freikorps. On January 6, the Kaiserhof hotel fell into the hands of the Freikorps, who used it as a headquarters, impromptu jail, and fortress from which to fire on the Spartakists outside. Although the Kaiserhof would stay in the hands of pro-government troops until the end of the month, the death of the Spartakist Revolt came on the fifteenth when army officers arrested its leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and conveyed them to the Eden Hotel to be murdered.

The Revolution and Spartakist Revolt marked the introduction into the grand hotels of extreme political violence. Many grand hotels became sites of the frustrated transition from war to peace—a transition that can more accurately be described as one from foreign war to civil war. The Adlon, Kaiserhof, and Eden, in particular, offer vantages from which to observe the development of animosities that prefigured the insupportable social and political tensions of Weimar.

Revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence spread to the Adlon, the Eden, and the Kaiserhof—violence that presaged the social and political animosities between rich and poor, the old politics and the new, of the Weimar period. The violence also demonstrated grand hotels' heightened level of vulnerability, now not only with respect to shortages, financial difficulties, and government interference but also with respect to all-

out political violence. This vulnerability persisted. More than a year later, violence erupted again at the Adlon. Where, before the war, hotels had often succeeded in keeping inside and outside worlds separate, now hotels reflected the full range of tensions, hatreds, and dangers in the German capital and the grand hotels.

While plundering and violence happened across the Reich, particularly in big cities, the damage was most prevalent in Berlin.¹ On account of its location, the Adlon waded through some of the most trying moments. On November 9, 1918, bullets shattered the windows of its most luxurious corner suite, the one facing the Brandenburg Gate and Unter den Linden. Later that day, revolutionary troops searched the building, proclaimed the republic, and had that proclamation repeated by everyone present.² Then, in early January, a battlefield formed at the Adlon's front door, with pro-government *Freikorps* exchanging fire with Spartakist revolutionaries. The façade sustained damage, and bullets and explosives shattered many of the windows.³

Meanwhile, down the Wilhelmstraße, the Kaiserhof descended into a nightmare of violence, vandalism, and atrocity. On January 6, 1919, Freikorps troops entered the building, ejected the management, and commandeered the premises. From the windows, men fired on the Spartakists, and as many as 1200 soldiers enjoyed the run of the house. They flooded parts of the building and damaged virtually all of the flooring, most of the walls, and many of the ceilings. They broke windows, wrecked textiles and furniture, clogged toilets, bidets, and baths, and swung from chandeliers in the public rooms.

¹ On the effect of this violence on Berlin's hotel industry: "Ersatzansprüche für Revolutionsschäden," *Das Hotel*, February 4, 1919. On the impact of the 1918 revolution on Berlin, see Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 52.

² Adlon, *Hotel Adlon*, 84–90.

³ "When Revolution Stalks Streets of Berlin," *New York Times*, January 19, 1919.

Perhaps the most expensive damage occurred in the hotel's restaurant, which registered 21,678 Marks of missing silver. Men smashed china and glasses, broke up tables, ate everything in the kitchens, and quaffed or absconded with thousands of bottles of wine. They hauled in prisoners, whom they mistreated, tortured, and sometimes murdered. When the Freikorps pulled out a month later, they took with them much of the rest of the Kaiserhof's property.⁴

The ground floor took months to reopen and still longer to be returned to its former shine. The rest of the hotel required years of work and hundreds of thousands of Marks. Most difficult to repair was the Kaiserhof's reputation. Its new association with all-out political violence—an association that replaced its connections to Imperial prestige and power—had to be undone with the help of an advertising campaign that cost 50,000 Marks. When the state, some three years later, reimbursed the Hotebetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for damages to the crown jewel of its properties, the sum was too little, too late. Such had the mark devalued by 1922 that compensation amounted only to a few thousand prewar marks, not enough even to repaint the façade.⁵ Most members of the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft never forgave the Republic.

In fact, hoteliers had as much reason to blame the right as the left, if not more so. Forces of the right such as the Freikorps and the Reichswehr did far more damage to the grand hotels than the Spartakists.⁶ The severity of the vandalism points to right-radical

⁴ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of January 30, 1919 and March 24, 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁵ Ibid., and meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of October 8, 1919; October 18, 1919; March 3, 1920; March 30, 1920; September 16, 1920; April 1, 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁶ The only other attack to come from the left was at the Hotel Bristol, where a group of workers from Neukölln hurled projectiles through the windows and tried to enter the building. See Kurt Wrobel, *Der Sieg der Arbeiter und Matrosen: Berliner Arbeiterveteranen berichten über ihren Kampf in der*

soldiers' violent resentment of Germans on the home front.⁷ This sentiment extended through the army ranks and officer corps. It was a defining feature of the spirit of the Freikorps and justified their brutalization of the home front in the months after the emperor's abdication in November 1918.⁸ To be sure, the actions of the Freikorps and Reichswehr at the Kaiserhof were uncoordinated and opportunistic rather than premeditated and self-consciously political, but the selection of the building as headquarters of the counterrevolution and the decision of the commanding officer to let his men display such disregard for the establishment's private property and symbolic prestige—these moves, unimaginable in the Imperial period, portended, and indeed reflected, the gulf between non-veterans and veterans, the old politics and the new.

And the new politics of the right were more violently anti-Semitic and misogynistic than before. Political cartoons often presented male soldiers in confrontation with foreign enemies unaware of the grotesque Jewesses approaching, knife drawn, from the rear. This was the quintessential political lie of the Weimar era: the proverbial stab in the back, perpetrated by Jews, women, and Socialists.⁹ In cartoons, the often aggressive

Novemberrevolution (Berlin: Bezirksleitung der SED Groß-Berlin, 1958), 30, which, although propagandistic in its arguments, is meticulous with respect to facts.

⁷ On soldiers' resentment, see Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 101–102.

⁸ On the composition of the Freikorps, not all of it veterans and not necessarily spontaneous in origins, see Peter Keller, "*Die Wehrmacht der Deutschen Republik ist die Reichswehr*": *Die deutsche Armee, 1918–1921* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014), 51; Hagemann and Schüler-Springorum, *Home/Front*, 15; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, "Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923," *Journal of Modern History* 83 (2011), 489–502. On the brutalization thesis, first elaborated by George Mosse but now questioned by Dirk Schumann and others, see Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Schumann, "Political Violence, Contested Public Space, and Reasserted Masculinity in Weimar Germany" in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Weimar Germany in the 1920s*, eds. Kathleen Canning et al. (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 236, who argues that political street violence, at least after 1921, was a ritualized contest over urban space. Yet I would insist that from the perspective of a middle-class Berliner, it must have been difficult to see the ceremonial attributes of these frightening turf wars.

⁹ See sources in George Vasick and Mark Sadler, eds., *The Stab-in-the-back Myth and the Fall of the Weimar Republic: A History in Documents and Visual Sources* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), especially chapter 8, on the Hindenburg testimony (1919); see also Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914–1933* (Düsseldorf:

postures of the backstabbing murderess showed a homefront turned upside-down, with women taking on male attributes in order to commit treason by butchering an unsuspecting German soldier, extinguishing his life force and, of course, his virility. (Note the angle of the Medusa's pike and the angle of the soldier's rifle in fig. 30.)



Figure 30. “An die Kurzsichtigen,” a cartoon by Werner Sahmann for *Kladderadatsch*, November 30, 1919. Hindenburg, at right, is giving a précis of his recent testimony on the causes of the defeat. “You’re looking for the truth?” he asks. “When it appears, you’ll wish it went to the devil!” A looser translation that captures a darker shade of meaning would be, “You’re looking for the truth? Well, when you find it, you’ll want to damn it to hell!” (Original: *Ihr sucht die Wahrheit? Wenn sie aber erscheint, wünscht ihr sie zu allen Teufeln!*”) Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Droste, 2003); and Marks, “Mistakes and Myths,” 635. Although the lie was most often expressed on the right, liberals and even socialists asserted the validity of “non-military explanations” (that is, *false* explanations) for the German defeat of 1918, according to Corey Ross, “Mass Politics and Techniques of Leadership: The Promise and Perils of Propaganda in Weimar Germany,” *German History* 24 (2006), 188.

For consumers of this propaganda, the archetypal backstabber was communist leader Rosa Luxemburg, detained and beaten at the Eden Hotel on January 14/15, 1919, and then transported, shot, and dispatched at the Landwehrkanal nearby.¹⁰

The Eden Hotel, where the first stages of the murders of Luxemburg and co-revolutionary Karl Liebknecht played out, had been requisitioned by the Army High Command for use as the Berlin headquarters of the Reichswehr. From there, army leaders coordinated battles throughout the city. Although the occupation of the Eden did not lead to damages anywhere near the magnitude of those at the Kaiserhof, it would be better remembered for its role in the ruthless suppression of the Spartakist uprising.

On the evening of January 14, soldiers arrested Liebknecht and brought him to the Eden for execution. He waited under guard in the hotel for the better part of the evening. Finally, a young officer came to take him to another three officers, who would escort him out a side door, in order to avoid the crowd of soldiers and officers in the lobby, and into a waiting car, which would convey him to his execution by shooting, in the Tiergarten.¹¹ The same night, soldiers arrested Luxemburg and took her to a guest room in the Eden.

She waited there until soldiers came to escort her out. They led her down the grand staircase and through the lobby, where an assembly of officers and soldiers were waiting. A hush fell over the crowd as Luxemburg and her captors neared the exit. Then, as she crossed the threshold, a soldier named Otto Runge cried something to the effect of “Jewish whore,” raised his rifle butt, and struck her on the head with it once, then again,

¹⁰ Adolf Hitler must have been an avid consumer of such cartoons. His speech on November 9, 1928, evokes the imagery of the “Hydra,” and connects it directly to Rosa Luxemburg: “Im Innern unseres Volkes sehen wir aber zum ersten Mal die Hydra des Verrats sich erheben. Es tauchen Namen auf, die den nationalen Widerstand zu sabotieren beginnen, der Name Liebknecht und der der Jüdin Rosa Luxemburg.” Full text in Bärbel Dusik, ed., *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen—Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, 4 vols. (Munich: Saur, 1994), 3:216–217.

¹¹ Statement of Hermann Wilhelm Souchon to the Berlin police, in LAB, A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 464, f. 45.

until he had drawn blood and she seemed to lose consciousness. Luxemburg's escorts then carried her to the back seat of a waiting van. They seated themselves to her left and right. Propped up in this way, Luxemburg began to regain consciousness. The butt of a gun was brought down on her head again as the van kicked into gear. Moments later, Oberleutnant Vogel, seated in front, turned to face Luxemburg and shot her at point-blank range. Yet she was still alive when they parked the van on the Liechtenstein Bridge and threw her over the railing into the Landwehrkanal.¹²

Unlike with Liebknecht, soldiers and officers had dragged Luxemburg through a crowd of armed men, as if the expectation, if not the hope, was that the mob would bring her to justice—she who had stabbed the army in the back with her pacifism, her feminism, her radicalism, and her un-German Jewishness. Thus the Eden was not only the site of political violence but also the site of the first antifeminist, anti-Semitic attack in a grand hotel in Berlin.¹³ The building itself both housed and facilitated this development: the existence of back hallways, great rooms, and multiple entrances of varying publicity allowed two very different murders to unfold, while guest rooms served as perfect holding cells for the evening's victims. A decade later, the Eden's advertising materials claimed that the hotel first opened in 1922, a full three years after the murders.¹⁴ Grisly scenes of revolutionary violence were public-relations liabilities, of course: they laid bare the vulnerability of hotels to the vicissitudes of German history—a

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Elżbieta Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life* (Boston: Beacon, 1986); on the hysterical demonization of Luxemburg in the revolutionary period of 1918–1919, see Paul Fröhlich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Ideas in Action*, trans. Joanna Hoornweg (London: Pluto, 1994), 190. There is also a gender dimension to the murders, happening as they did in the context of what historians have long called a crisis of masculinity. See Rowe, *Representing Berlin*, 3ff; Hagemann and Schüler-Springorum, *Home/Front*, 4.

¹⁴ Promotional book for the Eden Hotel, undated (1920s), 9–10, in LAB, Soz/420.

vulnerability all too familiar to hotel guests during World War I and after. That period had to be forgotten if hoteliers meant to turn profits in the 1920s.

However, visions of the future were grim. At the meeting of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft on January 30, 1919, one member stated the obvious: since the “outbreak of the Revolution,” business had dried up. In addition to the dangers of going out and traveling amid incipient civil war and widespread street fighting, Germans’ lower incomes made it “impossible” to keep up the “luxury services of former times.” Wilhelm Rüttnik, member of the board of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft and general manager of the Kaiserhof, offered a solution: to initiate an “alteration of the business,” a capacious idea that included the dissolution of the accommodation concession entirely. After some discussion, the directors opted for exploratory steps toward other sources of revenue, in this case in the form of a five-o’clock tea dance. “With amusements like these,” Rüttnik reasoned, “we might again find at least a modicum of profitability.”¹⁵ But six days later, the very day of the occupation of the Kaiserhof, the rest of Berlin’s hotels descended into chaos. Effective January 6, 1919, the city’s waiters were on strike.¹⁶

Leaders of the Verband der Gastwirtsgehilfen (Union of Hospitality and Gastronomy Workers) called for all the city’s waiters to walk out. The demands included the abolition of the practice of tipping as well as the institution of a weekly wage of 90 to

¹⁵ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of January 30, 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

¹⁶ On the tendency in postwar Germany toward confrontation rather than compromise, especially in comparison with France, see Petra Weber, *Gescheiterte Sozialpartnerschaft—Gefährdete Republik? Industrielle Beziehungen, Arbeitskämpfe und der Sozialstaat: Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich, 1918–1933/39* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010), especially 179–190. On workers’ demands and the increasingly fraught relationship between workers and non-workers after 1918, see Sean Dobson, *Authority and Upheaval in Leipzig, 1910–1920: The Story of a Relationship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 189–289.

130 Marks, the immediate implementation of an eight-hour workday, and a prohibition on firing a waiter without the express approval of the Verband.¹⁷ Reports of unruly crowds at restaurants across the city filled the papers. (The fashionable Café Keck fell to a mob that destroyed all its furniture and porcelain.)¹⁸ The Adlon's restaurant was one of the few to remain open during the strike. That fact brought 1500 waiters and their sympathizers to a demonstration in front of the hotel. Some of the crowd forced its way into the restaurant. As the dining room filled with demonstrators, patrons made for the exits.¹⁹ *Das Hotel*, the weekly trade publication for hoteliers in the German-speaking world, showed in its reports little sympathy for the waiters, who were supposed to have "thrashed" a delegate to the Entente Commission and to have "violently attacked" either Lorenz or Louis Adlon, the father-son owners of the hotel.²⁰ For their part, the Adlon's own waiters refused to take part in the strike. Of course, what the paper missed was the sense that these waiters, in agreeing to help keep the Adlon restaurant open, were also acting as strikebreakers.²¹

In increasing numbers, hoteliers responded to "this terror" by trying to move together against the strikers. Barth, still chairman of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer, told a reporter for *Das Hotel* that he believed it was the "duty" of all hotel owners to come together "in solidarity."²² With the strike well underway, Ernst Rachwalsky,

¹⁷ "Kellnerausstand in Berlin," *Das Hotel*, January 10, 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ One strategy for breaking strikes never quite got off the ground. It was to hire women, who were excluded from most waiters' unions. Robert Glücksmann, in a January 24, 1919, article for *Das Hotel* entitled "Der Kampf gegen die Kellnerin," reminded readers that in the South of Germany, it was perfectly normal to be waited on by women. There, "herrschte in den bürgerlichen Restaurants unbestritten die Cenzi, Kati oder Lisbeth." Not so in Berlin.

²² "Kellnerausstand in Berlin" (op. cit.).

managing director of the Interessenverband für deutsche Gastwirtsgewerbe (Interest Group for the German Hospitality and Gastronomy Trades), who represented the hoteliers and restaurateurs in negotiations with the Verband der Gastwirtsgehilfen, urged owners to close for the duration of the strike in order to produce infighting between waiters who wanted to return to work and waiters who did not.²³ Although the shuttering of restaurants and cafés large and small proceeded almost without exception, the strategy failed.²⁴ Hoteliers' balance sheets could not sustain the closures. On January 10 and 11, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer moved to notify hotel employees, by means of large placards, of the Verein's decision to abolish tipping for waiters and non-waitstaff, raise wages to make up the difference, and shift almost everyone to an eight-hour day. To cover the expense, restaurant prices would go up 20 percent.²⁵

Within a few days, the Verein der Gastwirtsgehilfen had gotten what it wanted. By January 15, 1919, the agreement would come into force at every hotel except the Eden and the Kaiserhof, which had been commandeered by military and paramilitary forces.²⁶ Ten weeks later, kitchen workers got their due. On March 26 and 27, 1919, in Frankfurt, the Verband der Hotelbesitzervereine Deutschlands and its member organizations, including the Verein Berliner Hotelbestizer, met with various service workers' unions to standardize wages for kitchen staff across the Reich. The talks succeeded. The

²³ Rachwalsky was also a founding member of the board of directors of the Admiralspalast Aktien-Gesellschaft, according to information on the Eden-Konzern in a report prepared for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft of April 23, 1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 911.

²⁴ "Kellnerausstand in Berlin" (op. cit.).

²⁵ "Beschlüsse des Vereins Berliner Hotelbesitzer," *Das Hotel*, January 24, 1919. The eight-hour working day became the law of the land for industrial workers on November 23, 1918, and for most other workers, including white-collar employees, on March 18, 1919. See Ben Fowkes, ed. and trans., *The German Left and the Weimar Republic: A Selection of Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21–22. On trade unions' efforts to get the eight-hour day to be enshrined in law, see Gerard Braunthal, *Socialist Labor and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1978), 255–256.

²⁶ E. Kiefer and H. Bieget, managing directors of the Hotelreuhandgenossenschaft, Cologne, "Nottarif im Berliner Hotel- und Gastwirtsgewerbe," *Das Hotel*, January 17, 1919.

standardization of wages ushered in what *Das Hotel* called “a new era for the German hotel industry.”²⁷

It was also a new era for labor relations, not one defined by consensus and compromise but by spectacular conflict.²⁸ Trouble came again, in May 1919, when, in response to demands from the Verband der Gastwirtsgehilfen, the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer offered a 20 percent raise for servants and maids. The Verband declined the offer and prepared to call a strike in the event that the hoteliers refused to increase wages an additional 15 to 20 percent.²⁹ Conflict between employers and workers also ensnared white-collar employees. The Hotelangestelltenverbände (Combined Associations of Hotel Employees), the umbrella organization for various associations of clerks, accountants, salesmen, procurers, and management staff, made its position clear on the pages of the *Deutsche Gastwirtezeitung*: the Hotelangestelltenverbände wanted nothing to do with what they and their employers called the “terror” tactics of hotel workers. The best thing to do was to have all white-collar employees join their own unions, which would use “Christian” principles to counter the godless bolshevism of the workers.³⁰

And now, by the second month of 1919, in the hotels as well as elsewhere, the preconditions for the collapse of Weimar society had already formed. There was a propertied class—the hoteliers—who established close associations among each other in

²⁷ “Der erste Reichstarif im deutschen Hotelgewerbe,” *Das Hotel*, April 4, 1919.

²⁸ Noah Strote, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 46ff.

²⁹ “Vereinsnachrichten: Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer” *Das Hotel*, May 18, 1919.

³⁰ “Hotelangestelltenverbände gegen den Terror,” *Das Hotel*, February 7, 1919. The announcement referred to the establishment of a “Christliche Gewerkschaft” (Christian Trade Union) for white-collar employees. On the position of Christian trade unions after the Stinnes–Legien Agreement (November 15, 1918), see William Patch, *Christian Trade Unions in the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933: The Failure of “Corporate Pluralism”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 36–37; on Christian unions’ popularity among white-collar workers, largely on account of the unions’ anti-socialism, see the same volume, 47–49.

order to control the price of labor. These associations would turn into cartels and other illiberal formations. There was also a working class, the leaders of which continued their assault on cartel capitalism. And finally, there was the petty bourgeoisie, the white-collar workers, who adopted radical language and a radical tone that took issue not with the machinations of their betters but with the efforts of their inferiors. Fearful of downward social mobility and unsure of how to respond to the political culture of the new Republic, these white-collar workers of the lower middle class turned increasingly to the splinter parties of the right.³¹

The confluence of right radicalism and reaction nearly overwhelmed the Republic in March 1920, when Wolfgang Kapp and Walther von Lüttwitz attempted a coup. On March 13, after the insurgents managed to occupy the Friedrichstadt, where the government and grand hotels were located, the ousted cabinet called a general strike. Workers across the city abandoned their posts in support of the Republic. By evening on March 15, the lights were out. Then the gas and water supply collapsed. Kapp's battalions stalked the streets in disarray, orders having failed to reach them from the central command since the phones and cables were dead. As an urban system, Berlin ceased to function, and four days into the strike, the coup foundered.³² The moment of its failure occasioned a massacre in front of the Adlon.

George Renwick, a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, was stationed at the Adlon on March 18, the day Kapp's army, in retreat, processed past the hotel to the Brandenburg Gate and out of town. "Huge crowds" gathered in front of the hotel in order

³¹ Ibid., 199–201.

³² The *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* was generous in its account, giving the putschists an extra day of rule: "Fünf Tage Kapp Regierung," March 28, 1920.

to witness the sorry parade. At 5:00 p.m., a group of onlookers “stormed the Adlon ... but were persuaded to leave.” The crowd passed back out the doors, turned left toward Pariser Platz—and into a hail of bullets fired by one of the battalions in retreat.

From a corner window of the hotel, Renwick saw the onset of a mass panic. Many of “the people ... thickly packed on both sides of the Pariserplatz [sic]” ran in all directions. Others fell to their faces, either to protect themselves from the bullets or as a result of being knocked to “the muddy ground.” Kapp’s troops began to shoot from all sides of the square: “suddenly volley after volley rang out,” remembered Leonard Spray, another American journalist on the scene. Artillery horses “took fright and bolted” with their loads, careering into the backs of fleeing civilians. “People were yelling everywhere” as they made way for side streets, doorways, and windows. Hundreds of people pushed their way into the editorial offices of the *Lokal-Anzeiger*, while “the hall of the Adlon Hotel was transformed until it looked like a hospital ward.” Several wounded were brought in and placed on divans to be attended by doctors and nurses, probably guests of the hotel who had volunteered their services. Two of the victims turned out already to be dead and were put on the floor.³³ Meanwhile, from his window upstairs, Renwick wondered at the quick return to order.

In the run-up to the Putsch, the Adlon was a bellwether of the revolt of the monarchists against the Republic and against the reinstatement of the prewar balance between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. More than a year after the Spartakist Revolt, Louis Adlon was attempting to operate the business as usual, despite persistent shortages and difficulties. The arrival of the Entente Commission boosted revenue, since many of

³³ George Renwick, “Junker Farewell a Berlin Tragedy, *New York Times*, March 20, 1920.

the highest-level delegates found accommodation at the Adlon, and, at the same time, the Adlon was also becoming the favorite spot for the losers of recent events—the royals, major and minor, and their aristocrat associates. Many of them resented the presence of these enemy visitors and sought insidious ways to show their displeasure. By early March 1920, the situation in the Adlon was explosive.

On the night of March 6, 1920, diners filled the main restaurant of the Adlon. Most of the guests were German, but a small party of French nationals—two Frenchman in town for the Commission and one of their wives—had been seated on the terrace, near the table of Prince Joachim of Prussia, a cousin of the deposed emperor. At the prince’s request that the conductor do so every night, the orchestra struck up the nationalist song “Deutschland über alles.” A soprano began an impromptu performance, and soon almost everyone in the room was standing. The French guests remained seated in “dignified” repose. As the music swelled, Prince Joachim cried to the French, “Get up!”³⁴ The crowd turned to face him, and he repeated his demand: “Get up!” Others began to shout the same—“*Aufstehen! Aufstehen!*”—until the music died away.

Seeing that the French meant to defy him, the prince hurled a saucer at their table. Members of the crowd began to follow suit: a wine bottle fell behind the chair of one Frenchman, a champagne flute into the seatback of the other. En masse and with “clenched fists,” men and women began to ascend the steps to the terrace to assail the foreigners. The headwaiter spirited the French woman out of the room as some of the mob reached their targets and began to deliver blows. One of the Frenchmen succeeded

³⁴ Joachim’s behavior recalled the cult of manliness that William McAleer has associated with dueling in fin-de-siècle Germany. The soprano functions here as the insulted party whose honor now must be defended. Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-siècle Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 159ff.

somewhat in defending himself, though he was hit many times; eventually, a waiter managed to drag him from the room to safety. The second victim was not so lucky. He was pulled out of his chair and thrown to the floor, whereupon people kicked him in the back and sides. Two men pulled him up and held him fast by the arms so that others could take turns delivering blows. Once he managed to free his arms to guard his abdomen, he began to receive punches to the face. He fell to the floor, and the process repeated. In addition, he had his hair pulled, his dinner jacket torn, his tie ripped, and his cigarette case and money stolen. Finally, an opening in the crowd emerged and the poor man fled to the exit. The three French reconvened in the safety of the directors' office, where Louis and Lorenz Adlon apologized profusely for what had happened.³⁵

Such a spectacular scene had never played out in a grand hotel in Berlin before and never would again. The image of this descent into barbarity and xenophobia in the finest public dining room in the country, occupied by over a hundred men and women in evening dress and jewels, was great fodder for the press. Louis Adlon himself referred to the event as a “scandal.” What had been like a second Berlin residence to the royal family in prewar years had become by 1920 a terrain they had to defend. The prince's ejection from the premises—he was arrested shortly after the attacks—mirrored his cousin's disgrace of sixteen months prior. It also meant that the Adlon would have to change

³⁵ I have pieced this story together from more than a dozen eye-witness accounts collected by the police as sworn testimony, in LAB, A Rep. 358–01, Nr. 2039. There were enough accounts from disinterested observers—particularly lower-ranking waiters and hapless diners—to suggest a chain of events. Of course, all of the royals or aristocrats interviewed denied vigorously the charge that the prince had had anything to do with the disturbance, but damning testimony from the prince's waiter and from several people seated nearby, as well as the testimony of the victims, points overwhelmingly to the prince's guilt. The state prosecutor eventually did charge him with incitement to violence and culpability in the crime of assault, for which he was ultimately fined 500 Marks.

gears, to welcome new sets of elites, if it meant to maintain its position as *primus inter pares* among the grand hotels of Berlin.

If there had been any doubt that grand hotels were no longer particularly safe places to be, especially for foreigners and cosmopolitans, or that they could no longer promise the rarefied atmosphere of the pre-war period, the events of March 6 dispelled it. Now more than a year past, the end of the war had not returned conditions to normal. The equipoise between cosmopolitan and nationalist imperatives had not returned, nor had the stability of social relations specific to the grand hotel hierarchy. On the contrary, conditions for grand hotels and social, economic, cultural, and political life in Berlin were more poisonous than they had been in generations. Where in 1918 it had been clear to the city councilors that the health of the city depended on the health of its hospitality industry, the reverse claim could also be made: the health of the hospitality industry depended on the health of the city.³⁶ Into the 1920s, new challenges to the maintenance of Berlin again figured grand hotels as sites of trouble, crucibles in which groups with irreconcilable differences contested one another's right to enter and enjoy, as well as to profit from and depend for a livelihood on, the city's economy of elite hospitality.

Disputes with "our more than 2000 employees," the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft reported in spring 1920, "have not settled down even for a second."³⁷ Since the end of the war, the board of Aschinger's had been using apocalyptic language to get its point across to shareholders that the workers needed, by whatever means, to be brought to heel. Rising wages threatened "to attain undreamed-of dimensions and will serve in the end to bury" the business, reads the annual report for 1918, penned in April

³⁶ See "The Disappearing Hotels" section, in Chapter 3.

³⁷ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

and May of 1919.³⁸ Wages for 1918 imposed a total cost of 3,273,578 Marks, while the sum of all dividends did not manage to exceed 120,000. The situation was “uncommonly favorable,” then, to the workers, Aschinger’s top brass reasoned. As yet uncommon in annual reports but soon to be one of their integral parts was the proposal of adjustments to Germany’s political economy. If the reduction of unemployment was the aim, then the state would have to freeze wages. That action would depend, of course, on workers accepting the freeze. Unlikely to do so, then, the workers had to be stopped from taking direct action. “Whether and to what extent we will be in a position, after the ratification of the peace treaty and the opening of the borders, to resume and expand our activities depends on the workers and employees (*Arbeitnehmer*) merely recognizing that their movement for higher wages must be kept within the bounds of what is bearable.”³⁹ In the final analysis, the board resigned itself to the status quo: there would be a shortage of workers, and wages would continue to rise. In late winter and spring of 1919, it appeared as if nothing good would emerge until “the state comes back to life.”⁴⁰ Two years, several strikes, and one putsch later, little if anything had improved. The total expenditure on payments to employees for the year 1920 topped 18 million Marks, up from 8.5 million in 1919 and 3.5 million in 1918.⁴¹ What the board did not recognize, or refused to recognize, was that inflation elsewhere and the rise in the cost of living, both underway since 1914, easily outstripped this increase in wages.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid. Wages, in line with all other costs, rose dramatically after the war.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1162.

⁴² Cf. Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, 30–35.

Recent agreements about wages started to fall apart in 1921, and not only because inflation threatened to undo the improvements. On May 25, 1921, the *Berliner Tageblatt* reported that both employers and waiters were in the process, however quietly, of rolling back the abolition of tips.⁴³ This illicit yet widespread practice resulted in another strike, called by the Berliner Gastwirtsgehilfen (Hospitality and Gastronomy Workers of Berlin) on October 1, 1921.⁴⁴ *Das Hotel* summed up the hoteliers' response most succinctly by accusing the union leaders of exhibiting a "flippancy without parallel." Were their "eyes closed" to the weakness of the industry and the paucity of its resources? Yes, it seemed: the strike was nothing more than the invitation to a "trial of strength," any victory in which, should the hoteliers and restaurateurs surrender, would be pyrrhic. No industry and therefore no jobs would be left.⁴⁵ Stalemate ensued, and the strike lasted weeks.

In some cases, to offer a tip was to stake a position against the workers' movement, socialism, and the Republic. In October 1921, Prince Joachim, allowed back into the Adlon after the fracas of the previous March, tried to force a waiter to accept a tip. Cyril Brown of the *New York Times* tested the waters, too, and met the same "adamant refusal."⁴⁶ Reports abounded of union saboteurs who punished strikebreaking by sneaking into hotels at night in order to hang threatening signs and steal or destroy property, food, and wine.⁴⁷ *Das Hotel* hoped that these actions would be a "wakeup call

⁴³ "Die Gesellschaft für soziale Reform und das Trinkgeldproblem," *Berliner Tageblatt*, May 25, 1921.

⁴⁴ "Die 'schlagenden' Argumente der streikenden Gastwirtsgehilfen," *Das Hotel*, October 14, 1921.

⁴⁵ "Gastwirtsgehilfenstreik in Berlin," *Das Hotel*, October 7, 1921.

⁴⁶ Cyril Brown, "Berlin Waiters, Striking for Higher Pay," *New York Times*, October 4, 1921. The Republic's judiciary, as well as other institutions, could be quite lenient when it came to prominent members of the old regime. See Anthony McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic: Authority and Authoritarianism, 1916–1936* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), especially chapters 5 ("The Authority of the Law: The Judiciary") and 7 ("Renegade Authority: The Junker Landrat").

⁴⁷ "Sabotage in Berlin's Hotels," *New York Times*, October 15, 1921.

to everybody”: such strikes could not go on unabated.⁴⁸ Yet the strike did go on. As a result, by the strike’s third week, it became almost impossible to find a hotel room in Berlin. And where one did happen to be available, the traveler sometimes had to contend with “strikers driving guests from the hotels, sometimes with violence.” The Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune* recounted breathlessly the experience of Mrs. William Shephard and Mrs. Pauline Fleischman who, after “a week in the Kaiserhof without food, light, or heat ... [,] were forced to flee from the hotel” and all the way to Paris.⁴⁹

Shortages were most severe at times of strike, but at no time before 1924 did the pressure on supplies abate entirely. Hoteliers had not expected the continuation of the blockade much past the armistice, yet as late as September 1919, managers reported a perilous shortage of coal. Meanwhile, business chafed under the state-imposed limits to the consumption of gas, electricity, and hot water.⁵⁰ Cooks went without adequate supplies of flour, butter, sugar, milk, meat, and potatoes into 1920 and in some cases beyond.⁵¹ Cream deliveries intermittent, guests often had to take their coffees black.⁵² Finally, in the course of 1920, boards of directors observed a turning point, when poultry, fish, game, meat, and potatoes came off rationing.⁵³

Throughout the difficult period, however, there persisted one shortage that turned out to be a major advantage. The shortage of apartments and hotel rooms, as a result of

⁴⁸ “Die ‘schlagenden’ Argumente der streikenden Gastwirtsgehilfen” (op. cit.).

⁴⁹ “Berlin Waiters’ Strike,” *Chicago Tribune*, Paris edition, October 20, 1921.

⁵⁰ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635; “Kohlennot und Polizeistunde,” *Das Hotel*, September 12, 1919.

⁵¹ Report of the managing directors to the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, January 13, 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 02; annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1162; annual Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

⁵² Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635.

⁵³ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1162.

the closure of so many hotels during the war and the arrival in Berlin of thousands of German nationals from territories lost after the war, ensured the survival and even profitability of many businesses. Most of Berlin's grand hotels weathered the material shortages by the gift of full occupancy well into the 1920s.⁵⁴

Shortages, political disorder, overcrowding, and economic and social dislocation created the conditions for which it was easy to commit crimes in grand hotels. The revolution and Spartakist revolt unleashed a crime wave that managed to permeate Berlin's grand hotels. The master criminal Wilhelm Blume, "one of the most refined and scrupulous murderers in the last decade," checked into the Adlon under the name Baron von Winterfeldt on New Year's Day 1919 and then robbed and strangled a money carrier there. He had also distributed leaflets to most of the city's banks warning of the Spartakists' plans to confiscate all assets by January 4, and hadn't depositors better take their money out of the banks and hide it at home (the better for Blume to steal it and dispatch the owners)?⁵⁵

The crime wave continued apace.⁵⁶ At the Grand Hotel Alexanderplatz on February 21, 1919, two men, dressed as a counterrevolutionary soldier and civilian, respectively, entered through the front door and announced themselves as agents of the

⁵⁴ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1918, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635; annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1919, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 635; annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1162; annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

⁵⁵ Interview transcripts for Richard Blackburn, chef de reception; Flocker, head waiter; Max Zingel, servant; Minna Leber, maid; and Hugo Neubauer, page, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1714; file summary in the Zentralkartei für Mordsachen, undated, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1712. Police found Blume in Dresden, where they arrested and interviewed him. Between arrest and transfer to jail, Blume managed to commit suicide, according to the information card at the front of his file in the Zentralkartei für Mordsachen (op. cit.).

⁵⁶ Although the murder rate "increased dramatically" in Germany after World War I, it was still low compared to the United States at the same time, according to Sace Elder, *Murder Scenes: Normality, Deviance, and Criminal Violence in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 21.

government in search of Spartakists on the run. Instead, they managed to rob a guest of 8,000 Marks. In the same week and at the same hotel, a civilian and an armed man in a Reichswehr uniform came on a mission to find a certain salesman, Zokolowski of Lodz, who was wanted, they said, on charges of trading chocolate on the black market. Management showed the soldier and civilian to Zokolowski's room, where the visitors seized one of his suitcases, containing 20,000 Marks, as evidence, and then, after a scuffle, shot and wounded Zokolowski. Although hotel employees managed to apprehend the counterfeit soldier, the civilian got away.⁵⁷ Later that year, in another hotel, a Viennese woman had a fur stole lifted from the wardrobe in her room. Across the Reich, in fact, all sorts of criminals attacked hotels and their guests. In May of 1919, the wine merchants J. Langenback & Sons, of Worms, gave notice to *Das Hotel* of a "female swindler" making the rounds at hotels and restaurants, posing as a saleswoman for the firm and taking money for goods that she said would be delivered at a later date.⁵⁸ In the face of staggering losses of their own and guests' property, hoteliers throughout Germany began to question the extent to which hotels were in fact responsible for customers' belongings.⁵⁹

As thefts continued, hoteliers began to renege on the promise to guests, made commonplace in the prewar period, that their property would be safeguarded. In the summer of 1922, Franz Kessels, the manager of the Fürstenhof, notified guests upon registration that the hotel no longer took any responsibility for items lost or stolen.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ "Die Schadenersatzfrage bei Plünderung und Raub in Hotels," *Das Hotel*, February 21, 1919.

⁵⁸ "Warnung!" *Das Hotel*, May 9, 1919.

⁵⁹ "Die Haftpflicht bei Raubanfällen in Hotels," *Das Hotel*, September 5, 1919.

⁶⁰ Registration card for a room at the Hotel Fürstenhof, undated but probably summer 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

Notices in the rooms were more elaborate. In German, English, and French, they explained to guests that “on account of present conditions, we are forced...to refuse all responsibility for personal effects.” For a fee, safes would be made available.

Furthermore, guests now had to carry a “room card to be shown upon request when asking for room keys” at reception.⁶¹ “*Inspectricen*,” one for each of the guest floors, were to keep watch over linens and other vulnerable items belonging to the hotel.⁶² Not only did the Fürstenhof and other hotels roll back their commitment to securing guests’ property, but they also stepped up their commitment to protect their own property, and their willingness to do so by spying on guests.

Surveillance indicated the deterioration of the relationship between hotel management and guests. At a 1922 meeting of the Kommission der Berliner Hotels (Berlin Hotels Commission), members decided to notify each other, by means of a circular letter, of guests who, in protest against high prices, had threatened to call the Wucheramt (Anti-Profiteering Office) or of those guests who “otherwise make difficulties for the hotelier and restaurateur.”⁶³ In restaurants, management called on head waiters to observe guests’ behavior and to take in hand anyone disgruntled enough to threaten the house with exposure to the authorities for any perceived infraction, usually having to do with pricing. When the exchange between head waiter and guest went sour, the restaurant manager had to be called. In December 1922, five “longtime guests” of the Fürstenhof complained to head manager Kessels that his managerial colleague in the

⁶¹ Notice to guests of the Hotel Fürstenhof, undated but probably summer of 1922, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁶² Kessels to Lohnert, letter of September 1, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁶³ Minutes from the confidential meeting of the Kommission der Berliner Hotels, Gruppe A und B, of November 7, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

restaurant, Müssigbrodt, had “bullied us” (*schikanieren*) and otherwise exhibited “improper behavior” (*ungebührendes Verhalten*), all on account of a breakfast bill.⁶⁴

And pricing was increasingly complicated. It became standard by 1922 to charge one price for Germans and another price for foreigners. As of October 18, 1922, a single room at the Fürstenhof would be 1000 Marks for Germans and 3000 Marks for foreigners.⁶⁵ A few days later, in order to mitigate the effects of rampant inflation and of competition among hoteliers, Berlin’s hoteliers met to standardize room prices among the city’s grand hotels and, for foreigners, peg those prices to the American dollar.⁶⁶ Now non-Germans would pay \$1 for a single room, a figure subject to change as the mark lost value. Germans were to pay only 1300 Marks, 25 percent of the foreigners’ price as of October 22, 1922.⁶⁷ Then, on November 7, the Berlin Hotels Commission met again, this time in secret, to circumvent the various regulations against industrial and commercial combination. They also began to doubt whether nationality was the best way to distinguish among guests. After a long discussion, the group eventually landed on ethnicity. Ethnic Germans still resident in ceded territories would enjoy the price for all other Germans (except Austrians, who, even if they were ethnically German, at first were to get half the foreign rate, but then lost the advantage in the last round of talks).⁶⁸ As

⁶⁴ Ferdinand Goldschmidt, G. Meyer, and three other guests of the Hotel Fürstenhof to the management of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, letter of December 15, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁶⁵ Price list of the Hotel Fürstenhof of October 9, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁶⁶ The meeting took place at the Hotel Bristol on the morning of October 22, 1922, according to the meeting minutes, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Meeting minutes of Berliner Hotels-Kommission, Gruppe A und B, of November 7, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174. The board had previously discussed charging ethnic Germans from Austria half the rate of German nationals but scrapped the proposal, possibly because of the inherent difficulty in parsing nationality among Viennese cosmopolitans. The issue of whether Austrians were indeed Germans was a hot one, since the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the absorption of Austria into a greater Germany, thereby dashing the hopes of *Großdeutsch* nationalists in both countries. See Erin Hochman, “Ein Volk, ein Reich, eine Republik: Großdeutsch Nationalism and Democratic Politics in the Weimar and First Austrian Republics,” *German History* 32 (2014), 29–52. In other cases, the hoteliers’ logic of ethnic

reported in the meeting minutes, the rest, “*without exception*,” would be charged the foreigners’ price on the dollar basis.

It was up to the chef de reception to explain the system when queried, but hoteliers tried to keep the price disparities hidden at the point of check-in. To keep the secret from restaurant patrons, however, was impossible. Although there were two separate menus, a table of mixed ethnicity would have to see both versions and to have the bills figured separately.⁶⁹ This practice put the head waiter in the uncomfortable position of asking to see passports before the cashier could compute the bill. Indeed, in addition to a competent manager, the head waiter now had to adjudicate cases of indeterminate or even suspect ethnicity and then execute the procedures of discrimination accordingly.⁷⁰

Relations between staff and management, on the one side, and guests, on the other, deteriorated further as a result of the hotel and apartment shortage. Increasingly, chefs de reception had to act as gatekeepers, explaining to guests time and again, and with increasing insistence, why no rooms could be made available today, tomorrow, or even at any near-future date. What had already been an acute shortage during the war only intensified after November 1918. By April the following year, *Das Hotel* was reporting that the “lack of housing” had reached the level of “a severe state of emergency” in the capital.⁷¹ “Thousands of people without apartments” were coming to

discrimination corresponded, roughly, to Weimar-era immigration policy as it moved toward a system of quotas. Neighboring countries of more Germanic stock received preferential treatment, and the regime was particularly vigilant about immigration of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. See Oltmer, *Migration und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (op. cit.).

⁶⁹ Minutes from the confidential meeting of the Kommission der Berliner Hotels, Gruppe A und B of November 7, 1922, which set foreigners’ prices for food and drink at twice the price for Germans, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Die Hotels und die Wohnungsnot,” *Das Hotel*, April 18, 1919.

the hotels for relief, and most houses, at full capacity, were turning them away.⁷² In October 1919, Ewald Kretschmar, as manager of the Bristol, beseeched city officials to recognize that the acute shortage of apartments had led to an equally acute shortage of hotel rooms. He was responding to government proposals to force the conversion of hotels into apartment houses.⁷³ The threat turned out to be real. As the magistrate moved to compel the sale of many of Berlin's small and medium-sized hotels, a group of hotel and restaurant staff held a protest against the disappearance of their places of work. The scene of the action, at the Lehrervereinshaus (Headquarters of the Teachers' Union) on April 29, 1921, descended into chaos and effectively stopped the magistrate from taking any further action.⁷⁴ Still, the specter of requisition remained present. In October 1921, a new law enabled the municipality of Vienna to requisition for use as apartments a full quarter of the city's hotel rooms.⁷⁵ The effect of deepening shortages of long- and short-term accommodation, in Vienna as well as Berlin, this situation led to steady inflation and a deterioration of the relationship between guest and hotelier as the latter began to yield to pressure that his house become as much a port of last resort as a luxury destination.

By spring 1922, hoteliers had learned to be creative when it came to accommodating more and more guests with fewer and fewer resources. Franz Kessels of the Fürstenhof decided to convert extra bathrooms to bedrooms, but finding funds for the furniture became difficult as prices continued to rise.⁷⁶ On September 1, 1922, he reported to his boss, Aschinger's chief officer Hans Lohnert, that the Fürstenhof was now

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Hotelnot," *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 4, 1919.

⁷⁴ "Protest," (editorial) *Das Hotel*, May 6, 1921.

⁷⁵ "Requisition von Hotels," *Neue Wiener Journal*, October 30, 1921.

⁷⁶ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of May 17, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

in the position of having to turn away even the most important and loyal guests. The bathroom conversions, as well as the use of six small single rooms as doubles, no longer sufficed. Kessels was now preparing to make doubles out of the rest of the singles, and that meant finding a good deal of extra blankets, sheets, pillows, and beds “of any kind,” such as chaises longues that could be made to lie flat. The task was not made easier by the fact that “*so much bedding has been stolen recently.*”⁷⁷ Part of the problem was that, as inflation and shortages mounted, Kessels and other managers no longer had the authorization to purchase any new items for their hotels. Instead, they had to write a corporate officer for permission. To buy as few as ten telephones, for example, Kessels had to send a formal letter to the managing directors of the parent company, Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft.⁷⁸

At the nexus of the shortages of goods, of space, and of currency, hotels attracted the sustained attention of the Wucheramt (Anti-Profiteering Office). In the popular imagination, too, hotels stood for the evils of hoarding and price gouging. *Das Hotel* reported in 1921 that a good number of “thoughtless newspaper readers” (*gedankenlose Zeitungleser*) believed sensationalist reports of “extortionate pricing” (*Wucherpreise*) in hotels and were being swayed by fiery opinion pieces that called for immediate “state intervention.”⁷⁹ One response among hoteliers was to argue that the recent spate of trials of profiteers (*Wuchergerichte*) amounted to a witch hunt that aimed simply to destroy the hotel industry once and for all.⁸⁰ Not only hotels but also individual hoteliers and restaurateurs came under investigation. According to *Das Hotel*, in May 1921, the owner

⁷⁷ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of September 1, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174, emphasis in the original.

⁷⁸ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of August 18, 1922, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁷⁹ “Die Preise der Hotels und die Öffentlichkeit,” *Das Hotel*, June 24, 1921.

⁸⁰ “Kampf der deutschen Hoteliers und Wirte gegen die Wuchergerichte,” *Das Hotel*, December 19, 1919.

of a restaurant in Frankfurt was called before the court for having charged 54 Marks for two portions of lobster mayonnaise, 50 Marks for two rump steaks, 8 Marks for two portions of fried potatoes, and 14 Marks for two servings of bread and butter. The court found the restaurateur guilty and sentenced him to three days in prison and a fine of 1500 Marks.⁸¹

Accusations of extortion often went hand-in-hand with accusations of black marketeering. On January 13, 1920, the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft met to discuss the urgent matter of “pending proceedings ... against hotels, and in particular against ours, for alleged offenses against the so-called ‘Decree on Illicit Trade.’”⁸² But without access to basic necessities, hoteliers wondered what to do. They were losing business to nearby pubs (*Kneipen*), which, as small gastronomy enterprises, were not under the same rationing regime as grand hotels, nor did they seem to attract the attention of the authorities. Where hotels “were forced” (*zwangsweise*) to offer coffee without milk, bread without wheat, tea without sugar, and pastries without butter, the pubs next door enjoyed the luxury and lure of the real thing.⁸³

From the hoteliers’ perspective, the reins began to unravel in their hands. Their annual reports after 1918 became increasingly dismal, and for three possible reasons: first, business really was as difficult as the reports contended; second, board members wanted shareholders to know that it was on account of such a difficult business environment that dividends would not come in, not on account of mismanagement; and

⁸¹ “Drei Tage Gefängnis und 1500 Mk. Geldstrafe,” *Das Hotel*, May 3, 1921.

⁸² Report of the managing directors the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, January 13, 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 2.

⁸³ “Das schiefe Gleis unserer Zwangswirtschaft,” *Das Hotel*, January 21, 1921, by a certain Herr Rechtsanwalt Dr. Brugsch.

third, the board had every reason to present to the state an account of conditions that might inspire officials to lay off hotels for a while.

Yet in this, “the total collapse of our economy,” as the managing directors chose to put it, boards found some advantages. One was in the opportunity to pay off prewar loans with postwar Marks.⁸⁴ The Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft announced in July 1919 that it would pay its 1911 obligations of 5,218,000 Marks in full, at a small fraction of their value, by October.⁸⁵ Other corporations tried for the first time to raise money by selling shares on the open market. The Esplanade Hotel Aktiengesellschaft did just that on May 16, 1919, and picked up a new majority shareholder who promised to save the hotel from insolvency.⁸⁶

But in 1920, as new liabilities mounted, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft and other corporations considered taking out mortgages on their properties.⁸⁷ Such measures worked in only a few cases. Typical was the predicament of the Kaiserhof in 1921, still in disrepair two years after the counterrevolutionaries had sacked it. Apparently saddled with a hopeless case and thus without access to credit, the Kaiserhof’s owners discussed raising money through the sale of shares in order to add two stories to the building and fill them with cheap guest rooms that might allow the business better to capitalize on being at full occupancy.⁸⁸ By 1922, any such plans went on hold. As prices for goods and

⁸⁴ “Kohlennot und Polizeistunde” (op. cit.).

⁸⁵ “Hotelberichte,” *Das Hotel*, July 25, 1919.

⁸⁶ “Hotelberichte,” *Das Hotel*, May 30, 1919.

⁸⁷ At Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, taxes alone exceeded profits in 1920 by a factor greater than five, according to the annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1062; and according to the meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft of September 16, 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046. Yet in this year of bad business for almost everyone in Germany, Aschinger’s did indeed turn a profit. In other words, taxes were not so high that the corporation could not pay its shareholders.

⁸⁸ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of April 1, 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

labor reached dizzying heights, boards began to apply all liquidity “to filling our stores at any moment.”⁸⁹ Still, some chairmen, such as Richard Weser at Aschinger’s, ventured cautious optimism. The reserves built up as a result of “conservative budgeting” in the years of full occupancy, he opined, might help businesses overcome most difficulties.⁹⁰ Weser was wrong. By the beginning of 1923, his and everyone else’s reserves were worthless.

Hyperinflation

In March of 1922, hotel bookkeepers started to register inflation by the day.⁹¹ “Extraordinary increases in operation costs” first occurred as a result of the fast rising expenditures on labor, laundry, and coal in the winter of 1921/22.⁹² By September 30, runaway gas prices were causing bills for cooked meals to mount.⁹³ As machinery and furniture wore out after almost a decade of underinvestment, the money was not there to repair them.⁹⁴ In the spring of 1922, for example, the cost of replacing the water tanks at the Kaiserhof was 670,000 Marks “and rising.”⁹⁵ (The final settlement for damages from the sacking of the hotel, received about the same time, came out to one-third that sum.)⁹⁶ When, later that year, the Entente Commission declared Germany to be in default on its reparations payments, the French occupied the Ruhr and the government printed money

⁸⁹ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of March 2, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of September 30, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁹⁴ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of April 27, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁹⁵ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of March 2, 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

in order to counter the effects of its policy of passive resistance, a concatenation of events that caused the mark to collapse, bringing down with it Berlin's hospitality industry.⁹⁷

Prices now achieved new heights of esotericism. Official price lists could not be reprinted fast enough. From February 1, 1923, on, the corporate directors of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft added to the frenzy by changing the menus without any advance warning.⁹⁸ On February 24, a representative of Elektrischer Ferndrucker G.m.b.H. (Electric Telegraph LLC), which leased the Fürstenhof its telegraph machines, announced the rate would go up several-fold.⁹⁹ Overnight, prices for coal would rise 160 percent; soap, 200 percent; and laundry, 350 percent.¹⁰⁰ In mid-March, taxes followed suit, now climbing "not only from month to month but from week to week—no, day to day, even."¹⁰¹ Profits withered and then disappeared.¹⁰²

In April, upward pressure on wages and salaries exploded. Managers threw money at staff and workers with abandon.¹⁰³ On April 14, 1923, the chairman of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, on behalf of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce, sent waiter Franz Haas the customary notice of congratulations on 25 years of service to the Central-Hotel. The "certificate of honor" came with no less than 50,000 Marks in cash,

⁹⁷ On the effects of this course of action, particularly on workers in the Ruhr, see Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis, 1923–1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 290. On the mismanagement of the crisis more generally, see Gerald Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 669ff; and Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, *The German Inflation, 1914–1923*, trans. Theo Balderston (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986).

⁹⁸ Beverages price list of February 1, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

⁹⁹ Elektrischer Ferndrucker GmbH to the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, letter of February 24, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰⁰ Price list sent from the Verband Groß-Berliner Wäsche-Verleihgesellschaften to Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft on February 27, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰¹ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

which would lose most of their value a few hours later.¹⁰⁴ In fact, in four days, 50,000 Marks would not have bought 5 napkins, now costing 12,000 Marks apiece.¹⁰⁵

The exorbitance of the napkins converged with an avalanche of other micro-crises to overwhelm hotel managers and their corporate bosses. Several of Kessels's letters to Lohnert, a managing director of the Fürstenhof's parent company, from the week of January 15, 1923, survive, and all of them point to chaos at the hotel. On January 16, Kessels pleaded with Lohnert to find funds to fix the flagpole over the main entrance, the droop of which had reached a breaking point.¹⁰⁶ Two days later, Kessels importuned Lohnert for money to fix the roof of the kitchen, which leaked buckets every day, and to hire an exterminator to dispatch the rats in the guest-level pantries, in the dumbwaiters, and in the elevators, the baseboards of which had been "nibbled" to splinters.¹⁰⁷ The letters also point to infighting among Aschinger's different branches. The company's café concessions, independent of the hotels, had apparently made off with the Fürstenhof's "hors d'oeuvre trucks," for the return of which Kessels begged his supervisors.¹⁰⁸ As an acknowledgment of the new reality, Kessels dispensed with the cash economy altogether when for a business trip he asked Lohnert for a box of cigars, a few dozen small bottles of cognac, and 100 napkins so that he might bribe "corrupt police officers and officials" along the way.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Vorstand der Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to Fritz Haas, waiter at the café of the Central-Hotel, letter of April 14, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 150.

¹⁰⁵ Lohnert to Kessels, letter of April 18, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰⁶ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of January 16, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰⁷ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of January 18, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰⁸ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of January 19, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹⁰⁹ Kessels to Lohnert, letter of April 16, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174; Lohnert to Kessels, letter of April 18, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

In addition to corruption, compensation became a central problem in the hotel business under hyperinflation. Many white-collar employees had to be rewarded for extra time and effort, including the chief buyer for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, whose job it was to source and pay for everything the hotel needed. The board agreed to give him a bonus equaling 60 percent of his April wages. But how much money would that be, exactly? By the board's own estimate: 23 million Marks.¹¹⁰ Other employees had to be let go; there was not enough cash on hand to pay them. The cost of leasing telegraphs, for example, had consumed the wages of the Fürstenhof telegraph girl, so the corporate office ordered that her post be eliminated.¹¹¹ Staff who remained at the hotel saw their compensation dwindle by the hour. The Fürstenhof's musicians had been going from table to table asking guests for money. Such "pestering" must stop under all circumstances, Lohnert wrote to Kessels. Longtime American guests had been angered by the scene and decided both to check out and to cancel their lavish farewell dinner, such as it would have been under the circumstances. Disciplined just short of being fired, the musicians had their hours reduced and were told that they would be dismissed without compensation should they ever go "begging" again.¹¹²

If direct requests to guests for compensation did not work, then stealing would, and with stealing, an employee or worker was less likely to be caught. When at the Fürstenhof, in February 1923, 5000 Marks went missing from a package containing 1,169,257 Marks, the management first blamed Fräulein Klüger, a cashier. She denied

¹¹⁰ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft" of May 30, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

¹¹¹ Kessels to Müssigbrodt, letter of March 1, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹¹² Corporate management of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft to the manager of the Hotel Fürstenhof, letter of August 21, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1147.

any wrongdoing and pointed to all the other people who had laid hands on the money en route to its final depository: there were the head cashier, Fräulein Klückmann, the clerk, Herr Pfitzner, and finally the bookkeeper, Herr Werth. At any rate, it must have been clear to everyone that soon, as the value of 5000 Marks approached zero, the matter would not be worth pursuing.¹¹³ In the end, morale was more important than a few stolen marks, especially in light of recent, cost-prohibitive increases in the premiums for a riot insurance policy that promised what would soon be only paltry payouts of half a billion to two billion Marks.¹¹⁴

The board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft looked for cuts everywhere and then took drastic measures. Plans materialized early on for alterations that might reduce costs. In April of 1923, the board discussed reducing the size of hotel kitchens as a means of reducing the number of expensive machines and the workers who operated them. Without any way of knowing how much the construction would actually cost, however, the board scrapped these plans and looked into fixing the roof, a much more pressing problem, at the cost of “several 100 millions.”¹¹⁵ The discussion then descended to the level of everyday mundanities with a heated debate about linens.¹¹⁶

In May, out of desperation, came the unanimous decision to sell all foreign currency and apply the entirety of the proceeds to the purchase of textiles, as well as goods and wine.¹¹⁷ To loot its own treasury was, for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft and the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft, already a foregone conclusion. Since the onset of

¹¹³ Report on missing money from the Fürstenhof of February 8, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1174.

¹¹⁴ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of April 23, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of May 30, 1925, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

hyperinflation, the strategy had been to “settle up every day,” including with guests, and then put every bit of the proceeds toward “constantly filling up our stores.” So commonplace was the hoarding that the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft, in its annual report, referred to the practice without euphemisms.¹¹⁸

Accounting soon became impossible. At the arrival of hyperinflation, the board of Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft tried to have calculations of its non-cash capital done in reference to gold.¹¹⁹ They fashioned their own “Goldmark,” expressed in British pounds, for valuing assets and inventories.¹²⁰ But it became impossible to keep account of inventories as the stores filled and emptied many times over the course of a month. In fact, when Price Waterhouse came to audit Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft a few years later, they found that the “schedules relating to the Inventories of Merchandise on Hand at January 1, 1924 have been mislaid.”¹²¹ Had they been on hand, if indeed they had ever existed, the inventories would not have shed any light. Money values meant nothing. Where it was necessary, firms reckoned in cash with little regard for what it was worth or would be worth in a few hours.

When in spring 1923 Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft calculated dividends for the previous year, they innovated several modes of translation among the values of a prewar mark, a present-day mark, a 1918 mark, the value of gold, and the exchange rate of marks to American dollars. On November 15, 1923, when the government finally made this kind of accounting official by introducing the gold-backed Rentenmark, hotel bookkeepers

¹¹⁸ Annual report of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft for 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1048.

¹¹⁹ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

¹²⁰ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of June 20, 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

¹²¹ “Prüfungsbericht der Price, Waterhouse & Co. über den Jahresabschluss der Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft und der ‘Geka’ Geschäfts- und Kontorhaus A.G. für das Jahr 1923,” sent in a letter from Price, Waterhouse & Co., Berlin, to the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft on February 5, 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 626.

now had a currency they could match to the notional sums with which they had been working since summer, and the period of hyperinflation came to a close.¹²²

With stabilization, hoteliers' most insistent grievance resurfaced—taxes.¹²³ As of 1924, their businesses were taxed in various ways. Sales tax entailed an accommodation tax, a ten-percent state tax (Reichssteuer), a tax on wine, an additional tax on sparkling wine, and a tax on profits. The state also collected on bonds, mortgages, ground rent, and land use. And finally, there was the tax on commerce in the state of Prussia.¹²⁴ In the midst of hyperinflation, tax rates had indeed reached astronomical proportions. The accommodation tax for foreigners in early 1923 was 80 percent (40 percent for Germans). The resulting sums, along with all other taxes, pushed hoteliers' and restaurateur's contributions up to about 50 percent of all revenue.¹²⁵ Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft reported that this tax policy would result in the demise of the hotel industry. The accommodation tax, then higher for foreigners, would keep American and other investors from visiting Germany. Such taxes on commercial hospitality, the board argued, would surely sink "the whole of our national economy."¹²⁶ At the people's expense, then, the hotel industry suffered—and worse than any other industry, "not one" of which was "saddled with so many and such heavy taxes," as the hoteliers saw it.¹²⁷ Such complaints spilled easily into demonizations of the Republic, the "Tax-Hydra" that reached farther and wider by the day.¹²⁸

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ On stabilization and new taxes, see Holtfrerich, *The German Inflation*, 301–303.

¹²⁴ Annual report of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft for 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1048.

¹²⁵ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1922, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Georg Persisch, "Gegen die Steuerhydra," *Das Hotel*, December 12, 1921.

A second set of complaints, also often contending that the Republic was singling out the hotel industry for extra punishment, revolved around the institution of the Preisprüfungsstelle beim Magistrat Berlin (Price Auditing Authority of the Magistrate of Berlin). In July 1924, the Verein der Berliner Hotels und verwandter Betriebe (Union of Berlin Hotels and Related Businesses) wrote to the magistrate in protest against the Preisprüfungsstelle's recent decision to compel the reversion of room prices to their prewar values.¹²⁹ This move, according to the Verein der Berliner Hotels and to the hotel corporations themselves, failed to account for the tax rate and cost of living having gone up 40 to 60 percent since July 1914.¹³⁰ Moreover, the "incessant pestering of our members by your officials' pointless inquiries" was taking up valuable time and energy.¹³¹ The Verein Berliner Hotels also wrote the Statistisches Amt der Stadt Berlin (Office of Statistics for the City of Berlin) to tattle on the Preisprüfungsstelle. The latter's questionnaires exhibited flaws in procedure of which the city's statisticians should be aware.¹³² The Verein der Berliner Hotels even tried to pit the two agencies against each other by suggesting to the statisticians "that the Pricing Authority has neither the competency nor the prerogative" to conduct its own surveys, surveys which should be the exclusive purview of the Statistisches Amt.¹³³ These exchanges among the Verein der Berliner Hotels, the Preisprüfungsstelle, and Statistisches Amt point to hoteliers' two-pronged strategy when dealing with state and municipal regulations. First, complain to the relevant authority about the unfairness and deleterious effects of the policy in

¹²⁹ Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer to the Preisprüfungsstelle beim Magistrat, letter of July 30, 1924, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2390, f. 108.

¹³⁰ Annual report of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft for 1923, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1048.

¹³¹ Verein Berliner Hotels und verwandter Betriebe to the Preisprüfungsstelle beim Magistrat, letter of July 30, 1924, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2390, f. 108.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

question; second, contact a rival authority that might intercede on your behalf.

Increasingly, hoteliers, hotel corporations, and hotel industry combinations tried where possible to complicate, confuse, and frustrate the state's efforts to extract revenue from commercial hospitality. As instances of evasion and protest mounted, they converged with illiberal, now anti-Republican, currents in hoteliers' thinking and actions between 1918 and 1924.

Recriminations

From 1918 to about 1921, hoteliers still clung to the vestige of prewar liberalism that emphasized the capacity of the free market to correct all imbalances. "Experience teaches us," argued Richard Weser, the chairman of the board of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, "that free trade alone is capable of delivering the necessary quantities of foodstuffs, cheaply and unspoiled, to where they are wanted."¹³⁴ The problem, he felt, was not shortage itself but regulations that attempted to mitigate it. Weser's vision of the saving grace of free trade took in the international context, too. The tendency of rationing, as well as wage price-setting, to increase the cost of domestic goods, in particular, was threatening to do "monstrous damage" to the German economy.¹³⁵

Regulation gave the advantage to foreign suppliers, and here Weser would have meant Germany's old foes. This time, the way to beat them was not to dig in but to reach out: let the world market determine prices, and Germany would prosper. Turn its back to the world and to free trade, and nothing could "save our national economy."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920," in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1062.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Yet, as we shall see, Berlin's hoteliers did not always practice what they preached. They continued to resort to combinations, which resulted in artificially high prices for consumers. Like the industrialists (and some actors were both industrialists and hoteliers), the hoteliers "adhered [to a] type of capitalism that was authoritarian, anti-Western and, as far as the existing political system was concerned, openly and

Yet the German government was not the only party responsible for the interruption of free trade. The Entente, having declined to disband for years after the war, continued its blockade, “view[ing] us still as opponents in the field.” The annual report went on to complain about Entente members “represent[ing] us, whom they hate . . . , as the counterpoint to their humanitarianism, to their love of freedom and justice.” They had not thought of the “consequences of this line of thinking,” continued hostility and the danger of another war.¹³⁷ A contributor to *Das Hotel* concurred when he complained about the deleterious effects of the symbolic “act” (*Akt*) at Versailles.¹³⁸ Like so many of his compatriots, he refused to use the words “peace treaty.”¹³⁹

Between 1918 and 1924, bitter recriminations became a common occurrence in hoteliers’ comments, annual reports, and editorials for *Das Hotel*. In his opinion piece for that publication, Harry Nitsch, an expert in the field of advertising in the hotel industry, singled out the French for special opprobrium.¹⁴⁰ To him, any Germans telling their downtrodden and pessimistic compatriots to call up “our people’s inner strength and efficiency (*Tüchtigkeit*),” to find “Germany’s star,” to submit to the “healing power of

covertly anti-Republican,” in the words of Volker Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 103. That said, not all industrialists were illiberal. Werner Plumpe has shown that Carl Duisberg, the managing director of Bayer in the 1920s, reversed his prewar stance on the SPD (very negative) and instead tried to work with socialists to bring about a healthier, more stable, more equitable form of capitalism: “The End of World War I,” in *Business in the Age of Extremes: Essays in Modern German and Austrian Economic History*, eds. Hartmut Berghoff et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41.

¹³⁷ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1920, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1062.

¹³⁸ “Die Friede und die internationale Hotelindustrie,” *Das Hotel*, July 11, 1919.

¹³⁹ Many German businessmen, liberals and otherwise, were in a difficult position. They wanted to get on with the West but at the same time refused to accept Versailles as a treaty, more or less the cost of doing business with France, Britain, Belgium, and others. The easiest thing to do was to claim, erroneously, that reparations, determined after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, would bankrupt Germany and therefore should not be paid. See Marks, “Mistakes and Myths,” 644.

¹⁴⁰ Nitsch’s book came out in 1927 under the title *Das Hotel- und Gastgewerbe: Moderne Propaganda-Methoden* (Düsseldorf: Floeder, 1927). By 1933, the Friedrich Floeder Verlag was distinguishing itself with such titles as *Das Ehrenbuch des Führers: Der Weg zur Volksgemeinschaft* (The Führer’s Book of Honor: The Path to Volksgemeinschaft) by Heinz Haake (1933). See David Biale, “Blood and the Discourses of Nazi Antisemitism,” in *Varieties of Antisemitism: History, Ideology, Discourse*, eds. Murray Baumgarten, Peter Kenez, and Bruce Thompson (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 71.

Reason,” was not only useless but also un-German—indeed, prototypically French. This deluded worship of reason and the belief in the nation’s capacity to overcome all challenges captured the spirit of the French Revolution in the days “of Robespierre and Danton.”¹⁴¹ With this point, Nitsch evoked a complex point about Germany’s present difficulties, both at home and abroad. Neither romantic nationalism nor the enlightenment state could get the Germans, and their hotel industry, out of the hole.¹⁴² Deliverance instead depended on a change of heart among the authors of Germany’s misfortune in Paris and London. And these assignments of guilt tended to extend to the Weimar coalition parties, too, especially the SPD, which, as one hotelier put it in a speech to his colleagues, had sabotaged the German economy by abetting the Entente’s program of extortion.¹⁴³

Despite the widespread resentment of Germany’s enemies, many hoteliers saw the pitfalls of expressing it. After all, former foes made for reliable guests flush with foreign currency. Hoteliers had an interest in relaxing international tensions as quickly as possible. As soon after the war as January 1919, a contributor to *Das Hotel* asserted that

¹⁴¹ Harry Nitsch, “Die neue Zeit: Einführung und Ausblicke,” *Das Hotel*, November 7, 1919.

¹⁴² Railing against the machine state of the French while praising the German genius for freedom became current as early as the 1790s, shortly after the Reign of Terror, when the early German Romantics, horrified by the recent violence in France, formed an idea of Germany and Germanness as fundamentally different from France and Frenchness. See Frederick Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1–7ff. On the legacy of early German Romanticism in the nineteenth century, see George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁴³ Transcript of the speech given in Berlin on December 7, 1920, by Heinrich Kreuzer, managing director of the Hotelreuhandgenossenschaft, Düsseldorf, at the I. Hauptversammlung des Verbandes der Hotelbesitzervereine Deutschlands, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 893. The very act of paying reparations on behalf of the German people served to enrage many of them, especially from the DVP (Deutsche Volkspartei, formerly the National Liberal Party). See Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-wing Women in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 34. So intense was the anger that a group of radical nationalists murdered Walther Rathenau on June 24, 1922, largely because he had come out in favor of fulfilling the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the regimen of reparations. See Gall, *Walther Rathenau*, 223.

hoteliers must be “neutral,” or at least appear to be neutral, in all matters, including foreign relations. “The visitor of those nationalities” made to feel unwelcome here will prefer to “clear out and stay away,” an outcome that “is without a doubt” bad for business.¹⁴⁴ What was more, the unpleasant deprivations under the blockade needed to be hidden lest they evoke uncomfortable feelings of guilt among French and British guests. The point was for the guest, when in the hotel, to forget the unpleasantness. The guest “would not like to see that the hotel industry suffered acutely because of the war, nor indeed that it still suffers from the effects of the war, nor that it is because of these effects”—the effects of the continued blockade—“that not every wish of the traveling public can be fulfilled to satisfaction.”¹⁴⁵ Still, the writer recognized that some acknowledgement of the difficulties would be in order, perhaps a nicely worded notice about postwar scarcity.¹⁴⁶

Inherent in the belief that foreign guests would rather not think about Germany’s suffering while residing in one of Berlin’s grand hotels was the assumption that foreign guests were of a delicate, even refined, sensibility. A good number of German guests, on the other hand, appeared to be undesirables and posed a problem for hoteliers. Every day, more and more “war profiteers” came to “flaunt a ‘noblesse’” that turned out to be “an empty pretense.” Although there was no choice but to put up with this and other “peculiar characteristics,” managers must also “take precautions that *this species of guest* does not set a tone” that would hurt a hotel’s good name.¹⁴⁷ As expressed in the pages of *Das Hotel*, this anxiety about contamination by unsavory dissemblers, complete with the use

¹⁴⁴ “Der Hotelgast der neuen Zeit,” *Das Hotel*, January 31, 1919.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. My emphasis.

of the word “species,” coincided with widespread, anti-Semitic representations of war profiteers as Jews. And where anti-Semitism lurked, so too did anti-Republicanism.¹⁴⁸



Figure 31. “Kriegsgewinnlers wandern aus,” illustration by Stephan Krotowski, in *Ulk: Wochenbeilage zum Berliner Tageblatt*, April 25, 1919. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

¹⁴⁸ Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 74–80.



Figure 32. “Im Käfig,” illustration by Theodor Leisser, in *Ulk: Wochenbeilage zum Berliner Tageblatt*, May 23, 1919. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.

These 1919 cartoons appeared in a satirical magazine owned by Rudolf Mosse, whose Jewishness did not always preclude the inclusion of anti-Semitic content. The cartoon titled “War Profiteers Emigrate” does not take aim at Jews but rather at parvenues made rich off the war effort—*Kriegsgewinnler* (fig. 31). “Hubby! Shhh! Not so loud. You’ll wake the border guard,” the woman says. “He’s quite asleep,” her husband responds as the two make their way out of the frame and out of Germany. The suitcases,

presumably, are full of money or near-liquid assets. The border guard appears in the background as an old man, sapped of his energy, now forsaken by the very Germans who brought him to this sorry state. The second cartoon, titled “In the Cage,” accuses an altogether different group: Jewish bankers of no discernible nationality, though it becomes clear that one is located in London, the other in Paris (fig. 32). The referent would be the descendants of Mayer Amschel Rothschild of Frankfurt, whose sons had established banks in five European capitals by the start of the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, the Rothschilds were often the targets of anti-Semitic rage in the pages of the anti-Semitic and the mainstream press.¹⁴⁹ In this cartoon, one banker says to the other, “The Germans are suffering. Our stock market is doing well. It’s a profitable arrangement!” The other responds, “In Paris, dear brother, we could also use some money. The thinner they are, the fatter we get!” To drive the point home, the Jews are corpulent and have outsized features and prominent noses. The cage contains four Germans of the opposite profile: a destitute mother, a decommissioned soldier, a frail old man, and a dead body. A sign is affixed to the cage which reads “Do not feed!” Published within a month of each other, these cartoons illustrate, among other things, the ease with which anger about war profiteering and poverty, as well as the present regime’s inability to counter either, could slip into anti-Semitism of a particularly crass and pernicious form. This slippage became a reliable tendency of the right in Germany, one that Nitsch and others for *Das Hotel*, as well as certain members of Berlin’s group of hoteliers, picked up along their way towards opposition to the Republic.

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, the anti-Semitic interlude in Hermann Goedsche’s 1868 novel *Biarritz*, which appeared under the pseudonym of Sir John Retcliffe, in *The Jew in the Modern World*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 336–338. The novel became “proof” of the authenticity of the infamous forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (ca. 1902)

In their political statements, hoteliers began to lean to the right, however much they tried to cling to laissez-faire liberalism. Their politics between 1919 and 1924 developed into a synthesis of Anti-Republicanism and the prewar National Liberal Party—liberal in terms of a general antipathy to Social Democracy and organized labor. The sense of emergency never quite dissipated after the days “of grave danger,” when communist revolution and the first waiters’ strike prompted hoteliers to “stick together” and defeat “these radicals” and their “terroristic principles.”¹⁵⁰ Nostalgia for better days under the Kaiser colored a satirical piece in *Das Hotel* that wondered whether it might now be wrong for hotels to carry such names as “Kaiser, Großherzog, Krone, Wittelsbach, Hohenzollern, and König von Preußen.”¹⁵¹ Not all contributors to *Das Hotel* made light of Germany’s identity and constitutional crisis, however. “The world war may have ended,” read an opinion piece of August 1919, “but the war of Germany with itself has yet to find its end.”¹⁵² And many men of the hotel industry made it clear whose side they were on. A lawyer by the name of Brugsch, writing for *Das Hotel* in January 1921, referred to the economy under state control as the “sword of Damocles . . . hanging over the head of every hotelier and restaurateur” in Germany.¹⁵³ Or, if not a sword to the head, then the managed economy was the shackle around the ankle, heavy and “unbearably” tight.¹⁵⁴ In this sense, the outcome of the war had little to do with their day’s economic peril. The Republic and its illiberal economic policies bore the sole responsibility. This logic extended to foreign relations: the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, and

¹⁵⁰ “Kellnerausstand in Berlin” (op. cit.). I read these statements in the way that Volker Berhahn has suggested in his *Modern Germany*, 69: in the context of a counter-revolution before 1923 that was as pervasive as it was brutal.

¹⁵¹ “Hotelnamen im neuen Deutschland,” *Das Hotel*, July 27, 1919.

¹⁵² “Mit- und nicht gegeneinander,” *Das Hotel*, August 1, 1919.

¹⁵³ “Das schiefe Gleis unserer Zwangswirtschaft” (op. cit.).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

subsequent ancillary agreements, became an increasingly popular position among hoteliers. And these were disadvantageous agreements for which hoteliers blamed the Republic alone.¹⁵⁵ Here, liberalism entered the conversation, for revision would usher in an era of free trade, and only through free trade—that is, the self-correcting capacity of the free market—could inflation be halted.¹⁵⁶ Yet, it was a liberalism that expressed itself in the revisionist terms of the anti-Republican right.

Conclusion

On July 12, 1920, Heinrich Kreuzer, chairman of the Hotel Trust, in his address to the first annual meeting of the Verband der Hotelbesitzervereine Deutschlands (Association of Hoteliers' Societies of Germany), pulled together the strands of the hoteliers' synthesis of anti-Republicanism and National Liberalism. Kreuzer called to his audience's attention a litany of disasters and blunders that had compromised the hotel industry from before the war to the present.

The people, who have no understanding [of the problem], as well as the government and the communes, who sit by in silence as one fine hotel after the other is stripped of its identity—are all guilty. It is they who will be held responsible if in the foreseeable future the German hospitality and travel industries collapse and thus forfeit every competitive advantage to foreign countries, which never could have happened in the old days.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 72–73.

¹⁵⁶ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636. Cf., Andrew Williams, *Liberalism and War: The Victors and the Vanquished* (New York: Routledge, 2006), especially chapters 3 (“Reparations”) and 6 (“Retribution: The Logics of Justice and Peace”).

¹⁵⁷ Transcript of the speech given in Berlin on December 7, 1920, by Heinrich Kreuzer, Vorstand der Hotelreuehandgenossenschaft, Düsseldorf, at the I. Hauptversammlung des Verbandes der Hotelbesitzervereine Deutschlands, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 893.

Hoteliers' belief in the indispensability of the hotel industry to German culture, society, and politics rested on examples in recent months. After all, the hotels had accommodated and continued to accommodate delegates to the Entente Commission meetings, where the details of reparations were hammered out. National and international business likewise depended on the capacity of Berlin's grand hotels to accommodate investors, salesmen, and money carriers. But fewer examples supported the belief that responsibility for the hotel industry's woes lay primarily with the Weimar state and society. This was an accusation that took its cues from the legend of the "stab in the back" (*Dolchstoßlegende*), then making rounds among right-radicals, conservatives, and other Germans: proponents of the illegitimate Republic had undermined the army and lost Germany the war. Thereafter, Jewish, socialist, and effeminate republicans had besmirched the German name by signing the war guilt clause, disgraced Germany's traditions by dismantling the military, dismembered the nation by ceding territory, and crippled the national economy by agreeing to pay reparations in cash, gold, and kind. And now, Kreuzer charged, the republicans had trained their sights on the grand hotels of Berlin. In 1920, Kreuzer's was an extreme position for a hotelier to take. By the end of 1923, it was commonplace. The war having cut short their 40-year commitment to liberalism and cosmopolitanism, hoteliers embraced increasingly conservative and xenophobic explanations for the postwar disaster—an embrace that swung their worldviews into the camp of the anti-Republican Right.

Chapter 5

The Grand Hotel and the Crisis of German Democracy

On September 15, 1932, William Meinhardt, chairman of the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, made an ominous decision. The manager of the Kaiserhof had come to him with a complaint against the Nazis, who had been using the hotel as their Berlin headquarters for the better part of a year and were scaring away the Jewish clientele, and a request that Meinhardt and the board grant permission to have Hitler removed from the premises. Meinhardt declined, and the Nazis stayed. Four and a half months later, Hitler was chancellor; within the year, Meinhardt was on a ship bound for England, fleeing for his life, never to return to Germany. Why Meinhardt, a Democrat (DDP) and Jew, allowed the Nazis to stay in what was, in some sense, his house—a *Jewish* house, too, since the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft was Jewish by a narrow majority—will be an enduring mystery. No one has ever explained the deliberations, not at the time and not afterwards. Moreover, the minutes of the meeting at which the Hitler–Kaiserhof issue was discussed are a highly mediated source, to put it mildly: any number of persons might have tampered with the transcript; the secretary might even have done so as he or she generated it.

All we can do is recreate the picture that Meinhardt and his colleagues faced in summer and autumn 1932 and, in so doing, come a step closer to identifying how the September 15 decision could have made sense to everyone involved. This effort, however inconclusive the results, is important because it allows us to think about why a group of Germans cast their lot with Hitler in the twilight of the Weimar Republic. I am going to

argue that several factors would have played into Meinhardt's thinking, including negative representations of grand hotels in Weimar culture, but that the pessimism that defined his and his colleagues' outlooks—a pessimism born of the chaos of 1918–1923 and never entirely dispelled by the years of relative prosperity of 1924–1928—tended after 1929 toward fatalism: certainty in the prediction that the business was going to fail. That pessimism-turned-fatalism might have presented Meinhardt in September 1932 with a dark view and a choiceless decision: eject the Nazis, and the business collapses; allow them to stay, and the business collapses. I suggest, in the end, that Meinhardt, under the influence of a pessimism-turned-fatalism endemic to his milieu in 1932, would not have seen or understood the ramifications of his decision and that as a liberal he was powerless to do anything to stem the Nazi tide.

Hotel Berlin in Weimar Culture

Cultural pessimism and cultural representations of grand hotels went hand-in-hand. Weimar culture's treatment of grand hotels made class distinctions and antagonisms a central theme. In print, on the stage, and on the screen, responses to grand hotel culture both reflected and helped shape an uneasy mix of continuity and change, especially with respect to the social and political transformations of the decade or so after the end of World War I. True for treatments of the grand hotel in works all over Europe and the United States, this observation is most apt for the German case and Berlin more specifically. It was Berlin's grand hotel that provided the setting and central subject of the most popular and lucrative franchise—that is, Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel*, which exploded onto the scene in 1929 as a serialized novel in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and then, in turns, a bestselling novel translated into nearly a dozen languages, a

successful stage play in Berlin, a hit on Broadway, and an internationally acclaimed film starring John and Lionel Barrymore, Joan Crawford, and Greta Garbo—all in the space of about three years.

Berlin's grand hotels were entertaining, to be sure, but beyond that, they were good to think with and had been so since Eloesser focused his knowing gaze on the particular assemblage of characters at a hotel grillroom in 1912.¹ What was new about Baum and others in the period 1924–1932 was the emphasis on social inequalities, many of them portrayed as untenable. By 1929, the meaning of the grand hotel was inseparable from the greatest dislocations of the day: the fitful transition to mass democracy, the inexorable pressures of international economic forces, and, most centrally, the swiftness of social mobility in both upward and downward directions.² The messages about the luxury hospitality industry, which Berlin's hoteliers would have consumed, was complex but also frightening: the grand hotel, far from being a refuge from the maelstrom outside, was actually, in these most modern times, a focal point for it. Weimar culture would have reflected to the hoteliers their darkest of visions for the future.

The first hotel film to be recognized as a masterpiece in its day was Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Man* or *The Last Laugh*, 1924). In it, Emil Jannings plays the aging head porter at the fictitious Hotel Atlantic in an unnamed German metropolis. His senses of self and self-worth depend on his pride of place at the revolving door. When the hotel manager demotes Jannings's character to toilet duty, chiefly because he is too old and weak for the physical rigors of his job, the poor man is

¹ See Chapter 2.

² Cf., Donald Albrecht, *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 138–141.

undone. We follow him home to the *Mietskasernen* (“rental barracks” or tenements), where he tries to keep the bad news from his family and his working-class community. When they find out his secret, his family disowns him out of shame and his erstwhile friends deride him. Alone and miserable, he now has to sleep at work, not, of course, in one of the guestrooms, but on the floor of the men’s lavatory, his new domain (fig. 33). Taking pity on him, the night watchman covers the porter with his coat.



Figure 33. Emil Jannings as the porter in *Der letzte Mann*, film, directed by F.W. Murnau (1924; Berlin: UFA). Distributed by Kino International, New York, N.Y.

The film could have ended there, and there is debate over whether that was, in fact, the original ending of the film. At any rate, the final scenes are of a pace, style, and tone that belong to a different genre entirely. A title card reads, “Here our story really ought to end, for in real life, the pitiful old man would have little to look forward to other than death. The author took pity on him, however, and provided quite an improbable epilogue.” And so, in a sudden twist of fate, the porter sees in the paper that he has been named as the heir to the enormous fortune of a Mexican man by the name of A.G. Money,

who had died in the arms of our sympathetic porter-turned-bathroom-attendant. (A.G. is the German abbreviation for *Aktiengesellschaft*, a corporation.) The porter makes a triumphant return to the hotel, where he invites the night watchman, who had been so kind, to join him in the feast. Sated, the two men exit the hotel past a row of staff members, happy to accept tips from this newest of millionaires. Outside, a man is begging. The porter invites him into the carriage, tips the new head porter, and rides off. All of this happens very quickly, and Jannings makes sure to play every beat for laughs. But even an ending as maudlin as this managed to illuminate and even decry the customs and institutions of class.

The final scene of Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* has the porter-turned-millionaire return to dine at his former place of work. The plates he receives are non-standard hotel fare, dishes blown out of all proportion: grotesque mountains of gelatinous desserts, for example, and impossible quantities of roast beef on outsized salvers. These props point to the ridiculousness of the grand hotel project in a time of economic misery, and the scene becomes a Swiftian essay on the gluttony and rapacity of the upper classes. It also invites the viewer to wonder about the difference between the porter-parvenu and his elite fellow diners: do the latter's haughtiness and the former's clowning belie the essence of this scene, which is as much about class condescension as it is about the class conflict represented in the overconsumption by one group of the resources that the general population needed in order to survive? As the porter gorges himself, the other restaurant patrons treat the scene as a splendid form of metropolitan entertainment.

The ending was but one instance of disharmony in this highly complex film, partly because it stood at a crossroads both in the history of German film and in the

history of the Weimar Republic. As such, it speaks to the ambivalence of continuity and change in German cultural as well as social and political life. The production team included Carl Mayer as screenwriter, Karl Freund as cinematographer, Walter Röhring and Robert Herlth as set designers, and Erich Pommer as producer. “Please invent something new,” Pommer asked of Murnau, “even if it’s crazy!”³ Pommer was under a good deal of pressure at this juncture, in 1924, just after stabilization of the currency by way of the introduction of the Rentenmark. The period of hyperinflation at an end, German cinemas now afforded to screen more Hollywood films than before. Producers could no longer rely on the protective effects of a weak and then worthless mark.

The Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa) had its work cut out for it. Executives knew that survival meant producing films that were technically brilliant but also characteristically German, where German meant, in various ways, different from Hollywood.⁴ A result of these efforts was *Der letzte Mann*, which folded technical innovation and an expressionist visual medium—two hallmarks of German film—into a melodrama of high production values.

The film was shot in spring and summer 1924 at Ufa’s studios in Berlin-Tempelhof and on the backlot of Babelsberg, near Potsdam. For Babelsberg, Röhring and Herlth designed an enormous outdoor scene, with the corner facade of the hotel jutting out into what appeared to be a major metropolitan crossing—all of it conceived for the moving camera, an innovation that Freund, the cinematographer, used to uncommon advantage. The composition of the street scene—its angles, in particular—as well as the

³ Sabine Hake, “Who Gets the Last Laugh? Old Age and Generational Change in F.W. Murnau’s *The Last Laugh* (1924),” in *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, ed. Noah Isenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 118.

⁴ Ibid.

sense of movement, not only within the frame but of the frame itself, and therefore of the viewer, was thoroughly expressionist, evocative of scenes from earlier films like *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920), which shared a screenwriter with *Der letzte Mann*, and *Der Schatz* (*The Treasure*, 1923), which also had Röhrling and Herlth as its scenic designers. Expressionist painting, too, appears to have inspired the perspective of the Atlantic, especially Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's prewar paintings of Nollendorfplatz (1912) and Potsdamer Platz (1914). Yet in other ways, the film broke with the expressionism of the inflationary period by taking the more objective view, which cast an unblinking gaze on the complexities, ironies, and injustices of urban civilization, neither to judge nor to moralize, but to shine a light on the conditions of life in modernity. In doing so, the film stood astride the divide between the expressionism of German film in the inflationary period (1919–1923) and the more faithful adherence to the New Objectivity of German film after 1923.

At the same time, Murnau and Jannings deployed wherever they could all “the heightened terms of nineteenth-century melodrama,” as Sabine Hake has observed.⁵ To the extent that the film was an unflinching look at the social dislocations of Weimar civilization, it was also a melodrama that used all the devices of that genre to detangle and pore over the myriad conflicts of postwar society—political, cultural, and generational.⁶ Nowhere does the political conflict become clearer than in the film's treatment of the uniform of Jannings's character, a porter. It is livery but of a characteristically Wilhelmine bombast and militarism: brass buttons, a gleaming visor, and a single-braided aguillette (fig. 34). The look, in its essence and in its details, was a

⁵ Ibid., 119.

⁶ Ibid., 116.

composite of the dress uniforms of the Hohenzollerns and their ilk. The performance itself implicated these references in the story of the feminization of Germany's patriarchal elites, with Jannings making himself ridiculous at every opportunity and weeping at just those moments when great stoicism is expected.⁷



Figure 34. Emil Jannings as the porter in *Der letzte Mann* (1924, op. cit.).

The film opened to great acclaim at Berlin's Ufa-Palast am Zoo on December 23, 1924. Critics focused on the film's innovations but not its content, which they thought to be unstylishly melodramatic. Yet it was in the interplay of melodrama and objectivity that *Der letzte Mann* had the most to say on the great conflicts of the day. As Judith Walkowitz has observed of feminists in England in the 1870s and 1880s, melodrama was political, casting a "floodlight" on patriarchy and its hypocrisies.⁹ Such is the case of the Fresnel lamps at the Ufa studios, which illuminated the undoing of an authoritarian personality, the yawning gap between rich and poor, between the hotel and the tenement,

⁷ Ibid.

⁹ Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 90.

between dignity and degradation. Among other things, *Der letzte Mann* was a meditation on disturbed hierarchies and intensifying inequalities. The grand hotel as setting and melodrama as genre helped throw social distinctions into the sharpest relief.

Der letzte Mann, and the urban grand hotel more generally, became inspiration for a slew of films, including *Hotel Stadt Lemberg* (Hotel Imperial, 1926), *Grand Hotel...!* (1927), *Hotelgeheimnisse: Die Abenteurerin von Biarritz* (Hotel Secrets: The Adventuress of Biarritz, 1928), *Fräulein Else* (1929), *Das grüne Monokel* (The Green Monocle, 1929), and *Ein ausgekochter Junge* (A Crafty Lad, 1931).¹⁰ Each, in its way, made more of the grand hotel than just a setting. Grand hotel life was the melodrama by which filmmakers and audiences liked to probe and sometimes protest the social and economic inequalities of Weimar's "golden age."

By 1929, Siegfried Kracauer had already noticed that film and the hotel were closely linked in a variety of ways.¹¹ The detective novel, Kracauer argued, had inspired the hotel film genre, including Murnau's masterpiece.¹² In other ways, as Kracauer also observed, the grand hotel itself could be inspiration enough on account of its "ever changing population," which afforded "the opportunity for [many] possible improvisations."¹³ The grand hotel was like a ballroom for Kracauer:

A hotel—how many life paths there are which intersect here! How many fates cross here! So many secrets live here, from one door to the next. Laughter and

¹⁰ The list is Alfons Arns's, from "Luxus, Horror, Illusionen: Das Universum des Hotels im Film," in *Film-Bühne Hotel: Begegnungen in begrenzten Räumen*, eds. Swenja Schiemann and Erika Wottrich (Munich: Etk, 2016), 18.

¹¹ Arns, "Luxus, Horror, Illusionen," 23.

¹² Ibid., 12; Siegfried Kracauer, "Luxushotel von unten gesehen," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, December 28, 1930.

¹³ Arns, "Luxus, Horror, Illusionen," 11; Kracauer, "Grand Hotel...!" *Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 24, 1928.

tears, seriousness and folly blend into a single chorus. And chance encounters of strangers stir their separate fates together in the fabulous masked ball of life.¹⁴

Kracauer appears now to be stating what is painfully obvious, but in his day, these insights were new. In the imperial period, critical observers such as Eloesser and Simmel had been able to meditate on the social heterogeneity of the grand hotel, but they did not see, or were scarce interested in, the intertwining fates of guests and staff. The hotel had been a way station on a larger procession, a place where people could sit and take stock of their positions vis-a-vis others, certainly, but not an arena for life-changing drama and life-affirming encounters. Such was the stuff of representations of the grand hotel in the 1920s, and Kracauer was among the first to notice it. The hotel lobby, in particular, was no longer a way to “seal [oneself] off from the world of the streets.”¹⁵ It was now where the triumphs and tragedies of life took place.

Joseph Roth also waxed poetic about a hotel lobby, this one of an unnamed property in a European port city, perhaps Marseille.¹⁶ In a series of essays for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, he probed the ironies, pleasures, and tragedies of hotel life.¹⁷ (The bulk of Kracauer’s hotel essays also appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.) More directly than Kracauer’s, Roth’s essays address the social hierarchy and place it at the center of

¹⁴ Kracauer, “Luxushotel von unten gesehen” (op.cit.): “Ein Hotel – Wieviel Lebenswege kreuzen sich hier! Wieviel Schicksale durchqueren sich hier. Wieviel Geheimnisse wohnen hier Tür an Tür. Lachen und Weinen, Ernst und Narrheit verschmelzen zu einem Chor. Und kurze Begegnung fremder Menschen wirbelt Schicksale durcheinander im tollen Maskenball des Lebens,” also quoted in Arns, “Luxus, Horror, Illusionen,” 12.

¹⁵ Kracauer, “Einer der nichts zu tun hat,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, November 9, 1929: “Dann suche ich mich vom Rausch des Flanierens zu entwöhnen. Ich halte mich nur in den vertrauten Straßen auf und mache abends bei Bekannten und Freunden Visite. Mein bester Trick ist aber der: mich in einer Hotelhalle von der Straßenwelt abzuriegeln. Der Fußboden ist mit schönen Teppichen belegt, in einem Klubsessel findet der Flaneur seinen Frieden. Oder beginnt seine Wanderung von diesem Punkt aus erst recht?” Also quoted in Arns, “Luxus, Horror, Illusionen,” 23.

¹⁶ Marseille, according to a note by Michael Hoffmann, in Joseph Roth, *The Hotel Years: Wanderings in Europe between the Wars*, ed. and trans. Michael Hoffmann (London: Granta, 2015), 155.

¹⁷ Roth’s *Hotel Savoy* came out in 1924.

hotel people's tangled narratives. "Such characters they are!" he exclaims of the staff: "Expert readers of languages and souls! No internationale like theirs! They are the true internationals!" The irony, not possibly lost on Roth, a sensitive observer of seen and unseen forces, was that staff could not be characters; their personalities were not welcome in the workplace. Indeed, these sentences bristle with impossibilities. How can hotel staff be expert readers of languages and souls when, in fact, people keep more from staff than they disclose? The staff are not priests. How can the staff be part of the communist international, when, in fact, their work consists in bowing to the bourgeoisie? How can the staff be true internationals when, in fact, they are fixed to the building all day and night?

Roth seems to know that the universe he has entered is an illusion and that the people who maintain that illusion are the staff. The porter greets him as a "father" would, with warmth and pride; the chef de reception welcomes him as a personal butler might; the pageboy takes Roth's two bags under each arm and ascends in the elevator, just as an "angel" does. Yet as Roth knows well, the pleasantry, "I'm delighted to see you looking so well, sir," is not a comment about his health. Roth translates for us: "looking so well" turns into, "Thank God you haven't sunk so far that you might have to seek out another hotel. You are our guest and our child! And long may you remain so." How can it be, Roth seems to ask, that these people would appear to love us wholeheartedly but also so very conditionally?

In most cases, Roth finds great difficulty even knowing who these members of staff really are. With the chef de reception, he has little to go on other than that man's comportment and dress. Is he in a position of magisterial power, not unlike one of those

“merciful judges” that one sees “in American films?” His genuflection “is not a bow” at all, but “a physical condescension...as though he were hearing a petition.”¹⁸ Or is he a liveried lackey? And yet, the livery is only waist-up. Waist-down are a fine pair of worsted trousers. Is this a bourgeois, Roth wonders, or are the trousers a gift from some tailor or seamstress who hopes to curry favor and custom from this servant to the rich? When the chef de reception ends his day and emerges from the cloakroom “in transformed dignity,” Roth is still no closer to placing the man, whose “gloved hand” and “half top hat, which he continues to affect,” conceal more than they reveal.¹⁹ The man whose job it is to guard the reputation of the hotel by refusing entry to the lower classes—and this he does, according to Roth, with great success—is himself suspect: might he be a fallen aristocrat or a counterfeit one? At any rate, he who scrutinizes everyone is scrutable to no one. The result is some degree of class angst on the part of the observer.

Roth introduced readers to this foreign chef de reception in the same year, 1929, that Vicki Baum invited the public to observe the activities of Rohna, an aristocrat-turned-receptionist at a Berlin hotel. But where Roth’s study was part of a series of individual character sketches, unrelated and appearing separately, Baum’s serialized novel, *Menschen im Hotel* (People in the Hotel, published in English as *Grand Hotel*) put these characters in constant, complex interaction. A *kleinbürgerlich* bookkeeper, a criminal aristocrat, an aging ballerina, a morphine-addicted doctor, a licentious businessman, and the good-time girl—the crisis of each person’s life comes to a head at roughly the same moment, in the same hotel. The hotel as setting for the collision of

¹⁸ Ibid., 162.

¹⁹ Ibid., 164.

destinies was not new in 1929, but what was new was the novel's frank approach to the pleasures and perils of everyday life in the modern metropolis, as experienced in a grand hotel. In this way, *Menschen im Hotel* fits nicely into the context of the New Objectivity, a modernist orientation toward frankness when it came to the realities of life, particularly in cities.²⁰

Vicki Baum was herself an urbanite through and through. Born in Vienna in 1888 to a well-to-do Jewish family, she moved to Berlin in the 1920s and became an editor for one of the newspapers of the Ullstein publishing house. The city provided ample inspiration for her own writing, the most successful example of which was *Menschen im Hotel*. Many of the ideas for characters came to Baum through reflection on her work at the newspaper, her attendance at Berlin's various entertainments, and the seediness of the Friedrichstadt, in particular. To what conservatives and others saw as a cesspit of vice, Baum brought the perspective of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. A grand hotel in the city center, her chosen setting, offered the right mix of public and private, high and low, serious and frivolous, that made for a good story, on one hand, and a probing study of German urban modernity in all its dynamism, on the other.

To Berlin's conservative, anti-American, and anti-Semitic dissenters, Baum's Berlin was little more than a hellscape of depravity. Popular print culture elucidated in particular the sexual dangers of the metropolis with novels like *The Big City Girl, or, the Legacy of the Dollar King*, about the corrupting influence of Americans and their money

²⁰ Arns, "Luxus, Horror, Illusionen," 16; Noah Isenberg, introduction to Vicki Baum, *Grand Hotel*, trans. Basil Creighton (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016), xv; and Leonardo Quaresima, "Menschen im Hotel: Ein multipler Text," in Schiemann and Wottrich, *Film-Bühne Hotel*, 68. On the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in prose, see Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 120–127ff. N.b., p. 132: Gay did not consider *Menschen im Hotel* to have been a very good example of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* at work. To him, the novel was one of the many "facile mediocrities" of the era.

on German girlhood.²¹ Representations of Berlin as “big-city quagmire” or “metropolitan morass” (*Großstadtsumpf*) implicated the grand hotels, most of which sat within or very close to major sites of prostitution.²² Indeed, the “Hotel Quarter” and the prostitution quarter of the Friedrichstadt were nearly coterminous.²³ The Central-Hotel, for example, stood at a major marketplace for sex. Further down the Friedrichstraße, Baum would have been able to observe the praxis of the trade from her office windows.

At the same time, all of the city’s finest hotels, as well as some of its best shops, theaters, cafés, and restaurants, survived among these public iniquities. Many observers cast this juxtaposition as a two-fold problem. First, the Friedrichstadt attracted not only the bad, but the good: and the good—particularly youths—might slide into the moral abyss, even if all they meant to do was eat cake at Kranzler. Second, allowing all manner of vice to pervade the Friedrich- and Dorotheenstadt, also home to the most powerful political, cultural, and commercial institutions of the country, was to have Berlin put its worst foot forward to visiting dignitaries and investors.

The district’s grand hotels occupied an uncomfortable position between vice and virtue. The Adlon, the Esplanade, the Kaiserhof, and others welcomed and cared for Berlin’s most important visitors, even as the same hotels served as nodes in local networks of vice and even larger networks of crime. Indeed, a Berlin grand hotel was, among other things, a home base for “criminals and coquettes” whose “milieu” extended

²¹ Decision of the Prüfstelle Berlin für Schund- und Schmutzschriften at a meeting of January 24, 1927, received by the Polizeipräsidium Berlin on January 26, 1928, in LAB: A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 17082, f. 14. Title in German: *Großstadtmädel oder das Vermächtnis des Dollarkönigs*.

²² On Berlin as a moral and spiritual “Sumpf,” particularly dangerous for youths, see Gabriela Holzmann, “Berlinlektionen für Kinder: Erich Kästners ‘Emil und die Detektive’ zwischen Provinz und Metropole,” in *Weltfabrik Berlin: Eine Metropole als Sujet der Literatur*, eds. Matthias Harder and Almut Hille (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 110.

²³ “Hotelviertel,” *Berliner Wirtschaftsberichte*, December 28, 1928.

to hotels as far away as “Paris, Barcelona, [and] Venice.”²⁴ The association between grand hotels and a “criminal underworld” was quite apparent, not least of all to the police.²⁵ *Menschen im Hotel* was far more accepting of the decline in morality than the police were. Yet Baum did not shy away from sometimes quiet, sometimes heavy-handed critiques of modern urban culture and society, particularly with respect to gender and social hierarchies.

The grand hotel of Baum’s novel is a “hybrid space,” as Sarah Clement has noted. As such, it offers a bundle of contradictions: commercial domesticity, a “public home.”²⁶ Like the metropolis itself, Baum’s grand hotel disrupts the gendered regime of public and private, or what was left of it by 1929. Yet Baum never introduces a “new woman,” confident in her abilities and plucky in face of men’s excesses. Instead, we have Flaemmchen and Grusinskaya. The former has only a nickname, meaning “little flame.” The moniker relates to Flaemmchen’s sexual appeal, maybe even her vital spirit, but certainly not her intellect or abilities. She is a young woman of that socially indeterminate space between lower middle and working class, and she is from the start in imminent danger of falling into prostitution. Danger also pervades the scenes involving Grusinskaya, an aging ballerina, once a sensation across Europe, now struggling to live up to her reputation. In the end, both Grusinskaya and Flaemmchen find the intimacy they need but from men who are both fated to die. And in order to get to the point of

²⁴ These words come from a précis by the Polizeipräsident Berlin, who, a few months into the Nazi period, banned the play under consideration: *Posada, oder der große Coup im Hotel Ritz*, based on the novel by Walter Serner, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, Nr. 17036.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sarah Clement, “Menschen im Hotel: Vicki Baum’s Symbol for Women in the City,” in *The Image of the City in Literature, Media, and Society: Selected Papers from the 2003 Conference, Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery*, eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan (Pueblo, Colo.: Colorado State University-Pueblo, 2003), 232.

loving someone, both women are almost undone in the process. Grusinskaya nearly falls victim to a jewel heist (and an unrelated attempt at suicide); Flaemmchen almost slips into the underworld. In both cases, predatory men lurk in proximity: Gaigern, who with bated breath stalks his incipient victim, Grusinskaya, and Preysing, who books the adjoining room for his newest plaything, Flaemmchen. For Baum's principal female characters, the grand hotel is a site of impending victimization. Hundreds of doors offer little protection.

Baum enumerates the ways in which these doors also serve as barriers, if not between the genders, then among the classes. The grand hotel as setting affords uncommon opportunities to put people of different stations into conflict and sometimes confraternity, as Kracauer observed. Baum takes full advantage. When the Baron von Gaigern, a real aristocrat but swindler nonetheless, asks for a room, and Senf, assistant to the chef de reception, expresses his reservations—Gaigern might well be a criminal, given the money he spends—Rohna responds, “That will do, Senf Gaigern's all right. I know him. He was at school with my brother at Feldkirch. There's no need to put [the detective] on to *him*.”²⁷ Checked in, Gaigern goes about planning his next crime. Next through the revolving door enters Otto Kringelein, the petty bourgeois bookkeeper, who demands the finest room in the house. In fact, he has asked twice before and been denied both times. Rohna refuses again, but Kringelein lets drop the name of his employer, Preysing, the chief executive of a manufacturing concern. In that case, a vacancy magically appears and Kringelein is shown up to the hotel's dingiest guestroom. (He eventually fights his way into one of the best rooms in the house.) The snobbery of

²⁷ Vicki Baum, *Grand Hotel*, trans. Basil Creighton (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016), 9–10.

Rohna, a fallen aristocrat, leads him to commit a grave error. Instead of subjecting Kringelein and Gaigern to equal levels of scrutiny, Rohna hassles a paying customer but admits a dangerous criminal. The rest of what happens in the novel is largely a consequence of Rohna's mistake, a function of his reflex elitism.

When Kringelein sits down to his first dinner in a grand hotel, there is further embarrassment. In this way, *Menschen im Hotel* follows the example of Murnau's *Der letzte Mann*. For Baum, too, depicting the parvenu at table is a chance to examine the stuff of social distinction. Immediately, Kringelein finds the "caviar [to be] a disappointment":

Tastes like herring and costs 9 marks.... The menu—22 marks plus tip—he had to forgo, as he couldn't stomach it. Burgundy was a thick, sour wine Rich people had funny tastes, or so it seemed. Kringelein soon saw that he was dressed wrong and eating with the wrong pieces of cutlery....He just couldn't get rid of the damnable nervous tremble that had stayed with him all evening as it piled up with little embarrassments of all kinds.²⁸

This passage is a prime example for Bourdieu's insight into class as a function of "the struggle for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs," which, in turn, refer back to a set of "choices."²⁹ When trotted out in public, these choices "are automatically associated with a distinct position and therefore endowed with a distinct value."³⁰ The value of what rich people choose to eat, Kringelein learns, has little to do with how

²⁸ Baum, *Grand Hotel*, 49.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010), 247.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 244

pleasurable it might be to consume—not very, it turns out—but with the social prestige, communicated through statements of taste, that lends bad food so much meaning.

Lily of the Dust, an American film of the same year, directed by Dimitri Buchowetzki, uses the very act of dining to similar effect. When Lily, a library attendant from the provinces, marries Colonel Mertzbach for his money and position, she finds herself transported to the Adlon on a whirlwind honeymoon that lays bare the social disparity between herself and her new husband. Like Jannings's porter, she outs herself through a series of dining-room faux pas.³¹ In Walther Ruttmann's 1927 *Berlin: Symphony of a Big City*, too, which juxtaposes a starving, fatherless family in the streets with the production and consumption of luxury foods in a grand hotel, dinner again becomes a scene of social disharmony. Another German film of the same year, *Grand Hotel...!*, directed by Johannes Guter, makes the same move. The opening shot is of a gentleman and his two female companions stepping from car to hotel entrance—and then the beggar woman again, this time childless, but no less remarkable to the viewer. Primarily vehicles for mass entertainment, these films also moralized where they could. The grand hotel, more than any other setting, let filmmakers set the classes of Weimar society in uncomfortable proximity.

The publication of Baum's novel and the subsequent stage versions and film versions of 1929–1932 sit at a turning point in the history of German hotel films—a turning point that reflects changing tastes and changing social, economic, and political conditions. Between stabilization and the stock market crash, German hotel films had

³¹ *Lily of the Dust* (1924), an American film set in Germany, is probably lost. I describe the scene as it was reported in a review of the film in *The New York Times*. *Lily of the Dust* came out that year and was directed by Dimitri Buchowetzki. It starred Pola Negri, Ben Lyon, Noah Beery, Raymond Griffith, William J. Kelly, and Jeanette Daudet. See "The Screen: The Colonel's Lady," *New York Times*, August 25, 1924.

taken a social-critical approach to class relations in the modern metropolis. After the stock market crash, light comedy became the order of the day. To be sure, films of 1924–1929 had featured a good dose of slapstick and hijinks, even and especially *Der letzte Mann*, but as the Great Depression worsened, comedic sequences supplanted the social critiques of the later 1920s. Filmmakers sensed that what audiences now wanted was an escape from the crisis, not a meditation on it.³² This shift coincided with the introduction of sound films, which expanded the range of jokes available to screenwriters. In search of social advancement, love, or both, characters enter the filmic grand hotels of the 1930s with a good deal of pluck and good humor. Inside, they mostly face issues of mistaken identity and comical miscommunication, not the debasement and despair of their 1920s counterparts.³³ *Menschen im Hotel*, in its journey from serialized novel to book to German stage play to Broadway play to Hollywood film, follows a similar progression.³⁴

The stage version of *Menschen im Hotel* opened in Berlin in January 1930, starring Gustaf Gründgens and directed by Max Reinhardt. The production played 70 times at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz and, in short order, graced dozens of other stages—127, to be exact, according to Leonardo Quaresima. Just a few months after it

³² On Hollywood comedies of the Depression-era and filmmakers' tendency to try to smooth over social conflict, see Ina Hark, ed., *American Cinema of the 1930s: Themes and Variations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 9–11ff. Cf., Iwan Morgan, introduction to *Hollywood and the Great Depression: American Film, Politics, and Society in the 1930s*, eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 1–26.

³³ The trend continued into the Nazi period. Film scholar Alfons Arns's list includes *Der Fall Brenken* and *Jungfrau gegen Mönch* (1934), *Du kannst nicht treu sein* (1935/1935), *Die Umwege des schönen Karl* (1937), *Narren im Schnee* (1938), and *Kitty und die Weltkonferenz* (1939), 18.

³⁴ Cf., Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, (op. cit.), who shows that for a similar case, the translation of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* across different media, many of the more objectionable themes fell by the wayside. According to Jelavich, this pattern of preemptive censorship was in fact voluntary on the part of the writers and production teams, who balked in face of Nazi threats in the last years of Weimar. The film version of *Menschen im Hotel*, a Hollywood production, was perhaps subject to a different process of translation and preemptive censorship, driven more insistently by the changing tastes of a movie-going public that had to contend with what appeared to be the crisis of American capitalism in 1931.

opened in Berlin, *Menschen im Hotel* was delighting audiences in Baum's hometown, Vienna, at the Volkstheater.³⁵ She had co-written the script, which retained many of the themes and scenes of the original novel.

The Broadway version, "the season's greatest hit," was less faithful, having been translated for a foreign audience nonetheless familiar with the original novel, which had already come out in English. For more than a year—that is, 459 performances—Broadway actors offered New York audiences the imagined experience of grand hotel life in Berlin.³⁶ MGM Studios caught wind of the production's success and signed a contract with Baum for the rights and her services as co-writer of the screenplay.

The result was the classic film *Grand Hotel*. Not quite the saccharine, silly treatment of grand hotel life now common by the film's release in 1932, *Grand Hotel* nonetheless took the edge off Baum's original serialized novel. There is little of the social-critical juxtapositions or the new objectivity that characterized the first iteration of *Menschen im Hotel*. Writing much later, Baum herself attributed the shift to her own intentions: "I wanted...something totally new and different for the film version: an expressionistic, abstracted hotel, as it were—an unrelenting maelstrom of faces, forms [*Gestalten*], scenes [*Kulissen*], telephone conversations, ringing bells, beds, things."³⁷ This was no longer a story about the ways in which the grand hotel magnified social conflicts and confraternities in 1920s Berlin. It was about the relentless excitement and high drama that resulted from the combination of personalities, at times funny, at times

³⁵ Quaresima, "Menschen im Hotel," 62.

³⁶ Ibid., 63

³⁷ Ibid.

poignant, but ultimately suitable for audiences at the Capitol cinema in Berlin, where it premiered just sixteen days after Hitler's assumption of power.

Social-critical scenes from the novel would have felt sorely out of place in the MGM film that German audiences viewed over the course of 1933.³⁸ The rewrite of Kringelein's exchange with Rohna set the new tone. We do not see him get refused a room out of hand, a decision based on little more than the social signals of Kringelein's carriage, attire, and accent. In the Hollywood film, Kringelein already has his room, and he is trying to get the attention of the receptionist. The initial difficulty is not that the receptionist has already decided to deny Kringelein his wishes, as Baum has it in the novel. The problem, instead, is that the receptionist is presently assisting a female customer in need of several rooms for her family. Class conflict is still present, but the other guest's gender makes it more difficult to sympathize with Kringelein, who behaves so dishonorably by throwing a tantrum in front of, and partly about, a lady standing next to him. In the novel, Kringelein is only ever kind to women. Another spectacular confrontation transpires in the bar, between Kringelein and Preysing, but its social-critical edge is also mitigated by Kringelein's ridiculousness, this time in the form of a descent into laughter, perhaps madness. Gone, too, is all trace of Kringelein's disappointment and alienation. Lionel Barrymore plays Kringelein as an excitable underdog or an unlucky everyman, not necessarily at home in his surroundings, but nonetheless unflappable in his way in face of the Preysing's rapacity. That is a different Kringelein from the one in the novel, who feels a curious combination of disenchantment and awe at the grand hotel

³⁸ Ibid. There were three versions on offer in Germany: the original Hollywood reel, the same reel but with German subtitles, and a version dubbed into German.

scene, the effects of which are mixed. At a few points in the novel, he prevails over his social betters. But in most cases, he does not.

Baum's novel, Murnau's *Der letzte Mann*, Kracauer's reviews, and Roth's essays dwell in this pessimistic ambiguity, where the grand hotel affords people the opportunity to better themselves but where people rarely, if ever, cut loose from the chains of class society. If anything, the grand hotel is just as easily a distillation of social distinction under pressure, prone to explosion. Although the later hotel films, of the Depression era, mined this material for comedy, thereby blunting the social-critical edge of hotel films of the 1920s, they nonetheless continued to acknowledge the fraught situation on the ground. The actual grand hotels of Berlin were now straining under the weight of old and new societal and political pressures.

Under Pressure

The development of Berlin's grand hotel industry in Weimar's so-called "golden years" (1924–1928), as well as life in the hotels, was characterized by the instability of social relations, economic conditions, and worldviews. My account of this period as it relates to the question of Meinhardt's decision is impressionistic; I cannot make a direct connection, with the evidence at hand, between the instability of grand hotel life in 1924–1928 and the pessimism with which Meinhardt and his colleagues approached their world. Instead, I offer an account and analysis of how, from the vantage of the grand hotel in Berlin, relationships across classes, genders, nations, industries, and political institutions failed to stabilize in the half decade between hyperinflation and the collapse of the German economy. I will present hoteliers' pessimism as a logical conclusion, if not an outright effect, of these instabilities.

After 1923, labor relations improved, even if the confrontational politics of the far left and the fair right never quite abated.³⁹ Increased cooperation among owners, managers, and employees helped defuse tensions.⁴⁰ In April 1924, the board of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft admitted Peter Saftig, a waiter, and Gustaf Haseloff, a painter, to the board as representatives of an employees' council (*Betriebsrat*).⁴¹ Their presence, however, often proved to be merely ceremonial.⁴² Strikes continued well into the 1920s.⁴³

Conservative conceptions of women's work and women's place in the grand hotel also persisted.⁴⁴ Harry Nitsch's 1925 article, for example, "The Working Woman in the Hotel," attempted to come to terms with the role of the hotelier's wife. He cast her as a woman working backstage to provide an invisible "something," a "spirit," a sense of "home." She was the foil for the frontstage woman—the glamorous female guest in furs and lipstick. Leave these lobby sirens for a moment to "take a look behind the curtains," Nitsch advised, where the hotelier's wife and other middle-class women in supervisory roles could be found "bind[ing] and weav[ing] the roses of heaven into life on earth."

³⁹ Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 108.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴¹ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft for April 28, 1924, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁴² In June 1924, for example, Saftig and Haseloff brought forth the council's request for modest winter bonuses, but to no avail: the board recommended that they try again in better times. Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft for June 12, 1924, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1046.

⁴³ A cooks' strike in 1924 laid up scores of hotel restaurants. When the Adlon employed strikebreakers in the kitchen, the rumor spread that the strikers might attack the hotel. That would be a particularly awkward eventuality, the *New York Times* reported, since Friedrich Ebert still patronized the restaurant and allowed himself to be served food prepared by the strikers' replacements. Although the strike of March 1924 did not involve waiters, their grievances of the period 1918-1923 persisted into the subsequent period of relative stability. See "German President Eats Dinner Cooked by Strikebreakers," *New York Times*, March 8, 1924.

⁴⁴ On women's work outside the household in the Weimar period, see Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberty*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), 203, who argues that the "gender-related limits of social, economic and political action had remained largely unchanged," with motherhood still the supreme ideal for German women. Cf., Susanne Rouette, "Mothers and Citizens: Gender and Social Policy in Germany after the First World War," *Central European History* 30 (1997), 48; Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*, 18-21 and 134-200.

(Here Nitsch was quoting Schiller.)⁴⁵ The reality was somewhat different. Margarete Wessel, wife of Eduard Wessel, manager of the Fürstenhof, was representative of women of her situation in having laid down the distaff and picked up the masculine skills necessary to keep a highly complex business in running order. A reference letter from the Kur- und Soolbad Bernburg attested to her good performance as a skilled bookkeeper, among other things.⁴⁶

As owner of the cloakroom concession at the Fürstenhof, Martha Windisch (Chapter 1) occupied a liminal place between frontstage and backstage that defied Nitsch's binary; her position as a proprietor, but a proprietor of a concession associated with domestic service, further complicated her place, particularly in the 1920s as she commenced the slide of downward social mobility. In August 1928, she found herself unable to pay the rent to Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for her cloakroom concession.⁴⁷ A look at her movement across Berlin attests to the decline in status that accompanied her difficulties. In 1912, Windisch had resided on the fashionable Lützowstraße, number 105, only a few steps from the Kurfürstendamm, in Charlottenburg. The 1920s took her to the Potsdamer Straße 27b, a busy, socially heterogeneous place three miles away from the rarified west and her previous life.⁴⁸ Other *Pächter* also faced difficulties. Lohnert and his

⁴⁵ This move reflected a wider tendency after World War I to reserve skilled jobs for men and to relegate women back to what Annemarie Tröger has called "the earthenbound ideal of German womanhood." See Annemarie Tröger, "The Creation of a Female Assembly-Line Proletariat," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review, 1984), 243.

⁴⁶ Zeugnis for Frau Margarete vhl. Wessel of October 15, 1924, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 825.

⁴⁷ The hotel manager asked for a rent reduction on her behalf. Lohnert, although "in principle against it," granted her wish but made it clear that this would be the last time: "People take the good months...and the bad, as do we." See Hans Lohnert to C. A. Türke, letter of August 28, 1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1166. Windisch's problem was that there had not been "good months" for some time. She had only been able to cover costs, and she had sustained a series of demotions in her quality of life since the war. Martha Windisch to Hans Lohnert, letter of August 26, 1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1166.

⁴⁸ Pachtvertrag of December 21, 1912, and Pachtvertrag of June 1, 1921, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1166.

counterparts at the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, afraid of losing further rents, moved preemptively to terminate what leases they could and, in this way, often ended the livelihoods of *Mittelständler*, or members of the small-business-owning middle class. These actions put the grand hotel on the list of commercial institutions that appeared to care more about profit than social harmony and the needs of the *Mittelstand* and other members of the lower middle class.⁴⁹

For Baum's lower-middle-class antihero, Kringelein, the sensory experience of luxury is by turns nauseous, repulsive, enervating, upsetting—in a word, inhospitable.⁵⁰ The shock of this sad reality of grand hotel living both disappoints and fascinates Kringelein as he takes in the scents (“coffee, cigarettes, perfumes..., asparagus, flowers”), sights (“marble pillars..., the illuminated fountain, the easy chairs..., dress coats and dinner jackets..., bare arms..., jewelry and furs), sounds (“music in the distance”), and textures (“the thick red carpet, [which] impressed him most of all”).⁵¹

⁴⁹ At the Fürstenhof, Lohnert and Türke raised the rent of the theater tickets concession well past what he knew that the *Pächter* could afford. Since the concession was held by two men, the idea was that raising the rent would force out one or perhaps both of them, and then the Fürstenhof might run its own ticket agency, as did the Bristol, the Kaiserhof, and the Central. C. A. Türke to Hans Lohnert, letter of February 1, 1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1145. On *Mittelstand* fears of downward social mobility and the divide between the “old” *Mittelstand* and the “new,” comprised of white-collar workers (*Angestellten*), see Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 156–158 and 233; Thomas Childers, “The Social Language of Politics in Germany: The Sociology of Political Discourse in the Weimar Republic,” *American Historical Review* 95 (1990), 332–333; David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 42–43. On the “negative self-definition” of the *Mittelständler*, somewhere between proletarian and bourgeois, see Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 237–238; and Benjamin Lapp, *Revolution from the Right: Politics, Class, and the Rise of Nazism in Saxony, 1919–1933* (Boston: Humanities, 1997), 136–183; Michael Hughes, *Paying for the German Inflation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 48–50, 107–109. On “the contentious historiography of the sociology of Nazism” but also the broad acceptance of the idea that the hard core of Nazi support came from aggrieved *Mittelständler* (including independent artisans) and disgruntled farmers, see Federick McKittrick, *From Craftsmen to Capitalists: German Artisans from the Third Reich to the Federal Republic, 1939–1953* (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 12–14.

⁵⁰ For Bourdieu, distinction and disgust are closely related, if not actually the one and the same: “In short, the philosophical sense of distinction is another form the visceral disgust at vulgarity.” In this inverted case, the vulgar man feels visceral disgust at what is supposed to be good, or at least elite, taste. See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 502.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

Drawn to these stimuli, Kringelein is also repelled by them almost immediately, and then with increasing force over the course of the novel. Luxury is at once the object of Kringelein's fantasy and the agent of his alienation. The repulsive properties of luxury were part of the composite "cultural idea of the hotel"—an unfair formulation, according to a contributor to *Das Hotel*, who argued that hotels were now being "persecuted" for their popular association with "luxury as it is today spoken about"—in a word, "empty...unproductive." There was, indeed, according to the writer, a pervasive "hatred of people in possession of a bathroom," this hatred being the product of a form of social envy that singled out the hotel in particular.⁵²

In fact, not every guest of a grand hotel got his or her own bathroom, and grand hotels in the 1920s were fast becoming less luxurious even as the nature of demand for luxury changed. In an essay on the operation of grand hotels in Germany, Kurt Lüpschütz, managing director of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, noted the reduction in demand for, and subsequently supply of, the most luxurious apartments (*Prunkapartements*) in hotels on account of the "disappearance of...Germany's many royal courts as well as the official festivities of the court in Berlin."⁵³ For the first time, moreover, Berlin's grand hotels began to advertise value for money. A Kaiserhof brochure offered "small, reasonably priced meals for one."⁵⁴ And as food simplified, interiors deteriorated. Many luxury hotels postponed renovations to the extent that they lost their first-class status in the eyes of peers and guidebook writers. By 1925, the Hotel Baltic, once one of the finer hotels in the city, had sunk below the "level of first class,"

⁵² "Die kulturellen Ideen des Hotels," *Das Hotel*, September 4, 1925.

⁵³ Kurt Lüpschütz, "Organisation der Hotels," in *Fremdenverkehr*, ed. Industrie- und Handelskammer zu Berlin (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1929), 412.

⁵⁴ Brochure, undated but probably 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1032.

according to Hans Lohnert, who argued to the board of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft that the place needed extensive "renovations and re-outfitting."⁵⁵

The ravages of war and the violent peace that followed it, during both of which hotels refrained from capital investment, created by the mid-1920s the need for major renovations, which hoteliers began to carry out in 1925. In that year and the next, the Excelsior added more public rooms and expanded the lobby.⁵⁶ The Coburger Hof, a large hotel near the Friedrichstraße station, installed telephones in every room and increased the number of ensembles.⁵⁷ A smaller but quite luxurious hotel, the Hotel am Tiergarten, in Charlottenburg, spread the benefits of a 16-million-Mark renovation over its 70 rooms, all of which now had their own bathrooms—a first for Berlin.⁵⁸ Yet any single modification had at best a thirty-year run before it would be seen as "completely outdated" and in need of renewal, according to a contemporary analysis in the *Berliner Wirtschaftsberichte*.⁵⁹

Tastes and priorities had changed dramatically since the inception of Berlin's grand hotels in the Imperial period. Now what was wanted was cleanliness above all else: hygiene became a new, more virtuous mode of luxurious living, and so Berlin's grand hotels were quick to accentuate what they had deemphasized before: the bathroom. A mid-1920s promotional book for the Hotel Esplanade left the lavatory door wide open (fig. 35). "Elegant and comfortable, convenient and hygienic" were the "watchwords" of the day, the book declared.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ H. Suhrbier to Hans Lohnert, letter of January 7, 1925, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1077.

⁵⁶ Karl-Heinz Arnold, "Verbrannte Pracht am Anhalter Bahnhof," in *Berlinische Monatschrift* 5 (1999), 27.

⁵⁷ "Hotel Coburger Hof, Berlin," *Das Hotel*, August 14, 1925.

⁵⁸ "Internationale Hotel-Messe," *Das Hotel*, March 25, 1921.

⁵⁹ "Berlin als Hotelstadt," *Berliner Wirtschaftsberichte*, December 8, 1928.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 35. Guest room interior. Promotional book for the Hotel Esplanade, published in 1926, in LAB, 96-211. Landesarchiv Berlin.

The installation of new bathrooms was part of an expensive larger program of modernization that in many cases took its cues from innovations in the design of ocean liners.⁶¹ An article for *Das Hotel* in 1925 observed that “the shipbuilding industry and the hotel industry are closely connected.” Both had to combat “the feeling of crampedness and crowdedness [by] deploying all possible technological and organizational means.” Both were charged with the safety of property and people. Both had to accommodate and please a heterogeneous, transient population. Yet ship designers had pulled ahead of hotel architects when it came to marrying technology and luxury, the author conceded: “it is in

⁶¹ According to design historian Anne Wealleans, *Designing Liners: A History of Interior Design Afloat* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 78, a “battle for prestige” broke out among European and American lines after World War I. In some ways, this was a resumption of prewar modes of national competition, especially between Germany and the United Kingdom.

the cabins of the modern steamer where H.G. Wells's futuristic conception of the hotel room is being realized."⁶²

The article spent more words on the kitchens than on guestrooms, however, because the former were changing the fastest. Patents for devices such as a cheese-cutting machine, a champagne swizzle stick with built-in thermometer, a potato-slicing machine, and a mechanical egg-grabber came to light every month in a new insert to *Das Hotel* called *Technik im Hotel*, which advised readers on how best to find, afford, and profit from the latest inventions. The most important of these was the walk-in refrigerator (fig. 36).⁶³ Finally, wrote Dr. R. Glücksmann, professor at a hospitality trade school in Düsseldorf, "the latest technologies in refrigeration have minimized the risks that storing foodstuffs had until recently" presented.⁶⁴

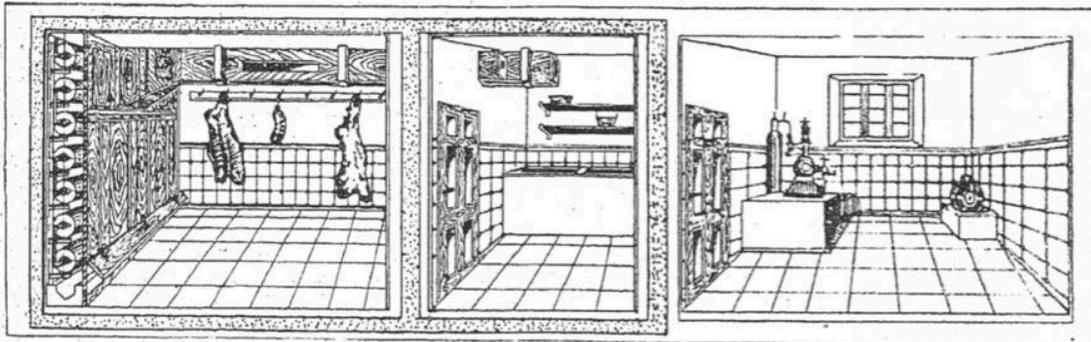


Figure 36. Illustration of a "modern refrigerator" by the Alpenen Maschinen Aktiengesellschaft in Augsburg, in *Das Hotel*, August 17, 1925. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Although refrigerators, refrigeration rooms, and other such technologies tended to land in spaces off limits to guests, hoteliers still found ways to publicize their latest

⁶² "Das moderne Schiffshotel," *Das Hotel*, December 18, 1925.

⁶³ "Patentbericht," *Technik im Hotel*, March 2, 1928.

⁶⁴ Richard Glücksmann, "Die Betriebswirtschaft des Hotels," in *Fremdenverkehr*, ed. Industrie- und Handelskammer zu Berlin (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1929), 382. The breakthrough came not a moment too soon, according to a contributor to *Technik im Hotel*, who argued that now, in times of economic uncertainty, it was more important than ever to be able to reduce the risk of spoilage.

backroom acquisitions. A 1926 advertisement in Paris's *Le Matin* for the Hotel Excelsior in Berlin promised "the most modern in hotel technologies," including an electric generator of 920 horsepower and pumps capable of discharging 75,000 liters of water per hour.⁶⁵

This new emphasis on scale and technology reflected the ascent of the American model of commercial hospitality, which underwrote a technological revolution by accessing the potential of economies of scale, a model that fascinated German hoteliers.⁶⁶ Early in the 1920s, *Das Hotel* began to devote large amounts of space in almost every issue to the American hotel industry. Hoteliers' visits to the United States received particular focus. Scarcely two years after the end of the war, two contributors to *Das Hotel* filled three pages with details of a recent trip to the United States, where they were received "with open arms" at the annual banquet of the New York Hotel Men's Association. Having visited dozens of hotels and interviewed several American hoteliers, they wrote in awe of the volume of trade they witnessed and heard about—there was one hotel where "two to three thousand oysters are opened per day," a fact almost as impressive as the refrigerators on hand to keep so many bivalves alive. The highlight, however, was a meeting with E. M. Statler, whose singular vision, these German visitors insisted, made such immensity possible.⁶⁷ *Das Hotel* cast Statler as a man with a different, wholly American, quite original way of doing business. He was charismatic, the

⁶⁵ Advertisement in *Le Matin* (Paris), December 18, 1926.

⁶⁶ On the promise of American optimization, see Charles Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), 29; Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 58–69.

⁶⁷ "Amerikanische Reise-Eindrücke," *Das Hotel*, March 11, 1921. On other such visits by Germans to American firms in the 1920s, see Nolan, *Visions of Modernity*, 18–22.

“most pleasant of people,” always willing to share his experience and expertise.⁶⁸ The results of his genius, *Das Hotel* reported breathlessly, were manifold: “Nearly three hundred thousand rooms a month are occupied. Three and a half million individuals stop at Statler hotels during the course of a year. What an army of pleased and comforted human beings!”⁶⁹

In 1928, a new regular insert to *Das Hotel* appeared, entitled “Hotels in America” and edited by Hans Ullendorff, the liaison between the North American and German hoteliers’ associations. Ullendorff and others projected an image of the modern American hotel as the model of “simplicity and clarity..., particularly in its technical and organizational aspect.” This image reflected a characteristically “American functionalism and practicality” (*Sachlichkeit und praktische Vernunft*) that nonetheless allowed space for elegance and ornament.⁷⁰ The owners of the Esplanade, the Eden, and other grand hotels in Berlin tried to market their properties similarly: as both luxurious and practical, cozy and hygienic, traditional and modern.⁷¹ But a “shortage of capital” endemic to the German economy limited the extent to which German hoteliers could achieve such American heights.

The relative difficulty in finding sources of credit created the tendency “toward combines, mergers, and programs of corporate reorganization,” according to an

⁶⁸ “E. M. Statler,” *Das Hotel*, May 4, 1928. See also Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 127–133.

⁶⁹ “Statler’s Hotel Theory in Action,” *Das Hotel*, April 6, 1928. In the late 1920s, *Das Hotel* experimented with dual-language editions, in English and German.

⁷⁰ Gustav Leonhardt, “Das amerikanische Hotel,” *Das Hotel*, January 6, 1928.

⁷¹ It downplayed the hotel’s storied past, replete with aristocratic and royal personages, in favor of what it touted as the *modernes Hotelsystem*, a reference to the work of the American hotelier E.M. Statler. The Esplanade had learned by his example: it had assimilated “all the developments in Germany and abroad.” It had “combined” lessons in the areas of “art, technology, and hygiene” to outdo even the Americans, who had set the “pattern” but waited on the Germans at the Esplanade to “perfect” it. Promotional book for the Hotel Esplanade, published in 1926, in LAB, 96-211.

economist familiar with the German hotel industry.⁷² Already having acquired the controlling interest in the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft in 1924, Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft purchased a majority stake in the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft the following year.⁷³ Then in 1927, Aschinger's took a step toward what it understood as "rationalization" at the managerial level and merged its two new subsidiaries under the name of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, further concentrating the management and oversight of Berlin's grand hotel industry.⁷⁴ Only the Adlon, Esplanade, Eden, Continental, and Excelsior hotels operated as competitors to the new Aschinger's conglomerate. Fewer hotel corporations meant simplified negotiations when it came to cooperating with competitors to try to set prices and wages. In the middle of the 1920s, for example, non-competition clauses began to appear in managers' contracts.⁷⁵ At the same time, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, even as its managing directors were trying to sell the corporation to Aschinger's, made an agreement with the Esplanade, the

⁷² Emil Theilacker, "Die Bedeutung der Wirtschaftswissenschaften für die Hotelindustrie," *Das Hotel*, September 25, 1925. On Germany in international credit markets, German reliance on credit for investment in industry, and the tendency among German corporations to consolidate, in part a function of their reliance on American credit, see Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 122, 194, 197–222, and 251. On corporate consolidation in Europe more generally in the 1920s, see Derek Aldcroft, *The European Economy, 1914–2000*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 30. On corporate consolidation under a single management authority, the holding company, in the United States at the same time, see George McJimsey, "The Role of the Group in New Deal Planning," in *Great Depression: People and Perspectives*, ed. Hamilton Cravens (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 148–149. See also Frank Costigliola, "The United States and the Reconstruction of Germany in the 1920s," *Business History Review* 50 (1976), 477–502; Charles Feinstein, Peter Temin, Gianni Toniolo, "Private International Capital Flows in Europe in the Inter-War Period," and Gerd Hardach, "Banking in Germany, 1918–1939," both in *Banking, Currency, and Finance in Europe between the Wars*, ed. Charles Feinstein (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 131–150 and 269–295.

⁷³ Prüfungsbericht der Price, Waterhouse & Co. of February 5, 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 626.

⁷⁴ Notarregister, entry of 1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 985; Fusionvertrag zwischen der Firma Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft und der Firma Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft of March 1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 985; Zweiunddreißigster Bericht der Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft of 1928–1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 94; and a history of the firm, on type-written pages, sandwiched among other, unrelated documents, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 606, f. 35.

⁷⁵ Vertrag zwischen der Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, der offenen Handelsgesellschaft "Hotel Adlon Eigentümer Lorenz Adlon," et al., und Ewald Kretschmar of January 9, 1925, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 987; Aufsichtsratsitzung am Freitag den 3ten Oktober 1924, in which the case of Kretschmar having violated his non-competition clause was discussed, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 2.

Excelsior, the Adlon, and the Continental that set the minimum price for wine and champagne.⁷⁶ These developments fell under the rubric of rationalization and modernization as Berlin's hoteliers understood the terms. They also continued a tradition of cartel capitalism in which Meinhardt was a key player.⁷⁷

Rationalization and modernization could not generate demand, however, and therefore failed to support any hotel project as large as those in the United States. The real estate developer Heinrich Mendelssohn did try his hardest to persuade the chief officers of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft that there was a hotel shortage and thus a need for a new, giant hotel.⁷⁸ In November 1927, he sent plans for a property of 650 rooms, 900 beds, and 8000 square meters of reception rooms, restaurants, and ballrooms.⁷⁹ Two years later, in 1929, the proposed room count for this fantasy project had ballooned to 1200.⁸⁰ "When it is finished," Mendelssohn wrote, "the Excelsior might very well feel the pinch," a favorable eventuality for Aschinger's, which now owned most of the Excelsior's competition.⁸¹ But even before the Wall Street crash, Mendelssohn's attempts to get a new hotel built were bound to fail.

⁷⁶ Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, letter of November 30, 1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 644. The Adlon owned the Continental at this point.

⁷⁷ On this tradition, see Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, 103; Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, 13–17, 23–25; Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945–1995*, trans. Brandon Hunziker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 76–79. On William Meinhardt and OSRAM, see Andries Heerding, *The History of N.V. Philips' Gloeilampenfabrieken*, vol. 2, *A Company of Many Parts*, trans. Derek Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 331; Renate Tobies, *Iris Runge: A Life at the Crossroads of Mathematics, Science, and Industry* (Basel: Springer, 2012), 342; Robert Jones and Oliver Marriott, *Anatomy of a Merger: A History of G.E.C., A.E.I. and English Electric* (London: Cape, 1970), 32–36; Hermann Levy, *Industrial Germany: A Study of Its Monopoly Organizations and Their Control by the State* (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), 77–80.

⁷⁸ Hans Lohnert to Hans Friedmann, letter of February 11, 1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 920.

⁷⁹ Bericht des Vorstandes der Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft für das Geschäftsjahr 1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636. Skyscrapers were approved, in principle, throughout the state of Prussia, but only to the extent that a tower would not disturb the neighborhood or cast shadows. See "Allerlei aus aller Welt," *Das Hotel*, February 4, 1921.

⁸⁰ Hans Lohnert to Hans Friedmann, letter of February 11, 1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 920.

⁸¹ Heinrich Mendelssohn to Kurt Lüpschütz, letter of September 23, 1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 920.

The shortage of rooms of the immediate postwar period had evaporated, hoteliers agreed.⁸² (A full third of all rooms in grand hotels now tended to sit empty on any given night.)⁸³ The Verein Berliner Hotels und verwandter Betriebe took the position that the city's number of beds ought to be reduced, and the way to do it was by closing down hotels.⁸⁴

Thus Berlin's grand hoteliers were pleased to hear in 1926 that the Reich government wanted to purchase the Kaiserhof. The acquisition was part of the drive to pull government offices, still flung out across the capital, into the Friedrichstadt and Tiergarten districts. This move would obviate the need for further expenditure on several "physical and human resources," and the Kaiserhof, for its location and size—more than 500 rooms—was from the standpoint of the Reich "most suitable."⁸⁵ For the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft, the Kaiserhof was operating at a loss, so selling it made sense. In a previous round of attempts to purchase the building, in 1917 and 1918, the hue and cry of the city council had delayed the deal, and the end of the war had finished it off. In the meantime, in order to keep the hotel running, the City of Berlin granted the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft a mortgage at cut-rate interest.⁸⁶

In 1926, the city's interest in the case was twofold. First, the Kaiserhof provided valuable tax revenue, while a Reich government office would contribute nothing. Second,

⁸² Lüpschütz, "Organisation der Hotels," 421: "There can be no talk of a shortage of hotel rooms in Berlin; just the opposite is true."

⁸³ Verkauf des Hotels "Der Kaiserhof," Bericht of October 21, 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1031. The sum of all hotel beds, not including beds in *Pensionen*, dropped from 21,000 in 1913 to 19,000 in 1926. In that year, only 2,100 beds belonged to Berlin's six remaining luxury hotels, the Fürstenhof, Bristol, Kaiserhof, Adlon, Esplanade, and Eden. The great railway hotels such as the Central and Excelsior, grand if no longer as luxurious or expensive as the other six, contributed a further thousand beds.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. See Chapter 3.

the cultural and historical importance of the Kaiserhof, combined with its location, anchored the surrounding palaces, government offices, department stores, shopping arcades, cafés, restaurants, and theaters. Much more imposing and impressive than any other structure in the immediate vicinity, the Kaiserhof attracted thousands of visitors a day and then dispersed them, pocketbooks in hand, to the four corners of the Friedrichstadt. Thus a conflict between the Reich and city governments flared up on the issue of the Kaiserhof purchase.

The city's hoteliers came down on the side of the Reich and the sale. A lawyer by the name of Hampe, on behalf of the Verein Berliner Hotels und verwandter Betriebe, wrote Reichsfinanzminister Peter Reinhold in October 1926 in support of the latter's attempts to buy the Kaiserhof. "In the interest of rationalization," Hampe wrote, hotels that were failing to turn a profit ought to be closed. The city was wrong to try to block the sale. Moreover, that effort indicated underlying inconsistencies and hypocrisies, Hampe charged. Although city council members were now decrying the loss of 300 jobs entailed by the sale of the Kaiserhof, the very same members remained silent when their "friends" decided to close factories with workers in the thousands. In the case of the Kaiserhof's workforce, the labor market "should have no trouble absorbing" the surplus. Hampe then attacked another of the city's arguments against the sale of the Kaiserhof, that it would hinder the growth of the city's tourism industries: with so many empty rooms, the hotel scene would benefit from reducing its inventory. Finally, Hampe revealed where he thought the subtext of the debate lay: in party politics. The city of Berlin, he charged, was using the Kaiserhof issue as an opportunity to criticize the Reichsfinanzminister and the Reich coalition government, which fell to the right of the government of the city of

Berlin.⁸⁷ The city wanted to cast the Reich as anti-Berlin by drawing attention to the latter's attempt to rob the Berliners of one of their greatest landmarks.⁸⁸ Despite Hampe's entreaties, the city won in the end and the Kaiserhof survived—but not because the Reichsfinanzminister relented. Rather, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft swooped in and purchased the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft, which owned the Kaiserhof. The advantage to the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft was twofold: first, it eliminated a significant source of competition, which put downward pressure on prices; second, it gave the buyer, with its considerable portfolio of properties, a chance to divert investment to the Kaiserhof and then turn a profit, something the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft was too small and too beleaguered to afford.

Yet the view from Hampe's vantage was gloomy. A consensus was forming between 1924 and the onset of the Great Depression that the market could not sustain the grand hotel scene any longer, at least not at its present scale. This pessimism pervaded the annual reports of Berlin's three hotel corporations and left little room for acknowledging any positive, or even ambiguous, developments in the city's luxury hospitality industry during Weimar's moment of relative stability.

The Politics of Pessimism

The annual reports of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, approved if not co-authored by Meinhardt, reflected a pattern of pessimism and a lack of confidence in the

⁸⁷ On the SPD-run Prussian capital as a counterpoint to the authoritarian tendencies of Weimar, especially its constitution and later executives, see Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 651. On Berlin's as "the butt of ridicule and vituperation" among Weimar's enemies, especially Hitler, see Thomas Friedrich, *Hitler's Berlin: Abused City*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) Hitler's Berlin, 204ff. On funding the capital out of Prussian and Reich moneys, respectively, in the Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi periods, see Engler,

⁸⁸ Verkauf des Hotels "Der Kaiserhof," Bericht of October 21, 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1031.

governments of Germany, Prussia, and Berlin, even as economic and political conditions improved after 1923.⁸⁹ Meinhardt's reports were, in fact, more consistently pessimistic than those of Berlin's other two large hotel corporations, the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft and Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft. Finally, and surprisingly, the annual reports of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft managed to conceal the fact of the corporation's relatively good health in the period between 1924 and 1929. By the end of the decade, the reports no longer served the purpose of informing shareholders and the public of the financial state of the corporation; rather, these documents' principal function became to convey complaints and demands to the authorities—to lobby, not to testify. (This was a curious move considering the fact that the audience for these annual reports was primarily corporate shareholders and investors.) The high frequency of these messages established a pattern of pessimistic language that left little space for the acknowledgement of what was actually going well in these years of relative stability and prosperity, 1924–1928.

Whose language was this? The question has no simple answer. It is not easy to ascribe authorship to the annual reports of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. The reports, which always had to be approved by the chairman of the board, in this case Meinhardt, were the product of collaboration among the managing directors of the corporation, Kurt Lüpschütz, Jakob Voremberg, and Carl Pelzer, later replaced by Heinz Kalveram. Even if it is not possible to know whose words appear at which point, it is safe to assume that the content of the annual reports reflected the wishes of the managing

⁸⁹ On the perception of economic deterioration, see Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 12–14. Cf., Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland, 1918–1933* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2008), 83–133.

directors—Lüpschütz, Voremberg, Pelzer, and Kalveram—and Meinhardt, chairman of the board.

Lüpschütz was a businessman in at least four industries: electricity, gas, entertainment, and hospitality.⁹⁰ By the time of the war, in which he served, Lüpschütz held the title of “Direktor” in the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft.⁹¹ He was also the artistic director of the Wintergarten variety theater and served on the advisory board of the Verein Berliner Hotelbesitzer.⁹² In the 1920s, he began to develop a reputation for expertise in the field of commercial hospitality. A 1926 visit to the United States furnished him with information that became part of an exegesis, published in 1929 in an edited volume on the hospitality and gastronomy industries, on how to set up and run a grand hotel.⁹³ The process of his retirement began in 1931 when Lüpschütz, “in accordance with his own wishes,” stepped down from the board of managers.⁹⁴ Evidence of Lüpschütz’s politics has not survived, though a strand of cultural conservatism is perceptible in his response to the Wintergarten renovation in 1928. In a letter to the architects, whom Lüpschütz accused of a spree of vigilante redecoration, he railed against what he saw as “gratuitous modernism [*unnötige Moderne*]” more suited to a “minor cinema.” Lüpschütz demanded the immediate restoration of the traditional sconces and the banishment of anything he deemed to be “hypermodern.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ “Veränderungen,” *Licht und Lampe: Zeitschrift für die Beleuchtungsindustrie* (1912), 485, in which it was announced that Lüpschütz had assumed a position on the board of the Deutsche Gasglühlicht Aktiengesellschaft (Auergesellschaft).

⁹¹ Annual report of the Verein Berliner Hotel-Besitzer for 1916, in LAB, A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2080.

⁹² “Vereinsnachrichten,” *Das Hotel*, February 2, 1917.

⁹³ Lüpschütz, “Organisation der Hotels” (op. cit.).

⁹⁴ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1931/1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 189.

⁹⁵ Lüpschütz to Bielenberg & Moser, letter of August 20, 1928, in LAB, A Rep. 22, Nr. 1002.

Either Voremberg and Pelzer were less directly involved than Lüpschütz in running the business or the demise of documents inscribed with their names has obscured their roles.⁹⁶ In the case of Voremberg, what we do know is that he served as one of the three managing directors from 1926 to 1933, in which year Lohnert and other members of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft, as the then parent corporation of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, forced out most of their Jewish colleagues. By that time, Voremberg had worked for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for twenty-five years.⁹⁷ Pelzer had also given a quarter century to the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft by the time he was through. He served as a managing director until his death in 1928 or 1929.⁹⁸ Like Voremberg, Pelzer appears to have been less involved in the daily operations of the corporation.⁹⁹ Both, however, would have been equally responsible for drafting the annual reports.

The tone of the annual report for fiscal year 1924–1925 changed little from that of 1923–1924, a period of almost unmitigated disaster for the hotel industry. Points of information that could have generated optimism about the near future of a German

⁹⁶ Voremberg's behind-the-scenes involvement in the attempted purchase of the Adlon may indicate the kinds of tasks his position entailed.

⁹⁷ Hans Lohnert to Pg. Schmauß, Ortsgruppenleiter, Berlin-Dahlem, letter of October 10, 1938, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 59; Protokoll der Sitzung des Ausschusses für Direktions- und Personalangelegenheiten vom 8. November 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 64; minutes of the meeting of the Personalkommission of July 15, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 60; annual reports of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1926/1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 644; annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1927/1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 645; annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1928/1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 94; annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1931/1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 189; meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for September 15, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 39.

⁹⁸ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1928/1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 94.

⁹⁹ Pelzer's oversight of the 1928 Wintergarten renovation may indicate the kinds of work he did in his capacity as a managing director. When Pelzer died, the board tapped Heinz Kalveram, earlier the manager of the Fürstenhof, as the replacement. He served as one of the three managing directors from 1929 until 1935. Kalveram would assume a more prominent role in the firm in the early 1930s, but his contribution appears in later sections of this chapter since for most of the period 1924 to 1928, Kalveram had little to do with the generation of the annual reports.

economy now blessed with a stable currency were nonetheless tempered by dark prognoses based on what Lüpschütz, Voremberg, and Pelzer saw as the “poor general condition of the German economy.”¹⁰⁰ German guests could no longer afford to patronize luxury hotels in the midst of “Germany’s impoverishment,” they lamented.¹⁰¹ The report did not quite lay blame for this impoverishment, but it did acknowledge geopolitical forces at work. Foreigners were staying away, the argument went, largely on account of advertisements abroad that cast a visit to Germany in a negative light. Lüpschütz and the others were quick to blame Germany’s local governments for the bad press: foreign visitors to Germany knew not to expect “some of the entertainments” to which they might be accustomed “on account of officials’ wrongheaded decrees—for example, the ban on dancing in hotels,” which proved to be short-lived.¹⁰² That municipalities in other European countries were more permissive meant that foreigners were more likely to choose one of those places over Berlin as a vacation destination. But the official stance against fun was not the only force to blunt Germany’s competitive edge. There was also the “tremendous [*ungeheuer*] pressure applied by taxes,” which made it “all but impossible for the German hospitality industry to compete with destinations abroad.”¹⁰³ The policies of the state and the municipal governments, more than any other geopolitical or economic forces, were sinking the industry, the 1924/1925 report suggested, and without some reversal and soon, the industry would succumb. Yet the German economy, as well as the profits and the prospects of Berlin’s hotel industry, were actually improving. The managing directors and chairman of the board were obscuring that fact in

¹⁰⁰ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1924/1925, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

the annual report for 1924/1925—a fact that should have been apparent to each of them in the spring of 1925 when they sat down to write it.

The business report for 1926/1927, penned in the summer of 1927 also by Lüpschütz, Pelzer, and Voremberg, downplayed any improvements by evincing an excessively cautious optimism and highlighting the myriad ways in which the government, both in its local and national forms, was undermining the hotel industry and commerce more generally. When the directors admitted to witnessing some improvement, they were quick to disperse qualifying phrases that had the effect of dampening any sense of optimism—for example: “The results of this most recent fiscal year (1926/1927) more or less met those of the previous fiscal year (1925/1926), despite...the higher expenditure on taxes.”¹⁰⁴ The phrasing was slippery. A higher expenditure on taxes actually reflected, in this context, greater revenue, not a higher *rate* of taxation, but Meinhardt and his directors were comfortable leaving this fact buried in the summary of accounts that followed the introductory essay. They were still using the annual report as an opportunity to campaign against the present tax regime.

For the 1927/1928 report, generated in the midst of further improvement, Lüpschütz, Pelzer, Voremberg, and Meinhardt, instead of acknowledging their good fortunes, attacked national, state, and local governments anew, this time for the failure to spur tourism. The city of Berlin had, the report conceded, made great efforts to increase traffic to the capital. “Large-scale events and the creation of new attractions” were supposed to have “revived tourism in Berlin.” The hotel industry, too, had done its bit, Meinhardt and the others contended, but all such efforts foundered on the rocks of local,

¹⁰⁴ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1926/1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 644.

state, and national tax policies. Success could only have been possible with a “reprieve” from taxes, which were still too high to allow any business, but particularly a hotel, to turn a profit and thus give back in some way to the national economy.¹⁰⁵ Again, the annual report became a place for railing against tax policy and, by extension, making claims that were political in the sense of suggesting how the state should and should not collect and distribute resources for the purpose of improving national and local economic conditions. The suggestions were overwhelmingly conservative: this and the other business reports of the later 1920s never missed an opportunity to make the case that lowering or even eliminating corporate taxes, however crucial the proceeds were to the social and economic goals of the Republic, would ultimately revive the German economy and, in turn, stabilize German social relations and politics.

The annual report for fiscal year 1928/1929—approved by Meinhardt and authored by Lüpschütz, Voremberg, and Ernst Kalveram, who had replaced the now deceased Pelzer—began to register the decline in tourism that accompanied a general slowdown in the German economy after the middle of 1928. Although the number of foreign guests had increased slightly, there was not enough of a surplus to compensate for the shortfall in domestic custom.¹⁰⁶ For all their efforts to maintain a dark outlook on the future of the business, the managing directors and Meinhardt did not foresee, when this report was written in the spring of 1929, that that autumn would bring a global economic disturbance of unprecedented intensity in modern history. The pessimism of the reports does not indicate that Meinhardt and his managing directors were able to predict or were even trying to predict the future. Rather, the expression of pessimism reflects the attempt

¹⁰⁵ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1927/1928, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 645.

¹⁰⁶ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1930/1931, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 94.

to solve two problems: first, to justify to shareholders several consecutive years of low dividends, and second, to intervene in public-political discussions on taxation, state expenditure, and local and national policies related to commerce and the hotel industry in particular.

Meinhardt's and the managing directors' pessimism in the annual reports came close to misrepresenting the state of affairs for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft between 1924 and 1929. An independent study of the corporation, published in *Der deutsche Volkswirt* in November 1929, did indeed confirm some of the annual reports' negative points—the decrease in German hotel guests and the failure of government programs to boost tourism, for example. But the study also established grounds for optimism, especially with respect to the gastronomy concessions. Moreover, overall revenues from 1925 to 1928 had increased dramatically: 4.5 percent from 1925/1926 to 1926/1927, 55.6 percent from that fiscal year to 1927/1928, and then a further 29.8 percent up to the summer of 1929.¹⁰⁸ These figures had been present in the directors' respective annual reports but buried under introductions that did all they could to divert attention from the good news below.

In fact, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft as a whole, in light of the performance of all its branches, was doing quite well by 1928. Its principal source of revenue being rents from retailers and not room fees or restaurant bills, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft reaped a whirlwind of cash as soon as the German economy stabilized in 1924. In 1928/1929, the corporation pulled in 1.1 million Marks in rent, a full quarter

¹⁰⁸ Dividends were seven percent of profits in the fiscal years 1925/1926 and 1926/1927, compared with ten percent in 1912/1913. "Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft (Bristol, Kaiserhof, Bellevue, Baltic, Centralhotel)," in *Der Deutsche Volkswirt: Zeitschrift für Politik und Wirtschaft*, November 8, 1929.

of which came from the Central-Hotel's retail units. Yet this particularly profitable side of the hotel business—the renting of shop space on ground floors—like other positive points, escaped mention in the annual reports. The only sign of optimism, and an oblique one at that, was the rise in dividends for the fiscal year 1928/1929, the first such increase since the war, from seven to nine percent. If this development engendered optimism, however, it did so tacitly. Meinhardt and his managing directors persisted throughout the 1920s in downplaying the various ways in which business had improved since the tumults of 1918–1923.

Why did Meinhardt and his managing directors mislead in this way? Why did they bury good news under pessimistic introductions? They did not justify their actions, but a look at the business reports of other hotel corporations reveals an industry-wide tendency to downplay the positive. The tone of the Berliner Hotel-Gesellschaft's annual reports, for example, tended to be mixed, to give several examples of improvement only to dash readers' hopes with dramatic pronouncements of decline. The business reports of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft were likewise mixed, if more extreme in the swings between optimism and pessimism. There were the same complaints about “suffering” under the burden of taxes both from the state (*Staat*) and the municipality (*Kommune*) and the same complaints about the failure of the authorities to do enough to increase tourism.¹⁰⁹ The first half of 1926, the managing directors reported, had indeed been bad, but then conditions improved to the extent that an “encouraging picture” had emerged by the end of the year. The optimism persisted well into 1927, when the managing directors drafted a particularly rosy report for the year 1926.¹¹⁰ Yet 1928 dispelled this confidence.

¹⁰⁹ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

In that year, the government's foreign policy came into Aschinger's crosshairs. "The monstrous burden of the Dawes Plan and the duty to pay 'reparations,' which rests on all levels of society, is impeding...the recovery of the German economy."¹¹¹

This statement made a series of political and economic claims. First, it used scare quotes to express a rejection of the terms of the peace settlement. Then it presented its protest under a veil of altruism—the need to raise awareness of the plight of *every* class of German. But Aschinger's was not heaping scorn on the entente alone, although that appears to be the case. The entente, after all, had not forced the hotel industry to pay up. In fact, the terms of the Dawes Plan exempted hotels and related businesses.¹¹² But the Reich government, as a means of spreading the burden of reparations more evenly across the economy—all toward the end of blunting the effects of reparations—chose to extract from the hotel industry a portion of the payments.¹¹³ This line, then, worked similarly and in parallel to conservative and ultra-conservative revisionist claims that the entente was not the only or even principal author of German suffering; it was the Republic that must bear the guilt of having accepted and agreed to administer the unjust punishment.

The same report made further forays into political speech with the anti-worker, anti-socialist language it used to protest rising wages and the eight-hour workday: "The labor laws around the catering trades have become a special burden."¹¹⁴ Yet for all these complaints, tinged with the ire of the anti-Republican right, neither the catering nor the hotel business was going badly, Aschinger's admitted. "With respect to our hotels," the

¹¹¹ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

¹¹² On the Dawes Plan's exemptions, see Albrecht Ritschl, *Deutschlands Krise und Konjunktur, 1924–1934: Binnenkonjunktur, Auslandsverschuldung und Reparationsproblem zwischen Dawes-Plan und Transfersperre* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), 196–198.

¹¹³ Audit report by Price, Waterhouse & Co. of February 5, 1926, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 626.

¹¹⁴ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1927, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636.

1927 report read, there had been “an improvement”—“despite,” of course, missing the mark of the “pre-war period.”¹¹⁵ Nostalgia for the old regime was a particular feature of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft reports.

If we find ourselves able to report a substantial expansion of the business, of openings and re-openings and also of the acquisition of two properties, then these facts are not to be taken as a sign that operations have returned to that prewar trajectory so favorable to the development of our enterprise. No, the necessary conditions for that, embedded in the way things used to be, no longer exist.¹¹⁶

This report was a model of anti-Republicanism and had a good deal in common with prior reports from the period of hyperinflation, inflation, unrest, and revolution. But the 1927 report also did something different. It told readers, presumably shareholders but also any interested parties in industry and government, exactly how to interpret the data—to interpret it against reason. The data pointed to good news, not bad: growth at or at least near 1913 levels and a hotel industry as healthy as it had been in fifteen years. The problem from the perspective of the board, the managing directors, and the shareholders was not that the state was killing the business. It was not. The problem was that the state was taking too large a cut of the proceeds. And for that, Aschinger’s managing directors and probably Fritz Aschinger himself peppered the annual reports with fiercely anti-Republican pronouncements.

Aschinger’s took a harder line against the Republic than did the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. Nonetheless, the chairmen and managing directors of both corporations used their annual reports to protest government policy and at some points to

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

malign the Republic, its labor and fiscal policies in particular. In these cases, the tendency to see the darkest side of any development in the business—that is, a chronic pessimism even in face of improving conditions—easily spilled over into anti-Republicanism, even when, as in the case of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, the business was headed by a Jewish member of the German Democratic Party.

The Great Depression

In the aftermath of “Black Friday,” October 25, 1929, which took its toll on German markets, the profits of Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, particularly its hotel branch, began to dwindle. Margins shrunk almost to 1924 levels, and this after revenue from the first nine months of the year had appeared to guarantee an increase in annual profits. Indeed, “there is very little good to say about our hotel business,” communicated the board in its annual report for 1929. It cited the *Jahresbericht der Berliner Handelskammer* (*Annual Report of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce*) in its declaration that “since 1923,” under hyperinflationary conditions, there has been “no year as inauspicious as this.”¹¹⁷

The main problem, according to the board of Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft in 1930, was the steady reduction of the clientele, particularly with respect to business travelers, “a great part, perhaps the greatest part, of whom” had disappeared. Compounding the effects of this development, the average duration of a guest’s stay began to slide in the last quarter of 1929.¹¹⁸ Data on 1931 showed the situation to be worsening. At “every impasse [*Stockung*]” in the course of this “crisis,” there was an accompanying drop in the number of business travelers. Moreover, average nightly stay

¹¹⁷ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1929, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 637.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

per guest continued to drop. Recreational tourism also suffered, particularly its international component. (In light of the signs of an incipient civil war in Berlin in 1932, foreigners were staying away.) Of the 2,200 steamer passengers who arrived at Bremerhaven in summer 1932, only eighty listed Berlin as a destination. Americans, “decisive” in hoteliers’ efforts to turn a profit in summer, were now scarce on the ground.¹¹⁹ By summer 1932, foreign attendance at Berlin hotels was in free fall.¹²⁰

The numbers portended disaster, managing director Adolf Schick informed the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft at a meeting on July 19, 1932.¹²¹ In the first half of 1929, the total number of foreigners at Berlin hotels had been 790,000. For the same period in 1931, that figure had dropped to 628,000. In 1932, it was 473,000. Under these circumstances, revenues plunged. Between 1931 and 1932, the hotels of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft—the Fürstenhof, Palast, and Grand Hotel am Knie—brought in a full 20 percent less.¹²² For 1932, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, the majority stake of which belonged to Aschinger’s, lost the staggering sum of RM 561,824.¹²³ These shortfalls were happening throughout the German economy; between 1929 and 1933 the depression managed to erase the gains of the period 1924 to the end of October 1929.¹²⁴ It was in the course of this swift decline that hoteliers’ longstanding pessimism turned to fatalism, a shift that might have caused Meinhardt to feel in

¹¹⁹ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for July 19, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 32.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 407. Primarily a provider of inexpensive meals prepared simply and often in advance, Aschinger’s suffered along with the lower-middle and working classes, their “in Frage kommenden Bevölkerungskreise.” Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1931, in LAB, A Rep. 637.

¹²³ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 407.

¹²⁴ Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 12.

September 1932 that he faced a choiceless decision: eject the Nazis, who had overrun his property, and the business would collapse; allow them to stay, and invite any number of insupportable consequences, including violent retribution by Hitler's henchmen.

The "severe decline in consumers' purchasing power," as the board of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft observed in 1930, put extraordinary downward pressure on prices. As Berliners and other Germans could afford less and less, reported Schick in July 1932, the hotel industry found itself offering more services for lower prices.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the discounts failed to produce demand. Despite a reduction in ticket prices at the Wintergarten in 1932, performances still played to a sparsely populated house. The Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft concluded that if by the end of 1932 attendance did not improve, and in particular if foreign tourists continued to keep away from Berlin and the Wintergarten, then the storied performance space would have to close. The rest of the business, too, looked to be in danger of collapse under the pressure of a fast deflating currency. Price cuts brought the fee for a room down 20 percent over the course of 1931. By summer 1932, the cost of accommodation was now only 30 percent of what it had been at the end of 1929. (Food and drink prices dropped, too, if at a slightly slower rate.) The hoteliers recognized the hand of the state in these developments as the "deflationary measures (*Preissenkungsaktion*) of the Reich government," Chancellor Franz von Papen's blunt instrument of attack on the working class and on confidence in the Republic.¹²⁶

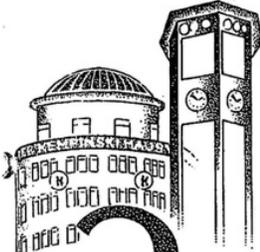
¹²⁵ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, July 19, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 32.

¹²⁶ Larry Jones, "Franz von Papen, Catholic Conservatives, and the Establishment of the Third Reich, 1933-1934," *Journal of Modern History* 83 (2011), 273-274. Cf., Sidney Pollard, "German Trade Union Policy, 1929-1933, in the Light of the British Experience," in *Economic Crisis and Political Collapse: The Weimar Republic, 1924-1933*, ed. Jürgen von Krüedener (New York: Berg, 1990), 43-44.

As prices fell, cutbacks ensued and standards slipped; hoteliers looked to entice non-elite customers. In spring 1931, the Central-Hotel collaborated with the travel agency Kempinski-Reisen and the Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro to offer package deals for a weekend trip to Berlin (fig. 37). One such product promised two nights' accommodation, meals at "first-class restaurants," guided tours of the city, a visit to the pleasure palace Haus Vaterland, a show at the Wintergarten, and an excursion to Potsdam.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Lüpschütz to Fritz Aschinger, letter with sample advertisement of June 6, 1931, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

Kempinski-Reisen
nach



Berlin
IN VERBINDUNG MIT DEM
M · E · R
MITTELEUROPAISCHES REISEBÜRO

3 Tage
45,50 RM.

einschließlich
 Unterkunft im **CENTRAL-HOTEL**
 Verpflegung in Gaststätten ersten Ranges
 Stadtbesichtigungen
 Ausflug nach Potsdam
 Besuch des „HAUS VATERLAND“
 und des Varieté „WINTERGARTEN“

Auskunft und Gutscheine durch:



Figure 37. Advertisement of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for summer 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-797. Landesarchiv Berlin.

The prominence of the price in the advertisement above would attract the frugal traveler, but it also associated the Central with economy rather than luxury. (As a *Passantenhôtel*, or a grand hotel that devoted a large part of its resources to accommodating middle-class railway customers on shorter stays, the Central had tried for years to emphasize both luxury and economy.) Lüpschütz defended his decision to

participate by citing the difficulty in finding guests in summer and particularly on Sunday nights. Still, the Central would be providing service at or near cost, at 7 marks per night. Lüpschütz was careful to emphasize that these guests would get no more than what they deserved and likely even less than what they expected. “Accommodation will be as basic as possible, perhaps two or three to a room,” he told Aschinger. “Should a guest have any special wishes,” Lüpschütz continued, “he must of course pay extra.”¹²⁸ This was not first-class treatment. The move reflected Lüpschütz’s expectation of a high response rate among second-class travelers.

Higher incidences of theft in hotels inspired further associations with a lower sort of customer. As in the early 1920s, the Kaiserhof had patrons in the early 1930s sign a document stating that the hotel bore no responsibility for guests’ property. These documents stood up in court when Hilde Eisenreich lost her case against the Kaiserhof in 1931. She and her husband had been guests in the hotel the previous year when, in the middle of their stay, they reported to the manager that 590 Reichsmarks’ worth in goods—a watch, a bracelet, and a ring—had gone missing from their room. After a fruitless police investigation, Eisenreich had brought civil suit against the hotel, but she lost because of the form the Kaiserhof had had her sign upon check-in. In addition to the waivers of responsibility, hoteliers also relied on the police to investigate thoroughly and, in their reports, absolve the management of any wrongdoing such as negligence or worse. Indeed, in 1932, the officials of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft complained that the police were not doing enough, even calling on the Reichsfinanzminister to ask that the

¹²⁸ Ibid.

hotel business be better and more extensively policed.¹²⁹ Hotel employees should also police each other, the heads of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft urged. An October 1931 memo to the managers of the Bristol, Kaiserhof, Central, and Baltic requested that workers be reminded to report any suspicious behavior within the ranks and that maids in particular be sure to follow proper protocol by never agreeing to work alone.¹³⁰

Crime, grit, and intrigue did not necessarily repel all guests, as a new crop of visitors arrived to see firsthand the depravity of late Weimar Berlin. Some came out of genuine concern. In March 1931, Charlie Chaplin told reporters at the Adlon that while in town he wanted to see a prison and “something of street life in the poorer quarters.”¹³¹ A *New York Times* article by George Bernhard of the previous year had encouraged tourists to get beyond “the Hotel Adlon” and “the palaces of the President and the government buildings” by following the Wilhelmstraße northwards, or, if on “the historic Unter den Linden, do not stop at the former Imperial castle but cross the Spree and wander along the eastern direction of the city.”¹³² The first thing to observe, according to Bernhard, would be the women, whose “silk or near-silk stockings and short skirts” barely concealed “the fact that these people belong to the working classes.” In slumming, the tourist might find the real Berlin, now in an exciting “age of ferment.”¹³³

In his *Guide to the Depraved Berlin (Führer durch das lasterhafte Berlin)*, Curt Moreck presented the city in similar fashion as a unit of two opposed entities: the one official, historical, and apparent, the other peripheral, dynamic, and hidden. “Berlin is a

¹²⁹ Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to the Reichsfinanzminister, addendum to a letter of October 27, 1931, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 757.

¹³⁰ Memorandum to the managers: Bollbuck (Bristol), Schröder (Kaiserhof), Weidner (Central), and Wessel (Baltic), of October 27, 1931, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797.

¹³¹ “Chaplin in Berlin,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1931.

¹³² George Bernhard, “An Age of Ferment in German Culture,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1930.

¹³³ Ibid.

city of opposites,” Moreck declared, “and it is a pleasure [*Lust*] to discover them.”¹³⁴ A “confusing metropolis of pleasure,” Berlin would confound visitors, particularly those who visited its “underworld,” a “labyrinth” that could only be accessed, maneuvered, and made intelligible by a knowledgeable guide or, barring that, the guidebook Moreck was shilling.¹³⁵ As did Bernhard of the *New York Times*, Moreck urged readers to leave Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstraße, a “mummified yesteryear” lined with “milestones of ennui,” and head for the outer-lying districts, not only to look at the girls in their stockings, silk or otherwise, but to seek new “experiences..., adventures..., and sensations.”¹³⁶

Both the guidebook and the *New York Times* article emphasized the proximity of Berlin’s old center, the Friedrichstadt and Dorotheenstadt, to the working-class districts to the east and north. This proximity had become a liability for hotel corporations even before the war, but now in light of high unemployment and civil unrest, it had turned into a major cause of concern for those hoteliers whose properties lay in the old center. (Almost all the grand hotels were in this area.) At the same time, hoteliers of the old center continued to face what had been for many years a westward drift of attractions and population that pitted the Friedrichstadt against a newer, glittering metropolis on the other side of the Tiergarten. “The rivalry between the Center and the West has had a very real effect on our business,” Kalveram reported in September 1931. More and more guests were going west for dinner, and almost as many now preferred to stay there overnight. This trend benefitted not just the Eden Hotel, the only grand hotel west of Potsdamer

¹³⁴ Curt Moreck, *Führer durch das “lasterhafte” Berlin* (Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1931), 8–9.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

Platz, but also many of the smaller hotels and pensions there. Although the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft tried through its advertising materials to strike back by claiming theirs as “the *actual* center,” some corporate officers felt themselves to be fighting a losing battle. The *Hotel Revue*, for example, which the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft supplied free in all its guestrooms, was working against their best efforts. It celebrated all manner of attractions in the west and then got the east all wrong, according to a corporate officer of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. Tips related to the city’s eastern entertainments often sent guests to “seedy locales [*Nepplokale*]—of a homosexual tone, even,” and it was thus no wonder that taking one of these “pleasure tours, recommended *by the hotel itself*, guests came back understandably displeased.”¹³⁷

The *Hotel Revue* was probably responding to what some guests wanted to experience of the city, and this pandering corresponded to a more general dissipation of grand hotels’ exclusive atmosphere. As prices fell and hoteliers looked for new sources of revenue among groups heretofore peripheral to its publicity efforts, such as middling businessmen and budget travelers, the class profile of the guests began to change. “Perhaps it was a mistake,” wrote Paul Arpé, manager of the Fürstenhof, in his report on the New Year’s celebrations for 1930/31, “to price the menu so cheaply [*billig*], since around 50 percent of the attendees were first-timers.”¹³⁸ Not all of the guests behaved.¹³⁹ At 9:30, hotel staff wheeled out a large radio so that everyone would be able to hear President Hindenburg’s New Year’s address. The speech, which admonished Germans to

¹³⁷ Heinz Kalveram to Hans Lohnert, letter of September 17, 1931, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 797. Emphasis in the original.

¹³⁸ “Denkschrift Silvester 1931,” in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1156.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* These revelers, 105 in all, consumed 94 bottles of champagne that night, almost the same number drunk the previous year when the guest list had been twice as long.

“walk hand in hand toward the future,” could not be heard in its entirety on account of what Arpé described as “political troublemaking.”¹⁴⁰ There is no more information about what happened, but that there was a political disturbance at all portended a good deal. It pointed to the deleterious effects of political polarization.

The Crisis of German Democracy

From 1926 on, but with increasing focus after 1929, the Nazi party directed its energies toward Berlin. Their move to the Imperial capital, the bastion of Nazism’s enemies, particularly the far left, surprised no one. Within Berlin itself, Hitler and his top aides came ever closer to the centers of power, into the Friedrichstadt, replete with grand hotels. In the 1920s, Hitler’s residence of choice had been the Sanssouci, a modest, mediocre, and unfashionable hotel *garni*, 27 rooms, on a side street west of the Potsdamer Platz, separate from the heart of the Friedrichstadt.¹⁴¹ It was the quarter that supported the city center’s zone of intense commercial and political activity by harboring large railway stations, streetcar and underground interchanges, lesser hotels, and unglamorous dining concessions and businesses. But in February 1931, fresh from a major electoral victory in September 1930, which gave the Nazi party 107 seats in the Reichstag and the presence in Berlin that came with them, Hitler crossed the Potsdamer Platz, swept into the Leipziger octagon, passed the Wertheim luxury department store (whose windows a Nazi mob had smashed in the fall of 1930), hung left at the Wilhelmstraße, and rode into the portico of the Kaiserhof, adjacent to the Chancellery and squarely within the Republic’s unsettled turf.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Friedrich, *Hitler’s Berlin: Abused City*, 28.

As Hitler geared his party up for the seizure of power, the Kaiserhof proved to be both instrumental and problematic for him. In the winter and spring of 1932, the months leading up to the presidential election in which Hitler would try and fail to unseat Hindenburg, the Kaiserhof saw more visits from him than ever before. In the period in which he helped destroy the Republic (January 1, 1932 to January 30, 1933), Hitler stayed at the Kaiserhof more than 100 nights, spread across almost all thirteen months.¹⁴² He was there to campaign in the April and November 1932 Reichstag elections, in which his party won 37.3 and 33.1 percent of the vote, respectively. But fame came with a downside: notoriety. On April 4, 1932, the liberal weekly *Die Welt am Montag* published a facsimile of one of the Nazis' recent Kaiserhof bills. The editors pointed out that the nightly cost of one of the twelve rooms that Hitler had rented was equal to "the maximum that two unemployed persons can claim for an entire week's support."¹⁴³ Hitler had no right to represent a workers' party, as he claimed to do. Hitler sued the editors for libel and won. A sympathetic court found the bill to have been a forgery, and, of course, the Kaiserhof management denied the veracity of the document and even reported to the police the theft of a ream of the house's receipt forms. Whether a setup or not, the Kaiserhof bill affair lobbed a serious and familiar criticism at Hitler: hypocrisy arising from the disagreement between what the man said and what he and his party did.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibid., 245.

¹⁴³ "So lebt Hitler!" *Die Welt am Montag*, April 4, 1932.

¹⁴⁴ On the debate among historians of fascism over the distinctions between what fascists do and what fascists say, see Adrian Lyttelton, "What Was Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, October 21, 2004. See also Roger Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002), 21–43; Robert Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism," *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998), 1–23; and Roger Eatwell, "On Defining the 'Fascist Minimum': The Centrality of Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1 (1996), 303–319.

Hitler's chief press officer, Otto Dietrich, was still trying in 1934 to spin the story to the Führer's advantage. Hitler had not chosen the Kaiserhof to pamper himself, Dietrich explained. Instead, Hitler had chosen the Kaiserhof for three "reasons of expediency." First, the luxury and formality of the property served only the political purpose of helping the Republic's conservative elites to take Hitler seriously. Second, the location of the Kaiserhof lent itself to the progression of Hitler's seizure of power. There, he was in full view of the "old Chancellery building," the establishment occupants of which "laid countermines" and made other "insidious and malicious" attempts to "prevent the onrushing movement from gaining power." Finally, Dietrich accentuated the historic-symbolic significance of the Kaiserhof to the narrative of how Germany got from the Second to the Third Reich. The Kaiserhof was "one of Bismarck's houses," a symbol and effect of unification, and the hotel of choice for delegates to the most important conferences and congresses of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It thus had to be the hotel of choice for Hitler; it was his "gateway" to the Chancellery, "from which Bismarck had ruled the German Empire," of which Hitler would "take possession...in turn."¹⁴⁵

The move to the Kaiserhof in 1931 and from the Kaiserhof to the Chancellery on January 31, 1933, shorthanded and elucidated the way Hitler preferred that Germans think of his relationship to the past: history took him from the Hotel Sanssouci, named for the favorite of Frederick the Great's palaces; to the Kaiserhof, named for Kaiser William I, whom Otto von Bismarck propelled into position as emperor of a new Germany; to the old Chancellery, which Hitler made his own—from Frederick the Great to Bismarck to

¹⁴⁵ Friedrich, *Hitler's Berlin*, 216.

Wilhelm I and II to the Nazi seizure of power; from the First to the Second to the Third Reich. The problem, from the perspective of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft in 1932, was that Hitler did not belong at the Kaiserhof. His class and the bad behavior of his hangers-on, clad in inappropriate paramilitary attire and unlikely to know or respect the conventions of good comportment in such an elite commercial establishment, would have indicated the Nazis' unsuitability. They were also bad for business.

In despair, the managing directors of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft wrote to the Reichsfinanzminister, the Oberbürgermeister of Berlin, and the Preußische Staatsregierung for help in November 1932. Their revenues, which "in normal years stood at 30 million marks," were unlikely to reach even 10 million by the end of 1932. This 20-million-mark retraction was the greatest since the beginning of the Depression and, indeed, in the history of the business. From 1930 to 1931, revenues dropped 21 percent. In the fall of 1932, the decline since 1930 reached 44 percent. The firm, according to its leaders, needed some form of government assistance and indeed deserved it: "the fault lies not in the failure of the leadership, nor in organizational or financial shortcomings," Aschinger's argued, "but in the severe economic difficulties [*schwere Wirtschaftsnöte*] under which Germany and the whole world suffers."¹⁴⁶ With "monstrous losses mounting by the day," the letter asked, "why not just close shop?" Aschinger's then answered its own question: because the company, not with its luxury hotels but through its low-cost café concessions, had spread "deep roots" in Berlin and proved itself "indispensable to the lower middle class [*kleinen Mittelstand*] and the workers." Aschinger's presented itself as a model of altruism, never having "wanted...to seek

¹⁴⁶ "Eingaben an das Reichsfinanzministerium, das Preußische Finanzministerium und die Hauptverwaltung der Stadt Berlin," November 10, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 757.

help...from government authorities [*öffentlichen Stellen*].” Instead, Aschinger’s management had tried to find savings in cutbacks and rationalization and would continue to do so. The salaries of the firm’s “leading figures,” for example, had “been reduced considerably.” But Aschinger’s had reached its limits, the letter argued, and would now have to ask for a concession: the mitigation of an “unbearable tax” burden.

There was no more room for savings, the letter emphasized, and no point in further rationalization and economization without “a generous settlement” on the issue of those “taxes and duties” which, having cost the corporation 20 percent more in 1931 than in 1930, “threatened to overwhelm the business” and presently, with indications of a similar increase from 1931 to 1932, eliminated any chance of “survival.” Aschinger’s also beseeched the addressees to call off the mess of “agencies and authorities” now “robbing [us] of [our] time” and instead assign all activities related to taxation to “a central office.” Both the level and the manner of taxation were bringing the firm grief and needed correcting if the business was “to hold itself upright” any longer.¹⁴⁷ This letter, while also trying to seize an opportunity to get a much-needed tax break, revealed the extent to which Aschinger’s leadership had grown accustomed to presenting their situation as hopeless.

Indeed, as in 1919–1923, the hotel firms blamed the state for their misfortune and seized on taxes as the means by which the fiscus sought to destroy free, profitable enterprise. They were, in part, correct: high taxes as a response to the Depression were having terrible effects in Germany as elsewhere.¹⁴⁸ “We have made every effort” to right

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Dietmar Rothermund, *The Global Impact of the Great Depression, 1929–1939* (London: Routledge, 2003), 16–17. On taxation and the Great Depression in Germany, see Dietmar Keese, “Die volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtgrößen für das deutsche Reich, 1925–1936,” in *Die Staats- und*

the business and only failed to turn a profit on account of “our tax burden,” the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft claimed in its annual report for 1931/1932. It was because of taxes and taxes alone that business was suffering, they argued.¹⁴⁹

The hoteliers had a sound argument when it came to taxes: high rates of taxation were indeed damaging the economy by reducing the spending power of consumers. Still, hoteliers might have found a more pointed argument for why the state was to blame if that argument focused on Brüning’s deflationary measures and the conservatives’ efforts to dismantle the Republic by further ruining the economy.¹⁵⁰ On that count, however, the annual reports and all other communications remained silent. Instead, hoteliers used increasingly hysterical language to describe the effects of taxation. The emphasis remained on taxes as the principal cause of the emergency—an emphasis that tended to cast the government as selfish, anti-business, and even anti-German. But high taxes were only one way that the government managed to damage the economy. For the annual reports to have focused on deflation as well as taxes would have been to cast the leadership as saboteurs, intent on pursuing a policy that would victimize Germans to the extent that they would turn against the Republic. Instead of calling on the state to end this practice, the hoteliers chose almost never to acknowledge it. When they did speak up, it

Wirtschaftskrise des deutschen Reichs, 1929–33, eds. Hans Raupach and Werner Conze (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1967), 35–37; cf., Theo Balderston, “The Beginning of the Depression in Germany, 1927–30: Investment and the Capital Market,” *Economic History Review* 36 (1983), 396–397; Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1931/1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 189.

¹⁵⁰ Ferdinand von Lüninck (DNVP), a member of Brüning’s cabinet, put the chancellor’s rationale most succinctly: “Improvements in the existing system will never be possible through reform but only through the total elimination [of the system itself], and this is only possible by letting it collapse from the weight of its own incompetence.” Letter of February 4, 1930, quoted in Jones, “Franz von Papen, Catholic Conservatives, and the Establishment of the Third Reich,” 276. Cf., Ritschl, *Deutschlands Krise und Konjunktur*, 131–133, 220ff. See also Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, “Was the Policy of Deflation in Germany Unavoidable?” in Kruedener, *Economic Crisis and Political Collapse*, 66–70; Pollard, “German Trade Union Policy,” 43; Knut Borchardt, “A Decade of Debate about Brüning’s Economic Policy,” in Kruedener, *Economic Crisis and Political Collapse*, 99–151.

was only to ask for a “temporary” reprieve from the austerity, not for an end to deflation.¹⁵¹ This move tended to cast the present difficulties as part of a longer history of over-taxation under coalitions of the center-left and not as a result of the newer policies of the conservatives, aimed at restricting the money supply and credit.

This tacit acquiescence to the policies of the Right mirrored and, as a general phenomenon, aided in the ascent of the anti-Republican, ultraconservative milieu that eventually invited Hitler to power. While hoteliers were trying to make sense of what they saw as a deepening crisis, both political and economic, they would have observed the continued rightward drift of the German electorate. In April 1932, Paul von Hindenburg won reelection to the presidency, ensuring the continued presence of arch-conservatives in the Chancellery. Two weeks later, the NSDAP prevailed in the state parliament elections of Anhalt, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Prussia.¹⁵² Then, in July, Chancellor von Papen, under the President’s powers to legislate by emergency decree, took over the government of Prussia and effectively abrogated parliamentary rule there. In the national elections eleven days later, the Nazi party won 37.3 percent of the vote and became the strongest faction in the Reichstag. By the end of August, Hermann Göring was President of the Reichstag. These were the political conditions under which the boards of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft and the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft labored.

There is throughout the minutes of board meetings and in correspondence among hoteliers in 1931 and 1932 a high frequency of fatalist pronouncements. The reports’

¹⁵¹ “Ein Hilfsprogramm für die deutsche Hotelwirtschaft: Entschließung des Reichsverbandes der Deutschen Hotels E.V.,” flier of October 6, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 798.

¹⁵² The NSDAP also prevailed in Hamburg’s *Bürgerschaftswahlen*.

authors used language to suggest that they were in the process of washing their hands of the industry and of any effort to salvage it. “Stagnation,” “crisis,” and “catastrophe” become the words used most frequently to describe the situation.¹⁵³ Although the reports paid scant attention to the international dimensions of the Depression, the board members of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft must also have been aware of the condition of hotel industries abroad. In the United States, for example, some 70 percent of hotels were out of business, bankrupt, or in receivership by the start of 1932.¹⁵⁴ The Depression discredited the American example, which Berlin’s hoteliers had until very recently held up as the model of rational, responsible enterprise. Now there were no models, only the sense that a business as big and costly to operate as a grand hotel had finally and conclusively proved itself to be less viable than almost any other kind of business.¹⁵⁵

September 15, 1932

How do we begin to make sense of Meinhardt’s reasoning and the board’s decision to allow the Nazis to use the Kaiserhof as their Berlin headquarters? In the absence of any further testimony from Meinhardt and the other board members, all we can do is reconstruct their perspective on events and try to find contexts and a logic. What emerges from this effort is the sense of an atmosphere of uncertainty, emergency, and fear

¹⁵³ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1930, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636. The report of the year before also registered the difficulty: “Unfortunately, it must be said that the hotel business has been hit hard by the economy’s stagnation,” in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 636. A year later, the German hotel industry was “in a state of catastrophe.” Falling prices and the fall-off in consumer spending were bringing the industry to the point of crisis in which something had to give: “the advent of an economic turnaround is that much more urgent this past year as the effects of the crisis came to be felt much more acutely.” See “Ein Hilfsprogramm für die deutsche Hotelwirtschaft: Entschließung des Reichsverbandes der Deutschen Hotels E.V.,” flier of October 6, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 798.

¹⁵⁴ Lisa Pfueller Davidson, “‘A Service Machine’: Hotel Guests and the Development of an Early-Twentieth-Century Building Type,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 10 (2005), 124-125.

¹⁵⁵ “Ein Hilfsprogramm für die deutsche Hotelwirtschaft: Entschließung des Reichsverbandes der Deutschen Hotels E.V.,” flier of October 6, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 798: “Einem völligen Preisverfall und stärksten Konsumrückgang stehen starre, gleich gebliebene Fixkosten in einem Umfrage gegenüber, wie sie kaum in einem andern Gewerbe anzutreffend sind.”

in September 1932 that clouded these Jewish board members' judgment to the extent that they invited into their own house the man who would ruin them.

On September 15, 1932, the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft met at the Bristol to discuss the challenges facing the Kaiserhof and the rest of the corporation's properties: the banking crisis, the credit crisis, and the "almost total closing off of the borders" as national governments retrenched. Board members present included Meinhardt as chair; Lohnert; Aschinger; Wilhelm Kleemann, manager of the Dresdner Bank; Eugen Landau, a diplomat and member of the boards of the Schultheiß-Patzenhof brewing concern and two banks; and Walter Sobernheim, Landau's stepson, also a diplomat, and head of Schultheiß-Patzenhof.¹⁵⁶ Managing directors present were Kalveram, Schick, and Voremberg. Also in attendance were two employee representatives.¹⁵⁷

At the start of the meeting, Schick rose to give some bad news about the Kaiserhof. The hotel was experiencing the "greatest decline in sales" of all the properties of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. The presence of Hitler's SA (*Sturmabteilung*) and SS (*Schutzstaffel*), as well as the Stahlhelm, a right-radical paramilitary league, had resulted in "substantial losses." And given the Nazis' electoral successes, Schick counseled the board to expect a further influx of right-radicals, a resultant decline in sales among the hotel's standard clientele, and the series of "substantial cutbacks" that would surely result. Schick avoided the mention of specific behaviors and actions. Moreover, his report was almost diplomatic in its failure to demand that the Nazis and their hangers-on

¹⁵⁶ Apologies came in from Hans Arnhold, banker; Karl August Harter, banker; and the banker and diplomat Heinrich von Stein.

¹⁵⁷ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for September 15, 1932, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 39.

be apprehended. Schick perhaps felt he had to be circumspect since five of the seven board members in attendance were Jews.

The minutes do not record a heated debate, but one is likely to have happened given the disparity of views and the polarizing effects of recent German politics. The minutes show that an employee representative from the Kaiserhof's managerial staff spoke first on the issue. His words were accusatory, an uncustomary tone for an employee to take before a board of directors. "Not enough is being done," he said. It was common knowledge "that Hitler has been in residence in the house for some time, that the Stahlhelm have commandeered [*militärisch aufgezogen*] the Kaiserhof for use as a headquarters, that too much of the clientele has been lost...that the whole Jewish clientele has stayed away." The Kaiserhof and its guests were being misused, he claimed. And "of course, this has played a role in the decline in sales and the firings that come with it." Profits, and the Kaiserhof itself, had to be "won back" and soon.

The board suspended discussion until other matters could be considered. Then Meinhardt finally addressed the issue: "As a hotel company, we must remain neutral on matters of confession and politics [*Konfession und Politik ausschalten*]. Our houses must remain open to all." Meinhardt then abdicated responsibility: "Surely the situation, as it has developed, is no fun for any of the interested parties, but we, the directors, cannot do anything about it." Now Kleemann, also Jewish, called Meinhardt on his obfuscation: "I know for certain that Jewish guests no longer stay at the Kaiserhof and no longer visit the restaurant, either." As if to dispel the tension but with no intention to malign the Nazis, Meinhardt said that he knew "how hard it is for the house's restaurant director to exercise

the requisite tact in face of these difficult questions.”¹⁵⁸ The minutes end there. The decision, in the end, was not to decide, and that meant the de facto expulsion of Jews from the Kaiserhof, the abdication of all civil and fiduciary responsibility, and preemptive capitulation to the radical right. Most remarkable about this discussion, as the minutes reflect it, is that the most of the voices were Jewish.¹⁵⁹ This was an argument among Jews about what to do with Hitler.

Or, perhaps, Meinhardt’s thinking was not as pragmatic as that of a board chairman under normal circumstances; perhaps his political beliefs came into play. Meinhardt’s liberalism, as that of his party more generally, proved to be no match for the Nazis, who were adept at using the liberal precepts of free speech, free political association, and open access—precepts on which the grand hotel had always depended—to gain entry to liberal institutions only for the purpose of destroying them. What was happening at the Kaiserhof in 1932—the intimidation of Jews, Democrats like Meinhardt, and the traditional elites making trips to and from the hotel and the Chancellery less than 500 meters away—would happen throughout the Reich after January 1933.

Several factors would have played into Meinhardt’s decision to allow the Nazis to stay. There were, first, the negative consequences of ejecting the Nazis: the risk of reprisals from a Nazi party and organization that was growing in size, power, and popularity, as well as the alienation of pro-Nazi customers. Second, there was the problem of Meinhardt’s responsibility to shareholders and his duty to remain impartial: as

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Behind these moral failures lay a dynamic that Peter Jelavich has identified in another realm of pre- and not proto-Nazi activity: the arts. Preemptive censorship along lines of Nazi demands, before the Nazis even got to power, was both a sign and a cause of a crisis that was as much moral as it was political. See Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, xi-xii.

chairman of the board, he was not supposed to let his own politics or Jewishness guide his decisions. Third, there was the problem of Meinhardt's liberalism: to refuse service to someone on the basis of his or her political beliefs, however odious, would be itself an illiberal thing to do, and Meinhardt was a committed liberal. Fourth, and finally, there was his particular position as a member of Germany's industrial elite, the anti-Republican stance of which might have made the democratic solutions to Germany's problems a bit less attractive to Meinhardt. These four facets of Meinhardt's profile—his appreciation for the overwhelming appeal of Nazism and his awareness of Nazi strategies of intimidation, his fiduciary responsibility to shareholders, his liberalism, and his status as a member of the German industrial elite—any or all of these might have encouraged Meinhardt to allow the Nazis to remain at the Kaiserhof after September 15, 1932.

The rest of this section evaluates in detail each area of concern. The results will be speculative since Meinhardt did not leave a record of his preoccupations. Nonetheless, what will emerge is a sense of Meinhardt's position in a complicated, perilous situation that, as the previous sections have demonstrated, he and his colleagues approached with a high degree of pessimism and fatalism.

Meinhardt had been born in 1872 in Schwedt, a small city on the Oder River. His parents were Simon (1839–1901) and Ida *née* Goldstein (1850–1904).¹⁶⁰ In 1899, after having completed his state law examination, Meinhardt became an assistant judge (*Assessor*). Next he became a solicitor in his own right (*Rechtsanwalt und Notar*) with a specialization in patent law. In 1914, he became a managing director of the *Auergesellschaft*, one of the world's great manufacturers of metal filaments for

¹⁶⁰ Brigitte Heidenhain, *Juden in Schwedt: Ihr Leben in der Stadt von 1672 bis 1942 und ihr Friedhof* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2010), 153.

incandescent bulbs.¹⁶¹ Five years later, in 1919, Meinhardt became the chairman of the board of a new conglomerate, the Osram G.m.b.H. (LLC), which began full operations in February 1920. This corporate formation now dominated the German market in light bulbs. As chairman of the board and architect of the legal arguments—and victories—that allowed this monopoly to form and flourish, Meinhardt became “a recognized authority on the subject of the electrical industry” generally, according to a study published in Britain in 1935.¹⁶² In 1929, Meinhardt’s numerous speeches and essays were published together in an edited volume called *Kartellfragen*, or “On the Issue of Cartels”; 1932 saw the publication of his *Entwicklung und Aufbau der Glühlampenindustrie*, an account, among other things, of how he had helped create one of the greatest industrial combinations in the world.¹⁶³ A component of this story of an industrious Jewish boy from the provinces who found himself by the end of middle age at the top of Germany’s cartel-capitalist hierarchy would be Meinhardt’s involvement with the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft as chairman of its board. It was in this capacity, and not in his other, higher profile one, that Meinhardt first came face-to-face with the Nazi menace, in 1932, the year before he would lose his chairmanship of Osram and flee Germany for his life.¹⁶⁴

The dangers that Nazis posed to Jewish businesses in 1932, as well as the dangers associated with being Jewish—and a prominent Jewish businessman at that—were manifold and apparent. As early as October 13, 1930, a Nazi mob had descended on the area around the Leipziger Platz in order to smash plate-glass windows and otherwise

¹⁶¹ Hermann Levy, *Industrial Germany: A Study of Its Monopoly Organizations and Their Control by the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 77.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶³ William Meinhardt, *Kartellfragen: Gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze* (Berlin: Osram, 1929); William Meinhardt, *Entwicklung und Aufbau der Glühlampenindustrie* (Berlin: C. Heymann, 1932).

¹⁶⁴ Tobies, *Iris Runge*, 342.

vandalize Jewish-owned retail establishments, the most prominent of which was the Wertheim department store.¹⁶⁵ If Wertheim was vulnerable, so too was the Kaiserhof and the other hotels of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, all located a short walk from the violence. A year later brought another example of anti-Jewish action when members of the NSDAP attacked Jews, and people suspected of being Jews, on Rosh Hashanah.¹⁶⁶ Having happened in broad daylight on the Kurfürstendamm, this action further highlighted the vulnerability of even the most vaunted commercial districts of the capital. The year 1932 brought still more violence to light in Berliners' daily lives and in the daily papers. "Squads...in the provinces" were stopping cars and demanding to be taken to Berlin on the eve of the July 31, 1932, national election, according to the *Berliner Tageblatt*: "a great many sources lay before us that suggest that either the central leadership of the SA or its regional subgroups have issued orders that particular departments be put on alert and made ready to march [on Berlin] in the days before and after the Reichstag elections."¹⁶⁷ These were by all accounts frightening days—fear may explain Meinhardt's decision to give the Nazis the run of his house. The Kaiserhof had, after all, been sacked once before by a roving paramilitary force, back in January 1919.¹⁶⁸

Given the choice between physical damage and damage to the house's reputation, Meinhardt chose the latter, and the dynamics of his firm's managerial hierarchy might have played a role here. Meinhardt's principal responsibility was to his shareholders, and it thus fell to him to ensure that the Kaiserhof never be exposed to danger or damage. That responsibility entailed balancing shareholders' entitlement to dividends with the

¹⁶⁵ Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, 157.

¹⁶⁶ Bodo Harenberg, ed., *Die Chronik Berlins* (Dortmund: Chronik, 1991), 373.

¹⁶⁷ "S.-A.-Alarm," *Berliner Tageblatt*, July 29, 1932.

¹⁶⁸ See chapter 4.

firm's need to make regular capital investments. (The latter, if managed properly, would ensure higher dividends in the future, or so the theory went.¹⁶⁹) When he decided to allow the Nazis to remain at the Kaiserhof, Meinhardt might have been thinking about this dynamic and his duty to shareholders: which course was most likely to ensure the safeguarding of the firm's assets and the possibility of dividends in the near future?

The amorality of other industrialists' approach to the rise of Nazism indicates that this kind of thinking would have been possible on Meinhardt's part. Overwhelming pessimism among Germany's industrialists eliminated any opportunity to see a way toward prosperity that did not involve a fundamental transformation of the German economy, German society, and even in some cases the German polity.¹⁷⁰ As Hitler consolidated his mass base in the years 1928 to 1933, he appeared to be the most likely instrument of the change. By way of a pessimism that had been intensifying and the emergence of a leader whose meteoric rise indicated at least the possibility of the transformation industrialists sought, a fatalism emerged among the industrial elite and may have infiltrated the board room at the Hotel Bristol where Meinhardt convened the fateful meeting of September 15, 1932.

¹⁶⁹ Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli, *Business History: Complexities and Comparisons* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 78-80.

¹⁷⁰ Theo Balderston, *The Origins and Course of the German Economic Crisis: November 1923 to May 1932* (Berlin: Haude & Spenersche, 1993), 381-412.

Epilogue:

Hotel Germania

Some of the developments that brought Hitler to power took place inside the Kaiserhof. Throughout 1932, Hitler took meetings there with present and future collaborators, such as the actress and filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, whom he entertained for tea in his rooms on September 28.¹ Many of Hitler's visitors, however, were not artists or even fellow Nazis but rather members of the government and their advisors who made the short trip from the Chancellery across the square. These visits increased in frequency after the September 15, 1932, board meeting in which the owners of the Kaiserhof had decided that the Nazis could stay. There, Hitler played master negotiator and statesman, even as he managed extralegal efforts to get power.

To complement these backroom, backstairs negotiations, Hitler also unleashed wave after wave of violence across Germany, particularly in its cities.² As Berlin and other towns appeared to be descending into civil war in December 1932, Hindenburg dismissed Franz von Papen and replaced him with Kurt von Schleicher. This last-ditch effort on Hindenburg's part, both to appease and to defang the Nazis' mass base, failed, as did Schleicher's efforts to maintain his authority over the cabinet and members of Hindenburg's entourage.

¹ Paul Bruppacher, *Adolf Hitler und die Geschichte der NSDAP: Eine Chronik* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2008), 1: 225-226.

² On violence and the Nazi seizure (or assumption) of power, see Richard Bessel, "Political Violence and the Nazi Seizure of Power," in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1-16; William Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930-1935* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), especially 236. See also McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic*, chapter 8. Cf., Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

It is worth emphasizing at this point the spatial dimension of Schleicher's difficulties—the physical proximity of Hitler to power. “The choice of the Kaiserhof as my headquarters in Berlin, diagonally opposite the Chancellery building,” Hitler is supposed to have said, “has already left the men there profoundly shaken.”³ A home at the Kaiserhof emboldened Hitler and his acolytes. Sitting up with their Führer in his salon “until the grey light of dawn,” according to Goebbels in February 1932, “plans are hatched as if we are already in power.”⁴

Gleichschaltung

In the first weeks of 1933, the Kaiserhof entered history as one of the key sites of the generation of Nazi rule. Intermediaries rushed between the Chancellery and the hotel in order to set up meetings between Nazi leaders and the government.⁵ After several such meetings at secret locations in and around Berlin, Hitler departed the area on January 23, 1933, for Frankfurt-Oder and then traveled onward to Munich. Three days later, he was back at the Kaiserhof to consider the last stages of his party's ascent to power.⁶ When Schleicher finally stepped down on January 28, the wheels began to turn: von Papen made the successful case to Hindenburg that Hitler should be chancellor and that he, von Papen, should be vice-chancellor. Two days later, shortly after 11 a.m. on January 30, Hitler made his way from the Kaiserhof to the Chancellery to accept his prize.

³ Friedrich, *Hitler's Berlin*, 219.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁵ On such meetings between the nationalists (DNVP) and NSDAP leaders, see Hermann Beck, *The Fateful Alliance: German Conservatives and Nazis in 1933—The Machtergreifung in a New Light* (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 70–88. On such meetings with industrialists, see Gerard Braunthal, *The Federation of German Industry in Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965), 15ff.

⁶ Friedrich, *Hitler's Berlin*, 310.

Once in power, the Nazis unleashed further waves of terror and repression over the capital that worried the city's grand hoteliers. On February 1, not 48 hours after Hitler took power, Hindenburg agreed to dissolve the Reichstag, and the hunt for Nazism's enemies began immediately. The press, too, found itself muted in those early days: on February 4, an emergency decree limited freedom of speech as well as the right to free assembly.⁷ The end of the month brought further attacks on what was left of Weimar's democratic institutions: on February 27, the Reichstag building sustained heavy damage by fire; on the next day, the Reichstag Fire Decree (*Reichstagsbrandverordnung*) removed many of the civil liberties guaranteed by the Weimar constitution and enabled the ruthless hunt for communist party (KPD) leaders and members as well as the destruction of that party and other sources of opposition. On March 8, an emergency decree stripped all KPD delegates of their seats in the national parliament.⁸ And every day, the assaults on certain Berliners, communists in particular, intensified.⁹ The insurance industry even sought to capitalize on the fear evoked by this unrestrained violence, as a letter of March 1, 1933, from one such firm to the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft attests: "Current events give us cause to bring your attention to the possibility that riot insurance ... will allay your anxiety over the protection of all your tangible assets—an anxiety made worse by the fact that no one knows what tomorrow will bring."¹⁰ The letter addressed a sense of unease that was pervasive among hoteliers, whose businesses sat at the epicenter of the consolidation of Nazi power and terror. Of all

⁷ Manfred Görtemaker, *Weimar in Berlin: Porträt einer Epoche* (Berlin: Br.Bra, 2002), 211.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The extent to which the Third Reich was a dictatorship by consent (*Zustimmungsdiktatur*) notwithstanding, the Nazis did indeed come to power under the storm of violence that they themselves had unleashed. See Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 2003), 450–456.

¹⁰ Königstadt Aktien-Gesellschaft für Grundstücke und Industrie to the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, letter of March 1, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 975.

the grand hotels, only the Eden was more than a fifteen-minute walk from the Chancellery and the Prinz-Albrechtstraße, headquarters of the Gestapo from May 1933.

The reach of Nazi persecution soon made its way into the hotels themselves. In May 1933, this persecution began in the form of an institution set up for the express purpose of *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination—process of forced synchronization with the present workings of the new regime. On May 18, a circular arrived at the offices of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft informing the recipients of a newly Nazified organization, the managing directors of which would have three charges: first, to carry out Gleichschaltung in large retail concerns, which meant compelling businesses to make whatever changes necessary in order to “bring into line” their operations with those of the new regime, and second, to gather information on the employees.¹¹ What this last point meant was the identification and promotion of Nazis and pro-Nazis, on the one hand, and the quantification and elimination of Jews from the firm’s ranks, on the other.¹²

The leaders of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft’s branch of this organization included two Nazis, previously uninvolved with the firm, and Kalveram, one of its managing directors and neither a Nazi nor a sympathizer to the movement.¹³ The group’s orders were to distribute a survey aimed at collecting information on the political and racial makeup of the firm’s employees and owners. In addition to requesting the names of

¹¹ On *Gleichschaltung* and German business, see Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin, 2008), chapter 4.

¹² Schutzgemeinschaft der Großbetriebs des Einzelhandels und verwandter Gruppen to Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, letter of May 18, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 36.

¹³ Kalveram fell afoul of Fritz Aschinger and the Nazis in 1933. Both accused him of expressing “anti-Nazi sentiments.” In fear, he apologized, recanted, and affirmed the righteousness of the regime. A meeting with Aschinger on May 30, 1933, appears to have put things right for Kalveram, who kept his job and his freedom. See notes on a meeting between Fritz Aschinger and Heinz Kalveram of May 30, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 43; Memo of May 26, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 36; Max Kersten to Hans Lohnert, letter of May 27, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr 36.

anyone with a position in the NSDAP or Stahlhelm, the survey also demanded the following: the number of white-collar employees, male and female; the number of workers, male and female; the number of apprentices, male and female; and the “*absolute* total count of *Jewish* members of the firm (white-collar employees, workers, and apprentices).”¹⁴ Kalveram and the two Nazi overlords who shared with him the authority to carry out this survey had one week to supply this “absolutely essential” information, according to the circular. It must be delivered “without delay.”¹⁵ (The results of this survey surely arrived on time, but they did not make their way to any of the archives I visited.) However, another document, as curious as it is damning, does appear in the archives of Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft, parent company to the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. It is an artifact of the process by which Aschinger’s and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft “geared up” into the new order.

¹⁴ Schutzgemeinschaft der Großbetriebs des Einzelhandels und verwandter Gruppen to Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, letter of May 18, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 36 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵ Ibid.

Meinhardt 0
Lohnert
+ ~~Arnhold~~
Aschinger
Friedmann 0
Harter
Janke
+ Kleemann *Kleemann*
+ ~~Landau~~ 0
Meidinger
+ ~~Sobornheim~~
von Stein
Dr. Steiner 0
Betriebsrat
Betriebsrat
Speckmann

Figure 38. List of names directly following the “Erklärung” of May 26, 1933, in LAB, A Rep 225-01, Nr. 36. Landesarchiv Berlin.

This is the typewritten page that immediately followed the survey on employees of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. It is a list of various board members and managing directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft and its parent company (fig. 38). There is no explanation of why some names appear on this list while others do not. There is, however, a pattern. This list features the names of all Jewish board members as well as board members whose backgrounds or names might suggest Jewish heritage. (As an entrepreneur from the provinces, Aschinger—who was not Jewish—fit the bill.) An unlikely candidate had to be added later, in pencil: that was Reinhold Georg Quaatz, an industrialist, conservative politician, and anti-Semite who had worked closely with Alfred Hugenberg. Quaatz likely escaped the first draft of the list because of his support of Hitler, yet Quaatz was, it turned out, of half-Jewish parentage.¹⁶ Although the precise meaning of the slashes, the circles, the X's, and the dots are lost, these markings attend *only* the names of Jews or men of Jewish heritage, men singled out to be ejected from their positions as soon as possible.¹⁷

To that end, Lohnert did much of the dirty work, if his letter of October 10, 1938, to the Ortsgruppenleiter of Berlin-Dahlem is to be believed. A kindly worded note from Lohnert to Voremberg dated 1933 had somehow reached the hands of the authorities by 1938, who in response threatened to investigate Lohnert for sympathetic dealings with Jews. The language of Lohnert's defensive response is racist, of course, but should not be

¹⁶ Quaatz was on the board of Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft. He was also Alfred Hugenberg's closest associate and a key architect of Hitler's assumption of power. See Hermann Weiss and Paul Hoser (eds.), *Die Deutschnationalen und die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik: Aus dem Tagebuch von Reinhold Quaatz, 1928–1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 17–21ff; Gerald Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel (eds.), *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 48–50; and Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 24–25 and 90–92.

¹⁷ List of names directly following the "Erklärung" of May 26, 1933, in LAB, A Rep 225-01, Nr. 36.

taken as an expression of his worldview; he was, after all, defending himself against Nazis and needed to do so with their lingo. He wrote:

Next I would like to point out that the correspondence with the Jewish managing director Voremberg dates from the year 1933, from a period in which the Jewish Question had begun but by no means reached a crisis point as it has in the year 1938. This must be taken into account at the very first, for in the year 1933, right about the time the letter [in question, to Voremberg] was written, the Jews were still riding high, and it was exceedingly difficult for me to throw them out, these Jewish gentlemen, who had been at the firm for more than 25 years. And aside from the fact that I [personally] had a hard time [dismissing] the Jewish Herr Voremberg, the board was overwhelmingly against me since the chairman [Meinhardt] as well as four additional members of the board were Jews. Even so, I wrote to two Jewish members of the board—namely, Generalkonsul Landau and Dr. Sobernheim—and requested that they consider the circumstances and resign.¹⁸

Quite swiftly after January 30, 1933, the situation for Meinhardt became particularly dangerous. Bad press about violence against Germany's Jews had incensed the top brass in Berlin, especially Hermann Göring, who summoned the leaders of the city's more assimilationist Jewish organizations in order to demand that elite Jews put a stop to the negative reports in foreign newspapers. The message to transmit was not that the German Jews were being mishandled—"barefaced lies," according to one of Hitler's spokesmen—but that the German government was tired of being flogged in the public

¹⁸ Hans Lohnert to Pg. Schmauß, Ortsgruppenleiter, Berlin-Dahlem, letter of October 10, 1938, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 59. Emphasis in the original.

sphere for acts that Nazi officials refused to confirm. “Unless you put a stop to these libelous accusations immediately, I shall no longer be able to vouch for the safety of German Jews.” To a foreign correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, he said, “The government is shocked, indignant, and indeed speechless at the reports written abroad about Jews in Germany.”¹⁹ Meinhardt lost little time. He fled to London within a few months. Eventually, he would help coordinate relief efforts under the auspices of the Association for Jewish Refugees.²⁰

The Kaiserhof Myth

In 1935, the Görings—Hermann and Emmy—celebrated their wedding at the Kaiserhof. One of Hitler’s preferred photographers, Heinrich Hoffmann, snapped a picture of the Führer and the couple that made its way onto the front page of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. At a table in the Festsaal and flanked by Hitler and her husband, Emmy smiles and gazes into the left middle distance. Göring smiles too. It is a happy occasion. But Hitler, in profile, looks intent, expectant, almost humble. The caption tells us why: “The Führer and Imperial Chancellor Adolf Hitler and the newlyweds, General Göring and his wife, at the celebration in the Kaiserhof, which has become a historic site for the National Socialist movement.”²¹

In the fateful days and nights before the assumption of power on January 30, 1933, Hitler had used rooms at the Kaiserhof as his Berlin base and home. Now, his propagandists used the Kaiserhof for another purpose, as a site of myth-making about the

¹⁹ Quoted and translated by Will Wainewright, *Reporting on Hitler: Rothay Reynolds and the British Press in Nazi Germany* (London: Biteback, 2017), 75.

²⁰ Tobies, *Iris Runge*, 342; Meinhardt, Wilhelm, biographical entry, *Deutsche Biographie*, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd127299904.html>, accessed September 17, 2017.

²¹ “Die Hochzeit des preußischen Ministerpräsidenten in Berlin,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, April 17, 1935.

origins of the regime.²² On the second anniversary of the advent of Nazi rule, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* published a series of photographs by Hoffmann as a retrospective of the events leading up to the fateful thirtieth of January. The images anticipated the dramatic arc of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. Read as a sequence, they show Hitler's arrival by airplane, the "spirited reception" he got from "national socialist" Berlin, his trip in an open convertible from the hotel to his meeting with Hindenburg, who invited him to power, and, finally, a view of Hitler all alone before a microphone: "Adolf Hitler speaks for the first time on German radio."²³ The descent from heaven, the adoration of the crowds, the open convertible in the streets, the solemn assumption of the duty to speak for and to the German people—this was the party line on the birth of the regime, in five iconic photographs. Riefenstahl's film, shot later that same year, 1934, would open with a similar sequence.

Like Nuremberg, the Kaiserhof, as a site of the Nazi ascent to power, was a place of Nazi myth-making, memory, and living history. The sense that great things were happening in its chambers defined many visitors' experiences of the hotel. A page boy, Harry Kosczol, remembered women congregating in the lobby for coffee but really to wait for famous Nazi personages to pass through. Even the knowledge that Hitler had once stayed there, and at the most important moment of his and Germany's life, was

²² The Kaiserhof fits the Nazi-period pattern, identified by Christopher Clark, whereby "the entire historical career of the Prussian state was shoehorned into the paradigm of national German history conceived in racist terms," in *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 662. The Kaiserhof fits another pattern, too, of myth-making around Hitler himself after January 1933. See Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 11–12.

²³ "Zum 30. Januar: Die letzten Tage vor der Machtübernahme," *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, January 30, 1935. On radio and the transition from Republic to dictatorship, see Adelheid von Saldern, "Volk and Heimat Culture in Radio Broadcasting during the Period of Transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany," *Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004), 312–346.

exciting for Kosczol. So was the night, in August 1936, when a black athlete slept off the effects of his exertions in the birthplace of the Nazi regime.²⁴ For Kosczol, who delighted in this irony, no amount of mythologizing could quite transform the Kaiserhof, site of Nazi lore, into an embodiment of the regime's values and priorities. The Kaiserhof, and Berlin's grand hotel scene more generally, exposed the gulf between ideology and practice, representation and reality, in Nazi Berlin.

It was at the Kaiserhof hotel that the Nazi rise to power occasioned the first exclusion of Jews from one of the capital's grand public commercial institutions. In 1932, Hitler and his SA henchmen had accomplished this in an informal way—through harassment. It reflected the SA's wider practices of threat-making and incitement to violence. These practices had turned several of Berlin's neighborhoods into battlegrounds and now, in the autumn of 1932, marked the experience of the city center for many Berliners. The expulsion of Jews from the Kaiserhof, which did not come to violence but depended on the context of widespread violence elsewhere and the threat of violence to come, began a process whereby the Nazis, once they were in power at the end of January 1933, took control of the city center by consolidating their power there in two key ways. First, they positioned the Gestapo in the Friedrichstadt and tortured victims there. The cries permeated the district and were audible to passersby and neighbors.²⁵ Second, they used violence or the threat of violence to clear the Friedrichstadt of undesirable

²⁴ Harry Kosczol, *Hotel Kaiserhof Berlin: Erinnerungen eines Pagen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003), 11.

²⁵ See Helmut Bräutigam and Oliver Glied, "Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager in Berlin I: Die 'wilden' Konzentrationslager und Folterkeller, 1933/34," in *Berlin-Forschungen*, ed. Wolfgang Ribbe (Berlin: Colloquium Berlin, 1987), 2:141–178.

elements—namely, Jews, homosexuals, socialists, communists, bohemians, and other types of nonconformists.²⁶

Neither violence nor the threat of violence fit with the regime's deepening commitment to the restoration and preservation of order.²⁷ By late 1933, running amok in the city center no longer served Nazi priorities. Instead, a shift in Nazi thinking occurred whereby the city center was no longer a battleground but rather an arena for the realization of an ethnic-fundamentalist vision. The city center would need to be remade in such a way as to reflect and support the greatness of the ethnic collective, the community of the folk, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. That meant a restoration of dignity, prosperity, peace—in a word, normalcy.²⁸

But the first, violent months of Nazi rule in the Friedrichstadt effected at least one lasting change: the Kaiserhof, previously a favorite resort among Berlin's well-heeled Jews, lost its Jewish clientele. The hotel had become, in 1932, an uneven battlefield for the city center, fought between, on the one side, a liberal vision of commercial hospitality and urbanism that prized, and profited from, access for all and, on the other side, an anti-liberal vision that located in the Friedrichstadt the opportunity to expunge with impunity and publicity an enemy-minority from the ethnic collective.²⁹ It was a cleansing that portended Nazi directives to transform the city center after 1933.

²⁶ See David Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic, 2000), 300–301.

²⁷ On Nazis' effort to seem like a party of law and order, see Bessell, "Political Violence and the Nazi Seizure of Power," 11–15.

²⁸ Large, *Berlin*, 300; Kristin Semmens, *Seeing Hitler's Germany: Tourism to the Third Reich* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 95.

²⁹ See chapter 5.

Business in the Third Reich

After a year of Nazi rule, and for the first time in a generation, the business reports of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft found reason to praise the state. "The strong initiatives of the National Socialist government ... have finally halted the years-long, enfeebling [zermürbend] decline in all sectors of the economy."³⁰ With words like "kraftvoll" (strong, powerful) for the Nazi regime and "zermürbend" (enfeebling) for the Weimar Republic, the report's writers set up a familiar opposition, associating Weimar with weakness and even femininity, but the Nazi regime with progress and potency.³¹ The following year's report, drafted in 1935, referred to nothing less than a "Wirtschaftsschwung," the economy having taken a "flying leap" or having been somehow "revivified."³² That report and the report of the following year, 1935 (drafted in 1936), both used the term "purposeful" (*zielbewußt*) to describe the new leadership (*Staatsführung*).³³ The drop in unemployment did indeed improve business at the corporation's fast food concessions, if only modestly. The hotels, however, tell a different story—the sad facts of which the board was at pains to minimize.

Berlin's grand hotels continued to suffer shortfalls of custom and revenue well into the Nazi period. In 1934, the board of Aschinger's admitted in its annual report that conditions were still "unfavorable" to the business, though the report's drafters were now careful not to name any of those conditions or, of course, lay blame with a regime that did not endear itself to tourists, who continued to consume articles about Nazi terror in

³⁰ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 406.

³¹ See Eleanor Hancock, "'Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held Its Value': Ernst Röhm, Masculinity, and Male Homosexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8 (1998), 617.

³² Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1934, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 405.

³³ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 404.

Berlin.³⁴ Unable or unwilling to blame the present regime, the board of Aschinger's referred shareholders to the mistakes of the Republic.³⁵ Yet by 1936, that move was making less and less sense. It must have been hard to blame a Republic, dead almost three and a half years, for present difficulties. The 1936 Olympics boosted business a little, but full occupancy was short-lived and profits were elusive.³⁶ The Nazis were failing to draw visitors to Berlin in numbers that might sustain the city's luxury hospitality industry.³⁷

Tourism to Berlin improved after the chaos of the late Weimar era, but the hospitality industry under the Nazis never saw the levels of demand it had enjoyed in the period of Weimar's relative stability (fig. 39). The Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft registered the shortfall in its 1934/1935 annual report, which nonetheless began with the customary offering of thanks for the "improvement [with respect to] tourism to Berlin." Such improvement was far short of what the Nazis had promised: the reinvigoration of all sectors of the German economy. In fiscal year 1934/1935, Berlin's hoteliers saw four-fifths the number of visitors they had seen in 1930/31. The problem in 1935 was threefold. First, the length of stay, a key indicator of profits for hoteliers, was as short as ever.³⁸ Second, the number of registrations by German nationals had yet to reach 1930/31 levels, which were 17 percent higher than 1934/1935. Third, and most worrying, the

³⁴ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 406.

³⁵ It was easier for Germans of the political center to complain about the material conditions of existence than about the Nazi use of terror, a discussion that contained "clear political subject-matter" and therefore a good amount of risk. On this point, see Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 57.

³⁶ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1936, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 403. The report only presented the positive side: "Auch der Umsatz unserer Hotels 'Der Fürstenhof' und 'Grand-Hotel am Knie' hat eine weitere Steigerung erfahren. Dazu hat die Olympiade nicht unwesentlich beigetragen."

³⁷ On tourism in and to the Third Reich and the failure of the regime to return the tourism industry to "normal" conditions, see Semmens, *Seeing Hitler's Germany*, 95.

³⁸ Annual report of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1934/1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 136.

number of registrations by foreign nationals at Berlin hotels was abysmally low, just a little over half the figure of 1929/1930.³⁹ Foreigners were staying away from Hitler's capital.

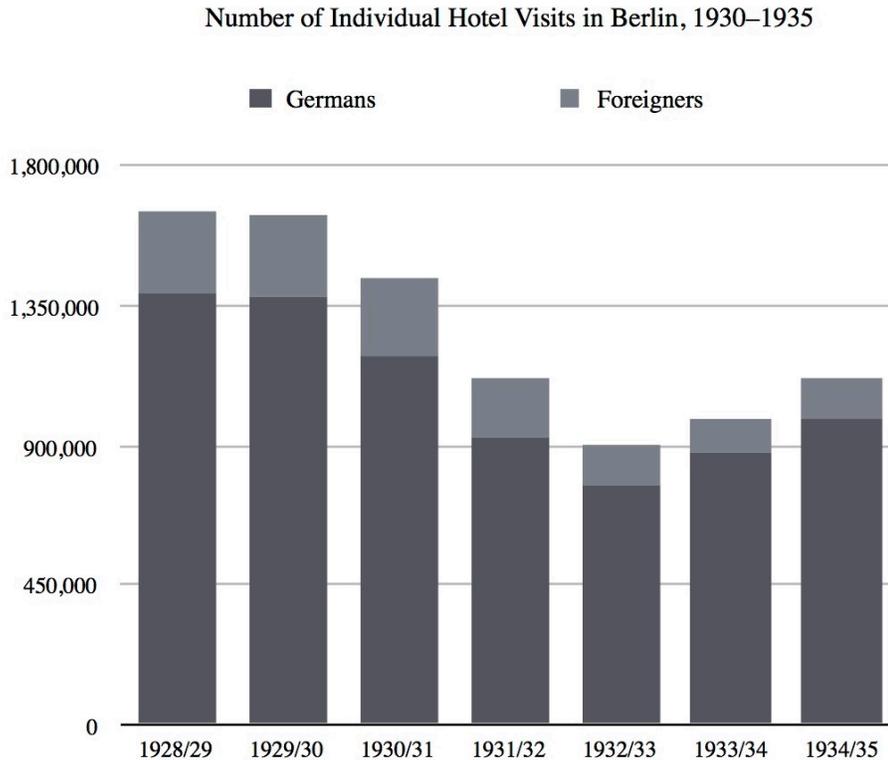


Figure 39. Source: Annual reports of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft for 1928–1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 136.

The result was that revenues missed the mark right down to the start of World War II. Although sales and rents at Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft went up 13 percent in 1933, 17 percent in 1934, 8 percent in 1935, and 11 percent in 1936, those figures belied the situation at the company's hotels and the hotels of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, of which Aschinger's still held the controlling shares.⁴⁰ In July 1933,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 406; annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for the year 1934, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 405; annual report

the *Berliner Börsen Courier* ran the headline “Hotel Business Without Dividends Again,” a familiar refrain for the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, the subject of the article.⁴¹ Board members of the parent company struck an apologetic tone in the annual report for 1933, drafted in October 1934. “The unfavorable situation for the hotels of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft,” as well as the “poor condition of our own hotels” caused the parent corporation a net loss for 1933. The 17-percent increase in revenues from other parts of the business did not even produce enough profit to cover the shortfall. An additional 1.95 million Reichsmark had to come out of the fund for renovations and new equipment.⁴² In August 1935, Aschinger’s sold its second-largest of three hotels, the Palast-Hotel and, the following year, offloaded its shares in the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, removing from its portfolio all but one grand hotel, the Fürstenhof. Aschinger’s was exiting the business.⁴³

Renovations

Both under Aschinger’s and then on its own, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft continued its efforts at renovation that are remarkable, not necessarily for their scope but certainly for their style. All changes to décor in the period 1933 to 1939 show attention to the nationalist imperatives of the new regime. The board’s first order of business, less than a year into Nazi rule, was to refresh the Germany-themed interiors of the Restaurant and Café “Zum Heidelberger” in the Central-Hotel.⁴⁴ In a meeting on August 19, 1933, at

of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 404; annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1936, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 403.

⁴¹ “Hotelbetrieb wieder dividendlos,” *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 18, 1933.

⁴² Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 406.

⁴³ Annual report of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 404.

⁴⁴ See chapter 2.

the Bristol, the board reviewed plans for a 310,000-Reichsmark overhaul.⁴⁵ The project would consume more than thirty percent of the renovations budget for 1933/1934. That budget also had to cover repairs to the façade of the Central, a new summer garden in the courtyard, meant to complement the Heidelberger's dining rooms, and substantial repairs to the roof. Several hundred thousand also went to keeping up the Bristol, the Kaiserhof, the Bellevue, and the Baltic.⁴⁶ The needs of those properties, with their aging machinery and furniture, should, in ordinary times, have been more pressing than the renovation of the Heidelberger, but these were not ordinary times. The historical moment of 1933 had remolded nationalist kitsch into the cutting edge. What had been out of step with Weimar modernism was a "restaurant of great cultural significance" after January 1933.⁴⁷ The hope must have been that a renovated Heidelberger, replete with themed rooms for every region of the Reich, would appeal to visitors from across Germany who had cheered Hitler's plans for a renovated Germany.

But now the board had created a problem for itself. Sharing a wall with the Heidelberg was the Central-Hotel's café concession, a meeting place for show-business hangers-on and what was left of late Weimar's demimonde. According to the Central's manager, the café had been overrun by "out-of-work artistes" who would order a coffee, pay the 40 Pfennigs it cost, and then stay all day. This and the "outdated" décor kept out customers of the better sort.⁴⁸ In a prime location across from the Friedrichstraße station,

⁴⁵ Meeting minutes of the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, August 19, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 61.

⁴⁶ Report by Adolf Schick to the board of directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, December 15, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 67.

⁴⁷ Transcript of a speech given by Hans Lohnert on the occasion of the reopening of the Café Wintergarten, also in the Central-Hotel, March 31, 1934, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 82.

⁴⁸ Ernst Kalveram and Adolf Schick to members of the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft, letter of December 22, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 82.

with frontage on the Dorotheenstraße, too, the Café Wintergarten should have benefitted from the foot traffic, or so reasoned the Central's manager and a managing director of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft. The proximity of the Admiralspalast, the Großes Schauspielhaus, the Deutsches Theater, and the Wintergarten variety theater, also in the Central, ensured that show-business was not out of place here. The managing directors decided to keep the show-business theme but get rid of the show-business people in order to attract the custom of theater-goers, whose pockets were deeper and whose appearance was more respectable.⁴⁹

The first step was to change the name from Café Central-Hotel to Café Wintergarten, now a “monument ... dedicated to the international art of variété.” Then, in order to avoid having actual variété artistes come in, the prices would need to rise. Next came the extensive renovations: the installation of neon advertisements outside, the relocation of the door to the corner of the well-trafficked Friedrichstraße and Dorotheenstraße, and the rebuilding of the interior.⁵⁰ Architect and designer August Dietterle created a two-story dining room with 270 seats downstairs and 105 upstairs.⁵¹ A dark blue ceiling of neon-illuminated stars, as well as nightly performances by a male quartet, were intended to remind customers of the Wintergarten variety theater next door. Eight-meter-tall statues meant to represent the muses of dance, acrobatics, dressage, and other arts of the variété also helped rebrand the café as a show-business destination, even as the opulence of the interior and the change in pricing would have dissuaded most real performers from entering. For the semblance of authenticity, then, the designers simply

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ August Dietterle had redesigned the another of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft's properties, the Café Bristol (Kurfürstendamm), in 1932.

raided the photo archives of the Wintergarten variety theater and decorated the Café with the likenesses of the artistes of yesteryear.

The rebranding of the Central-Hotel's café was part of a larger initiative to clean up the Friedrichstadt, still home to half of Berlin's grand hotels. Hermann Görke, president of the Reichsverband des deutschen Gastsättengewerbe, had called for a "revival of Berlin's city center."⁵² With most of its properties in the Friedrichstadt, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft answered the call. At the opening ceremony for the Café Wintergarten on March 31, 1934, Hans Lohnert announced the renovation as a "step toward the realization of the City-Aufbau-Programm" (City Development Programm).⁵³ Lohnert concluded his speech with a clumsy, if almost poetic, blessing for the neighborhood: "May this new restaurant's gleaming stars also make the star of the Friedrichstadt shine in all its former radiance" (*Glanz*). The district had actually been in decline since before World War I; "Glanz," meaning radiance as well as glamour and glitz, would have been a word better attributed to the new Western center of town along the Kurfürstendamm. And although Lohnert hoped for the Café Wintergarten to be "one of the most important centers of the new life of the city center," the Friedrichstraße never did become the Kurfürstendamm.

Undeterred and evidently still banking on the resuscitation of the Friedrichstadt, the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft directed much of its investment funds for 1933/1934 to the Central's third floor, which they transformed into the "Berlin-

⁵² Hermann Görke to Fritz Aschinger and Paul Spethmann, letter of December 21, 1933, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 82. See also Karl-Friedrich Schrieber, *Die Reichskulturkammer: Organisation und Ziele der deutschen Kulturpolitik* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1934), 58.

⁵³ Transcript of a speech given by Hans Lohnert on the occasion of the opening of the Café Wintergarten, March 31, 1934, in LAB, A Rep. 225-01, Nr. 82.

Etage.”⁵⁴ Each of the 130 rooms had a unique theme, communicated by enlarged photographs and posters, each meant to showcase Berlin to the out-of-towner. The Berlin on offer was a “world city of order and beauty . . . , the world city with the most beautiful environs.” Room names and themes referred to Fontane (the novelist), Zille (the illustrator), Wannsee (a nearby lake), Schinkel (the architect), and Borsig (manufacturer of locomotives).⁵⁵ Some themes were more elaborately carried out than others, but in most cases, framed photographs did all the work of differentiating one room from another. What made the rooms so attractive was their price—just RM 5—and their renovations, which stripped the walls of their woodwork and lent the Berlin-Etage all the sleekness and style of a transatlantic steamer’s second-class staterooms.⁵⁶

The Kaiserhof, too, resorted to graphic depictions of the local scene in order to show itself off to the world. The hotel’s grillroom, called the Kaiserhofstuben, would be remade into a soberer version of itself, with clean lines, dark wood panels, and illuminated false windows—a sanitized version of the traditional German restaurant, austere and thoroughly domestic.⁵⁷ Photographs of the finished rooms show that all traces of the foreign, particularly the French and English, had disappeared (fig. 40). The walls were to be adorned with German paintings of Berlin’s landmarks, and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft would solicit contributions by means of a contest with cash prizes.

⁵⁴ Managing directors opted for the French word *étage* (long since brought into German) instead of its Germanic alternative. Although there was official and even popular pressure to trade foreign words for German ones, the frisson of glamour around the French language and culture persisted nonetheless, as Irene Guenther has shown in *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 121ff. On Nazi efforts, however uneven, to Germanize the German language, see Christopher Hutton, *Linguistics in the Third Reich: Mother-tongue Fascism, Race, and the Science of Language* (London: Routledge, 1999), 42–43ff.

⁵⁵ Brochure, undated, probably 1934, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1027.

⁵⁶ Brochure, undated, probably 1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 14.

⁵⁷ For a similar example, see Despina Stratigakos’s discussion of the 1935 renovation of Hitler’s apartment in Munich’s Prinzregentenplatz in *Hitler at Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 47–67.

The contest itself had been approved by the president of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, Ernst Honig, an architect, Nazi, and longtime anti-Semite committed to the exclusion of Jews from the fine arts.



Figure 40. The Kaiserhofstuben restaurant, postcard, postmarked 1938. author's collection.

In case there was any doubt as to the motivations of the contest and the renovation, the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft promised to favor “in particular ... the renderings of the architectural works of the Third Reich.”⁵⁸ The contest was to open in autumn 1936, a few months after the Olympic games, perhaps to give artists enough time to train their sights on the new venues. First prize would be RM 1000, sixty times the price of a well outfitted room at the Kaiserhof. The second-prize winner would receive RM 700, the third, RM 500, and the fourth, RM 300. Yet, for all its good

⁵⁸ Contest announcement: “Wettbewerb zur Erlangung von Bildern, die architektonische Schöpfungen in und um Berlin zum Gegenstand haben,” in LAB, A Rep. 243–04, Nr. 95.

intentions, the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft botched the contest by putting one of the “November Criminals” on the panel of judges.

Thus, no sooner had the contest been announced than an angry artist of “Aryan” blood wrote in to complain about one of the judges, the painter and graphic artist Heinz Fuchs, whose expressionist works of 1918/1919 should have been at home in the pantheon of so-called degenerate art.⁵⁹ The letter was a bombastic, clumsily worded screed directed at the manager of the Kaiserhof demanding that Fuchs, “who always knows how to push his way to the front of the line,” be dropped from the judges panel.⁶⁰ “A longtime member of the November Group,” an “incompetent washout,” and a “clown,” Fuchs was not fit to arbitrate. The letter went on to insult Fuchs in mildly creative ways. For example, even his prize-winning work looked “as if it [had been] made by a confectioner.”⁶¹ But toward the end of the letter, the charges got more serious: “All those artists who, in the era of our ruin, gained fame and glory from Jews and their proselytes have forfeited the right to display their sorry work in public.”⁶² On behalf of all artists, the writer then announced a boycott. Record of the resolution to the conflict did not make it into the archives, but given the evident commitment of the board of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to *Gleichschaltung*, it seems likely that the board would

⁵⁹ Around the time of the Kaiserhofstuben contest, Fuchs began teaching at Hugo Häring’s private art school, where dissenting artists could continue to work in obscurity and therefore without interference from the Nazis. See Jörn Grabowski, *Wählt Links! Das politische Plakat in Deutschland, 1918–1933* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1985), 5–6; Peter Jones, *Hugo Häring: The Organic versus the Geometric* (London: Axel Menges, 1999), 134.

⁶⁰ An artist or a group of artists to the “Direktion des Hotels Kaiserhof,” letter of October 20, 1936, in LAB, A Rep. 243-04, Nr. 95. The November Group refers to an association of left-leaning German artists and architects who came together in December 1918 but took the name “Novembergruppe” as a way of identifying with the revolutionary events of November 1918. Fuchs had indeed been a member. See Helga Kliemann, *Die Novembergruppe* (Berlin: Mann, 1969), xiv.

⁶¹ Original: *Zuckerbäcker*, in letter of October 20, 1936 (op. cit.).

⁶² The original has some choice words that frustrate, maybe even defy, translation: “Alle diejenigen Künstler, die in den Zeiten des Verfalls durch Juden und Judengenossen zu Ruhm und Ehre gelangten, haben das Recht verwirkt, ihre Machwerke der Oeffentlichkeit vorzuführen” (op. cit.).

have replaced Fuchs with the alternate judge listed in the contest announcement, Alfred Pfitzner, one of the regime's preferred artists.⁶³

The association of Fuchs with Jews and philo-Semites was a serious charge, given the pace of anti-Semitic legislation in the mid-1930s. Processes of expropriation, by “Aryanization” and other means, had been underway since April 1933. As Meinhardt was fleeing Germany, his counterparts at the Ullstein publishing concern lost control of their business in a forced sale to Catio GmbH in June of 1934. The year 1935 saw the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws and other similar laws, including the ban on Jews serving as state officials. And although the Olympic games of 1936 prompted the removal of discriminatory signage in the capital, the process of social exclusion progressed even faster. Thereafter, in 1938, the city rechristened streets that had been named for Jews. Later that year, the state recalled Jews' passports and then returned them stamped with the red J. In the week after the Reichskristallnacht, which took place on the night of November 9 and early morning of November 10, 1938, Jews lost the right to enter theaters, concert halls, cinemas, and swimming places, and teachers turned Jewish children away from public schools. From December 6, 1938, Jews were banned from setting foot on parts of the Wilhelmstraße and Unter den Linden—a ban which in effect barred entry into the Bristol, the Adlon, and the Kaiserhof. The exclusion was part of a larger effort to turn Berlin's Jews into strangers in their own city, a necessary step toward excluding them from what Claudia Koonz has called the “Germans' universe of moral obligation.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Ines Schlenker, *Hitler's Salon: The Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich, 1937–1944* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 230.

⁶⁴ Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.

Olympic Hospitality

If the Olympic games of 1936 were the only respite from this process of social exclusion, then it was a short-lived and superficial respite at best. But hosting the Olympics was not about showcasing the evolution of Germany's solution to the "Jewish Question." Hosting the Olympics was about showcasing the *imperial* capital, the once and future Reichshauptstadt.⁶⁵ Hoteliers had a major part to play in the spectacle, both behind the scenes and in the glare of flash bulbs going off in lobbies and dining rooms. They hoped to offset some of the year's losses by way of full occupancy for a few weeks.

Hoteliers were sorely disappointed when they received the decree from Goebbels himself a little less than a year before the games. Worse than a price ceiling, which the hoteliers should have expected after two years' experience under a dictatorship on the slide into autarky, a *Preisdictat* (price decree) arrived by way of the Wirtschaftsgruppe Gaststätten- und Beherbergungsgewerbe Gau Berlin (Trade Association of the Restaurant and Hospitality Industry), the leadership of which had been ordered by Goebbels to observe the following: hoteliers may choose from four and only four prices: RM 4, RM 6, RM 9, and RM 15.⁶⁶ Yet the rate in 1935 for the finest rooms, where profit margins were highest, was RM 30. Therefore, Goebbels's *Preisdictat* would produce considerably lower revenue at full occupancy during the Olympics than at full occupancy under normal conditions. Although a city official promised to bring hoteliers' protestations to

⁶⁵ On Berlin as a showcase and the amounts of money Nazi officials were willing to spend, see David Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 155–156.

⁶⁶ Managing directors of the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft to Hans Lohnert, letter of May 17, 1935, in LAB, A Rep. 225–01, Nr. 82. In fact, Goebbels had ordered the Wirtschaftsgruppe Gaststätten- und Beherbergungsgewerbe to ask Dr. Ronnefeld, the official in charge of organizing accommodation for the Olympics, to enforce the *Preisdictat*.

Goebbels, the *Preisdiktat*, in all but a few cases, came into force on August 1, 1936, and would not lift until the sixteenth.⁶⁷

Germania

Six months after the Olympic games, Albert Speer became the Generalbauinspektor (General Building Inspector) of Berlin and started in earnest on a new city plan, the “Gesamtplan für die Neugestaltung der Reichshauptstadt.” Out of this draft would eventually come the architectural model of the *Welthauptstadt* Germania that so fascinated the Führer.⁶⁸ Yet Speer executed little of the plan. Before the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, only a few changes, some of them in fact a function of earlier plans, came to light. The Siegessäule (Victory Column) moved from in front of the Reichstag to the Großer Stern in the Tiergarten in 1938, its radial roads now much wider. In the same year, the new Reichsbank building opened across from the Friedrich-Werdersche Kirche. And early in 1939, Hitler and members of the diplomatic corps were able to celebrate the opening of his new Chancellery building. The last large pre-war project, the subterranean S-Bahn line, opened two of its stations and the tiny stretch of track between Anhalter Bahnhof and Potsdamer Platz a little over five weeks after the invasion of Poland. Speer hoped to marshal this new north-south S-Bahn line for service along the Prachtallee (Avenue of Splendors), projected to extend south from an intersection with the even grander East-West Axis near the Adlon, which would be pulled down in order to make room for public buildings of heavy granite and cruel proportions.

⁶⁷ David Large has shown that in some cases, smaller hotels ignored the price controls. In the case of Berlin’s grand hotels, however, I found no evidence of subversion. See Large, *Nazi Games*, 115–116.

⁶⁸ On Hitler’s fascination, see Frederick Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook, 2009), 311–329.

In summer 1941, plans materialized for a gargantuan hotel project along the Prachtallee, and Fritz Aschinger was hoping to build it. Although Aschinger's had mostly withdrawn from the hotel scene in Berlin, the hotel scene in Germania, so-called capital of the world, presented an altogether different opportunity. The cost of construction would come in at RM 70 million. The scale would be commensurate with the other "monumental structures on the North-South Axis."⁶⁹ There would be an enormous garden, cafe, and department store. The complex would be composed of two or three ten-story buildings, behind which would rise two towers of 30 floors each. One would have a restaurant for 1000 diners on its twenty-eight floor—the other, a roof garden. In addition to a theater, there would be multiple dance halls, restaurants, cafés, and shops in the cavernous cellars. Below that would be an air raid shelter for 4,000, not even half the hotel's projected occupancy—10,000. Neither the air-raid shelter nor the hotel complex materialized.

War

It is hard to believe that a businessman as experienced as Fritz Aschinger would sign on to a project like this even as he faced severe difficulties feeding and housing what few guests he had—Aschinger's only remaining grand hotel was the Fürstenhof—to the standards befitting a world-city establishment. The first half of the World War II brought shortages, rationing, regulations, and surveillance, all of which chipped away at the grand hotel edifice in noticeable ways, however gradual the damage at first.

⁶⁹ Vorprüfungsbericht of August 20 1941, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-07, Nr. 1056.

Early on the morning of September 1, 1939, Berliners listening to the radio learned of the outbreak of war with Poland.⁷⁰ By all accounts, there was little public reaction and perhaps less public discussion.⁷¹ In fact, the word “war” appears only a few times in the corporate records of the Aschinger’s Aktien-Gesellschaft and the Hotelbetriebs-Aktiengesellschaft before the massive death tolls of 1942/1943, when the conquest of the Soviet Union stalled at Moscow and Stalingrad—that is, when the war of attrition finally commenced.⁷² Nevertheless, state intervention into the supply of food, clothes, and certain raw materials intensified immediately after the outbreak of World War II. On October 12, 1939, Fritz Aschinger himself admonished Paul Arpé, manager of the Fürstenhof, to make absolutely certain that prices on the menus did not exceed the prices for that same week three years prior, in 1936. When in doubt, Aschinger wrote, lower the price: “Even careless errors, no matter how small, can bring the gravest of consequences.”⁷³ In this way, the terroristic threats of the regime filtered down through the corporate chain of command.⁷⁴ By December 1939, Arpé was sending weekly price reports to the managing directors: “I hereby confirm that I have checked the prices on the menus and find everything to be in order.”⁷⁵ Arpé’s weekly confirmations would obviate

⁷⁰ For the Nazi period, I have avoided accounts by the local and foreign press, since reporters were under extraordinary pressure to write in such a way as not to offend the Nazi leadership, obsessed by the public image of the Third Reich. Even foreign correspondents had to conceal as much if not more than they revealed. Their efforts have been the subject of several primary and secondary works on foreign correspondents in Nazi Germany. See Wainwright, *Reporting on Hitler: Rothay Reynolds and the British Press in Nazi Germany* (op. cit.); Steven Casey, *The War Beat, Europe: The American Media at War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89–119; William Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent* (New York: Knopf, 1941).

⁷¹ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 62.

⁷² One of the earliest mentions of the war occurs in the annual report for 1940, written in autumn 1941, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 399.

⁷³ Fritz Aschinger to Paul Arpé, letter of October 12, 1939, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 369.

⁷⁴ On terror, conformity, privacy, and institutions, see Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 236–242.

⁷⁵ These messages, identical except for the dates, first appear for December 1939 and are throughout Aschinger’s corporate archive for the period down to 1945.

any claims he might make to plausible deniability, ensuring that he, not his superiors, would be taken in for questions about price-gouging.

Mounting shortages placed extraordinary upward pressure on prices, which the regime tried to counteract with price controls and rationing.⁷⁶ But even as early as November 1939, what variety there was on the shelves of Aschinger's fast-food counters began to disappear. If we must serve "crispy *Maultaschen*" every day for a week, then at least change the side dish or the description, Aschinger instructed.⁷⁷ Even at the Fürstenhof, standards slipped considerably. In March 1941, Aschinger would have to ask the manager of the Fürstenhof's restaurant to replace the words "frozen vegetables" with "chilled vegetables."⁷⁸ Vegetables were not the only problem. The Fürstenhof was loading its menus with organ meat as early as January 1940, when three gentlemen sat down at the restaurant and ordered the calf's liver, two of them producing the ration coupons required for 100 grams of meat, the third producing only half the coupons but requesting the same portion as the others. The head waiter refused: regulations were taken very seriously at the Fürstenhof, he said, and one of the three might be a *Preiskommissar*. "The gentlemen were very amused by this," the head waiter reported, "and explained to me that I was actually dealing with gentlemen from the *Preiskommissariat*. They proved it by producing a document and told me, 'You got lucky.'"⁷⁹

⁷⁶ On price-setting as one means of combating inflation in Nazi Germany, see Adam Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 108, 142, 231, 260, 494–495, and 642–644.

⁷⁷ Fritz Aschinger, "Gestaltung der Speisekarte," memo of November 24, 1939, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 369.

⁷⁸ Fritz Aschinger to Paul Spethmann, letter of March 25, 1941.

⁷⁹ Oberkellner Sander to the management of the Fürstenhof and its parent company, report of February 4, 1940, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 369.

In January 1942, amid rumors of massive losses on the eastern front, Berlin's cafés and restaurants began to offer what was called "Feldküchenessen" (battlefield cuisine) as an appetizer, to bring home and front closer together in the struggle against Germany's enemies.⁸⁰ But even without sampling the Feldküchenessen, a Berliner would nonetheless feel the pinch of war. Female Berliners, for example, were protesting in public against the new "Raucherkarten" (smoker's cards), which entitled women aged 25 or older only half the cigarettes of a man while women under 25 were allowed to buy no cigarettes at all.⁸¹ What was worse, of course, was the terrible news from the fronts, where in January 1942 alone there were somewhere near 44,200 soldiers killed and an additional 10,100 gone missing.⁸² Annual reports of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft began to list the dead, as had been done during the previous war but with different wording now: "We remember with deep gratitude our coworkers-in-arms (*Arbeitskameraden*) who died on the field of honor for the Führer and the Reich."⁸³ Hoteliers had already established relief funds and benefit societies for workers and employees, "especially [their] widows and orphaned children."⁸⁴ Hitler made a particularly spirited call for donations to the regime's own charity, the Winterhilfswerk (Winter Relief Campaign), on September 12, 1941, as the RAF began to refine its ability to bomb Berlin by night.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Harenberg, *Die Chronik Berlins*, 416.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁸² Statistisches Bundesamt, ed., *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1960* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960), 78. Includes Austrians, ethnic Germans living outside the Reich proper, and, in the "missing" category, prisoners of war.

⁸³ Annual report of the Aschinger's Aktien-Gesellschaft for 1940, written in November 1941, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 399.

⁸⁴ Louis Adlon to the Amtsgericht Berlin-Charlottenburg, letter of October 20, 1941, in LAB, B Rep. 042, Nr. 28200.

⁸⁵ Harenberg, *Die Chronik Berlins*, 413.

Destruction

Air raids did not arrive in full force until early in 1943. More planes carrying more and heavier bombs arrived at shorter intervals than ever before. On January 17, 1943, more than 250 British bombers dropped 700 tons of ordnance, a portion of which incinerated the Deutschlandhalle.⁸⁶ Mosquito bombers returned on January 30, exactly ten years after Hitler's assumption of power.⁸⁷ Two and a half weeks later, Goebbels rallied the public around the cause of total war. Children of 15 had already been enlisted as *Luftwaffenhelfer* (air force assistants who often operated searchlights and acoustic locators in the midst of air raids). Air raids continued through March, increasing in intensity. On the second of that month, "blockbusters" (*Wohnblockknacker*), and fire bombs destroyed or badly damaged several landmarks in the Friedrichstadt, rendered 35,000 people homeless, and killed 711.⁸⁸ Amid renewed attacks in August, the authorities began a partial evacuation of Berlin.

The city's grand hotels were still largely intact when the building authority began inspecting for faulty ventilation systems, but that initiative appears to have been suspended as, bit by bit, aerial bombardment destroyed the Friedrichstadt.⁸⁹ Between November 18 and December 3, 1943, the RAF carried out five extensive attacks.⁹⁰ On two consecutive nights in November 1943, the Fürstenhof took direct hits but remained in business with a small fraction of its rooms available for use.⁹¹ On the second night, the Kaiserhof took several direct hits and burned down for the second time in its history (fig.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 417.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Office of the Stadtpräsident to the Baupolizei-Hauptabteilung, letter of September 27, 1943, in LAB, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-07, Nr. 420, f. 4.

⁹⁰ Harenberg, *Die Chronik Berlins*, 417.

⁹¹ All hits listed in the damage report of February 24, 1945, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1257.

41). The Bristol was lost to fire, too. A married couple already bombed out of their home in the Tiergarten district took the opportunity to steal some of the hotel's blankets and sheets.⁹² By the end of 1943, some 400,000 Berliners had lost their homes.⁹³



Figure 41. Kaiserhof ruins, 1947, in LAB, F Rep. 290, Nr. 0268473. Landesarchiv Berlin.

The raids got worse with the new year, with massive bombings happening throughout January 1944.⁹⁴ On the night of January 2, even more of the Fürstenhof was knocked out of commission, along with parts of other hotels in the vicinity.⁹⁵ In March 1944, American bombers joined the melée in full force, though the RAF continued to lead.⁹⁶ In August, Goebbels, now the *Regierungspräsident* of Berlin, forbade all public

⁹² Statement by the witness Adelheid Steglich to the police, March 9, 1944, in LAB, A Rep. 358-02, Nr. 13401, f. 2.

⁹³ Harenberg, *Die Chronik Berlins*, 419.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

⁹⁵ Damage report of February 24, 1945, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1257.

⁹⁶ Harenberg, *Die Chronik Berlins*, 419.

events that were not contributing in some way to the war effort nor showing the proper degree of restraint in this time of great emergency.⁹⁷

It is difficult to find details on conditions in Berlin's grand hotels. Little survives beyond a few postcards sent by bombed out Berliners, who filled what was left of the city's supply of rooms, a few reports by the authorities, one police investigation, and dozens of photographs taken shortly after the end of the war. What is clear is that by the autumn of 1944, nothing resembling grand hotel life survived anywhere in Berlin. Guests who chose to stay at a grand hotel were choosing to rough it in partial ruins that could not even be used after nightfall and now, quite often, not even during the day, since daytime attacks were happening with increasing frequency. Still, the destruction of Berlin's grand hotels was piecemeal, happening in several raids over the course of several months, sometimes years. Hoteliers continued to accommodate guests until the end, it appears.

The end came for the Fürstenhof on February 3, 1945, in the course of the largest attack yet by the United States Air Force, an attack which killed at least 2600 people.⁹⁸ In February 1945, after a night of raids, a representative from the building council (Stadt- und Oberbaurat) divided the building's trapezoidal footprint into 11 sections, accounted for the damage to each, and wrote his report. Section A included the main entrance, the reception hall, the grand staircase, and the gilded elevators. The façades had been disfigured by shrapnel and other projectiles. The marble stair with its bronze trim had been smashed to pieces. The elevator shafts had collapsed. Blast forces had dislodged all the walls. Only thirty percent of the doors could be salvaged. The roof would soon collapse. Most sections fared much worse, C and G having been completely destroyed.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 420.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 421.

Elsewhere, the inspector made the following observations: “corridor walls destroyed/collapsed,” “attic level and fourth floor totally destroyed,” “all windows and muntins ripped out,” “woodwork and doors completely destroyed,” “facades severely damaged by shrapnel and other projectiles.”⁹⁹

By mid-April 1945, when the RAF was conducting its last raids, it is highly unlikely that any of Berlin’s grand hotels were still in any semblance of operation. On April 20, the Red Army began shelling the city from positions in the suburbs. On April 25, Berlin authorities suspended service on the remains of the city’s public transportation lines. A short while after services resumed, on May 14 (just 12 days after the surrender of the city and one week after the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich), a shadow hostelry emerged in the rearmost wing of the Adlon. Louis Adlon, who had died, probably of a heart attack, on May 7, 1945, and his wife, Hedda Adlon, had both been members of the Nazi party since 1941. On those grounds and according to the laws of the German Democratic Republic, the Amt zum Schutze des Volkseigentums seized the ruins as well as the shadow hostelry, which they kept in operation until the 1970s. Unable to agree on a use for this building so close to the Berlin Wall, the Kreisplankommission for Berlin-Mitte demolished it in 1984.¹⁰⁰

Reunification

Less than thirteen years after it was demolished in 1984, a loose reconstruction of the Adlon went up on the site of the original hotel. Roman Herzog, President of the

⁹⁹ Damage report of February 24, 1945, in LAB, A Rep. 225, Nr. 1257.

¹⁰⁰ Stellvertreter des Stadtbezirksbürgermeisters und Vorsitzender der Kreisplankommission to the Magistrat von Berlin, letter of December 23, 1980, in LAB, C Rep. 110–01, Nr. 2832.

Federal Republic of Germany, which had just moved its capital back to Berlin, gave a speech there on the occasion of its opening, on April 26, 1997:

It pleases me to be able to speak to you tonight at the Hotel Adlon. Ninety Years ago, the old Adlon was consecrated by Kaiser Wilhelm II. I, for my part, will not be consecrating anything tonight. Rather, I will be a sort of republican taste tester, who isn't necessarily displeased to see this house of traditions stand again in its former place.¹⁰¹

This passage and the rest of the speech are an exercise in equivocation. It is as if, this history not yet having been written, Herzog already knew that it was in turns beautiful and hideous. It begins with the building of the first grand hotel in 1875 and ends with the destruction of the last, in 1945.

In the late nineteenth century, hoteliers and other businessmen, as well as designers and architects, saw great opportunity in the form of the grand hotel, yet the enterprise, in the end, succumbed to tensions both internal and external to the industry. Some of the internal tensions were visible on the surface, such as that between cosmopolitan and nationalist cultural imperatives. The other, more pressing internal tensions of the pre-World War I period resided within liberalism itself. Berlin's hoteliers had faith in the meritocracy, some of them even having risen from the ranks of the working class. Yet their hotels impeded class mobility and relegated workers to dismal cellars and fetid attics, where class animosities seethed and eventually exploded in 1919. Like other liberals, Berlin's grand hoteliers prized meritocracy and the free movement of

¹⁰¹ Roman Herzog, "Aufbruch ins 21. Jahrhundert," transcript of the speech given at the Hotel Adlon on April 26, 1997, website of the Bundespräsidialamt, http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Roman-Herzog/Reden/1997/04/19970426_Rede.html, accessed September 17, 2017.

people, while at the same time impeding workers' advancement and locking them in place.

The external tensions, primarily with the state, developed in the Weimar period, when successive Republican governments took actions against free enterprise, as Berlin's grand hoteliers saw it. Price and wage controls, however limited and temporary, as well as high taxes, offended hoteliers' liberal sensibilities. Even as controls eased and business improved, the complaints persisted. The hyperinflation of 1923 had convinced hoteliers that the Republic was bad for business. Their complaints intensified after 1929, as Germany's problems appeared to defy liberal solutions. In face of the Great Depression, right-radical nationalism, and the ever-expanding role of the state in the economy, hoteliers opted for what they thought would best for business: the anti-Republican Right.

Seemingly to know that the history of luxury commercial hospitality in the German capital is every bit as harrowing as it is glamorous, Herzog concluded his 1997 Adlon speech with the words, "Our best years are still to come." Twenty years later, the new Adlon appears to do the job, presenting a cosmopolitan face to Berlin's visiting elite while, at the other end of the Linden, a concrete reconstruction of the Hohenzollern palace awaits whitewashing.

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University of Cambridge (U.K.)

M.Phil. in Modern European History (2007)

Swarthmore College

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Writing Grant, Johns Hopkins (2014–2015)

Dean's Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins (2013)

Berlin Program for Advanced German Studies Fellowship (2010–2011)

Research Grant, Program for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Johns Hopkins (2010)

George Owen Fellowship, Johns Hopkins (2008–2011)

Prize Research Fellowship, Centre for History and Economics, University of Cambridge (2006–2007)

Honorary Fellowship, Phi Beta Kappa, Swarthmore College chapter (2006–2007)

Joshua Lippincott Fellowship, Swarthmore College (2006–2007)

PUBLICATION

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COURSES TAUGHT

Consumer Culture in Modern European History, Swarthmore College

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