The 1991 Reburial of Frederick the Great and Its Potential Meanings

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Abstract

I begin the present paper by providing an overview of the afterlife of Frederick the Great's earthly remains. I then continue by presenting the mise-en-scène of Frederick's last (until now?) reburial, together with the conflicts and debates surrounding this event. Subsequently, I elaborate on the main conceptual frameworks dealing with dead body politics and thus seeming at first glance suitable for explaining the sinuous afterlife of the royal corpse of Frederick. Directly connected with this attempt at theoretical clarification, I comment upon the extent to which these frameworks furnish the appropriate instruments to make sense of the fate of Frederick the Great's dead body and of the reinterment that took place on 17 August 1991, in Potsdam. At the same time, I also aim to explicitly show how the 1991 reinterment of Frederick the Great, and that of his father, Frederick William I, differs to a large extent from apparently similar or akin events.

Introduction

Frederick the Great (1712-1786; king of Prussia: 1740-1786) is broadly acknowledged as one of the main figures of German history, occupying a central place within Germany's catalogue of historical personalities. At the same time, recent scholarship on Frederick's presence within German collective memory emphasizes the contested and debated nature of the role of the Prussian roi philosophe in the German past and the relationship of this role with the German present. Throughout history, representations of Frederick have been appropriated and exploited for political and cultural legitimizing purposes. From the Fridericus Rex movies popular both during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi period, to the recent exhibitions and events surrounding the 300th anniversary of Frederick's birth, the latter's image has been the object of a whole range of transformations, that can be read and interpreted with an eye to the broader transformations having taken place in German society at large.

In this context, researching the sinuous destiny of Frederick the Great's dead body and of his multiple burial places "might reveal both contemporary ideologies and a long filiation of ideas or beliefs at work", as other investigations of similar case studies have shown. By tracing the intricate destiny of Frederick the Great's dead body, with an emphasis on the 1991 reburial of him and of his father, Frederick William I (1688-1740;
The Posthumous Life of Frederick the Great's Earthly Remains

During his lifetime, Frederick left very concrete instructions in his testament regarding the way he wanted to be interred. Written in French, the language in which the Prussian king felt more at ease than in German, his last will includes the following directions:

J'ai vécu en philosophe et je veux être enterré comme tel, sans appareil, sans faste, sans pompe; je ne veux être ni disséqué ni embaumé; qu'on m'enterre à Sans-Souci, au haut des terrasses, dans une sépulture que je me suis fait préparer. [...] si je meurs en temps de guerre ou bien en voyage, il n'y a qu'à déposer mon corps dans le premier lieu, et le transporter en hiver à Sans-Souci, au lieu que j'ai désigné ci-dessus.

Nevertheless, Frederick's successor, Frederick William II (1744-1797; king of Prussia: 1786-1797), decided that his uncle, whose death occurred on 17 August 1786, should not be buried on the terrace of his beloved palace of Sanssouci, but in Potsdam's Garrison Church, a place considered more appropriate for a royal corpse such as Frederick's. The Garrison Church, built between 1730 and 1735, under the reign of Frederick's father, Frederick William I, would be subsequently endowed with particular relevance by German nationalists, becoming in effect a "mythical place for the Prussian-German resurgence". Furthermore, such imagined mythical features would be linked, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, with the presence in its interior of the earthly remains of Frederick the Great, and of his father, Frederick William I, also known as the "soldier king".

Starting with the beginning of the nineteenth century, Frederick's sarcophagus attracted famous and less famous people to pay their tributes. The visits paid by the Russian Tsar Alexander I or by Napoleon in the first decade of the nineteenth century, to the crypt where Frederick lay, played a role in the discourses about Frederick's greatness. Yet undoubtedly the most important such tribute, in effect a far-reaching
instrumentalization making use of Frederick's grave in the Garrison Church, took place in the first half of the twentieth century, on 21 March 1933, when a grandiose manifestation was staged in Potsdam, under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels. The ceremony was meant to mark the taking over of power by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, in the presence of Paul von Hindenburg, the President of the Reich at the time. It involved Hindenburg's laying of wreaths in the crypt where Frederick Wilhelm I and his son, Frederick II, were buried. The *mise-en-scène* of the 'Day of Potsdam' symbolized Germany's breakaway with the Weimar Republic and its entering a new era, in which pre-Weimar Germany, represented by Hindenburg, shook hands with Hitler's National-Socialism.

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Within the Nazi understanding of history, propagated by the likes of Hitler or Goebbels, the Prussian past in general and Frederick the Great in particular played a quintessential role:

zumindest für Hitler und Goebbels, [für die] die Friedrich-Figur nicht nur ein taktisches Instrument des propagandistischen Kampfes, sondern darüber hinaus eine Stütze des Selbstbewußtseins, ein stabilisierendes Moment der Autosuggestion ist, was offenbar damit zusammenhängt, daß für Hitler Friedrich, herausgehoben aus der Gestaltenfülle der Geschichte, von hervorragender Bedeutung für das eigene Selbstverständnis, für die Deutung der selbstgestellten Aufgabe und der eigenen Rolle in seiner Epoche war.

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Against this background, it is by no means a surprise that the intensification of bombardments upon Berlin and Potsdam in the latter part of the Second World War created for the Nazis the need to secure the two coffins. Thus, in 1943 they were first moved from the Garrison Church to a Luftwaffe bunker, considered bomb-safe. Subsequently, Frederick II and Frederick William I were then moved again, in March 1945, to a salt mine in Thuringia (Bernterode), together with those of Hindenburg and his wife, relocated from Tannenberg, East Prussia (today Stebark in Poland) in the context of the flight and expulsion of Germans from the region, and with other art treasures, looted or simply placed under protection by the Nazis. This is where American troops found them, in April of the same year. Americans then transported them further west, actually invented by publicists and artists after the event was supposed to have happened. See Jürgen Kloosterhuis: "Friedrich der Große am Sarg des Großen Kurfürsten". Der König im Spannungsfeld von Vorbild und Vergänglichkeit, in: Jahrbuch Preußischer Kulturbesitz 47 (2011), 173-99.

12 Freitag, Mythen (wie Anm. 11), 399.
16 Ingrid Krüger-Bulcke: Der Hohenzollern-Hindenburg-Zwischenfall in Marburg 1947. Wiederaufleben nationalistischer Strömungen oder Sturm im Wasserglas?, Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte 39 (1989), 311-52. Trivia: the topic of the art treasures looted by the Nazis and then found by American troops in the Second World War has been addressed by a recent Hollywood production, Monuments Men (2014), directed by George Clooney. Nevertheless, the movie included no reference to Frederick's sarcophagus.
to Marburg, storing them first in the castle, and subsequently in the building of the state archives.\textsuperscript{17}

At this stage, the fate of the coffins and of the corpses of the two Hohenzollerns raised problems for the American occupation administration: both due to the instrumentalization of the Prussian past during Nazi rule in Germany and to the Soviet occupation of East Germany, reburying the dead bodies in Potsdam (or in East Prussia, in the case of the Hindenburgs) was out of the question. Legislative intricacies, together with the fact that the Hohenzollern estates where the two kings could have been buried were in the French zone of occupation, which would have implied complex negotiations and agreements, led to the placement of the caskets in the Elisabeth Church in Marburg, in a simple ceremony in August 1946.\textsuperscript{18} It was subsequently described by Louis-Ferdinand von Hohenzollern (1907-1994), the head of the Hohenzollerns between 1951 and 1994, as "eine tieftraurige, ich möchte sagen, fast makabere Zeremonie".\textsuperscript{19}

As Ingrid Krüger-Bulcke showed, this act of reinterment was surrounded by complicated negotiations and by a variety of stances displayed by several actors with interests at stake (the Lutheran Church, the American occupation administration, the Hesse government, the Hohenzollern family). Furthermore, the reburial did not put a halt to the debates and conflicts regarding the fate of the coffins, always connected with the broader political context of the time, namely with de-Nazification.\textsuperscript{20} One of the greatest risks associated with the presence of the two royal dead bodies in Marburg, especially in the eyes of the local and regional authorities in Hesse, was that they would become places of pilgrimage for disgruntled Nazis.

Subsequently, only six years after their placement in the Elisabeth Church in Marburg, the two royal corpses were once again moved to a new resting place, this time on the Hohenzollern family estate in Hechingen, Baden-Württemberg. The new transfer of the mortal remains took place at the behest of the Hohenzollern descendants, although it was unsuccessfully contested by the parish council of the Elisabeth Church, who also raised property claims upon the dead bodies.\textsuperscript{21} In consequence, between 1952 and 1991, Frederick William I and Frederick II remained in Hechingen. Nevertheless, as a typewritten document from 1952 that can be found in the archive of the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation shows, the idea of bringing Frederick back to Potsdam in the context of the potential future German unification was envisaged from the very start: "An dem Tage, an dem Deutschland in Freiheit wieder vereint ist, werden – so Gott will – die sterblichen Überreste der beiden Preußenkönige nach Potsdam zurückkehren."\textsuperscript{22}

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\textsuperscript{17} Krüger-Bulcke: Zwischenfall (wie Anm. 16), 314-317.
\textsuperscript{18} Krüger-Bulcke: Zwischenfall (wie Anm. 16), 330.
\textsuperscript{19} "Das Ereignis soll in Würde und Ruhe stattfinden", Interview with Louis Ferdinand, Prince of Prussia, in: Tagesspiegel, 28 Juli 1991.
\textsuperscript{20} Krüger-Bulcke: Zwischenfall (wie Anm. 16), 330.
\textsuperscript{21} Krüger-Bulcke: Zwischenfall (wie Anm. 16), 343-348.
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Nevertheless, the first attempts towards a return of Frederick to Potsdam took place already in the 1980s, in the context of the rediscovery and reevaluation of the Prussian past taking place in the GDR (concurrently with a similar phenomenon taking place in West Germany). Hans Bentzien (1927-2015), former Minister of Culture in the GDR (1961-1965), attempted to intermediate between Erich Honecker (1912-1994) and Louis Ferdinand of Hohenzollern such a transfer of the royal remains. Despite Bentzien's efforts, the desired transfer took place only later, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, in August 1991. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to consider that the negotiations between the GDR representatives and Louis Ferdinand were unfruitful. In effect, it seems that a reburial of Frederick II and Frederick William I was planned to take place in 1993, on the occasion of Potsdam's millennial celebrations. Yet the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification contributed to the change of plans.

The 1991 Reburial

At the end of the Second World War, the image of Prussia was associated with militarism and German aggression. This representation led to a process called by historian Gregor Thum a process of "demonizing Prussia". In effect, the Allies made sure to make a Prussian ressurection in the future impossible:

About half of Prussia's territory was ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union, including the core Prussian provinces of Eastern Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia. Subsequently, the ceded territory was drained of the remaining German population. [...] The Prussian territory within Germany's postwar borders was divided into five different administrative units, the names of which avoided any reference to Prussia. The division of Germany and the emergence of two different states in 1949 contributed to the dismantling of Prussia: the Iron Curtain separated Prussia's wealthy western provinces in the Federal Republic of Germany from Prussia's historical center with Brandenburg at its core in the German Democratic Republic. Similarly, the former Prussian capital was divided into two halves with the historical center of Berlin falling to the GDR and the bourgeois neighborhoods becoming part of West Germany.

In the same vein, significant parts of the material legacy of Prussia, already affected by the war, were razed to the ground in the first postwar decades. The ruins of the Garrison Church in Potsdam were amongst the buildings and monuments destroyed by Communist authorities in the late 1960s, replaced by a computing center.
Nevertheless, starting with the 1970s, in direct relationship with what Thum called the "stabilization of the postwar nations", a "reevaluation of the Prussian past" also started to take place, in both East and West Germany. Reassessing the Prussian past was bound to imply a reconsideration of the role played by Frederick the Great. Furthermore, this reconsideration also had a very tangible outcome: in 1980, the famous equestrian statue of the Prussian roi philosophe was brought back to its original location on the iconic Berlin boulevard, Unter den Linden, from Potsdam, where it had been tucked away in the 1950s. With this gesture, GDR authorities "made clear to everyone that Prussia's demonization had come to an end". Concurrently, in 1986, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Frederick the Great's death, a commemorative service was held in Hechingen, in the presence of high-ranked political figures, such as Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Philipp Jenninger, the president of the Bundestag, and Lothar Späth, the prime-minister of Baden-Württemberg. Yet it also has to be said that this event was rather an exception: in general, throughout the period in which their residence was in Baden-Württemberg, the royal sarcophagi were "kein Anlaß für Demonstrationen oder Veranstaltungen politischer Art".

This is the background against which the first attempts aimed at the reburial of Frederick the Great and Frederick William I in Potsdam took place, initiated by Hans Bentzien. In November 1986, the latter first turned to Erich Honecker, the General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party, in his endeavor to bring the two Hohenzollerns back to their original resting places. With Honecker in principle agreeing to the idea, Bentzien became an intermediary between the GDR authorities and Louis Ferdinand of Hohenzollern who, as a representative of Germany's last imperial family and as someone close to West German chancellor Helmut Kohl, was fundamentally reluctant towards the GDR. Initially, Louis Ferdinand reiterated his conviction that the desired reburial could take place only in the context of a united Germany. Nevertheless, Bentzien's efforts were not in vain, as they actually led to Louis Ferdinand accepting an invitation to Potsdam. During his visit, which took place in November 1987, the chief of the Hohenzollern house also met Honecker. As a consequence of this visit, it seemed that the objective of Bentzien's negotiations was moving closer towards "den Horizont des Möglichen".

Looking into the exchange of letters between Hans Bentzien and Louis Ferdinand, historian Martin Sabrow

29 Thum: We are Prussia (wie Anm. 25), 264-269.
30 Thum: We are Prussia (wie Anm. 25), 266; see also: Denkmal König Friedrich II. von Potsdam, available at http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/cgi-bin/hidaweb/getdoc.pl?DOK_TPL=ida_doc.tpl&KEY=obj%200909060118 (last accessed 1 September 2015).
31 Thum: We are Prussia (wie Anm. 25), 266.
32 Bentzien: Heimkehr (wie Anm. 15), 69.
33 Bentzien: Heimkehr (wie Anm. 15), 69.
34 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 364.
35 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 365.
36 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 365.
37 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 369.
argues that the latter was entertaining some hopes regarding the restitution of former property of the Hohenzollern family, e.g. the Cecilienhof castle. Furthermore, the same exchange of letters suggests that a reburial was actually envisaged for 1993, the year when the festivities marking one thousand years since the foundation of Potsdam were supposed to take place. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the German reunification led to a change of plans. Nonetheless, as the correspondence between Bentzien and Louis Ferdinand on the one hand and between Bentzien and Honecker on the other hand indicates, the efforts taking place in the 1980s, towards a reburial of the Hohenzollerns were already indicative of a potential German-German transborder cooperation. Both the symbolic and the concrete involvement of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was wished and endeavored by Bentzien, as it could have contributed to casting away the doubts of Louis Ferdinand of Hohenzollern.

With German reunification a reality, the road towards a return of the two kings became fully open in 1990/1991. In an interview granted to Tagesspiegel, Louis Ferdinand presented the reinterment as a direct consequence of the reunification: "Ich danke meinem Schöpfer, daß durch die Wiedervereinigung unseres deutschen Vaterlandes diese beiden Särge wieder in ihre märkische Heimat zurückkehren können." The reburial was framed as a private event of national importance: funding came mostly from private sources, yet the state was also involved: "Das Haus Hohenzollern kommt für die Überführungskosten bis zur Ankunft der Särge in Potsdam auf, wo sie in Obhut des Landes Brandenburg gehen. Außerdem übernehmen wir die Kosten für die Herrichtung der Grabstätten, was nicht ganz billig sein wird.

The East-West journey of the two Fredericks, from Hechingen to Potsdam, first involved the need to mark the departure from the former place. Thus, in Hechingen ceremonies preceding the departure of the royal corpses were organized at the behest of the Masonic Grand National Mother Lodge "The Tree Globes" (Zu den drei Weltkugeln), and took place on 20 July 1991. With a little bit more than 150 guests ("brothers and sisters") attending it, the event was rather low-key, relevant within the particular Masonic context, and not so much a solemnity that could in be integrated in a narrative focusing on the production of national identity and collective memory.

In the booklet edited by the aforementioned Masonic lodge, one can find excerpts from German newspapers from the period of the Potsdam reburial (17-19 August 1991). An article from Berliner Morgenpost, about the ceremonies marking the departure from Hechingen, reports about the fact that the sarcophagi were transported from the chapel where they were held to the inner ward, by members of the Bonn Guardsmen (Bonner Wachbataillon). Furthermore, four staff officers provided the guard of honor for the dead kings.

38 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 370.
39 Sabrow: Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 371.
40 "Das Ereignis" (wie Anm. 19).
41 "Das Ereignis" (wie Anm. 19).
43 Schwartz: Heimkehr (wie Anm. 42), 20.
Following a short religious ceremonial, the sarcophagi were then transported to the train station in Hechingen, where they were met by 90 guards of honor from the battalion of the Bonn Guardsmen, and by a military music corps from Stuttgart. The sarcophagi were loaded onto the royal train in the presence of about 3,000 bystanders. The train ride of Frederick II and Frederick William I took place during the night. The next morning, following a short stopover in the Brandenburg train station, in order for the locomotive to be changed with a steam one, the special royal train entered Potsdam's Wildpark train station (currently Potsdam Park Sanssouci railway station).

In Potsdam, the coffins, placed on a carriage driven by horses, were transported first to the mausoleum in the Church of Peace, where Frederick William I was to find his rest. From there, Frederick's sarcophagus was transferred to the forecourt of Schloss Sanssouci, where he was exhibited to the curious crowds (newspaper reports differ, reporting figures ranging from 60,000 to 100,000 spectators). In this context, Chancellor Helmut Kohl also made a short appearance. With Frederick's coffin outside, the ceremonies then moved inside, in the New Palace (Neues Palais), where the Brandenburg government organized a commemorative event, which included opening remarks by Louis Ferdinand and by the then prime minister Manfred Stolpe, and a speech by political scientist Christian Graf von Krockow.

Nevertheless, the final and most important part of the entire event was the nightly deposition of the coffin into the crypt, in the presence of a very small audience consisting of members of the Hohenzollern family and of Helmut Kohl, at the personal invitation of Louis Ferdinand. In order to keep with Frederick's desire to be buried without pomposity, in the middle of the night, the ceremony was a simple one. Furthermore, although it was recorded for television, it was not transmitted live.

Dead Body Politics. Possible Interpretations of Frederick the Great's 1991 Reburial

Having seen how the 1991 reburial actually took place, the question is how we can make sense of it. Or, worded differently, what sort of conceptual and analytical framework can be employed in order to shed light upon the deeper meanings of the reinterment of Frederick the Great. In effect, the latter's dead body has only scarcely raised the interest of scholars and researchers. Nevertheless, an investigation into the treatment of Frederick the Great's mortal remains does not fall on totally sterile ground. In a rather singular contribution, Martin Sabrow looked at the post-mortem fate of Frederick the Great, placing his analysis under the aegis of the concept of "authenticity".

According to Sabrow, the staging of Frederick's initial burial in 1786 reinforced the distinction between the political and the physical body of the monarch, analysed by medieval historian Ernst H. Kantorowicz in his

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46 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), passim.
The King's Two Bodies:

Im Zentrum des Leichenbegängnisses, in dem die Macht der absolutistischen Herrschaft über Mensch und Natur sich präsentierte und ihre Erhabenheit über alle irdischen Wechselfälle demonsstrierte, stand freilich der König und nicht der Mensch Friedrich.47

Furthermore, in commensuration with a concept of authenticity laying emphasis on the political body, and not on the physical one of the king, the dead body of Frederick the Great, or that of his father, Frederick William I, lying by his side in the Garrison Church, did not have any symbolic relevance in the decades following Frederick's death.48 Only the visits paid by the Russian Tsar Alexander I, in 1805, and then by French emperor Napoleon, in 1806, indicated a subtle modification of this concept and, consequently, of the importance granted to the physical body of the monarch.49 Subsequently, the Nazi appropriation and instrumentalization of the dead bodies of the two Hohenzollerns, taking place during the (in)famous Day of Potsdam in 1933, should be understood under the auspices of a "heroische Authentizität", for whom national greatness was more important than warranted genuineness.50 Nevertheless, the Garrison Church and the royal sarcophagi were inserted by the Nazis in the touristic circuit, which indicates that a rather abstract cult of heroes needed some tangible artefacts, surrounded by an aura of concrete authenticity.51

Finally, the 1991 reburial suggests a renewed and changed emphasis placed upon historical authenticity. Thus, Sabrow argued that the exhumation and reburial which took place in August 1991 had less to do with political legitimacy, identity formation or power, but rather with a reconfiguration of the meaning of historical authenticity. Furthermore, in an optimistic note, Sabrow saw no perspectives for the future and no nostalgia in Frederick's reburial:

...die im August 1991 unter einer demokratisch legitimierten Brandenburger Landesregierung erfolgte Verwirklichung des so lange vorbereiteten Rückführungsplans stand ganz unter einem von allen politischen Kontinuitäten befreiten Authentizitätsbegriff. [...] Es [das Konzept des Authentischen] zielte auf die möglichst unverstellte und direkte Begegnung mit einer Vergangenheit, deren Rückkehr von niemandem ernsthaft gewünscht oder proklamiert wurde.52

Sabrow's analysis is undoubtedly attractive and his emphasis on the concept of "authenticity" can explain to a large extent the reburial in 1991. Nevertheless, the desire for an authentic reburial in accordance with Frederick's last will does not provide the full answer. "Dead body politics", to use a term coined by

47 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 352.
48 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 355.
49 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 355-356.
50 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 357.
51 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 360-361.
52 Sabrow, Gebeine (wie Anm. 7), 372.
anthropologist Katherine Verdery, is or can also be about nationalism, nation-building, the relationship with the ancestors, or the quest for political or cultural legitimacy, especially when the dead body in question is that of a former monarch such as Frederick the Great.

Dead bodies, funerals and commemorations have been under the spotlight of scholarly research starting roughly with the 1970s. Scholarship has drawn attention upon the tight relationship between centrally steered state funerals or official commemorations and the production and reproduction of identity and collective memory, on both the national and the local levels. Furthermore, the fall of the Iron Curtain in particular seemed to bring forth a resurgence of re-burials in Eastern Europe, which also raised the interest of scholars and writers.

Nevertheless, royal bodies, dead or alive, had been the object of theological and political interest long before the final decades of the twentieth century. In his groundbreaking study, historian Ernst H. Kantorowicz looked in depth at the medieval political theology doctrine of the "king's two bodies". More prevalent in England rather than on continental Europe, the doctrine constructed the king as a physical person and the embodiment of the community at the same time. Kantorowicz also showed the connections of this doctrine with theological elaborations on the dual nature of God. In the Middle Ages, "kings' bodies and tombs were important political objects which were systematically evoked during periods of crisis and interregnum." Royal burials, royal bodies and royal tombs played an important role either in enabling the successors to forge "a symbolic link with their dynastic past", or, on the contrary, in marking a break with this past. In the latter case, royal bodies could be divested of legitimacy and "denied the rites and graves that their status should have merited". Tracing straightforward connections between the medieval political theology of royal deaths and burials and the twentieth century adventurous journey of Frederick the Great's mortal remains would be to a certain extent a rather far-fetched endeavour. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that issues related to legitimacy have constantly been at the core of the treatment of the dead and of dead bodies, especially when these dead were political/royal figures.

From this point of view, modern political systems such as the nation-state make no exception: their "symbolic
treatment of the dead" creates a "sense of continuity with past and future generations". Hence, nation-states and modern political systems rationally "perform reburial rituals and posthumously restore citizenship rights". With nationalism and religion being closely intertwined, the treatment of dead bodies ends up playing an important role even in apparently secular "civil religions".

In other words, the political cult of the dead, centred around the gravestones and the dead bodies of important political or cultural personalities seems to be a historical constant. It might have taken various shapes and guises throughout history, yet its presence has been constant, contributing as "something like a slow-burner" (eine Art Dauerbrenner) to the "consolidation of relationships of dominance" (Befestigung von Herrschaftsverhältnissen). Against this background, looking into the 1991 reburial of Frederick the Great and of his father can provide us with insights into questions related to legitimacy and dead body politics in general and into the construction (or the eschewal therefrom) in twentieth century Germany of a sense of continuity with the past and the future.

In effect, questions related to (political) legitimacy sub tend literature on public funerals and on the cult of the dead. Against this background, Frederick's 1991 reinterment looks like a rather ambiguous event. It was presented as a symbol of the fulfilled German reunification, yet considering German twentieth century history such symbolism was in effect laden with contestation and ambiguity. Thus, comparing the 1991 ceremonies in Potsdam to other exemplary propagandistic and legitimizing reinterments of former monarchs - for example to the 1989 return of the Serbian Prince Lazar's dead body from the Belgrade cathedral to the Ravanica monastery -, the return of the roi philosophe to Potsdam does not seem to belong to the same category.

It is worth for example noting that the train journey, taking place during the night, was as direct as possible: there were five stops on the way, yet they do not seem to have been meant to provide opportunities for eulogizing and commemorating the figure(s) of the dead monarch(s), as in many other cases of the sort. Compare this for example with Béla Bartók's transatlantic journey to Hungary, where he was granted a state funeral in 1988. According to anthropologist Susan Gal, the reburial of the famous Hungarian composer "is best understood as an attempt by intellectuals speaking in support of a morally and organizationally weak state to make a claim for much-needed credibility by symbolically aligning the state with the figure of..."
Taking place in the summer of 1988, the concrete unfolding of the reinterment involved a complex journey from New York to Budapest:

Instead of being flown directly to Budapest from New York, the coffin was brought by ocean liner to England and by motorcade through France, Germany, and Austria, with celebratory concerts in Southampton, Cherbourg, Paris, Strasbourg, Munich, and Vienna. When the coffin crossed the Hungarian border, people lined the highway to see the motorcade pass their villages on its way to Budapest. At each step across Europe and at the border, Hungarian ambassadors, consuls, or ministers greeted the coffin.67

The display of forces in the case of Frederick the Great and Frederick William I was much less significant, being limited to Hechingen (to a small extent) and Potsdam, as the final destination.

At this stage, it is worth pinpointing that Frederick's reburial was in effect not a state funeral. Looking at the French case, historian Avner Ben-Amos distinguished between national funerals, funerals at the expense of the state, and official funerals, with ceremonies of transfer of bodies being similarly classifiable.68 Following these distinctions, Frederick's reburial would rather fall into the latter category: its organization was privately funded, yet the involvement of state authorities in it definitely made it an "official funeral".

Unlike in other related cases, in the case of Frederick's reinterment, the official involvement of the state was purportedly minimized. The whole affair was rather a public-private one, with the greatest part of the costs being covered from private funding. For example, the special train Hechingen-Potsdam was chartered by the Hohenzollern family from the Deutsche Bahn.69 Nevertheless, the Bundeswehr participated at the ceremonies by providing guards of honor, the two sarcophagi were transported from the train station in Potsdam to the carriage with the same special automobile (Unimax) that had been used for the state funerals of Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Ehrhard,70 authorities in Brandenburg were in fact responsible for the smooth running of the solemnities, and, last but not least, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl attended parts of the reinterment, yet as a "private person".

The private-public joint venture is indicative of the multiple and ambiguous stances with respect to Frederick's reburial. The idea of acquiring some sort of political legitimacy was embedded from the very start in the discourses emphasizing the links between the reunification and the reinterment. Nevertheless, the

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67 Gal: Bartók's Funeral (wie Anm. 66), 449-450.
68 Ben-Amos: Funerals, Politics, and Memory (wie Anm. 54), 168.
69 "Das Ereignis" (wie Anm. 19).
participation of the Bundeswehr for example was outrightly rejected by protesters or by people directly involved in the organization of the ceremonies, such as Hans-Joachim Giersberg, the then director of the Foundation Prussian Palaces and Gardens, who managed the Sanssouci Palace. In a letter addressed to Manfred Stolpe on 30 July 1991, the prime-minister of Brandenburg, Giersberg straightforwardly opposed the involvement of the German military:

Mit dem Aufmarsch der Bundeswehr auf dem Schloßhof von Sanssouci bekommt dieses Ereignis jedoch jetzt eine neue und wie ich meine, nicht gute Dimension. [...] Ich glaube, daß es nicht gut ist, daß Bilder mit Offizieren der Bundeswehr vor dem Schloß Sanssouci stehend um die Welt gehen. Alle 20 Minuten werden die Offiziere abgelöst. Es entsteht dadurch eine Unruhe, die von dem eigentlichen Gedanken, von dem großen preußischen König Abschied zu nehmen, ablenkt und ist dieser Situation nicht würdig.71

Interestingly, confirming Sabrow's elaborations on the role of authenticity in the 1991 reburial, Giersberg (unsuccessfully) aimed to make use of an argument emphasizing that the participation of the Bundeswehr would actually run counter Frederick's attitude during his lifetime and the private character of Sanssouci: "Durch die Bundeswehr wird es offiziell und wohl kaum im Sinne des Königs, der Militär in Sanssouci nur für die abendliche Bewachung geduldet hat (1 Sergeant und 5 Soldaten)."72

Nevertheless, in the end the Bundeswehr did symbolically participate in the ceremonies: issues related to symbolic legitimacy had eventually leverage upon authenticity or upon the dubious image of the German army considering the country's history of militarism and aggression and the fears in this respect raised by German reunification. Yet Brandenburg political figures were cautious in presenting the symbolic involvement of the Bundeswehr in the reburial. Hinrich Enderlein, then Minister for Science, Research and Culture in Brandenburg, emphasized the role of the Bundeswehr in the democratization of Germany, together with the fact that the military was part of the ceremonies, without dominating them:

Wir sind ein Staat mit einer inzwischen gewachsenen und gefestigten demokratischen Tradition, die voll im Ablauf der Veranstaltung zum Tragen kommt, was aber auch einschließt, daß die Bundeswehr als keineswegs dominierender Teil der Veranstaltung mit integriert und nicht ausgegrenzt wird. Sicher gibt es wenig Länder, in denen das Militär so in die demokratische Entwicklung integriert ist, wie in der Bundesrepublik. Schon dieses stellt einen geradezu dramatischen Kontrapunkt zu der preussischen Militärtradition dar. Dies im Rahmen dieser Veranstaltung zu demonstrieren ist nicht ohne Reiz.73

In a similar vein, in the speech held in the New Palace, Manfred Stolpe displayed a critical stance towards the militarism that had been part and parcel of Frederick the Great's policy in the eighteenth century,

72 Letter (wie Anm. 71).
underlining the dangers implied by a militarization of society and reemphasizing the German opposition towards sending its own troops in the then ongoing Gulf War:

Wir müssen widerstehen, wenn Militär zum Selbstzweck würde und Militarisierung die Gesellschaft zu ergreifen drohte. In dieser Zeit des Übergangs, in der das Instrument Krieg überlebt, aber die Kriegsgefahr nicht beseitigt ist, hat beides in Potsdam Platz: Das Heereskommando Ost und das Pazifistendenkmal. In Brandenburg haben wir zu dieser Dialektik auch unsere aktuellen Erfahrungen: Die Friedensgruppen haben unseren Mut zur Freiheit geweckt. Die Bundeswehr hat hierzulande als Friedenspartner der Sowjettruppen schon mehr geleistet als sie es je im Golffkrieg hätte tun können.74

Other aspects in the concrete unfolding of the reinterment also suggest the presence of elements aiming to create a sort of political legitimacy, coexisting with discourses on authenticity and the fulfillment of Frederick the Great's last will. One can find such a binome embedded in the ceremony organized by the Masonic Lodge "The Tree Globes" in Hechingen, on 20 July 1991, some weeks before the transfer of remains. The choice of the date was presented as a conscious one, establishing a (rather far-fetched) symbolic link with the 20 July plot to assassinate Hitler.75 Moreover, as press articles and TV shows suggest, Frederick's image was appropriated in the context of the 1991 reburial by other groups as well, such as gays, extreme right-wingers, or student members of right-wing fraternities: the former king had something to offer to everybody.76

Unlike in other cases, e.g. the French one, the idea of using political burials or reburials in order to acquire political legitimacy was bound to fall on a minefield in the (West) German context, due to the country's particular recent history. In France, as historian Avner Ben-Amos showed, numerous state-sponsored funerals and reburials with a distinct political meaning took place, both before and after the end of the Second World War.77 Considering that death and rites surrounding death played a very important role within the National-Socialist imagination, and that the postwar West German state denounced the Nazi past, impregnated with militarism and genocidal policies, state-sponsored funerals could not occupy a similar place within West German political culture. Whereas 71 state funerals took place in the Third Reich, only 38 took place in the Federal Republic of Germany until 1994.78 The impossibility of establishing implicit or explicit connections with the National-Socialist state-sponsored funerals might explain in part why Konrad Adenauer's burial in 1967, was staged using the model of Churchill's interment, which had taken place two years beforehand.79 Thus, it was difficult to discursively or symbolically connect Frederick's reburial with a rather non-existent tradition of public/state funerals in postwar (West) Germany. Connecting it with a tradition of public/state funerals in the GDR would also have been impossible, for obvious reasons. Hence, the

74 Manfred Stolpe, Ansprache anläßlich der Rückführung der Sarkophage der preußischen Könige Friedrich Wilhelm I und Friedrich II am 17.8.1991 in Potsdam, SPSG Archiv, Akte AR3/47.
75 Schwartz: Heimkehr (wie Anm. 42), 30.
76 Bissinger et al.: Friedrichs Heimfahrt (wie Anm. 70).
77 Ben-Amos: Funerals, Politics, and Memory (wie Anm. 54).
78 Ackermann: Staatsbegräbnisse (wie Anm. 54), 252.
79 Ackermann: Staatsbegräbnisse (wie Anm. 54), 458.
legitimacy discourse and symbolism, though present, were rather low-key, intertwined with authenticity discourses.

Having shown that the quest for legitimacy can add to the explanations emphasizing the relevance of "authenticity", I end this paper by succinctly discussing another analytical path apparently worth pursuing, namely that emphasizing the particular post-Socialist context in which the reinterment took place. Anthropologist Katherine Verdery, who coined the expression "dead body politics" saw the wave of reburials taking place in Eastern Europe during or in the immediate aftermath of the fall of state socialism as being tightly linked to the particular social, political and cultural context deriving out of the events in 1989.80 Her argumentation focused on the global changes brought forth by the fall of state socialism and the apparently triumphant march of capitalism and on the way these changes were mirrored in various exhumations and reinterments in the region. Furthermore, Verdery drew a connection between these reburials and the reconfiguration of nationalism and national sentiment in the region.

Nevertheless, despite the very broad explanatory framework proposed by Verdery and despite her complex elaborations, using her argumentative scaffolding as an interpretive panacea for all cases of exhumations and reburials in post-Socialist Eastern Europe is not fully satisfactory. Verdery's "post-socialist necrophilia" is marked by the simultaneity of several issues, such as "property restitution, political pluralization, religious renewal, and national conflicts tied to building nation-states",81 yet many instantiations of the type of dead body politics that she focuses her attention on display significant continuities rather than discontinuities or radical transformations.82

At first glance, the main issues enumerated by historian Maria Todorova (and quoted above) in her allusive critique to Verdery's line of argumentation can also be found in the case of Frederick the Great's 1991 reburial. The event came together with debates concerning potential property restitution in Potsdam towards the Hohenzollerns, with political pluralization in the former GDR, and with new questions related to German national identity in the new-old context of a unified German state in the centre of Europe. Nevertheless, any interpretation of the reinterment of Frederick the Great and of Frederick William I is bound to take into account the continuities with the pre-1989 period. In both German states a rediscovery of the Prussian past started taking place in the 1970s and in the 1980s, coming together with an upsurge in the interest for Frederick's personality. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the GDR authorities had already made steps in the 1980s towards a return of Frederick's earthly remains to Potsdam, negotiating with Louis Ferdinand von Hohenzollern in this respect.

80 Verdery: The Political Lives (wie Anm. 53).
82 Todorova: Bones (wie Anm. 81), 447-8.
At the same time, for reasons having to do with the German Sonderweg in the twentieth century, and with the straightforward and programmatic rejection of the National-Socialist past, reading Frederick the Great's reburial as a sheer attempt to establish a sense of continuity with the pre-Communist past, as it happened in other countries (for example Hungary), would be undoubtedly erroneous. In effect, such a reading constituted one of the main critiques raised by the (mostly) left-wing intellectuals and opponents of the event taking place in 1991. Nevertheless, the rather cautious attitude of high-ranked authorities with respect to the reburial suggests that this critical reading was to a certain extent far-fetched. Furthermore, linking the journey "home" of Frederick II and Frederick William I to echoes and remnants of the nationalistic and particularly National-Socialist "blood and soil" ideology, can also be only hardly integrated into an explanatory framework meant to shed analytical light upon the event in August 1991. Frederick's journey from West to East Germany was indeed meant to symbolize the completion of German reunification. Yet the difficult official exposure to death in Germany, following the demise of Nazism, together with the rather carnivalesque atmosphere present in Potsdam during the ceremony, indicate that the establishment of nationalistic links between the past and the present by means of a dead body was, in the best case, just a very small component of the event.

Moreover, the choice of the Sanssouci terrace as the place for reburial, in apparent agreement with Frederick's last wish, also stands at odds with the way the royal corpse had been exploited during Nazi rule, when it was placed within the Garrison Church. Of course, with the Garrison Church having been destroyed in the 1960s, it would have been impossible to bring back there any corpse whatsoever, be it royal or not. Nevertheless, the whole event in August 1991 was presented as a sort of compensation towards Frederick, in compliance with his last will. Looking at the fate of the dead body of Frederick William I, Frederick's father, is also prone to offer some insights into how the reburial was framed as a "reparation" issue. Frederick William I was reburied in the Church of Peace, also on the premises of the Sanssouci Park: the building also hosts the Kaiser Friedrich Mausoleum, where the Emperor Frederick III, his wife Empress Victoria, and their two sons, Prince Sigismund and Prince Waldemar, are interred. However, considering that Frederick William I wanted to be buried in the now lost Garrison Church, if the initiative towards a reconstruction of the latter ever gets put into practice, it might be that the dead body of Frederick the Great's father would enjoy yet another last trip. Louis Ferdinand already suggested this in 1991, in the interview I have already extensively quoted from.

Conclusions

Analytically caught in-between discourses emphasizing "historical authenticity", the process of German reunification, and the (contested) legitimacy brought forth by public/official ceremonies of the sort, Frederick's 1991 reburial looks very much as a peculiar, sui generis instantiation of politics of memory. Currently,

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84 Bissinger et al.: Friedrichs Heimfahrt (wie Anm. 70).
85 "Das Ereignis" (wie Anm. 19).
Frederick's crypt on the Sanssouci terrace is not the object of any particular (commemorative) interest, other than that of tourists visiting the Sanssouci Park and/or the palace. Nobody would attempt to gain some political (or cultural) legitimacy from it. August 1991 was probably the last moment in which Frederick the Great was purported to bestow some legitimacy to the present, albeit to a small extent, albeit strongly linked with a discourse emphasizing authenticity with respect to his last will.

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