

# Iron Kingdom

*The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947*

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## Introduction

On 25 February 1947, representatives of the Allied occupation authorities in Berlin signed a law abolishing the state of Prussia. From this moment onward, Prussia belonged to history.<sup>1</sup> The Prussian State, which from early days has been a bearer of militarism and reaction in Germany, has de facto ceased to exist. Guided by the interests of preservation of peace and security of peoples, and with the desire to assure further reconstruction of the political of Germany on a democratic basis, the Control Council enacts as follows:



### ARTICLE I

The Prussian State together with its central government and all its agencies is abolished. Law No. 46 of the Allied Control Council was more than an administrative act. In expunging Prussia from the map of Europe, the Allied authorities also passed judgement upon it. Prussia was not just one German territory among others, on a par with Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria or Saxony; it was the very source of the German malaise that had afflicted Europe. It was the reason why Germany had turned from the path of peace and political modernity. 'The core of Germany is Prussia,'

Churchill told the British Parliament on 21 September 1943. 'There is the source of the recurring pestilence. The excision of Prussia from the political map of Europe was thus a symbolic necessity. Its history had become a nightmare that weighed upon the minds of the living. The burden of that ignominious termination presses on the subject matter of this book, In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the history of Prussia had been painted in mainly positive tones. The Protestant historians of the Prussian School celebrated the Prussian state as a vehicle of rational administration and progress and the liberator of Protestant Germany from the toils of Habsburg Austria and Bonapartist France. They saw in the Prussian-dominated nation-state founded in 1871 the natural, inevitable and best outcome of Germany's historical evolution since the Reformation.

This rosy view of the Prussian tradition faded after 1945, when the criminality of the Nazi regime cast its long shadows over the German past. Nazism, one prominent historian argued, was no accident, but rather 'the acute symptom of a chronic [Prussian] infirmity'; the Austrian Adolf Hitler was an 'elective Prussian' in his mentality. The view gained ground that German history in the modern era had failed to follow the 'normal' (i.e. British, American or west European) route to a relatively liberal and untroubled political maturity. Whereas the power of traditional elites and political institutions had been broken in France, Britain and the Netherlands by 'bourgeois revolutions', so the argument ran, this had never been achieved in Germany. Instead, Germany followed a 'special path' (*Sonderweg*) that culminated in twelve years of Nazi dictatorship.

Prussia played a key role in this scenario of political malformation, was here that the classical manifestations of the special path seemed clearly in evidence. Foremost among these was the unbroken power of the Junkers, the noble landowners of the districts to the east of the river Elbe, whose dominance within government, the military and rural society had survived the age of the European revolutions. The consequences for Prussia and by extension for Germany were, it appeared, disastrous: a political culture marked by illiberalism and intolerance, an inclination to revere power over legally grounded right, and an unbroken — addition of militarism. Central to nearly all diagnoses of the special path was the notion of a lopsided or 'incomplete' process of modernization, in which the evolution of political culture failed to keep pace with innovation and growth in the economic sphere. By this reading, Prussia was the bane of modern German and European history. Imprinting its own peculiar political culture

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<sup>1</sup> Escudo de Armas de Prussia

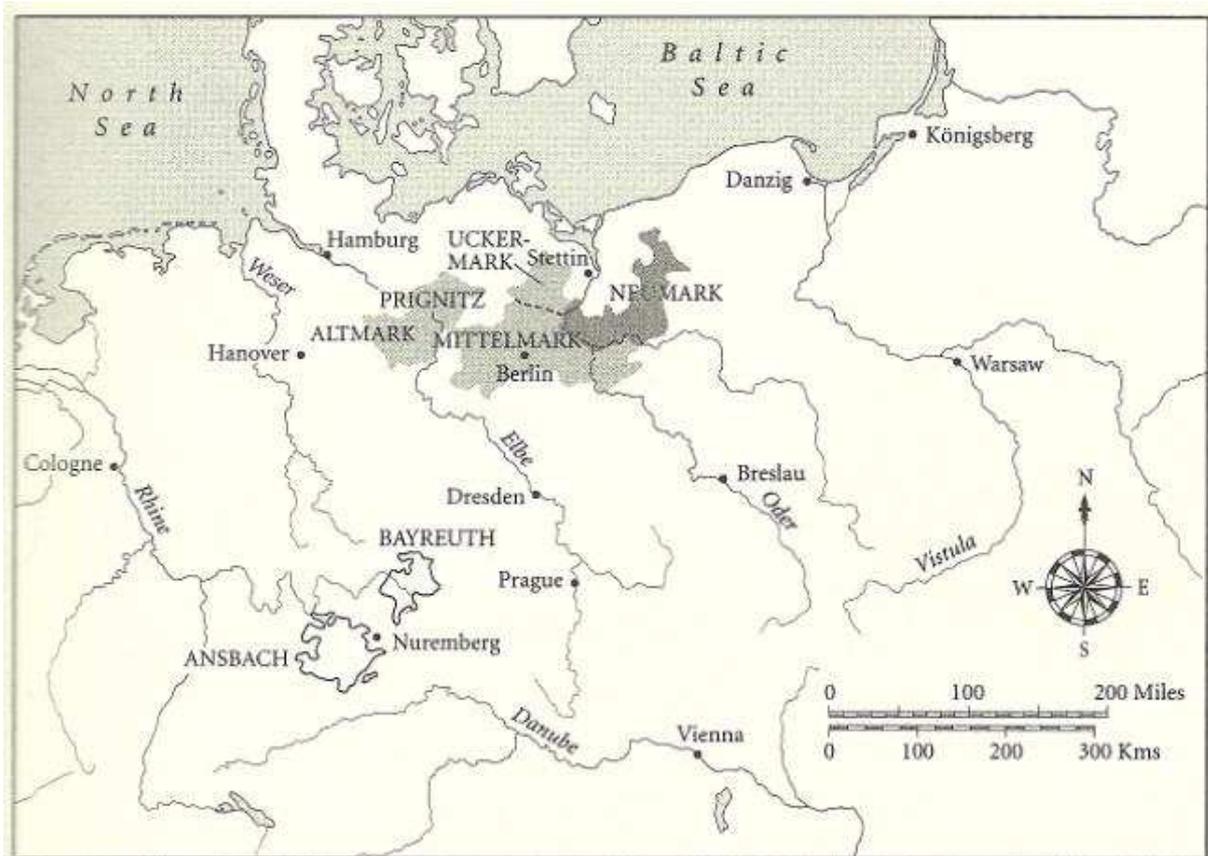
on the nascent German nation-state, it stifled and marginalized the more liberal political cultures of the German south and thus laid the foundations for political extremism and dictatorship. Its habits of authoritarianism, servility and obedience prepared the ground for the collapse of democracy and the advent of dictatorship.<sup>4</sup>

This paradigm shift in historical perceptions met with energetic counterblasts from historians (mainly West German, and mainly of liberal or conservative political orientation) who sought to rehabilitate the reputation of the abolished state. They highlighted its positive achievements - an incorruptible civil service, a tolerant attitude to religious minorities, a law code (from 1794) admired and imitated throughout the German states, a literacy rate in the nineteenth century) unequalled in Europe and a bureaucracy of exemplary efficiency. They drew attention to the vibrancy of the Prussian enlightenment. They noted the capacity of the Prussian state to transform and reconstitute itself in times of crisis. As a counterpart to the political servility emphasized by the special-path paradigm, they stressed notable episodes of insubordination, most importantly the role played by Prussian officers in the plot to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. The Prussia they depicted was not without flaws, but it had little in common with the racial state created by the Nazis.

The high-water mark for this work of historical evocation was the massive Prussia Exhibition that opened in Berlin in 1981 and was seen by over half a million visitors. Room after room full of objects and tables of text prepared by an international team of scholars allowed the viewer to traverse Prussian history through a succession of scenes and moments. There were military paraphernalia, aristocratic family trees, images of life at court and historic battle paintings, but also rooms organized around the themes of 'tolerance', 'emancipation' and 'revolution'. The aim was not to shed a nostalgic glow over the past (though it was certainly too positive for many critics on the political left), but to alternate light and shadow, and thereby to 'draw the balance' of Prussian history. Commentaries on the exhibition - both in the official catalogues and in the mass media - focused on the meaning of Prussia for contemporary Germans. Much of the discussion centred on the lessons that could or could not be learned from Prussia's troubled journey into modernity. There was talk of the need to honour the 'virtues' - disinterested public service and tolerance, for example - while disassociating oneself from the less appetizing features of the Prussian tradition, such as autocratic habits in politics or a tendency to glorify military achievement.

Prussia remains, more than two decades later, an idea with the power to polarize. The unification of Germany after 1989 and the transfer of the capital from Catholic, 'western' Bonn to Protestant, 'eastern' Berlin gave rise to misgivings about the still unmastered potency of the Prussian past. Would the spirit of 'old Prussia' reawaken to haunt the German Republic if Prussia was extinct, but 'Prussia' re-emerged as a symbolic political token. It has become a slogan for elements of the German right, who see in the 'traditions' of 'old Prussia' a virtuous counterweight to 'disorientation', 'the erosion of values', 'political corruption' and the decline of collective identities in contemporary Germany. Yet for many Germans, 'Prussia' remains synonymous with everything repellent in German history: militarism, conquest, arrogance and illiberality. The controversy over Prussia has tended to flicker back into life whenever the symbolic attributes of the abolished state are brought into play. The re-interment of the remains of Frederick the Great at his palace of Sans Souci in August 1991 was the subject of much fractious discussion and there have been heated public disputes over the plan to reconstruct the Hohenzollern city palace on the Schlossplatz in the heart of Berlin.

In February 2002, Alwin Ziel, an otherwise inconspicuous Social Democratic minister in the Brandenburg state government, achieved instant notoriety when he intervened in a debate over a proposed merger of the city of Berlin with the federal state of Brandenburg. 'Berlin-Brandenburg', he argued, was a cumbersome word; why not name the new territory 'Prussia'? The suggestion set off a new wave of debate. Sceptics warned of a rebirth of Prussia, the issue was discussed on Television talk shows across Germany, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ran a series of articles under the rubric 'Should there be a Prussia?' (*Darf Preussen sein?*) Among the contributors was Professor Hans-Ulrich Wehler, a leading exponent of the German special path, whose article - a vociferous rejection of Ziel's proposal - bore the title 'Prussia poisons us'.



**The Electorate of Brandenburg at the time of acquisition for Hohenzollerns**

No attempt to understand the history of Prussia can entirely escape the issues raised by these debates. The question of how exactly Prussia was implicated in the disasters of Germany's twentieth century must be a part of any appraisal of the state's history. But this does not mean that we should read the history of Prussia (or indeed of any state) from the perspective of Hitler's seizure of power alone. Nor does it oblige us to assess the Prussian record in binary ethical categories, dutifully praising light and deploring shadow. The polarized judgements that abound — contemporary debate (and in parts of the historical literature) are, problems not just because they impoverish the complexity of the Prussian experience, but also because they compress its history into a national teleology of German guilt. Yet the truth is that Prussia was a European state long before it became a German one. Germany was not Prussia's fulfilment — here I anticipate one of the central arguments of this book — but its undoing.

I have thus made no attempt to tease out the virtue and vice in the Prussian record or to weigh them in the balance. I make no claim to extrapolate 'lessons' or to dispense moral or political advice to present or future generations. The reader of these pages will encounter neither the bleak, warmongering termite-state of some Prussophile treatises, nor the cosy fireside scenes of the Prussophile tradition. As an Australian historian writing in twenty-first-century Cambridge, I am happily dispensed from the obligation (or temptation) either to lament or to celebrate the Prussian record. Instead, this book aims to understand the forces that made and unmade Prussia.

It has recently become fashionable to emphasize that nations and states are not natural phenomena but contingent, artificial creations. It is said that they are 'edifices' that have to be constructed or invented, with collective identities that are 'forged by acts of will'. No modern state more strikingly vindicates this perspective than Prussia: it was an assemblage of disparate territorial fragments lacking natural boundaries or a distinct national culture, dialect or cuisine. This predicament was amplified by the fact that Prussia's intermittent territorial expansion entailed the periodic incorporation of new populations

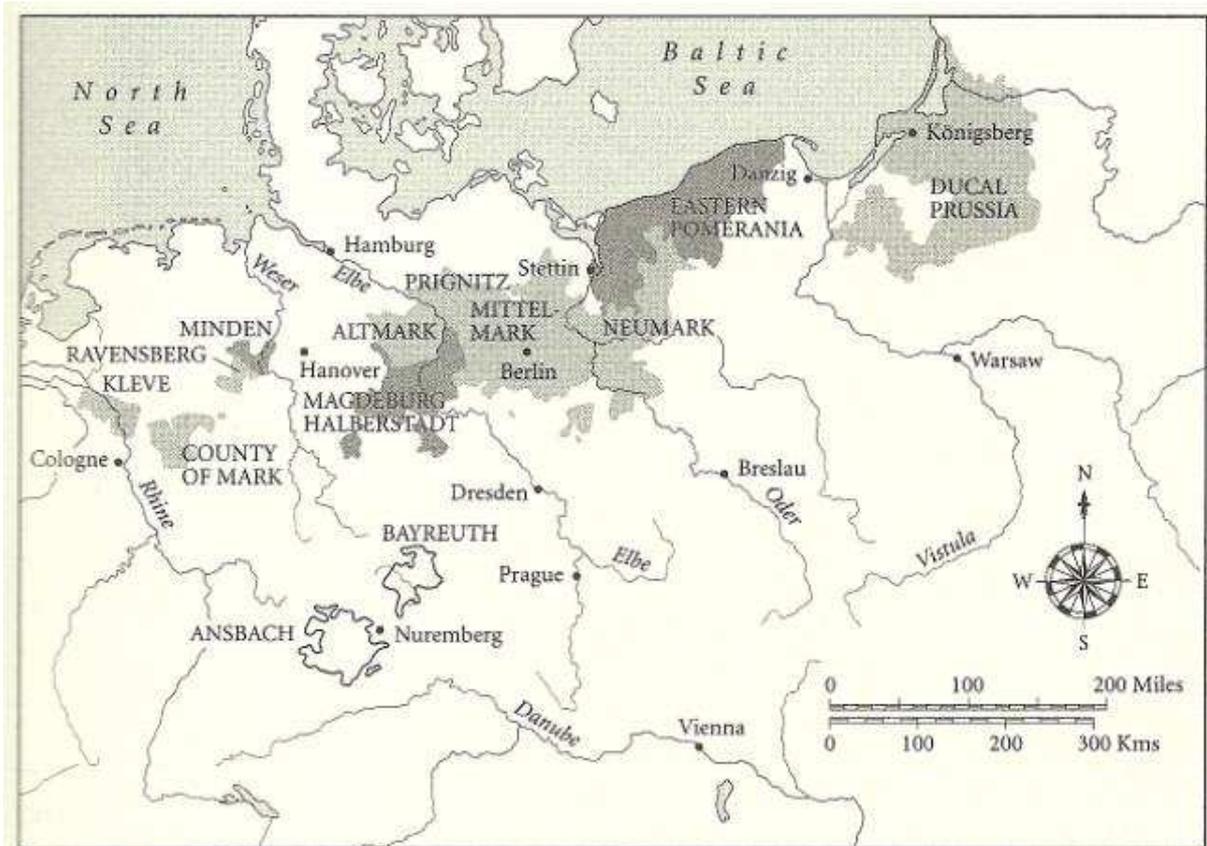
whose loyalty to the Prussian state could be acquired, if at all, only through arduous processes of assimilation. Making 'Prussians' was a slow and faltering enterprise whose momentum had begun to wane long before Prussian history reached its formal termination. The name 'Prussia' itself had a contrived quality, since it derived not from the northern heartland of the Hohenzollern dynasty (the Mark Brandenburg around the city of Berlin), but from a non-adjacent Baltic duchy that formed the easternmost territory of the Hohenzollern patrimony. It was, as it were, the logo the Electors of Brandenburg adopted after their elevation to royal status in 1701. The core and essence of the Prussian tradition was an absence of tradition. How this desiccated, abstract polity acquired flesh and bones, how it evolved from a block-printed list of princely titles into something coherent and alive, and how it learned to win the voluntary allegiance of its subjects - these questions are at the centre of this book.

The word 'Prussian' stills stands in common parlance for a particular kind of authoritarian orderliness, and it is all too easy to imagine the history of Prussia as the unfolding of a tidy plan by which the Hohenzollerns gradually unfurl the power of the state, integrating their possessions, extending their patrimony and pushing back the provincial nobilities. In this scenario, the state rises out of the confusion and obscurity of the medieval past, severing its bonds with tradition, imposing a rational, all-embracing order. The book aims to unsettle this narrative. It attempts, firstly, to open up the Prussian record in such a way that both order and disorder have their place. The experience of war - the most terrible kind of disorder - runs through the Prussian story, accelerating and retarding the state-building process in complex ways. As for the domestic consolidation of the state, this has to be seen as a haphazard and improvised process that unfolded within a dynamic and sometimes unstable social setting. 'Administration' was sometimes a byword for controlled upheaval. Well into the nineteenth century there were many areas of the Prussian lands where the presence of the state was scarcely perceptible.

Yet this does not mean that we should relegate 'the state' to the margins of the Prussian story. Rather we should understand it as an artefact of political culture, a form of reflexive consciousness. It is one of the remarkable features of Prussia's intellectual formation that the idea of a distinctively Prussian history has always been interwoven with claims about the legitimacy and necessity of the state. The Great Elector, for example, argued in the mid seventeenth century that the concentration of power within the executive structures of the monarchical state was the most reliable surety against external aggression. But this argument - sometimes rehearsed by historians under the rubric of an objective 'primacy of foreign policy' - was itself a part of the story of the state's evolution; it was one of the rhetorical instruments with which the prince underpinned his claim to sovereign power.

To put the same point a different way: the story of the Prussian state is also the story of the story of the Prussian state, for the Prussian state made up its history as it went along, developing an ever more elaborate account of its trajectory in the past and its purposes in the present. In the early nineteenth century, the need to shore up the Prussian administration in the face of the revolutionary challenge from France produced a unique discursive escalation. The Prussian state legitimated itself as the carrier of historical progress in terms so exalted that it became the model of a particular kind of modernity. Yet the authority and sublimity of the state in the minds of educated contemporaries bore little relation to its actual weight in the lives of the great majority of subjects.

There is an intriguing contrast between the modesty of Prussia's ancestral territorial endowment and the eminence of its place in history. Visitors to Brandenburg, the historic core province of the Prussian state, have always been struck by the meagreness of its resources, the sleepy provinciality of its towns. There was little here to suggest, let alone explain, the extraordinary historical career of the Brandenburg polity. 'Someone ought to write a little piece on what is happening at present,' Voltaire wrote at the beginning of the Seven Years War (1756-63), as his friend King Frederick of Prussia struggled to fight off the combined forces of the French, Russians and Austrians. 'It would be of some use to explain how the sandy country of Brandenburg came to wield such power that greater efforts have been marshalled against it than were ever mustered against Louis XIV. The apparent mismatch between the force wielded by the Prussian state and the domestic resources available to sustain it helps to explain one of the most curious features of Prussia's history as a European power, namely the alternation of moments of precocious strength with moments of perilous weakness. Prussia is bound up in public



**Brandenburg-Prussia at the tie of the Great Elector 1640-88**

awareness with the memory of military success: Rossbach, Leuthen, Leipzig, Waterloo, Koniggratz, Sedan. But in the course of its history, Brandenburg-Prussia repeatedly stood on the brink of political extinction: during the Thirty Years War, again during the Seven Years War and once again in 1806, when Napoleon smashed the Prussian army and chased the king across northern Europe to Memel at the easternmost extremity of his kingdom. Periods of armament and military consolidation were interspersed with long periods of contraction and decline. The dark side of Prussia's unexpected success was an abiding sense of vulnerability that left a distinctive imprint on the state's political culture.

This book is about how Prussia was made and unmade. Only through an appreciation of both processes can we understand how a state that once loomed so large in the awareness of so many could so abruptly and comprehensively disappear, unmourned, from the political stage.

## The Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg

### HEARTLAND

IT. DIE BEGINNING THERE WAS ONLY BRANDENBURG, A TERRITORY ENCOMPASSING SOME 40,000 SQUARE KILOMETRES AND CENTRED ON THE CITY OF BERLIN. THIS WAS THE HEARTLAND OF THE STATE THAT WOULD LATER BE KNOWN AS PRUSSIA. SITUATED IN THE MIDST OF THE DREARY PLAIN THAT STRETCHES FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO NORTHERN POLAND, THE BRANDENBURG COUNTRY-SIDE HAS RARELY ATTRACTED VISITORS. IT POSSESSES NO DISTINCTIVE LANDMARKS. THE RIVERS THAT CROSS IT ARE SLUGGISH MEANDERING STREAMS THAT LACK THE GRANDEUR OF THE RHINE OR THE DANUBE. MONOTONOUS FORESTS OF BIRCH AND FIR COVERED MUCH OF ITS SURFACE. THE TOPOGRAPHER NICOLAUS LEUTHINGER, AUTHOR OF AN EARLY DESCRIPTION OF BRANDENBURG, WROTE IN 1598 OF A 'FLAT LAND, WOODED AND FOR THE MOST PART SWAMP'. 'SAND', FLATNESS, 'BOGS' AND

'UNCULTIVATED AREAS' WERE RECURRING TOPOI IN ALL THE EARLY ACCOUNTS, EVEN THE MOST PANE-GYRIC.

The soil across much of Brandenburg was of poor quality. In some areas, especially around Berlin, the ground was so sandy and light that trees would not grow on it. In this respect little had changed by the mid-nineteenth century, when an English traveller approaching Berlin from the south at the height of summer described 'vast regions of bare hard burning sand; villages, few and far between, and woods of stunted firs, the ground under which is hoar with a thick carpeting of reindeer moss.

Metternich famously remarked that Italy was a 'geographical expression'. The same could not be said of Brandenburg. It was landlocked and without defensible natural borders of any kind. It was a purely political entity, assembled from the lands seized from pagan Slavs during the Middle Ages and settled by immigrants from France, the Netherlands, northern Italy and England, as well as the German lands. The Slavic character of the population was gradually erased, although there remained until well into the twentieth century pockets of Slavic-language speakers - known as 'Wends' - in the villages of the Spreewald near Berlin. The frontier character of the region, its identity as the eastward boundary of Christian-German settlement, was semantically conserved in the term 'Mark', or 'March' (as in Welsh Marches), used both for Brandenburg as a whole and for four of its five constituent provinces: the Mittelmark around Berlin, the Altmark to the west, the Uckermark to the north and the Neumark to the east (the fifth was the Prignitz to the north-west).

Transport arrangements were primitive. As Brandenburg had no coast, there was no harbour on the sea. The rivers Elbe and Oder flowed northwards towards the North Sea and the Baltic through the western and eastern flanks of the Mark, but there was no waterway between them, so that the residential cities of Berlin and Potsdam remained without direct access to the transportation arteries of the region. Work had begun in 1548 on a canal that would link the Oder with the river Spree that ran between Berlin and its sister-city Cologne, but the project proved to be costly and was abandoned. Since in this period transport was far more expensive by land routes than by water, the paucity of navigable east-west waterways was a serious structural disadvantage.

Brandenburg lay outside the main German areas of specialized crop-based manufacture (wine, madder, flax, fustian, wool and silk), and was well endowed with the key mineral resources of the era (silver, copper, iron, zinc and tin). The most important centre of metallurgical activity was the ironworks established in the fortified city of Peitz in the 1550s. A contemporary depiction shows substantial buildings situated among fast-flowing artificial watercourses. A large water-wheel powered the heavy hammers that flattened and shaped the metal. Peitz was of some importance to the Elector, whose garrisons depended upon it for munitions; it was otherwise of little economic significance. The iron produced there was prone to shatter in cold weather. Brandenburg was in no position to compete for export custom in regional markets and its nascent metallurgical sector could not have survived without government contracts and import restrictions. It had nothing to come with the flourishing foundries in the ore-rich electorate of Saxony to the south-east. It did not enjoy the self-sufficiency in armaments that enabled Sweden to assert itself as a regional power in the early seventeenth century.

Early accounts of Brandenburg's agrarian topography convey a mixed impression. The poor quality of the soil across much of the Territory meant that agricultural yields in many areas were low. In some places, the soil was so quickly exhausted that it could be sown only every six, nine or twelve years, not to mention sizeable tracts of 'infertile sand' or waterland where nothing could be grown at all. On the other hand, there were also areas - especially in the Altmark and Uckermark and the fertile Havelland to the west of Berlin - with sufficient tracts of arable land to support intensive cereal cultivation, and here there were signs of real economic vitality by 1600. Under the favourable conditions of the long European growth cycle of the sixteenth century, the landlords of the Brandenburg nobility amassed impressive fortunes by producing grain for export. Evidence of this wealth could be seen in the magnificent Renaissance houses - virtually none of which survive - built by the better-off families, a growing readiness to send sons abroad for university education, and a sharp rise in the value of agricultural property. The waves of sixteenth-century German immigrants who came to Brandenburg from Franconia, the



**Brandenburg 1600**

Saxon states, Silesia and the Rhine-land to settle on unoccupied farms were a further sign of growing prosperity.

Yet there is little to suggest that the profits earned even by the most successful landlords were contributing to productivity gains or longer-term economic growth on a more than local scale. Brandenburg's manorial system did not release enough surplus labour or generate enough purchasing power to stimulate the kind of urban development found in western Europe. The towns of the territory developed as administrative centres accommodating local manufactures and trade, but they remained modest in size. The capital city, a composite settlement then known as Berlin-Colin, numbered only 10,000 people when the Thirty Years War broke out in 1618 - the core population of the City of London at this time was around 130,000.

## DYNASTY

How did this unpromising territory become the heartland of a powerful European state? The key lies partly in the prudence and ambition of the ruling dynasty. The Hohenzollerns were a clan of south-German magnates on the make. In 1417, Frederick Hohenzollern, Burgrave of the small but wealthy territory of Nuremberg, purchased Brandenburg from its then sovereign, Emperor Sigismund, for 400,000 Hungarian gold guilders. The transaction brought prestige as well as land, for Brandenburg was one of the seven Electorates of the Holy Roman Empire, a patchwork quilt of states and statelets that extended across German Europe. In acquiring his new title, Frederick I, Elector of Brandenburg, entered a political universe that has since vanished utterly from the map of Europe. The 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation' was essentially a survival from the medieval world of universal Christian monarchy, mixed sovereignty and corporate privilege. It was not an 'empire' in the modern Anglophone sense of a system of rule imposed by one territory upon others, but a loose fabric of constitu-

tional arrangements centred on the imperial court and encompassing over 300 sovereign territorial entities that varied widely in size and legal status. The subjects of the Empire included not only Germans but also French speaking "Walloons, Flemings in the Netherlands and Danes, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats and Italians on the northern and eastern periphery of German Europe. Its chief political organ was the imperial diet, an assembly of envoys representing the territorial principalities, sovereign bishoprics, abbeys, counties and imperial Free Cities (independent mini-states such as Hamburg and Augsburg) that composed the 'estates' of the Empire.

Presiding over this variegated political landscape was the Holy Roman Emperor. His was an elective office - each new emperor had to be chosen in concert by the Electors - so that in theory the post could have been held by a candidate from any eligible dynasty. Yet, from the late Middle Ages until the formal abolition of the Empire in 1806 the choice virtually always fell in practice to the senior male member of the Habsburg family. By the 1520s, following a chain of advantageous marriages and fortunate successions (most importantly to Bohemia and Hungary), the Habsburgs were far and away the wealthiest and most powerful German dynasty. The Bohemian crown lands included the mineral-rich Duchy of Silesia and the margravates of Upper and Lower Lusatia, all major centres of manufacture. The Habsburg court thus controlled an impressive swathe of territories reaching from the western margins of Hungary to the southern borders of Brandenburg.

When they became Electors of Brandenburg, the Franconian Hohenzollerns joined a small elite of German princes - there were only seven in all - with the right to elect the man who would become Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation. The Electoral title was an asset of enormous significance. It bestowed a symbolic pre-eminence that was given visible expression not only in the sovereign insignia and political rites of the dynasty but also in the elaborate ceremonials that attended all the official functions of the Empire. It placed the sovereigns of Brandenburg in a position periodically to exchange the territory's Electoral vote for political concessions and gifts from the Emperor. Such opportunities arose not only on the occasion of an actual imperial election, but at all those times when a still reigning emperor sought to secure advance support for his successor.

The Hohenzollerns worked hard to consolidate and expand their patrimony. There were small but significant territorial acquisitions in almost every reign until the mid sixteenth century. Unlike several other German dynasties in the region, the Hohenzollerns also managed to avoid a partition of their lands. The law of succession known as the *Dispositio Achillea* (1473) secured the hereditary unity of Brandenburg. Joachim I (r. 1499-1535) flouted this law when he ordered that his lands be divided at his death between his two sons, but the younger son died without issue in 1571 and the unity of the Mark was restored. In his political testament of 1596, Elector John George (r. 1571-98) once again proposed to partition the Mark among his sons from various marriages. His successor, Elector Joachim Frederick, succeeded in holding the Brandenburg inheritance together, but only thanks to the extinction of the southern, Franconian line of the family, which allowed him to compensate his younger brothers with lands from outside the Brandenburg patrimony. As these examples suggest, the sixteenth-century Hohenzollerns still thought and behaved as clan chiefs rather than as heads of state. Yet, although the temptation to put the family first continued to be felt after 1596, it was never strong enough to prevail against the integrity of the territory. Other dynastic territories of this era fractured over the generations into ever smaller statelets, but Brandenburg remained intact.

The Habsburg Emperor loomed large on the political horizons of the Hohenzollern Electors in Berlin. He was not just a potent European prince, but also the symbolic keystone and guarantor of the Empire itself, whose ancient constitution was the foundation of all sovereignty in German Europe. Respect for his power was intermingled with a deep attachment to the political order he personified. Yet none of this meant that the Habsburg Emperor could control or single-handedly direct affairs within the Empire. There was no imperial central government, no imperial right of taxation and no permanent imperial army or police force. Bending the Empire to his will was always a matter of negotiation, bargaining and manoeuvre. For all its continuities with the medieval past, the Holy Roman Empire was a highly fluid and dynamic system characterized by an unstable balance of power.



## REFORMATION

In the 1520s and 1530s, the energies released by the German Reformation agitated this complex system, generating a process of gal-: ring polarization. An influential group of territorial princes adopted die Lutheran confession, along with about two-fifths of the imperial Free Cities. The Habsburg Emperor Charles V, determined both to safeguard ifae Catholic character of the Roman Empire and to consolidate his own imperial dominion, mustered an anti-Lutheran alliance. These forces won some notable victories in the Schmalkaldic War of 1546-7, but the prospect of further Habsburg advancement sufficed to bring together :ne dynasty's opponents and rivals within and outside the Empire. By the early 1550s, France, ever anxious to block the machinations of Vienna, had begun to provide military support for the Protestant German territories. The consequence of the resulting stalemate was the compromise settlement agreed at the 1555 Diet of Augsburg. The Peace of Augsburg formally acknowledged the existence of Lutheran territories Twithin the Em-

pire and conceded the right of Lutheran sovereigns to impose confessional conformity upon their own subjects.

Throughout these upheavals, the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg pursued a policy of neutrality and circumspection. Anxious not to alienate the <sup>2</sup>Emperor, they were slow to commit themselves formally to the Lutheran faith; having done so, they instituted a territorial reformation so cautious and so gradual that it took most of the sixteenth century to accomplish. Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg (1499-1535) wished his sons to remain within the Catholic church, but in 1527 his wife Elizabeth of Denmark took matters into her own hands and converted to Lutheranism before fleeing to Saxony, where she placed herself under the protection of the Lutheran Elector John. The new Elector was still a Catholic when he acceded to the Brandenburg throne as Joachim II (r. 1535—71), but he soon followed his mother's example and converted to Lutheran faith. Here, as on so many later occasions, dynastic women played a crucial role in the development of Brandenburg's confessional polity.

For all his personal sympathy with the cause of religious reform, . lim II was slow to attach his territory formally to the new faith. He still loved the old liturgy and the pomp of the Catholic ritual. He was also anxious not to take any step that might damage Brandenburg's standing within the fabric of the still predominantly Catholic Empire. A portrait from around 1551 by Lucas Cranach the Younger captures these two sides of the man. We see an imposing figure who stands with fists clenched before a spreading belly, decked in the bulging, bejewelled court garb of the day. There is watchfulness in the features. Wary eyes look out obliquely from the square face.

In the great political struggles of the Empire, Brandenburg aspired to the role of conciliator and honest broker. The Elector's envoys were involved in various failed attempts to engineer a compromise between the Protestant and Catholic camps. Joachim II kept his distance from the more hawkish Protestant princes and even sent a small contingent of mounted troops to support the Emperor during the Schmalkaldic War. It was not until 1563, in the relative calm that followed the Peace of Augsburg, that Joachim formalized his personal attachment to the new religion through a public confession of faith.

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick William the Great Elector

Only in the reign of Elector John George (1571-98), Joachim II's son, did the lands of Brandenburg begin to develop a more firmly Lutheran character: orthodox Lutherans were appointed to professorial posts at the University of Frankfurt/Oder, the Church Regulation of 1540 was thoroughly revised to conform more faithfully with Lutheran principles and two territorial church inspections (1573-81 and 1594) were carried out to ensure that the transition to Lutheranism was accomplished at the provincial and local level. Yet in the sphere of imperial politics, John George remained a loyal supporter of the Habsburg court. Even Elector Joachim Frederick (r. 1598-1608), who as a young man had antagonized the Catholic camp by his open support for the Protestant cause, mellowed when he came to the throne, and kept his distance from the various Protestant combinations attempting to extract religious concessions from the imperial court.

If the Electors of Brandenburg were prudent, they were not without ambition. Marriage was the preferred instrument of policy for a state "at lacked defensible frontiers or the resources to achieve its objectives by coercive means. Surveying the Hohenzollern marital alliances of the sixteenth century, one is struck by the scatter-gun approach: in 1502, and again in 1523, there were marriages with the House of Denmark, by which the reigning Elector hoped (in vain) to acquire a claim to parts of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein and a harbour on the Baltic. In 1530, his daughter was married off to Duke Georg I of Pomerania, in the hope that Brandenburg might one day succeed to the duchy and acquire a stretch of Baltic coast. The King of Poland was another important player in Brandenburg's calculations. He was the feudal overlord of the Duchy of Prussia, a Baltic principality that had been controlled by the Teutonic Order until its secularization in 1525, and was ruled thereafter by Duke Albrecht von Hohenzollern, a cousin of the Elector of Brandenburg.

It was partly in order to get his hands on this attractive territory that Elector Joachim II married Princess Hedwig of Poland in 1535. In 1564, when his wife's brother was on the Polish throne, Joachim succeeded in giving his two sons named as secondary heirs to the duchy. Following Duke Albrecht's death four years later, this status was confirmed at the Polish Reichstag in Lublin, opening up the prospect of a Brandenburg succession to the duchy if the new duke, the sixteen-year-old Albrecht Frederick, were to die without male issue. As it happened, the wager off: Albrecht Frederick lived, in poor mental but good physical health, for a further fifty years until 1618, when he died, having sired two daughters, but no sons.

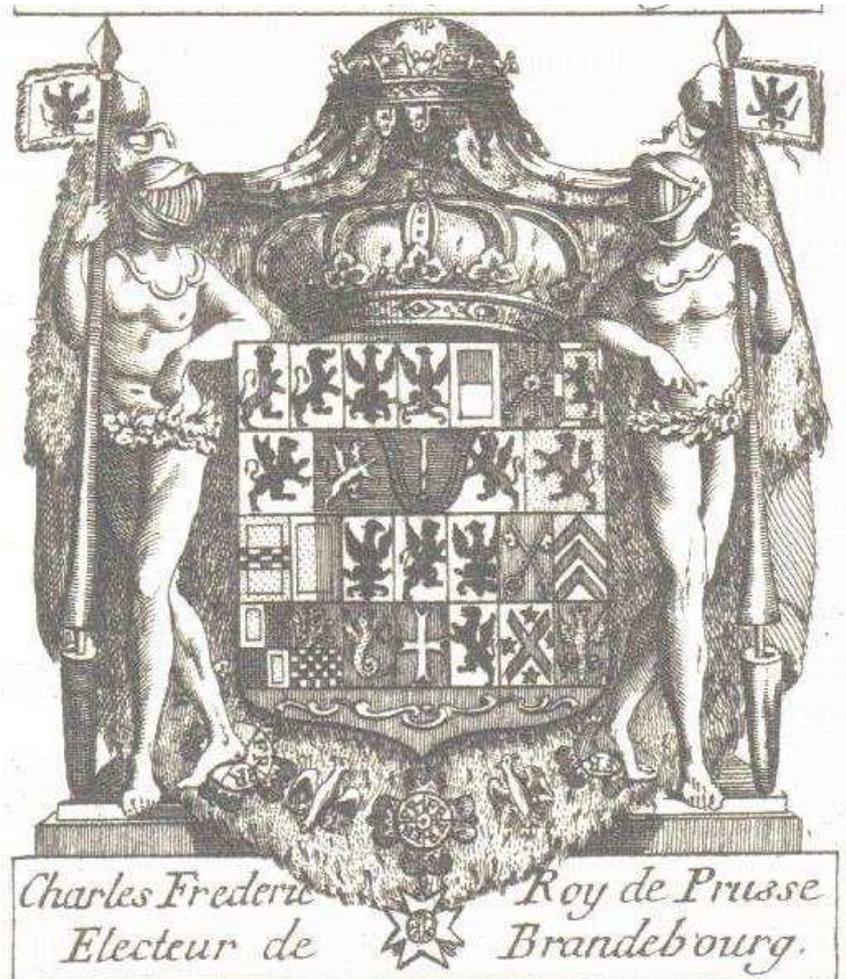
In the meanwhile, the Hohenzollerns lost no time in reinforcing their claim to the Duchy of Prussia by every means available. The sons took up where the fathers had left off. In 1603, Elector Joachim Frederick persuaded the Polish king to grant him the powers of regent over the duchy (necessary because of the reigning duke's mental infirmity). His son John Sigismund had further reinforced the link with Ducal Prussia by marrying Duke Albrecht Friedrich's eldest daughter, Anna of Prussia, in 1594, overlooking her mother's candid warning that she was 'not the prettiest. Then, presumably in order to prevent another family from muscling in on the inheritance, the father, Joachim Frederick, whose first wife had died, married the younger sister of his son's wife. The father was now the brother-in-law of the son, while Anna's younger sister doubled as her mother-in-law.

A direct succession to the Duchy of Prussia thus seemed certain. But the marriage between John Sigismund and Anna also opened up the prospect of a new and rich inheritance in the west. Anna was not only the daughter of the Duke of Prussia, but also the niece of yet another insane German duke, John William of Jülich-Kleve, whose territories encompassed the Rhenish duchies of Jülich, Kleve (Cleves) and Berg and the counties of Mark and Ravensberg. Anna's mother, Maria Eleonora, was the eldest sister of John William. The relationship on her mother's side would have counted for little, had it not been for a pact within the house of Jülich-Kleve that allowed the family's properties and titles to pass down the female line. This unusual arrangement made Anna of Prussia her uncle's heiress, and thus established her husband, John Sigismund of Brandenburg, as a claimant to the lands of Jülich-Kleve. Nothing could better illustrate the serendipitous quality of the marriage market in early modern Europe, with its ruthless trans-generational plotting, and its role in this formative phase of Brandenburg's history.

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

By the turn of the seventeenth century, the Electors of Brandenburg stood on the brink of possibilities that were exhilarating, but also troubling. Neither the Duchy of Prussia nor the scattered duchies and counties of the Jilich-Kleve inheritance adjoined the Mark Brandenburg.

The latter lay on the western edge of the Holy Roman Empire, cheek by jowl with the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic. It was a congeries of confessionally mixed territories in one of the most urban and industrialized regions of German Europe. Lutheran Ducal Prussia - roughly large as Brandenburg itself - lay outside the Holy Roman Empire to the east on the Baltic coast, surrounded by the lands of the Polish-



Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was a place of windswept beaches and inlets, cereal-bearing plains, placid lakes, marshes and sombre forests. It was not unusual in Early Modern Europe for geographically scattered territories to fall under the authority of a single sovereign, but the distances involved in this case were unusually great. Over 700 kilometres of roads and tracks - many of which were virtually impassable in wet weather - lay between Berlin and Königsberg.

It was clear that Brandenburg's claims would not go unchallenged. An influential party within the Polish diet was opposed to the Brandenburg succession, and there were at least seven prominent rival claimants to the Jilich-Kleve inheritance, of which the strongest on paper (after Brandenburg) was the Duke of Pfalz-Neuburg in western Germany. Both Ducal Prussia and Jilich-Kleve lay, moreover, in areas of heightened international tension. Jilich-Kleve fell within the orbit of the Dutch struggle for independence from Spain that had been raging intermittently since the 1560s; Ducal Prussia lay in the conflict zone between expansionist Sweden and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Elector's military establishment was based on an archaic system of feudal levies that had been in steep decline for over a century by 1600. There was no standing army, beyond a few companies of life-guards and some insignificant fortress garrisons. Even supposing Brandenburg were able to acquire them in the first place, keeping the new territories would require the commitment of considerable resources.

But where would these resources come from? Any attempt to the Elector's fiscal base in order to finance the acquisition of new territories was sure to meet entrenched domestic opposition. Like many European princes, the Electors of Brandenburg shared power with an array of regional elites organized in representative bodies called Estates. The Estates approved (or not) taxes levied by the Elector and (from 1549) administered their collection. In return they possessed far-reaching powers and privileges. The Elector was forbidden, for example, to enter into alliances without first seeking the approval of

the Estates. In a declaration published in 1540 and reiterated on various occasions until 1653, the Elector even promised that he would not 'decide or undertake any important things upon which the flourishing or decline of the lands may depend, without the foreknowledge and consultation of all our estates'. His hands were therefore tied. The provincial nobilities owned the lion's share of the landed wealth in the Electorate; they were also the Elector's most important creditors. But their outlook was vehemently parochial; they had no interest in helping the Elector to acquire far-flung territories of which they knew nothing and they were opposed to any action that might undermine the security of the Mark.

Elector Joachim Frederick recognized the scale of the problem. On 13 December 1604, he announced the establishment of a Privy Council (*Geheimer Rat*), a body consisting of nine councillors whose task was to oversee 'the high and weighty matters that press upon Us especially in connection with the claims to Prussia and Julich. The Privy Council was supposed to function collegially, so that issues could be weighed up from a range of angles with a greater consistency of approach. It never became the core of a state bureaucracy - the schedule of regular meetings envisaged in the original order was never observed and its function remained primarily consultative. But the breadth and diversity of its responsibilities signalled a new determination to concentrate the decision-making process at the highest level.

There was also a new westward orientation in marital policy. In February 1605, the Elector's ten-year-old grandson George William was betrothed to the eight-year-old daughter of Frederick IV, the Elector Palatine. The Palatinate, a substantial and wealthy territory on the Rhine, was the foremost German centre of Calvinism, a rigorous form of Protestantism that broke more radically with Catholicism than the Lutherans. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the Calvinist, or Reformed, faith had secured a foothold in parts of western and southern Germany. Heidelberg, capital city of the Palatinate, was the hub of a network of military and political relationships that embraced many of the German Calvinist cities and principalities, but also extended to foreign Calvinist powers, most importantly the Dutch Republic. Frederick IV possessed one of the most formidable military establishments in western Germany, and the Elector hoped that closer relations would bring him strategic support for Brandenburg's claims in the west. Sure enough, in April 1605 an alliance was formalized between Brandenburg, the Palatinate and the Dutch Republic, by which the Dutch agreed, in return for military subsidies, to maintain 5,000 men in readiness to occupy Jilich for the Elector.

This was a departure. In allying themselves with the militant Calvinist interest, the Hohenzollerns had placed themselves beyond the pale of the settlement reached at Augsburg in 1555, which had recognized the right to tolerance of the Lutherans, but not of the Calvinists. Brandenburg was now consorting with some of the Habsburg Emperor's most determined enemies. A division opened among the decision-makers in Berlin. The Elector and most of his councillors favoured a policy of caution and restraint. But a group of influential figures around the Elector's hard-drinking eldest son, John Sigismund (r. 1608-19), took a firmer line. One of these was the Calvinist Privy Councillor Ottheinrich Bylandt zu Rheydt, himself a native of Julich. Another was John Sigismund's wife, Anna of Prussia, the carrier of the Jilich-Kleve claim. Backed by his supporters - or perhaps driven by them - John Sigismund pressed for closer relations with the Palatinate; he even argued that Brandenburg should preempt any dispute over the succession to Julich-Kleve by invading and occupying it in advance. Not for the last time in the history of the Hohenzollern state, the political elite polarized around opposed foreign policy options.

In 1609 the mad old Duke of Jilich-Kleve finally died, activating the Brandenburg claim to his territories. The timing could hardly have been less propitious. The regional conflict between Habsburg Spain and the Dutch Republic was still simmering, and the inheritance lay in the strategically vital military corridor to the Low Countries. To make matters worse, there had been a dramatic escalation in confessional tensions across the Empire. Following a sequence of bitter religious disputes, two opposed confessional alliances emerged: the Protestant Union of 1608 led by the Calvinist Palatinate, and the Catholic League of 1609, led by Duke Maximilian of Bavaria under the protection of the Emperor. In less



**Joachim II. Hektor (1505-1571)  
Elector of Brandenburg (1535-1571)**

troubled times, the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Pfalz-Neuburg would doubtless have looked to the Emperor to resolve the dispute over Julich-Kleve. But in the partisan climate of 1609, there could be no confidence in the Emperor's neutrality. Instead, the Elector decided to circumvent the machinery of imperial arbitration and sign a separate agreement with his rival: the two princes would jointly occupy the contested territories, pending a later resolution of their claims.

Their action provoked a major crisis. Imperial troops were despatched from the Spanish Netherlands to oversee the defence of Julich. John Sigismund joined the Protestant Union, which duly declared its support for the two claimants and mobilized an army of 5,000 men. Henri IV of France took an interest and decided to intervene on the Protestant side. Only the French king's assassination in May 1610 prevented a major war from breaking out. A composite force of Dutch, French, English and Protestant Union troops entered Julich and besieged the Catholic garrison there. In the meanwhile, new states flocked to join the Catholic League and the Emperor, in his fury at the claimants, bestowed the entire Julich-Kleve complex upon the Elector of Saxony,

prompting fears that a joint Saxon-imperial invasion of Brandenburg might be imminent. In 1614, after further quarrels, the Julich-Kleve legacy was divided - pending a final settlement - between the two claimants: the Duke of Pfalz-Neuburg received Julich and Berg, while Brandenburg secured Kleve, Mark, Ravensberg and Ravenstein.

These were acquisitions of considerable importance. The Duchy of Kleve straddled the River Rhine, jutting into the territory of the Dutch Republic. In the late Middle Ages, the construction of a system of dykes had reclaimed the fertile soil of the Rhine floodplain, transforming the territory into the bread basket of the Low Countries. The County of Mark was less fertile and less populous, but here there were significant pockets of mining and metallurgical activity. The little County of Ravensberg dominated a strategically important transport route linking the Rhineland with north-eastern Germany and possessed a flourishing linen industry concentrated mainly around Bielefeld, the capital city. The tiny Lordship of Ravenstein, situated on the River Maas, was an enclave within the Dutch Republic.

At some point it must have become clear to the Elector that he had overreached himself. His meagre revenues had prevented him from playing more than a minor supporting role in the conflict over his inheritance claim. Yet his territory was now more exposed than ever. There was a further complication: in 1613, John Sigismund announced his conversion to Calvinism, thereby placing his house outside the religious settlement of 1555. The momentous long-term significance of this step is discussed in chapter 5; in the short term, the Elector's conversion excited outrage among the Lutheran population without providing any tangible short-term benefits for the territory's foreign policy. In 1617, the Protestant Union, whose commitment to Brandenburg's cause had always been fragile, withdrew its earlier support for the Brandenburg claim. John Sigismund responded by resigning from the Union. As one of his advisers pointed out, he had joined it only in the hope of securing his inheritance; his own territory was 'so far away that [the Union] could be of no other use to him. Brandenburg stood alone.

Perhaps a sharpening awareness of these predicaments accelerated the Elector's personal decline after 1609. The man who had displayed such vigour and enterprise as crown prince seemed used up. His

drinking, which had always been enthusiastic, was now out of control. The story later recalled by Schiller that John Sigismund ruined the chance of a marriage alliance between his daughter and the son of the Duke of Pfalz-Neuburg by punching his prospective son-in-law on the ear in a fit of intoxication may well be apocryphal. But similar accounts of violent and irrational drunken behaviour in the 1610s can probably be believed. John Sigismund grew obese and lethargic, and was intermittently incapable of conducting the business of government. A stroke in 1616 left his speech seriously impaired. By the summer of 1618, when the Duke of Prussia died in Königsberg, activating another Hohenzollern claim to another far-flung territory, John Sigismund seemed, according to one visitor, *'lebendtg-tof*, suspended between life and death."

The careful work of three generations of Hohenzollern Electors had transformed the prospects of Brandenburg. For the first time, we can discern the embryonic outlines of the sprawling territorial structure with its remote eastern and western dependencies that would shape the future of what would one day be known as Prussia. But there remained a gross discrepancy between commitments and resources. How would the House of Brandenburg defend its claims against its many rivals?

How would it secure fiscal and political compliance within its new territories? These were difficult questions to answer, even in peacetime. But by 1618, despite efforts from many quarters to broker a compromise, the Holy Roman Empire was entering an era of bitter religious and dynastic war.

## Devastation

During the Thirty Years War (1618-48) the German lands became the theatre of a European catastrophe. A confrontation between the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II (r. 1619-37) and Protestant forces within the Holy Roman Empire expanded to involve Denmark, Sweden, Spain, the Dutch Republic and France. Conflicts that were continental in scope played themselves out on the territories of the German states: the struggle between Spain and the breakaway Dutch Republic, a competition among the northern powers for control of the Baltic, and the traditional great-power rivalry between Bourbon France and the Habsburgs.

Although there were battles, sieges and military occupations elsewhere, the bulk of the fighting took place in the German lands. For unprotected, landlocked Brandenburg, the war was a disaster that exposed every weakness of the Electoral state. At crucial moments during the conflict, Brandenburg faced impossible choices. Its fate hung entirely on the will of others. The Elector was unable to guard his borders, command or defend his subjects or even secure the continued existence of his title. As armies rolled across the provinces of the Mark, the rule of law was suspended, local economies were disrupted and the continuities of work, domicile and memory were irreversibly ruptured. The lands of the Elector, Frederick the Great wrote over a century and a half later, 'were desolated during the Thirty Years' War, whose deadly imprint was so profound that its traces can still be discerned as I write'.

### BETWEEN THE FRONTS (1618-40)

Brandenburg entered this dangerous era utterly unprepared for the challenges it would face. Since its striking power was negligible, it had no means of bargaining for rewards or concessions from friend or foe. To the south, directly abutting the borders of the Electorate, were Lusatia and Silesia, both hereditary lands of the Habsburg Bohemian Crown (though Lusatia was under a Saxon leasehold). To the west of these two, also sharing a border with Brandenburg, was Electoral Saxony, whose policy during the early war years was to operate in close harmony with the Emperor. On Brandenburg's northern flank, its undefended borders lay open to the troops of the Protestant Baltic powers, Denmark and Sweden. Nothing stood between Brandenburg and the sea but the enfeebled Duchy of Pomerania, ruled by the ageing Boguslav XIV. Neither in the west nor in remote Ducal Prussia did the Elector of Brandenburg possess the means to defend his newly acquired territories against invasion. There was thus every reason for caution, a preference underscored by the still ingrained habit of deferring to the Emperor.

Elector George William (r. 1619-40), a timid, indecisive man ill equipped to master the extreme predicaments of his era, spent the early war years avoiding alliance commitments that would consume his meagre resources or expose his territory to reprisals. He gave moral support to the insurgency of the Protestant Bohemian Estates against the Habsburg Emperor, but when his brother-in-law the Elector Palatine marched off to Bohemia to fight for the cause, George William stayed out of the fray. During the mid-1620s, as anti-Habsburg coalition plans were hatched between the courts of Denmark, Sweden, France and England, Brandenburg manoeuvred anxiously on the margins of great-power diplomacy. There were efforts to persuade Sweden, whose king had married George William's sister in 1620, to mount a campaign against the Emperor. In 1626, another of George William's sisters was married off to the Prince of Transylvania, a Calvinist nobleman whose repeated wars on the Habsburgs - with Turkish assistance - had established him as one of the Emperor's most formidable enemies. Yet at the same time there were warm assurances of fealty to the Catholic Emperor, and Brandenburg steered clear of the anti-imperial Hague Alliance of December 1626 between England and Denmark.

None of this could protect the Electorate against pressure and military incursions from both sides. After the armies of the Catholic League under General Tilly had defeated Protestant forces at Stadlohn in 1623, the Westphalian territories of Mark and Ravensberg became quartering areas for Leaguist troops. George William understood that he would be

able to stay out of trouble only if his territory were in a position to defend itself against all comers. But the money was lacking for an effective policy of armed neutrality. The overwhelmingly Lutheran Estates were suspicious of his Calvinist allegiances and unwilling to finance them. In 1618-20, their sympathies were largely with the Catholic Emperor and they feared that their Calvinist Elector would drag Brandenburg into dangerous international commitments. The best policy, as they saw it, was to wait out the storm and avoid attracting hostile notice from any of the belligerents.

In 1626, as George William struggled to extract money from his Estates, the Palatine General Count Mansfeld overran the Altmark and Prignitz, with his Danish allies close behind. Mayhem broke out. Churches were smashed open and robbed, the town of Nauen was razed to the ground, villages were burned as troops attempted to extort hidden money and goods from the inhabitants. When he was taken to task for this by a senior Brandenburg minister, the Danish envoy Mitzlaff responded with breathtaking arrogance: 'Whether the Elector likes it or not, the [Danish] King will go ahead all the same. Whoever is not with him is against him. Scarcely had the Danes made themselves at home in the Mark, however, but they were pushed back by their enemies. In the late summer of 1626, after the imperial and Leaguist victory near Lutter-am-Barenberg in the Duchy of Brunswick (27 August), imperial troops occupied the Altmark, while the Danes withdrew into the Prignitz and the Uckermark to the north and north-west of Berlin. At around the same time, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden landed in Ducal Prussia, where he established a base of operations against Poland, completely disregarding the claims of the Elector. The Neumark, too, was overrun and plundered by Cossack mercenaries in the service of the Emperor. The scale of the threat facing Brandenburg was made clear by the fate of the dukes of neighbouring Mecklenburg. As punishment for supporting the Danes, the Emperor deposed the ducal family and bestowed Mecklenburg as booty upon his powerful commander, the military entrepreneur Count Wallenstein.

The time seemed ripe for a shift towards closer collaboration with the Habsburg camp. 'If this business continues,' George William told a confidant in a moment of desperation, 'I shall become mad, for I am much grieved. I shall have to join the Emperor, I have no alternative; I have only one son; if the Emperor remains, then I suppose I and my son will be able to remain Elector. On 22, May 1626, despite protests from his councillors and the Estates, who would have preferred a rigorous policy of neutrality, the Elector signed a treaty with the Emperor. Under the terms of this agreement, the entire Electorate was opened to imperial troops. Hard times followed, because the imperial supreme commander, Count "Wallenstein, was in the habit of extracting provisions, lodgings and payment for his troops from the population of the occupied area.

Brandenburg thus gained no relief from its alliance with the Emperor. Indeed, as the imperial forces

rolled back their opponents and approached the zenith of their power in the late 1620s. Emperor Ferdinand II seemed to disregard George William entirely. In the Edict of Restitution of 1629, the Emperor announced that he intended to 'reclaim', by force if necessary, 'all the archbishoprics, bishoprics, prelaties, monasteries, hospitals and endowments' which the Catholics had possessed in the year 1552 - a programme with profoundly damaging implications for Brandenburg, where numerous ecclesiastical establishments had been placed under Protestant administration. The Edict confirmed the settlement of 1555, in that it also excluded Calvinists from the religious peace in the Empire; only the Catholic and Lutheran faiths enjoyed official standing - 'all other doctrines and sects are forbidden and cannot be tolerated.

Sweden's dramatic entry into the German war in 1630 brought relief for the Protestant states, but also raised the political pressure on Brandenburg. In 1620, George William's sister Maria Eleonora had been married off to King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, a larger-than-life figure whose appetite for war and conquest was twinned with a missionary zeal for the Protestant cause in Europe. As his involvement in the German conflict deepened, the Swedish king, who had no other German allies, resolved to secure an alliance with his brother-in-law George William. The Elector was reluctant, and it is easy to see why. Gustavus Adolphus had spent the past decade and a half waging a war of conquest in the eastern Baltic. A series of campaigns against Russia had left Sweden in possession of a continuous swathe of territory stretching from Finland to Estonia. In 1621, Gustavus Adolphus had renewed his war against Poland, occupying Ducal Prussia and conquering Livonia (present-day Latvia and Estonia). The Swedish king had even pushed the elderly Duke of Mecklenburg into an agreement that the duchy would pass to Sweden when the duke died, a deal that directly undercut Brandenburg's long-standing inheritance treaty with its northern neighbour.

All of this suggested that the Swedes would be no less dangerous as friends than as enemies. George William returned to the idea of neutrality. He planned to work with Saxony in forming a Protestant bloc that would oppose the implementation of the Edict of Restitution while at the same time providing a buffer between the Emperor and his enemies in the north, a policy that bore fruit in the Convention of Leipzig of February 1631. But this manoeuvring did little to repel the threat facing Brandenburg from north and south. Furious warnings and threats issued from Vienna. In the meanwhile, there were clashes between Swedish and imperial troops across the Neumark, in the course of which the Swedes chased the imperials out of the province and occupied the fortified cities of Frankfurt/Oder, Landsberg and Kiiistrin.

Emboldened by the success of his troops in the field, the King of Sweden demanded an outright alliance with Brandenburg. George William's protests that he wished to remain neutral fell on deaf ears. As Gustavus Adolphus explained to a Brandenburg envoy: I don't want to know or hear anything about neutrality. [The Elector] has to be friend or foe. When I come to his borders, he must declare himself cold or warm. This is a fight between God and the devil. If My Cousin wants to side with God, then he has to join me; if he prefers to side with the devil, then indeed he must fight me; there is no third way.'

While George William prevaricated, the Swedish king drew close to Berlin with his troops behind him. Panicking, the Elector sent the women of his family out to parley with the invader at Kopenick, a few kilometres to the south-east of the capital. It was eventually agreed that the king should come into the city with 1,000 men to continue negotiations as the guest of the Elector. Over the following days of wining and dining, the Swedes talked beguilingly of ceding parts of Pomerania to Brandenburg, hinted at a marriage between the king's daughter and the Elector's son, and pressed for an alliance. George William decided to throw in his lot with the Swedes.

The reason for this policy reversal lay partly in the intimidating demeanour of the Swedish troops, who at one point drew up before the walls of Berlin with their guns trained on the royal palace in order to concentrate the mind of the beleaguered Elector. But an important predisposing factor was the fall, on 20 May 1631, of the Protestant city of Magdeburg to Tilly's imperial troops. The taking of Magdeburg was followed not only by the sacking and plundering that usually attended such events, but also

by a massacre of the town's inhabitants that would become a fixture in German literary memory. In a passage of classically measured rhetoric, Frederick II later described the scene: Everything that the unfettered license of the soldier can devise when nothing restrains his fury; all that the most ferocious cruelty inspires in men when a blind rage takes possession of their senses, was committed by the Imperials in this unhappy city: the troops ran in packs, weapons in hand, through the streets, and massacred indiscriminately the elderly, the women and the children, those who defended themselves and those who made no move to resist them, I saw nothing but corpses still flexing, piled or stretched out naked; the cries of those whose throats were being cut mingled with the furious shouts of their assassins.

For contemporaries too, the annihilation of Magdeburg, a community of some 20,000 citizens and one of the capitals of German Protestantism, was an existential shock. Pamphlets, newspapers and broadsheets circulated across Europe, with verbal renderings of the various atrocities committed. Nothing could more have damaged the prestige of the Habsburg Emperor in the German Protestant territories than the news of this wanton extermination of his Protestant subjects. The impact was especially pronounced for the Elector of Brandenburg, whose uncle, Margrave Christian William, was the episcopal administrator of Magdeburg. In June 1631, George William reluctantly signed a pact with Sweden, under which he agreed to open the fortresses of Spandau (just north of Berlin) and Küstrin (in the Neumark) to the Swedish troops, and to pay the Swedes a monthly contribution of 30,000 thalers.

The pact with Sweden proved as shortlived as the earlier alliance with the Emperor. In 1631-2, the balance of power was tilting back in favour of the Protestant forces, as the Swedes and their Saxon allies swept deep into the south and west of Germany, inflicting heavy defeats on the imperial side. But the momentum of their onslaught slowed after Gustavus Adolphus's death in a cavalry melee at the Battle of Liitzen on 6 November 1631. By the end of 1634, after a serious defeat at Nordlingen, Sweden's ascendancy was broken. Exhausted by the war and desperate to drive a wedge between Sweden and the German Protestant princes, Emperor Ferdinand II seized the moment to offer moderate peace terms. This move worked: the Lutheran Elector of Saxony, who had joined forces with Sweden in September 1631, now came running back to the Emperor. The Elector of Brandenburg faced a more difficult choice. The draft articles of the Peace of Prague offered an amnesty and withdrew the more extreme demands of the earlier Edict of Restitution, but they still made no reference to the toleration of Calvinism. The Swedes, for their part, were still pestering Brandenburg for a treaty; this time they promised that Pomerania would be transferred in its entirety to Brandenburg after the cessation of hostilities in the Empire.

After some agonized prevarication, George William elected to seek his fortune at the Emperor's side. In May 1635, Brandenburg, along with Saxony, Bavaria and many other German territories, signed up to the Peace of Prague. In return, the Emperor promised to see to it that Brandenburg's claim to the Duchy of Pomerania would be honoured. A detachment of imperial regiments was sent to assist in protecting the Mark and George William was honoured - somewhat incongruously, given his utter lack of military aptitude - with the title of *Generalissimus* in the imperial army. The Elector, for his part, undertook to raise 25,000 troops in support of the imperial war effort. Unfortunately for Brandenburg, this mending of fences with the Habsburg Emperor coincided with another shift in the balance of power in northern Germany. After their victory over the Saxon army at Wittstock on 4 October 1636 the Swedes were once again "lords in the Mark"

George William spent the last four years of his reign trying to drive the Swedes out of Brandenburg and to take control of Pomerania, whose duke died in March 1637. His attempts to raise a Brandenburg army against Sweden produced a small and poorly equipped force and the Electorate was ravaged by both the Swedes and the imperials, as well as by the less disciplined units of its own forces. After a Swedish invasion of the Mark, the Elector was forced to flee - not for the last time in the history of the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns - to the relative safety of Ducal Prussia, where he died in 1640.

## POLITICS

Frederick the Great later described Elector George William as 'incapable of governing', and one history of Prussia noted unkindly that this Elector's worst defect was not so much 'indecision of mind' as 'the absence of a mind to make up'. Two such Electors, it added, and Brandenburg would have 'ceased to provide anything but parochial history'. Judgements of this kind abound in the secondary literature. George William certainly cut an unheroic figure, and he was conscious of the fact. He had been seriously injured as a young man in a hunting accident. A deep wound on his thigh became chronically inflamed, confining him to a sedan chair and depressing his vitality. At a time when the destiny of Germany seemed to rest in the hands of physically imposing warlords, the spectacle of the Elector fleeing hither and thither in his sedan chair to avoid the various armed forces passing without leave across his territory hardly inspired confidence. 'It pains me greatly,' he wrote in July 1626, 'that my lands have been wasted in this way and that I have been so disregarded and mocked. The whole world must take me for a cowardly weakling.

Yet the hesitation and wavering of these years had less to do with the personal characteristics of the ruler than with the intrinsic difficulty of the choices that confronted him. There was something irreducible, something structural in his predicament. This is worth emphasizing, because it draws our attention to one of the continuities of Brandenburg (later Prussian) history. Again and again, the decision-makers in Berlin would find themselves stranded between the fronts, forced to oscillate between options. And on each of these occasions the monarch would be vulnerable to the charge that he had hesitated, prevaricated, failed to decide. This was not a consequence of 'geography' in any simplistic sense, but rather of Brandenburg's place on the mental map of European power politics. If we visualize the main lines of conflict between the continental power blocs of the early seventeenth century - Sweden-Denmark, Poland-Lithuania, Austria-Spain, and France - then it is clear that Brandenburg, with its virtually undefended appanages to the west and the east, was in the zone where these lines intersected. Sweden's power would later decline, followed by that of Poland, but the rise of Russia to great-power status would pose the same problem anew, and successive governments in Berlin would have to choose between alliance, armed neutrality and independent action.

As Brandenburg's military and diplomatic predicament deepened, competing factions emerged in Berlin with opposed foreign-political objectives. Should Brandenburg abide by its traditional allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor and seek safety at the side of the Habsburgs? This was the view espoused by Count Adam Schwarzenberg, a Catholic native of the County of Mark who had supported the Brandenburg claim to Tülich-Berg. From the mid-1620s onwards, Schwarzenberg was the leader of a Habsburg faction in Berlin. By contrast, two of the most powerful privy councillors, Levin von Knesebeck and Samuel von Winterfeld, were strong supporters of the Protestant cause. The two camps fought bitterly for control of Brandenburg's policy. In 1626, as the Elector was forced into closer collaboration with the Habsburg camp, Schwarzenberg succeeded in having Winterfeld tried for treason and driven out of the country, despite protests from the Estates. In the autumn of 1630, on the other hand, when Sweden was in the ascendant, a pro-Swedish faction emerged, led by the Calvinist Chancellor Sigismund von Götzen, and Schwarzenberg was forced to retire to Kleve, only to return to Berlin after the initiative passed back to the imperial side in 1634 and 1635.

The women at court also had strong views on foreign policy. The Elector's young wife was the sister of the Calvinist ruler Frederick V, whose Palatine homeland had been overrun and devastated by Spanish and Catholic League troops. She naturally took an anti-imperial view, as did her mother, who had joined her in exile from Heidelberg, and the Elector's aunt, who had married the brother of Frederick V. The Elector's Lutheran mother, Anna of Prussia, was another outspoken opponent of the Habsburgs. It was she who had engineered the marriage of her daughter Maria Eleonora to the Lutheran King of Sweden in 1620, disregarding the objections of her son, Elector George William. Her intention was to bolster Brandenburg's position in Ducal Prussia, but it was a highly provocative move at the time, since Sweden was at war with Poland, whose king was still formally the sovereign of Ducal Prussia. As these initiatives suggest, dynastic politics still functioned in a way that gave an important voice to consorts and female relatives of the monarch. The women in dynastic families were not just

living securities for inheritance claims; they also maintained relationships with foreign courts that could be of great importance and they did not necessarily see themselves as bound by the monarch's policy.

Beyond the narrow circle of the Elector's court were the holders of power in the land, the provincial Estates, representatives of the Lutheran nobilities. These were deeply sceptical of foreign political adventures of any kind, particularly when they suspected that these were motivated by an attachment to the Calvinist interest. As early as 1623, a delegation of Estates representatives warned the Elector against the enthusiasms of 'hot-headed councillors' and reminded him that their military obligations extended only to 'what was absolutely necessary for the preservation of the land in the case of an emergency'. Even after repeated incursions by Protestant and imperial troops, the Estates remained impassive in the face of entreaties from the sovereign. As they saw it, their function was to forestall unwarranted adventures and to preserve the fabric of provincial privilege against incursions from the centre.

Such passive resistance was difficult to overcome in peacetime. After 1618, the problem was compounded by the fact that the war, in its early phases, deepened the Elector's dependence on the corporate local structures of his territory. George William had no administration of his own with which to collect military contributions, grain or other provisions - all this had to be done by agents of the Estates. The provincial organs of tax collection remained under Estate control. With their local knowledge and authority, the Estates also played an indispensable role in coordinating the billeting and through-marches of troops. On occasion they even negotiated independently with invading commanders over the payment of contributions. Nevertheless, as the war dragged on, the fiscal privileges of the provincial nobilities began to look fragile. Foreign princes and generals had no compunction in extorting contributions from the provinces of Brandenburg; why should the Elector not take his share? This would involve rolling back the ancient 'liberties' of the Estates. For this task, the Elector turned to Schwarzenberg, a Catholic and a foreigner with no ties to the provincial nobility. Schwarzenberg lost no time in imposing a new tax without any recourse to the usual provincial organs. He curtailed the power of the Estates to oversee state expenditures and suspended the Privy Council, transferring its responsibilities to the Council of War, whose members were chosen for their complete independence from the Estates. In short, Schwarzenberg installed a fiscal autocracy that broke decisively with the corporate traditions of the Mark.

During the last two years of George William's reign, Schwarzenberg virtually ran the war against Sweden, pulling the tattered remains of the Brandenburg regiments together and mounting a desperate guerrilla campaign against Swedish troop units. Requests for tax exemptions from impoverished, war-damaged towns were unceremoniously rejected and those who entered into negotiations with the invaders - over billets, for example - were branded as traitors. Schwarzenberg was a controversial figure among his contemporaries. The Estates had initially supported his cautious, pro-imperial foreign policy, but they later came to loathe him for his assault on their corporate liberties. His prosecutions and intrigues earned him the hatred of his opponents in the Privy Council. His Catholic faith was a further spur to their rage. In 1638-9, when Schwarzenberg's power was in its zenith, flyers circulated in Berlin decrying the 'Hispanic servitude' of his rule." In retrospect, however, it is clear that this powerful minister set a number of important precedents. What survived his military dictatorship was the notion that the state, in times of need, might be justified in sweeping aside the cumbersome machinery of Estate privilege and corporate fiscal co-regency. Seen from this perspective, the Schwarzenberg were a first indecisive experiment in 'absolutist' rule.

## WHOLESALE RUIN

For the people of Brandenburg, the war meant lawlessness, misery, poverty, deprivation, uncertainty, forced migration and death. The Elector's decision not to risk a pro-Protestant commitment after 1618 initially kept Brandenburg out of trouble. The first major incursions came in 1626, with the Danish campaign in northern Germany. During the fifteen years that followed, Danish, Swedish, Palatine, imperial and Leaguist troops overran the provinces of Brandenburg in rapid succession.

The towns in the path of advancing armies faced a choice between surrendering and admitting the enemy, defending the walls and suffering the consequences if the enemy broke through, or abandoning them altogether. The town of Plane in the Havelland district of western Brandenburg, for example, successfully defended itself against attack by a small imperial force on 10 April 1627, but was abandoned by its population on the following day, when the enemy returned in greater numbers to renew the assault. No sooner had the imperials established themselves in the town, but it was attacked, captured and plundered by advancing Danish troops. In the city of Brandenburg, the mayor and corporation of the Old City on the right bank of the river Havel agreed to open their walls to the imperials, but the councillors of the New City on the other bank opted to seal themselves off by burning the bridges between the two precincts, barring their gates and firing on the invaders as they approached. A fierce battle followed, the defences of the New City were breached by imperial artillery, and the troops stormed through the city plundering in all quarters.

The hardest-hit provinces tended to be those, like the Havelland or the Prignitz, where river passes commanding the main military transit routes repeatedly changed hands throughout the war. During the summer of 1627, Danish forces played a game of cat-and-mouse with the imperial strongholds in the Havelland, plundering and laying waste to a string of quaintly named villages: Mothlow, Retzow, Selbelang, Gross Behnitz, Stdlln, Wassersuppe. Most commanders regarded their armies as personal property and were thus reluctant to commit men to battle unless it was absolutely necessary. Pitched battles were thus relatively rare and armies spent most of the war years engaged in marches, manoeuvres and occupations. It was an arrangement that spared the troops, but weighed heavily on host populations.

War brought a drastic rise in taxation and other obligatory payments. First there was the regular 'contribution', a combined land and poll tax levied by the Brandenburg government upon its own population to support the Elector's army. Then there were the numerous legal and illegal levies raised by foreign and home troops. These were sometimes agreed between the occupying commander and government officials or the mayors or councillors of cities and towns. But there were also countless episodes of outright extortion. In the winter of 1619, for example, officers commanding troops quartered in the New City of Brandenburg demanded that the burghers pay subsistence costs for the next nine months in advance. When the latter refused, punishment billets were quartered on the locals. 'And whatever they didn't quaff or squander themselves, they smashed in two; they poured away the beer, stove in the barrels, smashed windows, doors and ovens and destroyed everything. In Strausberg, just north of Berlin, the troops of Count Mansfeld required two pounds of bread, two pounds of meat and two quarts of beer per man per day; many soldiers refused to content themselves with their allotted ration and 'scoffed and quaffed as much as they could get'. The result was a steep decline in nutritional standards among the inhabitants, a dramatic rise in mortality rates, a pronounced fall in fertility among women of child bearing age, and even the occasional incident of cannibalism. Many simply fled the town, leaving their household goods behind. In the tense intimacy of protracted billets, there were endless opportunities, as many of the eyewitness accounts confirm, for one-off acts of extortion and theft.

All this meant that the people in many parts of Brandenburg were slowly crushed under successive layers of extortion. A report compiled in 1634 gives us some sense of what this meant for the district of Oberbarnim to the north of Berlin, whose population numbered some 13,000 in 1618, but had fallen to fewer than 9,000 by 1631. The inhabitants of Oberbarnim paid 185,000 thalers to imperial commanders in 1627-30, 26,000 thalers in contributions to the Swedish-Brandenburg allied forces in 1631-4, a further 50,000 thalers in provisioning costs to the Swedes in 1631-4, 30,000 thalers in provisioning costs to the Saxon cavalry regiments, 54,000 thalers to various Brandenburg commanders, plus sundry other taxes and one-off levies, not counting many other informal extortions, seizures and confiscations. This at a time when a horse cost 2.0 thalers and a bushel of corn less than one thaler, when a third of the peasant-owned land had been abandoned or lay uncultivated, when the disruptions of war had ruined many branches of skilled manufacture., when the ripening grain around the town was regularly trampled into the ground by passing cavalrymen.

Atrocity stories - narratives of extreme violence and cruelty by armed men against civilians - loom so

large in the literary depictions of the Thirty Years War that some historians have been tempted to dismiss them as the accoutrements of a 'myth of all-destructive fury' or a 'fable of wholesale ruin and misery'. There is no doubt that atrocity stories became a genre in their own right in contemporary reporting of this war; a good example is Philip Vincent's book *The Lamentations of Germany*, which listed the horrors suffered by the innocent, featuring graphic plates entitled: 'Croats eat Children', 'Noses and eares cut of to make hatbandes', and so on. The sensationalist character of many atrocity stories should not obscure the fact that they were rooted, at least indirectly, in the lived experience of real people.

Official reports from the Havelland record numerous beatings, house-burnings, rapes and wanton destruction of property. People living on the outskirts of Plaue, just a few kilometres to the east of Brandenburg city, described a through-march by imperial troops on their way to Saxony on New Year's Day 1639 during which 'many old people were tortured to death, shot dead, various women and girls raped to death, children hanged, sometimes even burnt, or stripped naked, so that they perished in the extreme cold. In one of the most evocative memoirs that survives from Brandenburg, Peter Thiele, customs officer and town clerk at Beelitz near Potsdam, described the conduct of the imperial army that passed through his town in 1637. In order to force a certain Jiirgen Weber, a baker in the town, to reveal where he had concealed his money, the imperials 'stabbed a piece of wood half a finger long into his [penis], if you will excuse me'. Thiele described the 'Swedish draught', said to have been invented by the Swedes, but widely reported of all armies and a fixture in later literary representations of the war: The robbers and murderers took a piece of wood and stuck it down the poor wretches' throats, stirred it and poured in water, adding sand or even human faeces, and pitifully tortured the people for money, as transpired with a citizen of Beelitz called David Orttei, who died of it soon after.

Another man, by the name of Krtiger Moller was caught by imperial soldiers, bound hand and foot and roasted over a fire until he revealed the whereabouts of his money. But no sooner had his tormentors taken the money and gone, than another raiding party of imperials arrived in the town. Hearing that their colleagues had already roasted 100 thalers out of Moller, they carried him back to the fire and held him with his face in the flames, roasting him 'for so long that he died of it and his skin even came off like that of a slaughtered goose'. The cattle merchant Jiirgen Moller was likewise 'roasted to death' for his money.

In 1638, the imperial and Saxon armies passed through the little town of Lenzen in the Prignitz to the north-west of Berlin, where they tore all the wood and equipment from the houses before putting them to the torch. "Whatever householders rescued from the flames, the soldiers took from them by force. Hardly had the imperials departed, but the Swedes attacked and plundered the town, treating the 'citizens, women and children so gruesomely that such things were never told of the Turks'. An official report compiled by the Lenzen authorities in January 1640 sketched a grim picture: 'They tied our honest burgher Hans Betke to a wooden pole and roasted him at the fire from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon, so that he gave up the spirit amidst much shrieking and pains.' The Swedes cut the calves of an elderly man to stop him from walking, scalded a matron to death with boiling water, hanged children naked in the cold and forced people into the freezing water. About fifty people, 'old and young, big and small, were martyred in this way'.

The men raised by the Elector himself were not much better than the invaders. They too were ill clothed, underfed and demoralized. Officers brutalized their men with a regime of draconian punishments. The soldiers of Colonel von Rochow's regiment were 'beaten and stabbed on trivial pretexts, made to run the gauntlet, branded', and in some cases had their noses and ears cut off. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the troops were equally merciless in their dealings with local civilians, prompting bitter protests against their 'frequent extortions, plundering, murder and robbery'. So frequent were these complaints that Count Schwarzenberg convened a special meeting with the commanders in 1640 and dressed them down for vexing the civilian population with acts of insolence and violence. But the effect of his admonitions soon wore off: a report filed two years later from the district of Teltow near Berlin stated that the troops of the Brandenburg commander von Goldacker had been plundering the area, threshing the corn they found and treating the local people 'in a manner as inhumane as, indeed

worse than, the enemy could have done'.

It is impossible to establish with any precision how frequently atrocities took place. The regularity with which such accounts crop up across a wide range of contemporary sources, from individual ego-narratives to local government reports, petitions and literary representations certainly suggests that they were widespread. What is beyond doubt is their significance in contemporary perception. Atrocities defined the meaning of this war. They captured something about it that left a profound impression: the total suspension of order, the utter vulnerability of men, women and children in the face of a violence that raged unmastered, out of control.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the harshness of the tribulations visited upon the people of Brandenburg between 1618 and 1648 is simply the demographic record. Diseases such as typhus, bubonic plague, dysentery and smallpox raged unchecked through civilian populations whose physical resistance had often been undermined by years of high prices and poor nutrition. Across the Mark Brandenburg as a whole, about one half of the population died. The figures vary from district to district; those areas that were protected from military occupation or through-marches by water or swamp-land tended to be less seriously affected. In the marshy floodplains of the river Oder, known as the Oderbruch, for example, a survey conducted in 1652. found that only 15 per cent of the farms in operation at the beginning of the war were still deserted. In the Havelland, by contrast, which saw nearly fifteen years of virtually uninterrupted disruption, the figure was 52 per cent. In the Barnim district, where the population was heavily burdened with contributions and billets, 58.4 per cent of the farms were still deserted in 1652. On the lands of the district of Locknitz in the Uckermark, on the northern margins of Brandenburg, the figure was 85 per cent! In the Altmark, to the west of Berlin, the mortality rate rose from the west to the east. Between 50 and 60 per cent are reckoned to have perished in the areas bordering on the river Elbe in the east, which were important military transit zones; the death rate sank to 2.5-30 per cent in the middle and 15-20 per cent in the west.

Some of the most important towns were very hard hit: Brandenburg and Frankfurt/Oder, both in key transit areas, lost over two-thirds of their populations. Potsdam and Spandau, satellite towns of Berlin-Colin, both lost over 40 per cent. In the Prignitz, another transit zone, only ten of the forty noble families who had been running the major estates in the province were still in residence in 1641, and there were some towns - Wittenberge, Putlitz, Meyenburg, Freyenstein - where no one could be found at all. We can really only guess at the impact of these disasters on popular culture. Many of the families that repopulated the most devastated districts after the war were immigrants from outside Brandenburg: Dutch, East Frisians, Holsteiners. In some places the shock was sufficient to sever the thread of collective memory. It has been observed of Germany as a whole that the 'great war' of 1618-48 obliterated the folk memory of earlier conflicts, so that medieval, ancient or prehistoric walls and earthworks lost their earlier names and came to be known as 'Swedish ramparts'. In some areas, it seems that the war broke the chain of personal recollection that was essential to the authority and continuity of village-based customary law - no one was left of an age to remember how things were 'before the Swedes came'. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the paucity of folk traditions in the Mark Brandenburg. In the 1840s, when the craze for collecting and publishing myths and other folklore was at its height, enthusiasts inspired by the brothers Grimm found lean pickings in the Mark

The all-destructive fury of the Thirty Years "War was mythical not in the sense that it bore no relation to reality, but in the sense that it established itself within collective memories and became a tool for thinking about the world. It was the fury of religious civil war - not only in his native England, but also on the continent - that moved Thomas Hobbes to celebrate the Leviathan state, with its monopoly of legitimate force, as the redemption of society. Surely it was better, he proposed, to concede authority to the monarchical state in return for the security of persons and property than to see order and justice drowned in civil strife.

One of the most brilliant German readers of Hobbes was Samuel Pufendorf, a jurist from Saxony who likewise grounded his arguments for the necessity of the state in a dystopian vision of ambient violence and disorder. The law of nature alone did not suffice to preserve the social life of man, Pufendorf

argued in his *Elements of Universal Jurisprudence*. Unless 'sovereignties' were established men would seek their welfare by force alone; 'all places would reverberate with wars between those who are inflicting and those who are repelling injuries.' Hence the supreme importance of states, whose chief purpose was 'that men, by means of mutual cooperation and assistance, be safe against the harms and injuries they can and commonly do inflict on one another'. The trauma of the Thirty Years War reverberates in these sentences. The argument that the state's legitimacy derived from the need to forestall disorder through the concentration of authority was widely employed in early modern Europe, but it had a special resonance in Brandenburg. Here was an eloquent philosophical answer to the resistance that George William had encountered from the provincial Estates. Since it was impossible in peace or war to conduct the affairs of a state without incurring expenses, Pufendorf wrote in 1671, the sovereign had the right to 'force individual citizens to contribute so much of their own goods as the assumption of those expenses is deemed to require'.

Pufendorf thus distilled from the memory of civil war a powerful rationale for the extension of state authority. Against the 'libertas' of the Estates, Pufendorf asserted the 'necessitas' of the state. Late in his life, when he was employed as historiographer at the Berlin court, Pufendorf wove these convictions into a chronicle of Brandenburg's recent history. At the centre of his story was the emergence of the monarchical executive: 'the measure and focal point of all his reflections was the state, upon which all initiatives converge like lines towards a central point. Unlike the crude chronicles of Brandenburg that had begun to appear in the late sixteenth century, Pufendorf's history was driven by a theory of historical change that focused on the creative, transformative power of the state. In this way, he engineered a narrative of great power and elegance that has - for better or for worse - shaped our understanding of Prussian history ever since.

## An Extraordinary Light in Germany recovery

Viewed against the background of the misery and hopelessness of 1640, Brandenburg's resurgence in the second half of the seventeenth century appears remarkable. By the 1680s, Brandenburg possessed an army with an international reputation whose numbers fluctuated between 20,000 and 30,000.\* It had acquired a small Baltic fleet and even a modest colony on the west coast of Africa. A land bridge across Eastern Pomerania linked the Electorate to the Baltic coast. Brandenburg was a substantial regional power on a par with Bavaria and Saxony, a sought-after ally and a significant element in major peace settlements.

The man who presided over this transformation was Frederick William, known as the 'Great Elector' (r. 1640-88). Frederick "William is the first Brandenburg Elector of whom numerous portraits survive, most of them commissioned by the sitter himself. They document the changing appearance of a man who spent forty-eight years - longer than any other member of his dynasty - in sovereign office. Depictions from the early years of the reign show a commanding, upright figure with a long face framed by flowing dark hair; in the later images, the body has swollen, the face is bloated and the hair has been replaced by cascades of artificial curls. And yet one thing is common to all the portraits painted from life: intelligent, dark eyes that fix the viewer in a sharp stare.

When he succeeded his father at the age of twenty, Frederick William had virtually no training or experience in the art of government. He had spent most of his childhood cloistered away in the fortress of Kiiistrin enclosed by sombre forests, where he was safe from enemy troops. Lessons in modern languages and technical skills such as drawing, geometry and the construction of fortifications were interspersed with the regular hunting of stag, boar and wildfowl. Unlike his father and grandfather, Frederick William was taught Polish from the age of seven to assist him in conducting relations with the Polish king, feudal overlord of Ducal Prussia. At the age of fourteen, as the military crisis deepened and a wave of epidemics spread across the Mark, he was sent to the relative safety of the Dutch Republic, where he would spend the next four years of his life.

The impact on the prince of these teenage years in the Republic is difficult to ascertain precisely, since

he did not keep a diary or write personal memoirs of any kind. His correspondence with his parents confined itself to the exchange of compliments in an extremely distanced and formal diction. Yet it is clear that the prince's Dutch education did reinforce his sense of allegiance to the Calvinist cause. Frederick William was the first Brandenburg Elector to be born of two Calvinist parents, and the composite name Frederick William, a novelty in the history of the House of Hohenzollern, was devised precisely in order to symbolize the bond between Berlin (William was his father's second name) and the Calvinist Palatinate of his uncle, Frederick V. Only with this generation of the Hohenzollern family did the reorientation launched by the conversion of his grandfather John Sigismund in 1613 come fully into effect. Frederick William consolidated the bond in 1646 by marrying the Dutch Calvinist Louise Henriette, nineteen-year-old daughter of Stadtholder Frederick Henry of Orange.

Frederick Williams's long sojourn in the Dutch Republic was also influential in other ways. The prince received instruction from professors in law, history and politics at the University of Leiden, a renowned centre of the then fashionable neo-stoical state theory. The prince's lessons emphasized the majesty of the law, the venerability of the state as the guarantor of order and the centrality of duty and obligation to the office of sovereign. A particular concern of the neo-stoics was the need to subordinate the military to the authority and discipline of the state. But it was outside the classroom, in the streets, docks, markets and parade-squares of the Dutch towns that Frederick William learned his most important lessons. In the early seventeenth century, the Republic was at the height of its power and prosperity. Over more than sixty years, this tiny Calvinist country had fought successfully to assert its independence against the military might of Catholic Spain and establish itself as the foremost European headquarters of global trade and colonization. In the process, it had developed a robust fiscal regime and a distinctive military culture with recognizably modern features: the regular and systematic drilling of troops in battleground manoeuvres, a high level of functional differentiation and a disciplined professional officer corps. Frederick William had ample opportunity to observe the military prowess of the Republic at close hand - he visited his host and relative, Viceroy Prince Frederick Henry of Orange, in the Dutch encampment at Breda in 1637, where the Dutch recaptured a stronghold that had been lost to the Spaniards twelve years before.

Throughout his reign Frederick William strove to remodel his own patrimony in the image of what he had observed in the Netherlands. The training regime adopted by his army in 1654 was based on the drill-book of Prince Maurice of Orange. Frederick William remained convinced throughout his reign that 'navigation and trade are the principal pillars of a state, through which subjects, by sea and by manufactures on land, earn their food and keep. He became obsessed with the idea that the link to the Baltic would enliven and commercialize Brandenburg, bringing the wealth and power that were so conspicuously on display in Amsterdam. In the 1650s and 1660s, he even negotiated international commercial treaties to secure privileged terms of trade for a merchant marine he did not yet possess. In the later 1670s, with the assistance of a Dutch merchant by the name of Benjamin Raule, he acquired a small fleet of ships and became involved in a string of privateering and colonial schemes. In 1680, Raule secured for Brandenburg a share in the west African trade in gold, ivory and slaves by establishing the small colonial fort of Friedrichsburg on the coast of modern-day Ghana.

It could be said that Frederick William reinvented the Electoral office. Whereas John Sigismund and George William had addressed themselves only sporadically to the business of government, Frederick William worked 'harder than a secretary'. Contemporaries recognized this as something new and noteworthy. His ministers marvelled at his memory for detail, his sobriety and his ability to sit for an entire day in council dealing with affairs of state. Even the imperial ambassador Lisola, no uncritical observer, was struck by the Elector's conscientiousness: 'I admire this Elector, who takes delight in long and exceedingly detailed reports and who expressly demands these of his ministers; he reads everything, he resolves and orders everything and neglects nothing. 'I shall manage my responsibility as prince,' Frederick William declared, 'in the knowledge that it is the affair of the people and not mine personally.' The words were those of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, but in the mouth of the Elector they signalled a new understanding of the sovereign's role. It was more than a prestigious title or a bundle of rights and revenues; it was a vocation that should rightly consume the personality of the ruler. The early histories of the reign established an image of this Elector as the model of an absolute and unstint-

ing dedication to office. His example became a potent icon within the Hohenzollern tradition, a standard that the Elector's reigning descendants would either emulate or be measured against.

## EXPANSION

In December 1640, when Frederick William acceded to the throne, Brandenburg was still under foreign occupation. A two-year truce was agreed with the Swedes in July 1641, but the looting, burning and general misbehaviour continued. In a letter of spring 1641, the Elector's viceroy, Margrave Ernest, who carried the responsibility for administering the ruined Mark, offered a grim synopsis: The country is in such a miserable and impoverished condition that mere words can scarcely convey the sympathy one feels with the innocent inhabitants. In general, We think that the cart has been driven so deep into the muck, as they say, that it cannot be extricated without the special help of the Almighty.

The strain of overseeing the anarchy unfolding in Brandenburg ultimately proved too much for the margrave, who succumbed to panic attacks, sleeplessness and paranoid delusions. By the autumn of 1642, he had taken to pacing about in his palace muttering to himself, shrieking and throwing himself to the floor. His death on 26 September was ascribed to 'melancholy'.

Only in March 1643 did Frederick William return from the relative safety of Königsberg to the ruined city of Berlin, a city he scarcely recognized. Here he found a population depleted and malnourished, and buildings destroyed by fire or in a parlous state of repair. The predicament that had bedevilled his father's reign remained unsolved: Brandenburg had no military force with which to establish its independence. The small army created by Schwarzenberg was already falling apart and there was no money to pay for a replacement. Johann Eriedrich von Leuchtmar, a privy councillor and the Elector's former tutor, summarized Brandenburg's predicament in a report of 1644: Poland, he predicted, would seize Prussia as soon as it was strong enough; Pomerania was under Swedish occupation and likely to remain so; Kleve in the west was under the control of the Dutch Republic. Brandenburg stood 'on the edge of the abyss'.

In order to restore the independence of his territory and press home his claims, the Elector needed a flexible, disciplined fighting force. The creation of such an instrument became one of the consuming preoccupations of his reign. The Brandenburg campaign army grew dramatically, if somewhat unsteadily, from 3,000 men in 1641-2, to 8,000 in 1643-6, to 25,000 during the Northern War of 1655-60, to 38,000 during the Dutch wars of the 1670s. During the final decade of the Elector's reign, its size fluctuated between 20,000 and 30,000. Improvements in tactical training and armaments modelled on French, Dutch, Swedish and imperial best practice placed the Brandenburg army close to the cutting edge of European military innovation. Pikes and pikemen were phased out and the cumbersome matchlock guns carried by the infantry were replaced by lighter, faster-firing flintlocks. Artillery calibres were standardized to allow for the more flexible and efficient use of field guns, in the style pioneered by the Swedes. The foundation of a cadet school for officer recruits introduced an element of standardized professional formation. Better conditions of employment - including provision for maimed or retired officers - improved the stability of the command structure. These changes in turn improved the cohesion and morale of the non-commissioned ranks, who distinguished themselves in the 1680s by their excellent discipline and low rates of desertion.

The improvised forces assembled for specific campaigns during the early years of the reign gradually evolved into what one could call a standing army. In April 1655, a General War Commissioner (*General-kriegskommissar*) was appointed to oversee the handling of financial and other resources for the army, on the model of the military administration recently introduced in France under Le Tellier and Louvois. This innovation was initially conceived as a temporary wartime measure and only later established as a permanent feature of the territorial administration. After 1679, under the direction of the Pomeranian nobleman Joachim von Grumbkow, the General War Commissariat extended its reach throughout the Hohenzollern territories, gradually usurping the function of the Estate officials who had traditionally overseen military taxation and discipline at a local level. The General War Commissariat and the Office for the Domains were still relatively small institutions in 1688 when the Elector died,

but under his successors they would play a crucial role in toughening the sinews of central authority in the Brandenburg-Prussian state. This synergy between war-making and the development of state-like central organs was something new; it became possible only when the war-making apparatus was separated from its traditional provincial-aristocratic foundations.

The acquisition of such a formidable military instrument was important, because the decades that followed the end of the Thirty Years War were a period of intense conflict in northern Europe. Two foreign titans overshadowed Brandenburg foreign policy during the Elector's reign. The first was King Charles X of Sweden, a restless, obsessive figure with expansionist dreams who seemed bent on trumping the record of his illustrious predecessor Gustavus Adolphus. It was Charles X's invasion of Poland that started the Northern War of 1655-60. His plan was to subdue the Danes and the Poles, occupy Ducal Prussia and then march south at the head of a vast army to sack Rome in the manner of the ancient Goths. Instead, the Swedes became bogged down in a bitter five-year struggle for control of the Baltic littoral.

After the death of Charles X in 1660 and the ebbing of Swedish power, it was Louis XIV of France who dominated Brandenburg's political horizons. Having assumed sole regency after the death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1661, Louis expanded his combined wartime armed forces from 70,000 to 320,000 men {by 1693} and launched a sequence of assaults to secure hegemony in western Europe; there were campaigns against the Spanish Netherlands in 1667-8, the United Provinces in 1672-8 and the Palatinate in 1688. In this dangerous environment, the Elector's growing army proved an indispensable asset. In the summer of 1656, Frederick William's 8,500 troops joined forces with Charles X to defeat a massive Polish-Tartar army in the battle of Warsaw (28-30 July). In 1658, he changed sides and campaigned as an ally of Poland and Austria against the Swedes. It was a sign of Frederick William's growing weight in regional politics that he was appointed commander of the Brandenburg-Polish-imperial allied army raised to fight the Swedes in 1658-9. A chain of successful military assaults followed, first in Schleswig-Holstein and Jutland and later in Pomerania.

The most dramatic military exploit of the reign was Frederick William's single-handed victory over the Swedes at Fehrbellin in 1675. In the winter of 1674-5, the Elector was campaigning with an Austrian army in the Rhineland as part of the coalition that had formed to contain Louis XIV during the Dutch wars. In the hope of securing French subsidies, the Swedes, allies of the French, invaded Brandenburg with an army of 14,000 men under the command of General Karl Gustav Wrangel. It was a scenario that awakened memories of the Thirty Years War: the Swedes unleashed the usual ravages on the hapless population of the Uckermark, to the north-east of Berlin. Frederick William reacted to news of the invasion with undisguised rage. 'I can be brought to no other resolution,' the Elector told Otto von Schwerin on 10 February, 'than to avenge myself on the Swedes.' In a series of furious despatches, the Elector, who was bedridden with gout, urged his subjects, 'both noble and non-noble', to 'cut down all Swedes, wherever they can lay their hands upon them and to break their necks and to give no quarter.

Frederick William joined his army in Franconia at the end of May. Covering over one hundred kilometres per week, his forces reached Magdeburg on 22. June, just over ninety kilometres from the Swedish headquarters in the city of Havelberg. From here, the Brandenburg command could establish through local informants that the Swedes were strung out behind the river Havel, with concentrations in the fortified cities of Havelberg, Rathenow and Brandenburg. Since the Swedes had failed to register the arrival of the Brandenburg army, the Elector and his commander Georg Derfflinger had the advantage of surprise, and they resolved to attack the Swedish strongpoint at Rathenow with only 7,000 cavalry; a further 1,000 musketeers were loaded on to carts so that they could keep pace with the advance. Heavy rain and muddy conditions impeded their progress but also concealed them from the unsuspecting Swedish regiment at Rathenow. In the early morning of 2,5 June, the Brandenburgers attacked and destroyed the Swedish force with only minimal casualties on their own side.

The collapse of the Swedish line at Rathenow set the scene for the Battle of Fehrbellin, the most celebrated military engagement of the Elector's reign. In order to restore cohesion to their position, the Swedish regiment in Brandenburg City pulled back deep into the countryside with the intention of

sweeping to the north-west to join up with the main force at Haveberg. This proved more difficult than they had expected, because the heavy spring and summer rains had transformed the marshes of the area into a treacherous waterland broken only by islands of sodden grass or sand and criss-crossed by narrow causeways. Guided by locals, advance parties of the Electoral army blocked the main exits from the area, and forced the Swedes to fall back on the little town of Fehrbellin on the river Rhin. Here their commander, General Wrangel, deployed his 11,000 men in defensive fashion, setting the 7,000 Swedish infantry in the centre and his cavalry on the wings.

Against 11,000 Swedes the Elector could muster only around 6,000 men (a substantial part of his army, including most of his infantry, had not yet arrived in the area). The Swedes disposed of about three times as many field guns as the Brandenburgers. But this numerical disadvantage was offset by a tactical opportunity. Wrangel had neglected to occupy a low sandhill that overlooked his right flank. The Elector lost no time in positioning his thirteen field guns there and opening fire on the Swedish lines. Seeing his error, Wrangel ordered the cavalry on his right wing, supported by infantry, to take the hill. For the next few hours the battle was dominated by the ebb and surge of cavalry charge and counter-charge as the Swedes attempted to seize the enemy guns and were thrown back by the Brandenburg horse. A metaphorical fog of war shrouds all such encounters; it was thickened on this occasion by - a literal summer mist of the kind that often gathers in the marshes of the Havelland. Both sides found it difficult to coordinate their forces, but it was the Swedish cavalry that gave way first, fleeing from the field and leaving their infantry - the Dalwig Guards - exposed to the sabres of the Brandenburg horse.

Of 1,200 Guards, twenty managed to escape and about seventy were taken prisoner; the rest were killed. On the following day, the town of Fehrbellin itself was seized from a small Swedish occupation force. There was now a great fleeing of Swedes across the Mark Brandenburg. Considerable numbers of them, more perhaps than fell on the field of battle, were hacked to death in opportunist attacks by peasants as they made their way northwards. A contemporary report noted that peasants in the area around the town of Wittstock, not far from the border with Pomerania, had slain 300 Swedes, including a number of officers: 'although several of the latter offered 2000 thalers for their lives, they were decapitated by the vengeful peasants. Memories of the 'Swedish terror' still vivid in the older generation played a role here. By 2, July, every last Swede who had not been captured or killed had left the territory of the Electorate.

Victories of the kind achieved at Warsaw and Fehrbellin were of enormous symbolic importance to the Elector and his entourage. In an era that glorified successful warlords, the victories of Brandenburg's army magnified the prestige and reputation of its founder. At Warsaw, Frederick William had stood in the thick of the fighting, repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire. He wrote an account of the event and had it published in The Hague. His notes on the battle formed the basis for the relevant passages in Samuel Pufendorf's history of the reign - a comprehensive and sophisticated work that marked a new departure in Brandenburg historiography. All this bore witness to a heightened historical self-consciousness, a sense that Brandenburg had begun to make - and to narrate - its own history. In his 'royal memoirs', a text intended for the eyes of his successor, Louis XIV observed that kings owe an account of their actions 'to all ages'. The Great Elector never unfolded a cult of historicized self-memorialization to rival that of his French contemporary, but he too began consciously to perceive himself and his achievements through the eyes of an imagined posterity.

At Warsaw in 1656 the Brandenburgers had shown their mettle as coalition partners; at Fehrbellin nineteen years later the Elector's army, though outnumbered and forced to advance at lightning speed, prevailed without aid over an enemy with an intimidating European reputation. Here too the Elector, now a stout man of fifty-five, stayed at the centre of the action. He joined his riders in assaults on the Swedish lines until he was encircled by enemy troops and had to be cut free by nine of his own dragoons. It was after the victory at Fehrbellin that the soubriquet 'the Great Elector' first appeared in print. There was nothing particularly remarkable in that, since broadsheets extolling the greatness of rulers were commonplace in seventeenth-century Europe. But unlike so many other early-modern 'greats' (including the abortive 'Louis the Great', propagated by the sycophantic pamphleteers of the

sun-king; 'Leopold the Great' of Austria; and 'Maximilian the Great', usage of which is now confined to die-hard Bavarian monarchist circles) this one survived, making Elector Frederick William the only non-royal early-modern European sovereign who is still widely accorded this epithet.

With FehrbeHn, moreover, a bond was forged between history and legend. The battle became a fixture in memory. The dramatist Heinrich von Kleist chose it as the setting for his play *Der Prinz von Hamburg*, a fanciful variation on the historical record, in which an impulsive military commander faces a death sentence for having led a victorious charge against the Swedes despite orders to hold back, but is pardoned by the Elector once he has accepted his culpability. To the Brandenburgers and Prussians of posterity, Frederick William's predecessors would remain shadowy, antique figures imprisoned within a remote past. By contrast, the 'Great Elector' would be elevated to the status of a three-dimensional founding father, a transcendent personality who both symbolized and bestowed meaning upon the history of a state.

## ALLIANCES

'Alliances are certainly good,' Frederick William wrote in 1667, 'but a force of one's own, that one can confidently rely on, is better. A ruler is not treated with respect unless he has his own troops and resources. It is these, thank God, that have made me important since I have had them. There was much truth in these reflections, composed for the edification of the Elector's son and successor. By the end of the Second Northern War, Frederick William was a man to be reckoned with. He was an attractive alliance partner who could command substantial subsidies. He also participated as a principal in major regional peace treaties - a distinction that had been denied to his predecessors.

But the army was just one factor in Brandenburg's recovery and expansion after 1640. Even before he possessed an armed force capable of tipping the scales in regional conflicts, Frederick William was able to secure major territorial gains simply by playing the international system. It was only thanks to French backing that Brandenburg emerged in such a strong position from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The French, who were looking for a German client state to support their designs against Austria, helped Frederick William thrash out a compromise agreement with Sweden (a French ally), under which Brandenburg received the eastern portion of Pomerania (excluding the river Oder). Then France and Sweden joined forces in pressing the Emperor to compensate Brandenburg for the still Swedish portion of Pomerania by granting it lands from the former bishoprics of Halberstadt, Minden and Magdeburg. These were by far the most significant acquisitions of Frederick William's long reign. After 1648, a swathe of Hohenzollern territory swept in a broad curve from the western borders of the Altmark up to the eastern end of the Pomeranian coastline - the gap between the central agglomeration of territories and Ducal Prussia narrowed to less than 12,0 kilometres. For the first time in its history, Brandenburg was bigger than neighbouring Saxony. It was now the second largest German territory after the Habsburg monarchy. And all this was achieved without discharging a single musket, at a time when Brandenburg's tiny armed force still counted for little.

The same point can be made in connection with the acquisition of full sovereignty over Ducal Prussia in 1657. To be sure: the Elector's army expanded to 25,000 men in the course of the Northern War of 1655-60. By fighting first on the Swedish and then on the Polish-imperial side, the Elector was able to prevent the powers engaged in the conflict from shutting him out of his exposed eastern duchy. After the victory at Warsaw in 1656, Charles X abandoned his plan to occupy Ducal Prussia as a Swedish fief and agreed to concede full sovereignty to Brandenburg. But once the Swedes had been driven back into Denmark, this promise became meaningless - Ducal Prussia was no longer theirs to give. The trick now was to get the Poles to follow suit and grant full sovereignty in their turn. Here again, the Elector was the beneficiary of international developments beyond his control. A crisis in relations between the Polish Crown and the Russian Tsar meant that the lands of the Commonwealth were exposed to Russian assaults. The King of Poland, John Casimir, was thus eager to separate Brandenburg from Sweden and to neutralize it as a military threat.

By a further coincidence, Emperor Ferdinand III died in April 1657, meaning that Frederick William

could trade his Electoral vote for concessions over Ducal Prussia. The Habsburgs duly pressed the Polish king to grant the Elector's demand for sovereignty over Ducal Prussia, urgings that carried considerable weight, since the Poles were counting on Austrian assistance in the event of a renewed Swedish or Russian attack. In a secret treaty signed at Wehlau on 1 September 1657, the Poles agreed to cede Ducal Prussia to the Elector 'with absolute power and without the previous impositions'. The Elector promised in turn to help John Casimir against Sweden. Nothing could better illustrate the intricacy and geographical scope of the mechanisms that shaped Brandenburg's opportunities. The fact that Frederick William had by now assembled sufficient troops under his command to be a useful ally was an important enabling factor in this outcome, but it was the international system rather than the Elector's own efforts that settled the question of sovereignty in his favour.

Conversely, the unilateral application of military force - even when it was successful in military terms - was of little avail in cases where Brandenburg's objectives were *not* underwritten by the broader dynamics of the international system. In 1658-9, Frederick William commanded an extremely successful joint Austrian-Polish-Brandenburg campaign against the Swedes. There was a long chain of successful military assaults, first in Schleswig-Holstein and Jutland and later in Pomerania. By the time the campaign of 1659 was over, Brandenburg troops controlled virtually all of Swedish Pomerania, excluding only the coastal cities of Stralsund and Stettin. But these successes did not suffice to secure the Elector a permanent foothold in the disputed portion of his Pomeranian inheritance. France intervened in support of Sweden, and the Peace of Oliva (3 May 1660) largely confirmed the concessions agreed at Wehlau three years before. Brandenburg thus gained nothing from the Elector's involvement in the alliance against Sweden, apart from broader international recognition of his sovereign status in Prussia. Here was a further lesson, if any were needed, in the primacy of the system over the forces at the disposal of one of its lesser members.

Exactly the same thing happened after the victory over Sweden at Fehrbellin in 1675. In the course of an exhausting four-year campaign, the Elector succeeded in driving every last Swede out of Western Pomerania. But even this was not enough to place him in possession of his claim, for Louis XIV had no intention of leaving his Swedish ally at Brandenburg's mercy. France, whose powers were waxing as the Dutch Wars came to an end, insisted that the conquered Pomeranian territories should be restored in their entirety to Sweden. Vienna agreed: the Habsburg Emperor had no desire to see 'the rise of a new king of the Vandals on the Baltic'; he preferred a weak Sweden to a strong Brandenburg. In June 1679, after much impotent raging, the Elector finally renounced the claim he had fought so hard for and authorized his envoy to sign the Peace of St Germain with France.

This dispiriting conclusion to a long struggle was yet another reminder that Brandenburg was still, for all its efforts and accomplishments, a small player in a world where the big players decided the important outcomes. Frederick William had been able with some success to exploit the shifting balance of power in a regional conflict between Poland and Sweden, but he was out of his depth in a struggle in which great-power interests were more directly engaged.

Playing the system effectively meant being on the right side at the right moment, and this in turn implied a readiness to switch allegiances when an existing commitment became burdensome or inopportune. Throughout the late 1660s and early 1670s, the Elector oscillated frantically between France and Austria. In January 1670, a three-year train of negotiations and agreements culminated in a ten-year treaty with France. In the summer of 1672, however, when the French attacked the Dutch Republic, invading and plundering Kleve in the process, the Elector turned instead to Emperor Leopold in Vienna. A treaty was signed in late June 1672, by which it was agreed that Brandenburg and the Emperor would conduct a joint campaign to safeguard the western borders of the Holy Roman Empire against French aggression. In the summer of 1673, however, the Elector was once again in alliance discussions with France; by the autumn of the same year he was already gravitating back towards a new anti-French coalition centred on a triple alliance between Emperor Leopold, the Dutch and the Spaniards. The same pattern of rapid alternation can be observed during the last years of Frederick William's reign. There was a succession of alliances with France (October 1679, January 1678, January 1684), yet at the same time a Brandenburg contingent was sent to assist in the relief of the Turkish

siege of Vienna in 1683. In August 1685, moreover, Frederick William signed a treaty with the Dutch Republic whose terms were largely directed against France (while at the same time assuring the French of his loyalty and pressing them to keep up with their subsidy payments).

'[It is] in the nature of alliances,' the Austrian military strategist Count Montecuccoli sagely observed, 'that they are dissolved at the slightest inconvenience. But even in an era that saw alliances as short-term fixes, the 'feverish inconstancy' (*Wechselfieber*) of the Elector seemed remarkable. There was method in the madness, however. In order to pay for his growing army, Frederick William needed foreign subsidies. Frequent alliance-switching forced would-be partners into a bidding war and thereby pushed up the going price for an alliance. The rapid alternation of alliances also reflected the complexity of Brandenburg's security needs. The integrity of the western territories depended on good relations with France and the United Provinces. The integrity of Ducal Prussia depended on good relations with Poland. The safety of Brandenburg's entire Baltic littoral depended on holding the Swedes at bay. The maintenance of the Elector's status and the pursuit of his inheritance claims within the Empire depended upon good (or at least functional) relations with the Emperor. All these threads crossed at various points to form a neural net generating unpredictable and rapidly shifting outcomes.

Although this problem was particularly acute in the reign of the Great Elector, it did not go away after his death. Again and again, Prussian sovereigns and statesmen would face agonizing choices between conflicting alliance commitments. It was a predicament that placed considerable strain on the decision-making networks close to the throne. During the winter of 1655-6, for example, as the Elector pondered which side to back in the opening phase of the Northern War, 'Swedish' and 'Polish' factions formed among the ministers and advisers and even the Elector's own family. The resulting mood of uncertainty and indecision prompted one of the Elector's most powerful councillors to the observation that the Elector and his advisers 'want what they didn't want and do what they didn't think they would do a charge that had also been laid at the feet of George William and would be made against various later Brandenburg sovereigns. The periodic disintegration of the policy-making establishment into factions supporting rival options would remain one of the structural constants of Prussian politics.

In switching thus from partner to partner, the Elector followed the advice of the Pomeranian Calvinist Privy Councillor Paul von Fuchs, who urged the Elector not to commit himself permanently to any one partner but always to follow a 'pendulum policy' (*Schaukelpolitik*). Here was an important break with the previous reign: George William, too, had alternated between Vienna and Stockholm, but only under duress. By contrast, the word *Schaukelpolitik* implied a conscious policy of oscillation. And this in turn implied an attenuation of the Elector's sense of obligation to the Emperor. Successive efforts to mount a joint Brandenburg-Habsburg response to the threat from France in the 1670s had revealed that the two powers had widely divergent geopolitical interests (this problem was to dog Austro-Prussian relations well into the nineteenth century). And the Austrian Habsburg court showed on more than one occasion that it was happy to see the Elector thwarted in his ambition. Frederick William boiled with resentment at these slights: 'You know how the Emperor and the Empire have treated us,' he told the chief minister of his Privy Council, Otto von Schwerin, in August 1679, when Vienna supported the return of Western Pomerania to Sweden. 'And since they were the first to leave us defenceless before our enemies, we need no longer consider their interests unless they agree with ours.

Yet it is also striking how reluctant the Elector was to burn his bridges with Vienna. He remained a loyal prince of the Empire, supporting the Habsburg candidates in successive imperial elections and participating actively and constructively in imperial politics. The Hohenzollern eagle shown on the ensigns of seventeenth-century Brandenburg always wore a shield proudly adorned with the golden sceptre of the Imperial Hereditary Chamberlain, a mark of the Elector's prominent ceremonial standing within the Empire. Frederick William saw the Empire as indispensable to the future well-being of his lands. The interests of the Empire were not, of course, identical with those of the Habsburg Emperor, and the Elector was perfectly aware that it might at times be necessary to defend the institutions of the former against the latter. But the Emperor remained a fixed star in the Brandenburg firmament. It was essential, the Elector warned his successor in the 'Fatherly Instruction' of 1667, 'that You bear in mind the respect that You must have for the Emperor and the Empire'. This curious combination of a rebel-

lions resentment of the Emperor with an ingrained respect for the ancient institutions of the Empire (or at the very least a reluctance to do away with them) was another feature of Prussian foreign policy that would endure into the late eighteenth century.

## SOVEREIGNTY

On 18 October 1663, a colourful assembly of Estates representatives gathered before Königsberg castle. They were there to swear an oath of fealty to the Elector of Brandenburg. The occasion was a solemn one. The Elector stood on a raised platform draped in scarlet cloth. Near him were four senior officials of the ducal administration, each bearing one of the insignia of his office: the ducal crown, a sword, a sceptre and a field marshal's baton. After the ceremony, the gates of the castle courtyard were opened for the traditional display of sovereign largesse. As the people of the city crowded in to join the celebrations, chamberlains tossed gold and silver commemorative medals into the crowd. Wine - red and white from two different spouts - splashed all day from a fountain fashioned in the likeness of the Hohenzollern eagle. In the reception rooms of the palace, the Estates were entertained at twenty large tables.

The choreography of this occasion invoked a tradition of great antiquity. The oath of fealty had been an accoutrement of sovereignty in western Europe since the twelfth century. It was a legal act by which the constitutional relationship between sovereign and subject was 'actualised, renewed and perpetuated'. In time-honoured fashion, the Estates representatives swore that they would never 'under any circumstances imaginable to man' break their bond with the new sovereign, all the while kneeling before the Elector with the left hand laid across the chest and the right hand raised above the head with the thumb and two fingers extended. It was said that the thumb signified God the Father, the index finger God the Son and the middle finger the Holy Spirit; 'of the other two fingers, folded down into the hand, the fourth signifies the precious soul, which is hidden among mankind, while the fifth signifies the body, which is a smaller thing than the soul'. A specific act of political subordination was thus merged into the permanence of man's submission before God.

These invocations of timelessness and tradition belied the fragility of Hohenzollern authority in Ducal Prussia. In 1663, when the oath was sworn in Königsberg, the Elector's legal sovereignty in the Duchy of Prussia was of recent vintage. It had been formally confirmed at the Peace of Oliva only three years before and had since been vigorously contested by the inhabitants. In the city of Königsberg, a popular movement emerged to resist the efforts of the Electoral administration to impose its authority. Only after a leading city politician had been arrested and Electoral cannon trained on the heart of the city could peace be restored, making way for the settlement that was solemnized in the palace courtyard on 18 October 1663. And yet, within a decade, the Electoral authorities once again faced open resistance and were forced to invest the city with troops. Not only in Ducal Prussia, but also in Kleve and even in Brandenburg itself, the decades that followed the Thirty Years War were marked by strife between the Electoral authorities and the guardians of local privilege.

There was nothing inevitable about the conflict between monarchs and estates. The relationship between the sovereign and the nobilities was essentially one of interdependence. The nobilities administered the localities and collected the taxes. They lent money to the sovereign - in 1631, for example, George William owed the Brandenburg nobleman Johann von Arnim 50,000 thalers, for which he pawned two domains to him as security. Noble wealth provided the collateral for crown loans and in times of war noblemen were expected to provide the prince with horses and armed men to defend the territory. During the seventeenth century, however, the relationship between the two came under increasing pressure. It seemed that conflicts between the sovereign and the Estates had become the norm rather than the exception.

The issue was essentially one of perspective. Again and again, Frederick William had to make the case that the Estates and the regions they represented should see themselves as parts of a single whole and thus as bound to collaborate in the maintenance and defence of all the sovereign's lands and the pursuit

of his legitimate territorial claims. But this way of seeing things was completely alien to the Estates, who viewed the respective territories as discrete constitutional parcels, bound vertically to the person of the Elector, but not horizontally to each other. For the Estates of the Mark Brandenburg, Kleve and Ducal Prussia were 'foreign provinces' with no claim on Brandenburg's resources. Frederick William's wars for Pomerania, by the same token, were merely private princely 'feuds', for which he had - in their view - no right to sequester the wealth of his hard-working subjects.

The Estates expected from the Elector the continuation and solemn observance of their 'especial and particular privileges, freedoms, treaties, princely exemptions, marital agreements, territorial contracts, ancient traditions, law and justice'. They inhabited a mental world of mixed and overlapping sovereignties. The Estates of Kleve maintained a diplomatic representative in The Hague until 1660 and looked to the Dutch Republic, the imperial diet and on occasions even to Vienna, for support against illicit interventions from Berlin. They frequently conferred with the Estates of Mark, Jilich and Berg on how best to respond to (and resist) the Elector's demands. The Estates of Ducal Prussia, for their part, tended to see neighbouring Poland as the guarantor of their ancient privileges. As one senior Electoral official irritably remarked, the leaders of the Prussian Estates were 'true neighbours of the Poles' and 'indifferent to the defence of [their own] country'.

It was not long before the widening scope of the Elector's ambitions put him on a collision course with the Estates. The introduction of foreigners, mostly of Calvinist confession, into the most powerful administrative offices of the territories was an affront to the largely Lutheran nobility. It contravened the cherished *Indigenat*, a longstanding constitutional tradition in all the provinces, according to which only 'natives' could serve in the administration. Another sensitive question was the standing army. The Estates objected to it not just because it was expensive, but also because it displaced the old system of provincial militias, which had been under Estates control. This was of particular importance in Ducal Prussia, where the militia system was a cherished symbol of the duchy's ancient liberties. In 1655, when the Electoral administration put forward a proposal for the abolition of the militias and their replacement by a permanent force answering directly to Berlin, the Estates responded with bitter protests, declaring that if the traditional means did not suffice for an effective defence, the sovereign should order days of 'general atonement and prayer' and 'seek refuge in God'. There are interesting parallels here with those outspoken 'Country Whigs' who opposed the expansion of the standing army in England, pleading for the retention of local militias under gentry control and arguing that a country's foreign policy should be determined by its armed forces, not the other way around. In England, as in Ducal Prussia, the 'country ideology' of the rural elites encompassed a potent blend of provincial patriotism, the defence of 'liberty' and resistance to the expansion of state power. Many Prussian noblemen would have agreed enthusiastically with the view expressed in an English anti-army pamphlet of 1675 that 'the power of *Peerage* and a *Standing Army* are like two Buckets, the proportion that one goes down, the other exactly goes up.

The most contentious issue of all was taxation. The Estates insisted that monetary and other levies could not legally be raised without prior agreement with their representatives. Yet the increasingly deep involvement of Brandenburg in regional power politics after 1643 meant that the administration's financial needs could not be satisfied using the traditional fiscal mechanisms. During the years 1655-88 the Great Elector's military expenditures totalled some 54 million thalers. Some of this was covered by foreign subsidies under a succession of alliance compacts. Some derived from the exploitation of the Elector's own domains, or other sovereign revenues, such as the postal services, coinage and customs. But these sources together accounted for no more than 10 million thalers. The remainder had to be raised in the form of taxes from the population of the Elector's territories.

In Kleve, Ducal Prussia and even in Brandenburg, the heartland of the Hohenzollern patrimony, the Estates resisted the Elector's efforts to secure new revenues for the army. In 1649, the Brandenburg Estates refused to approve funds for a campaign against the Swedes in Pomerania, despite the Elector's earnest reminder that all his territories were now 'limbs of one head' (*membra unius capitis*) and that Pomerania ought thus to be supported as if it were 'part of the Electorate'/' In Kleve, where the wealthy urban patriciate still regarded the Elector as a foreign interloper, the Estates revived the traditional 'al-

liance' with Mark, Julich and Berg; leading spokesmen even drew parallels with the contemporary upheavals in England and threatened to treat the Elector as the parliamentary party were treating King Charles. Frederick William's threats to apply 'military executive actions' were largely futile, since the Estates were supported by the Dutch garrisons still occupying the duchy.<sup>51</sup> In Ducal Prussia, too, the Elector encountered determined resistance. Here the Estates had traditionally ruled the roost, meeting regularly in full session and keeping a tight grip on central and local government, the militia and the territorial finances. The traditional Prussian right of appeal to the Polish Crown meant that they could not easily be bullied into cooperating.

It was the outbreak of the Northern "War of 1655-60 that brought the confrontation over revenues to a head. First, coercion and force were used to break resistance. Annual levies were raised unilaterally and extracted by military 'executive action' - especially in Kleve, where the annual contribution rose more sharply during the war years than anywhere else in the Elector's lands. Leading Estates activists were intimidated or arrested. Protests were ignored. In the struggle over revenues, the Elector benefited from changes in the broader legal environment that helped to undermine the pretensions of the provincial elites. In 1654, under pressure from the German Electors, most of whom were locked in conflicts of one kind or another with their Estates, the Emperor decreed that the subjects of sovereigns within the Holy Roman Empire were 'obliged obediently to give the necessary assistance to their Princes for the support and occupation of fortified places and garrisons'. While it is perhaps an exaggeration to describe this document as the 'Magna Carta of absolutism', the decree of 1654 was an important point of departure. It signalled the advent across the Holy Roman Empire of a political climate unfavourable to the assertion of corporate rights.

Of all the conflicts over Estates rights, the one in Ducal Prussia was the most bitter. Here too, the outbreak of the Northern War was the catalyst for confrontation. The Elector summoned the Prussian Diet in April 1655 but even in August, when the threat posed by Sweden was evident, the Estates refused to promise more than 70,000 thalers - a small sum if one bears in mind that poorer and less populous Brandenburg was at this time providing an annual military contribution of 360,000 thalers. The situation changed dramatically in the winter of 1655 when Frederick William and his army arrived in Königsberg. Forced payments soon became the rule and the annual military contribution rose sharply to an average of 600,000 thalers over the years 1655-9. A string of administrative reforms was put in place that allowed the Elector to circumvent the Estates. The most important were the foundation of the War Commissariat, with extensive fiscal and confiscatory powers, and the installation of an Electoral viceroy, Prince Boguslav Radziwill, whose task was to oversee the powerful and independent Supreme Councillors (*Oberräte*), who had traditionally ruled Prussia on behalf of the Estates.

With the issue of his full sovereignty resolved by the Treaty of Wehlau (1657) and the Peace of Oliva (1660), the Elector was determined to achieve a lasting settlement with the Prussian Estates. But the Estates contested the validity of the treaties, arguing that changes to the constitutional machinery of the province could only be made on the basis of trilateral negotiations between the Elector, the Ducal Prussian Estates and the Polish Crown. During the year-long Great Diet convened in Königsberg in May 1661, the Estates unfolded a far-reaching programme of demands including a permanent right of appeal to the Polish Crown, the removal of all Electoral troops except for a few coastal garrisons, the exclusion of non-Prussians from official posts, regular diets, and automatic Polish mediation in all disputes between the Estates and the Elector. It proved extremely difficult to reach an agreement over these issues, the more so as the mood among the citizenry of Königsberg grew steadily more restless and intransigent. In order to insulate the negotiations from the turbulence in the ducal capital, the Elector's minister, Otto von Schwerin, ordered that the diet be moved southwards to the more tranquil setting of Bartenstein in October 1661. Only after March 1662, when a mission to Warsaw failed to secure concrete assistance from Poland, did the corporate nobility begin to back down.

In the meanwhile, the mood of the city had grown more radical, following a pattern that can also be observed in other parts of Europe. There were daily protest meetings. One of the foremost activists for urban corporate rights was Hieronymus Roth, a merchant and president of the court of aldermen for Kneiphof, one of the three 'cities' of old Königsberg. Hoping to persuade Roth to adopt a more moder-

ate position, Otto von Schwerin invited him to a private meeting at the ducal castle in Königsberg on 26 May 1661. But the encounter went horribly wrong. According to a report by Schwerin, Roth adopted a seditious and confrontational tone, declaring among other things that 'every prince, be he ever so pious, bears a tyrant in his breast' - words that would later be cited in the alderman's indictment. Roth for his part recalled that he had defended the ancient liberties of Königsberg in a polite and reasonable way - it was Schwerin who had flown into a rage and threatened him with raised arm.

Despite a sustained campaign of harassment, Roth continued to agitate against the Electoral administration, protected by a city government that refused to arrest him or limit his activities. He travelled to Warsaw, where he met with the King of Poland, presumably in order to discuss the possibility of Polish support for the Estates. In the last week of October 1661, the Elector ran out of patience and entered Königsberg with 2,000 troops. Roth was arrested, tried, summarily convicted by an Electoral Commission and imprisoned in the fortress of Peitz, far away in Cottbus, a Hohenzollern enclave in Electoral Saxony. The prison regime was not particularly arduous in the early years - Roth was served six-course lunches, had comfortably appointed rooms and was allowed to take walks along the upper walls of the fortress.

New restrictions were imposed in 1668, however, when it was discovered that he had been carrying on a secret correspondence with his stepson in Königsberg, in which he railed against the 'arrogant Calvinists' who now governed his city on behalf of the Elector. The go-between who had conveyed his letters, a Königsberg-born soldier serving on the fortress garrison, was also punished. Frederick William had initially declared that he would release Roth if the latter would acknowledge his 'guilt', show true remorse and beg for mercy. But Roth stuck to his guns, objecting that he had acted not from any ill will but out of duty to his 'Fatherland'. After the scandal of the intercepted letters, the Elector resolved that the turbulent alderman should never be released. Only some years later, at the age of seventy, did Roth write to Frederick William begging for his liberation and commending himself as the Elector's 'loyal and obedient subject. But there was no pardon and the alderman died in his fortress in the summer of 1678, after seventeen years in confinement.

The imprisonment of Hieronymus Roth cleared the way for an interim settlement with the Prussian Estates. There were further clashes over taxation in the early 1670s, during which troops were called in to enforce payment. In January 1672 there was even a political execution in Ducal Prussia - the only one of the Elector's reign." But the Prussians did eventually come to accept the Elector's sovereignty and the fiscal regime that came with it. By the 1680s, the political rule of the Prussian Estates had come to an end, leaving nothing but nostalgic dreams of the 'still unforgotten. blissfulness, liberty and peaceful tranquillity' they had enjoyed under the mild overlordship of the kings of Poland.

## COURT AND COUNTRY

The Electoral administration gradually extended its independence from the provincial elites. Since the Elector owned nearly one-third of Brandenburg and about half of Ducal Prussia, he could greatly expand his revenue base simply by improving the administration of the crown domains. During the Second Northern War, the management of these properties was streamlined under the oversight of the new Office for the Domains (*Amtskammer*). A further important step was the excise tax, an indirect duty on goods and services introduced piecemeal in the towns of Brandenburg during the late 1660s and later extended to Pomerania, Magdeburg, Halberstadt and Ducal Prussia. After local disputes over the mode of its collection, the excise was placed under the control of centrally directed tax commissioners (*Steuerrate*), who soon began to accumulate other administrative functions. The excise was an important tactical asset because it divided the different corporate elements within the Estates against each other and thus weakened them *vis-a-vis* the central administration. Since the excise applied only to the towns, it placed rural enterprises at a competitive advantage over their urban rivals and enabled the Elector to milk the commercial wealth of the regions without alienating the powerful landed families.

Frederick William also reinforced his authority by appointing Calvinists to key administrative offices. This was not just a matter of religious preference - it was a policy consciously directed against the pre-

tensions of the Lutheran Estates. Several of Frederick William's most senior officials were foreign Calvinist princes. The long-serving viceroy of Kleve, John Moritz von Nassau-Siegen, fell into this category, as did Count (later Prince) George Frederick von Waldeck, the flamboyant ruler of a minor Westphalian principality who had served in the Dutch army and became the most influential minister of the first half of the reign. Another was John George II of Anhalt, commander of the 1672. campaign and sometime viceroy of Brandenburg. The Polish-Lithuanian Prince Boguslav Radziwill, appointed as viceroy in Ducal Prussia during the Second Northern War, was another imperial Calvinist grandee. The Brandenburg minister Otto von Schwerin, leading office-holder at the Berlin court after 1658, was a Pomeranian nobleman who had converted to Calvinism and whose activities on the Elector's behalf included the buying up of noble estates and their incorporation into the crown domains. In all, some two-thirds of senior office-holders appointed during the Great Elector's reign were of the Reformed faith.

The use of foreign officials was another important development; in Brandenburg, scarcely any of the leading ministers appointed after 1660 was actually a native of the Electorate. The employment of gifted commoners (mainly lawyers) in the upper echelons of the civilian and military administrations widened the gap between government organs and the provincial elites. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Junker nobility of the Brandenburg hinterland had become a marginal presence within the nascent Hohenzollern bureaucracy, a trend accelerated by the deteriorating financial condition of an elite that was slow to recover from the disruptions of the Thirty Years War. Of all the appointments made to senior court, diplomatic and military posts between the accession of Elector Frederick William in 1640 and that of his grandson Frederick the Great one hundred years later, only 10 per cent went to members of the Brandenburg noble landowning class. What emerged as they retreated was a new office-holding type, less bound to the provincial nobilities than to the monarch and his administration.

This was not a struggle for the unconditional surrender of one party to the other. The central authority did not seek direct dominance over the provincial elites as such, but control over particular mechanisms within the traditional power-holding structures. The Elector never set out to abolish the Estates or to subject them entirely to his authority. The objectives of his administration were always limited and pragmatic. The most senior officials often urged the government to be flexible and indulgent in its dealings with the Estates. Prince Moritz von Nassau Siegen, viceroy in Kleve, was by temperament a conciliatory figure who spent much of his time in office mediating between the sovereign and the local elites. Frederick William's chief agents in Ducal Prussia, Prince Radziwill and Otto von Schwerin, were both moderate figures with considerable sympathy for the Estates' cause. A close examination of the protocols of the Privy Council reveals a veritable flood of individual complaints and requests from particular Estates, most of which were approved on the spot by the sovereign.

The Estates, or at least the corporate nobilities, soon found ways of reconciling their interests with the Elector's pretensions. They acted tactically, breaking with their corporate colleagues when it furthered their interests. Their opposition to the standing army was muted by the realization that military service in a command role offered an attractive and honourable road to status and a regular income. They did not contest in principle the Elector's right to formulate foreign policy in consultation with his councillors. What they envisaged was a complementary relationship between the organs of central authority and the provincial grandees. As the Kleve Estates explained in a memorandum of 1684, the Elector could not be expected to know what was going on in all of his lands and was thus dependent upon his officials. But these, being human, were prey to the usual weaknesses and temptations. The role of the Estates was thus to provide a corrective and balance to the organs of provincial governance. Things had come a long way since the confrontational exchanges of the 1640s.

Force and coercion played a role in securing the acquiescence of local elites, but protracted negotiations, mediation and the convergence of interests, though less spectacular, were far more important. The Brandenburg administration pursued a flexible two-track approach, with the Elector pushing hard at intervals for key concessions and his officials working to restore consensus in between. Towns too, could benefit from this pragmatic approach. In return for rendering a formal declaration of fealty to the

Elector in 1665, the little Westphalian city of Soest in the County of Mark was allowed to retain its ancient 'constitution', incorporating a unique system of self-government and municipal justice run by elected functionaries recruited from the corporate elites.

If we survey the situation at the end of the century from the vantage point of the rural localities, then it is clear that the nobility had conserved much of its jurisdictional autonomy and socio-economic power and remained the dominant force in the land. They retained the right to assemble at their own behest in order to deliberate on issues affecting the welfare of their regions. They controlled the collection and allocation of taxes in the countryside. More importantly, Estate bodies at district level (*Kreisstände*) retained the right to elect the district governor (*Land-rat*), ensuring that this crucial figure in the administration remained -into the late eighteenth century - an intermediary who answered not only to the sovereign, but also to local corporate interests.

If, however, we focus instead on the political power structures of the Hohenzollern territories, it becomes plain that the relationship between the central administration and the provincial estates had been irreversibly transformed. Plenary assemblies of the corporate representatives of the provincial nobilities became increasingly rare - the last such meeting of the Altmark and Mittelmark nobilities took place in 1683. Thereafter the business of the Estates and their dealings with government were managed through small deputations of permanent delegates known as 'lesser committees' (*engere Ausschüsse*). The corporate nobility had retreated from the high ground of the state, focusing its collective attention on the locality and relinquishing its territorial political ambitions. Court and country had grown apart.

## LEGACY

At the close of the seventeenth century, Brandenburg-Prussia was the largest German principality after Austria. Its long scatter of territories stretched like an uneven line of stepping-stones from the Rhineland to the eastern Baltic. Much of what had been promised in the marriage and inheritance contracts of the sixteenth century had now been made real. As the Elector told a tearful bedside gathering on 7 May three days before his death, his reign had been, by God's grace, a long and happy one, though difficult and 'full of war and trouble'. 'Everyone knows the sad disorder the country was in when I began my reign; through God's help I have improved it, am respected by my friends and feared by my enemies. His celebrated great-grandson, Frederick the Great, would later declare that the history of Prussia's ascent began with the reign of the Great Elector, for it was he who had established 'the solid foundations' of its later greatness. Echoes of this argument resound in the great nineteenth-century narratives of the Prussian school.

It is clear that the military and foreign-political exploits of this reign did define, in formal terms, a new point of departure for Brandenburg. From 1660, Frederick William was the sovereign ruler of Ducal Prussia, a territory outside the Holy Roman Empire. He had superseded his ancestral political condition. He was no longer merely an imperial potentate, but a European prince. It is a mark of his attachment to this new status that he sought from the court of Louis XIV the official denomination '*Mon Frere*' traditionally accorded only to sovereign princes. During the reign of his successor Elector Frederick III, the Ducal Prussian sovereignty would be used to acquire the title of king for the House of Hohenzollern. In due course, even the ancient and venerable name of Brandenburg would be overshadowed by 'Kingdom of Prussia', the name increasingly used in the eighteenth century for the totality of the northern Hohenzollern lands.

The Elector himself was alert to the import of the changes that had been wrought during his reign. In 1667, he composed a 'Fatherly Instruction' for his heir. The document began, in the manner of the traditional princely testament, with exhortations to lead a pious and God-fearing life, but it soon broadened into a political tract of a type without precedent in the history of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Sharp contrasts were drawn between past and present: the Elector reminded his son of how the acquisition of sovereignty over Ducal Prussia had annulled the 'intolerable condition' of vassalage to the Crown of Poland that had oppressed his forebears. 'All this cannot be described; the Archive and the accounts

will bear witness to it.. The future Elector was also urged to develop an historical perspective on the problems that beset him in the present. Industrious consultation of the archive would reveal not only how important it was to maintain good relations with France, but also how these should be balanced with 'the respect that You, as an Elector, must have for the Reich and Emperor'. There was also a strong sense of the new order established by the Peace of Westphalia and the importance of defending it if necessary against any power or powers that should set out to overturn it. In short, this was a document acutely sensitive to its own location in history and charged with an awareness of the tension between historical continuity and the forces of change.

Closely linked to the Elector's alertness to historical contingency was an acute sensitivity to the vulnerability of his achievement: what had been made could always be unmade. The Swedes would always be waiting for the next chance 'by cunning or by force' to wrest control of the Baltic coast from Brandenburg. The Poles, together with the Prussians themselves, would take the first opportunity to return Ducal Prussia to its 'prior condition'. It followed that the task of his successors would not be to extend further the territories of the House of Brandenburg, but to safeguard what was already rightfully theirs:

"Be sure at all times that you live as far as possible in mutual trust, friendship and correspondence with all the Electors, princes and Estates of the Empire, and that you give them no cause for ill-will, and keep the good peace. And because God had blessed our House with many lands, you should look only to their conservation, and be sure that you do not awaken great envy and enmity through the quest for further lands or jeopardize thereby what you already possess."

It is worth emphasizing this note of edginess. It articulates one of the abiding themes of Brandenburg-Prussian foreign policy. Underlying Berlin's view of the world there was always a sharp undertone of vulnerability. The restless activism that would become a hallmark of Prussian foreign policy began with the remembered trauma of the Thirty Years War. We hear it resounding in the doleful phrases of the 'Fatherly Instruction': For one thing is quite certain, if You simply sit still, in the belief that the fire is still far from Your borders: then Your lands will become the theatre on which the tragedy is played out. We hear it again in Frederick William's words of 1671 to the chief minister Otto von Schwerin: I have experienced neutrality before; even under the most favourable conditions, you are treated badly. I have vowed never to be neutral again until I die. It is one of the central problems of Brandenburg-Prussian history that this sense of vulnerability proved so inescapable.

## Notes

### Introduction

1. Control Council Law No. 46, 25 February 1947, *Official Gazette of the Control Council for Germany*, No. 14, Berlin, 31 March 1947.
2. Speech to Parliament, 21 September 1943, Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 5, *Closing the Ring* (6 vols., London, 1952.), p. 491.
3. Ludwig Dehio, *Gleichgewicht oder Hegemonie. Betrachtungen über ein Grundproblem der neueren Staatengeschichte* (Krefeld, 1948), p. 223; id., 'Der Zusammenhang der preussisch-deutschen Geschichte, 1640-1945', in Karl Forster (ed.), *Gibt es ein deutsches Geschichtsbild?* (Würzburg, 1961), pp. 65-90, here p. 83. On Dehio and the debate over Prussian-German continuity, see Thomas Beckers, *Abkehr von Preussen. Ludwig Dehio und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (Aichach, zooi), esp. pp. 51-9; Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since iSoo* (Providence, RI and Oxford, 1997), pp. 56-71; Jürgen Mirow, *Das alte Preussen im deutschen Geschichtsbild seit der Reichsgründung* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 255-60.
4. On the critical school in general, see Berger, *Search for Normality*, pp. 65-71. On the *German Sonderweg*: Jürgen Kocka, 'German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), pp. 3-16. For a critical view: David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History. Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-century Germany* (Oxford, 1984). For a recent discussion of the case for Prussian peculiarity, see Hartwin Spenkuch, 'Vergleichsweise besonders? Politisches System und Strukturen Preussens als Kern des "deutschen Sonderwegs"', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 29 (2003), pp. 262-93.

5. For examples of this literature, see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Preussen. Geschichte eines Staates* (Frankfurt/Berlin, 1966; repr. 1981); Sebastian Haffner, *Preussen ohne Legends* (Hamburg, 1978); Gerd Heinrich, *Geschichte Preussens. Staat und Dynastie* (Frankfurt, 1981). Commenting on this tendency: Ingrid Mittenzwei, 'Die zwei Gesichter Preussens' in *Forum* 19 (1978); repr. in *Deutschland-Archiv*, 16 (1983), pp. 214-18; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Preussen ist wieder chic. Politik und Polemik in zwanzig Essays* (Frankfurt/Main, 1983), esp. ch. i; Otto Biisch (ed.), *Das Preussenbild in der Geschichte. Protokoll eines Symposions* (Berlin, 1981).
  6. See especially (with literature) Manfred Schlenke, 'Von der Schwierigkeit, Preussen auszus-tellen. Riickschau auf die Preussen-Ausstellung, Berlin 1981', in id. (ed.), *Preussen. Politik, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (2 vols., Hamburg, 1986), vol. i, pp. 12-34. On the debate triggered by the exhibition, see Barbara Vogel, 'Bemerkungen zur Aktualitat der preussischen Geschichte', *Archiv fur Sozialgeschichte*, 25 (1985), pp. 467-507; T. C. W. Blanning, 'The Death and Transfiguration of Prussia', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), pp. 433-59.
  7. The organizational hub of the present-day conservative Prussophiles is the Preussische Gesellschaft. The society publishes a journal (*Preussische Nachrichten von Stoats- und Gelehrten-Sachen*), for which it claims a readership of 10,000; its website can be consulted at <http://www.preussen.org/page/frame.html>. The society's following spans a wide range of right-of-centre positions, from authoritarian neo-liberals to Prussian federal autonomists, ultra-conservative monarchists and right-wing extremists.
  8. The remains of Frederick the Great had been transferred to Hohenzollern-Hechingen towards the end of the Second World War to prevent their disinterment by the approaching Russians. They were repatriated in 1991 in conformity with the king's testament, which had stipulated that he should be buried with his greyhounds on one of the terraces of Sans Souci. The presence of the then Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the re-interment ceremony was particularly controversial. On the city palace initiatives, see 'Wir brauchen zentrale Akteure', *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 January 2002., p. 17; Peter Conradi, 'Das Neue darf nicht verboten werden', *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 March 2002., p. 13; Joseph Paul Kleihues. 'Respekt vor dem Kollegen Schluter', *Die Welt*, 30 January 1002, p. 2.0. For details of the campaign to restore the palace, see <http://www.berliner-stadtschloss.de/indexi.htm> and <http://www.stadtschloss-berlin.de/>.
  9. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 'Preussen vergiftet uns. Ein Gluck, dass es vorbei 1st!', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 February 2002, p. 41; cf. Tilman Mayer, 'Ja zur Renaissance'. Was Preussen aus sich machen kann', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 February 2001. p. 49; see also Florian Giese, 'Preussens Sendung und Gysis Mission' in *Die Zeit*, September 2002, accessed online at <http://www.zeit.de/archiv/zooz/oylzoozof/preussen.xml>.
  10. See, for example, Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation* (New Haven, CT, 1991 and, more generally, James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT, 1998), esp. pp. n, 76-83, 183. On the debate over the 'constructed' character of nationalism, see Oliver Zimmer and Len Scales (eds.), *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005).
  11. Voltaire to Nicolas Claude Theriot, au Chene, 26 October [1757], in Theodor Bester-mann (ed.), *Voltaire's Correspondence*, trans. Julius R. Ruff (51 vols., Geneva, 1958), vol. 32., p. 135.
- i The Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg
1. 'Regio est plana, nemorosa tamen, & ut plurimus paludosa . . .', Nicolaus Leuthinger. *Topographia prior Marchiae regionumque vicinarum . . .* (Frankfurt/Oder, 1598 . reprinted in J. G. Kraus (ed.), *Scriptorum de rebus marchiae brandenburgensis maxime celebrium . . .* (Frankfurt, 1729J, p. 117. For other examples, see Zacharias Garcaeus. *Successiones familiarum et Res gestae illustrissimum praesidium Marchiae Brandenburgensis ab anno DCCCCXXVII ad annum MDLXXXII*, reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
  2. William Howitt, *The Rural and Domestic Life of Germany* (London, 1842), p. 429.
  3. Tom Scott, *Society and Economy in Germany, 1300-1600* (London, 2002.), pp. 2,4,119.
  4. Dirk Redies, 'Zur Geschichte des Eisenhiittenwerkes Peitz', in Museumsverband des Landes Brandenburg (ed.), *Ortstermine. Stationen Brandenburg-Preussens auf dem Weg in die moderne Welt* (Berlin, zooi), Part 2, pp. 4-16.
  5. F. W. A. Bratring, *Statistisch-Topographische Beschreibung der gesamten Mark Brandenburg* (Berlin, 1804), repr. edn by Otto Biisch and Gerd Heinrich (2. vols., Berlin, 196^ . vol. i, pp. 2.8, 30,

vol. 2, p. 1108. Bratring gives figures, but these derive from a later period when improvements had been made to many parts of the Mark and are in any case of dubious accuracy.

6. William W. Hagen, *Ordinary Prussians. Brandenburg junkers and Villagers*, (Cambridge, 2002), p. 44.

7. On the 'holiness' of the 'Reich', see Hans Hattenhauer, 'Über die Heiligkeit des Heiliger Romischen Reiches', in Wilhelm Brauner (ed.), *Heiliges Romisches Reich und modern-: Staatlichkeit* (Frankfurt/Main, 1993), pp. 12.5-46. On the multivalence of the term, see Georg Schmidt, *Geschichte des alten Reiches, Staat und Nation in der frühen Neuzeit (1415-1806)* (Munich, 1999), p. 10.

8. Only in the years 1741-5, under exceptional circumstances, did the imperial title pass to a member of the Bavarian Wittelsbach dynasty.

9. On dynastic partitions, see Paula Sutler Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven, CT, 1989), esp. pp. 4-2.1; Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London, 1984), p. 15.

10. Elizabeth's dramatic departure had less to do with the fear of religious persecution than with the extramarital liaisons for which Luther had reproached Joachim I in a series of published open letters. Manfred Rudersdorf and Anton Schindling, 'Kurbrandenburg', in Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler (eds.), *Die Territorien des Reiches im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Land und Konfession 1500-1650* (6 vols., Münster, 1990), vol. 2, *Der Nordosten*, pp. 34-67, here p. 40.

11. Axel Gotthard, 'Zwischen Luthertum und Calvinismus (1598-1640)', in Frank-Lothar Kroll (ed.), *Preussens Herrscher. Von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II* (Munich, 2000), pp. 74-94, here p. 75; Otto Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk. Funfhundert Jahre Vaterländischer Geschichte* (7th edn, Berlin, 1916), p. 153.

12. Walter Mehring, *Die Geschichte Preussens* (Berlin, 1981), p. 37.

13. For a discussion of the inheritance law involved in this claim, see Heinz Ollmann-Kosling, *Der Erbfolgestreit Jülich-Kleve (1609-1614). Ein Vorspiel zum Dreissigjährigen Krieg* (Regensburg, 1996), pp. 51-4.

14. For an overview with literature, see Rudolf Endres, *Adel in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1993), esp. pp. 13-30, 83-92..

15. Peter-Michael Hahn, 'Landesstaat und Standesrecht im Kurfürstentum Brandenburg während des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts', in Peter Baumgart (ed.), *Standesrecht und Staatsbildung in Brandenburg-Preussen. Ergebnisse einer internationalen Fachtagung* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 41-79, here p. 42.

16. This account is based on the text of the Geheimratsordnung of 13 December 1604, transcribed in Siegfried Isaacsohn, *Geschichte des preussischen Beamtenwesens vom Anfang des 15. Jahrhunderts bis auf die Gegenwart* (3 vols., Berlin, 1874-84), vol. 1, pp. 24-8.

17. Ibid., p. 28; Johannes Schultze, *Die Mark Brandenburg* (4 vols., Berlin, 1961-69), vol. 4, p. 188; Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern*, pp. 154-5.

18. Gotthard, 'Zwischen Luthertum und Calvinismus', in Kroll (ed.), *Preussens Herrscher*, pp. 85-7; Schultze, *Die Mark Brandenburg*, vol. 4, pp. 176-9.

19. Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern*, p. 162. Alison D. Anderson, *On the Verge of War. International Relations and the Jülich-Kleve Succession Crisis (1609-1614)* (Boston, 1999), pp. 18-40.

20. Parker, *Thirty Years' War*, pp. 28-37; Schultze, *Die Mark Brandenburg*, vol. 4, p. 185.

21. Gotthard, 'Zwischen Luthertum und Calvinismus', p. 84.

22. Friedrich Schiller, *The History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany*, trans. Capt. Blacquiere (2 vols., London, 1799), vol. 1, p. 93.

23. Cited in Gotthard, 'Zwischen Luthertum und Calvinismus', p. 84.

## 2 Devastation

1. There is a vast literature in English on the genesis and course of the Thirty Years War. Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London, 1988) remains the standard general account; Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-1648* (London, 1997) provides a useful recent introduction to the issues; a general history is currently in preparation by Peter H. Wilson. Sigfrid Henry Steinberg, *The Thirty Years War' and the Conflict for European Hegemony, 1600-1660* (London, 1966) and Georges Pages, *The Thirty Years War, 1618-1648*, trans. David Malm and John Hooper (London, 1970) are older works that stress the primacy of European over intra-German confessional issues.

2. Frederick II, *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de la Maison de Brandebourg* (2 vols., London,

1767), vol. i, p. 51.

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4. Count Schwarzenberg to Chancellor Pruckmann, 22 July 1626, reporting remarks by the Elector, cited in Johann Gustav Droysen, *Geschichte der preussischen Politik* (14 vols., Berlin, 1855-6), vol. 3, part I, *Der Staat des Grossen Kurfursten*, p. 41; Cosmar, *Beitrage*. p. 50.
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8. Frederick II, *Memoires*, p. 73.
9. W. Lahne, *Magdeburgs Zerstörung in der zeitgenossischen Publizistik* (Magdeburg. 1931), esp. pp. 7-24; 110-47.
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- 2.6. On contributions, see *ibid.*, pp. 47-50, 89-92; Parker, *Thirty Years' War*, pp. 19-. ir\_
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44. Werner Vogel (ed.), *Prignitz-Kataster 1686-1687* (Cologne, Vienna, 1985), p. i. The standard work on mortalities is still Günther Franz, *Der dreissigjährige Krieg und das deutsche Volk* (3rd edn, Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 17-21. Franz occupies a complex position in the historiography, mainly because of his outspoken adherence to the National Socialist regime. The traces of this commitment can still be discerned - despite some careful editing of the more egregious passages - in the post-war editions of his work. In the 1960s, Franz's calculations were vehemently rejected by Saul Steinberg, who argued that they were based on reports that exaggerated mortalities or vacancies in order to evade taxation. Steinberg came to the provocative - and bizarre - conclusion that 'in 1648, Germany was neither better nor worse off than in 1609' (Steinberg, *The Thirty Years War*, p. 3); this view was taken up by Hans-Ulrich Wehler in p. 54 of the first volume of his *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (5 vols., Munich, 1987-2003). However, recent studies have tended to endorse Franz's findings. The sources are especially full and reliable for Brandenburg. See J. C. Thiebault, 'The Demography of the Thirty Years War Revisited: Günther Franz and his Critics', *German History*, 15 (1997), pp. 1-21.
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- 3 An Extraordinary Light in Germany
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  5. Derek McKay, *The Great Elector, Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 170-71.
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  - E. Schmitt, 'The Brandenburg Overseas Trading Companies in the 17th Century', in Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra (eds.), *Companies and Trade. Essays on European Trading Companies During the Ancien Regime* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 159-76; Huttel, *Friedrich Wiihelm*, pp. 445-6; Heinz Duchhardt, 'Afrika und die deutschen Kolonialprojekte der 2. Halfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', *Archiv filr Kulturgeschichte*, 68 (1986), pp. 119-33: a useful historiographical discussion is Klaus-Jiirgen Matz, 'Das Kolonialexperiment des Grossen Kurfursten in der Geschichtsschreibung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts', in Heinrich (ed.), *Ein Sonderbares Licht*, pp. 191-202.
  8. Albert Waddington, *Le Grand Electeur Frederic Guillaume de Brandebourg: sa politique exterieure, 1640-1688* (2 vols., Paris, 1905-8), vol. i, p. 43; comments by Gotze and Leuchtmar, Stettin, 23 April 1643, in Bernhard Erdmannsdorffer (ed.), *Politische Verhandlungen*, (4 vols., Berlin, 1864-84), vol. i (= UuA, vol. i), pp. 596-7.
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  17. Curt Jany, 'Lehndienst und Landfolge unter dem Grossen Kurfiirsten', *FBPG*, 8 (1895 . pp. 419-67-
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  - 19- Frederick William to Otto von Schwerin, Schweinfurt, 10 February 1675, in Ferdinand Hirsch (ed.), *Politische Verhandlungen* (Berlin 1864-1930) vol. n (= UuA, vol. 18), pp. 824-5; Jany, 'Lehndienst und Landfolge unter dem Grossen Kurfiirsten', in *FBPG*, 10 (1898), pp. 1-30, here p. 7.
  - zo. Droysen, *Der Staat des Grossen Kurfursten*, p. 351.
  21. *Diarium Europaeum XXXII*, cited in Jany, 'Lehndienst und Landfolge', p. 7.
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  24. Frederick William, Political Testament of 1667 in Richard Dietrich (ed.), *Die politischen Testamente der Hohenzollern* (Cologne, 1986), pp. 179-204, here pp. 191-2.
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26. Comment to Louis XIV by the Austrian envoy in Paris, cited in Orlich, *Friedrich Wilhelm*, p. 158.
27. Cited from Count Raimondo Montecuccoli's *Treatise on War* (1680), in Johannes Kunisch, 'Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm und die Grossen Mächte' in Heinrich (ed.), *Bin Sonderbares Licht*, pp. 9-32, here pp. 30-31.
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32. Dietrich (ed.), *Die politischen Testamente*, p. 191.
33. For an account of the oath ceremony on which the present description is based, see Bruno Gloger, *Friedrich Wilhelm, Kurfürst von Brandenburg. Biografie* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 152—4.
34. Andre Holenstein, *Die Huldigung der Untertanen. Rechtskultur und Herrschaftsordnung (800-1800)*, (Stuttgart and New York, 1991), pp. 512-3.
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36. F. L. Carsten, *The Origins of the Junkers* (Aldershot, 1989), p. 17.
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39. Fiirbringer, *Necessitas und Libertas*, p. 59; for examples of this mode of argument, see supreme councillors of Ducal Prussia to Frederick William, Königsberg, 12 September 1648, in *ibid.*, pp. 292-3.
40. Resolution of the Estates of the county of Mark, Emmerich, 22 March 1641 in Haeften (ed.), *Standische Verhandlungen*, vol. i; pp. 140-45, here p. 142.
41. See, for example, Frederick William to the Cities of Wesel, Calcar, Diisseldorf, Xanten and Rees, Kiistrin, 15 May 1643, and Kleve Estates to Dutch Estates General, Kleve. 2 April 1647, in *ibid.*, pp. 205, 331-4.
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43. Comment by the viceroy of Ducal Prussia, Prince Boguslav Radziwill, cited in McKay. *Great Elector*, p. 135.
44. Comments by the Estates, Königsberg, 24 April 1655, in Kurt Breysig (ed.), *Standische Verhandlungen* (Berlin, 1894-9), v. 3: *Preussen*, Part i (= UuA, vol. 15), p. 354. On these questions in Ducal Prussia, see Stefan Hartmann, 'Gefährdetes Erbe. Landesdefension und Landesverwaltung in Ostpreussen zur Zeit des Grossen Kurfürsten Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg (1640-1688)', in Heinrich (ed.), *Bin Sonderbares Licht*, pp. 113-36; Hugo Rachel, *Der Grosse Kurfürst und die Ostpreussischen Stände (1640—1688)* (Leipzig. 1905), pp. 299-304.

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54. McKay, *Great Elector*, p. 62; Volker Press, 'Vom Standestaat zum Absolutismus: ?; Thesen zur Entwicklung des Standewesens in Deutschland', in Baumgart (ed.), *Ständer.: ' und Staatsbildung*, pp. 280-336, here p. 324.
55. Fay, 'Standing Army', p. 772.
56. McKay, *Great Elector*, pp. 136-7; Philippson, *Der Grosse Kurfürst*, vol. 2., p. 165; C ~ Nugel, 'Der Schoppenmeister Hieronymus Roth', *FBPG*, 14/2 (1901), pp. 19-105, here p. 32.
- 57- Roth and Schwerin produced radically divergent accounts of what transpired during the meeting; see Otto von Schwerin to Viceroy and Supreme Councillors of Prussia, Bartenstein, z i October 1661 and Private Circular of the Alderman Roth [early November 1661], in Kurt Breysig (ed.), *Standische Verhandlungen, Preussen*, pp. 595, 611, 614-19. For a detailed narrative, see Nugel, 'Hieronymus Roth', pp. 40-44; Andrzej Kamiński, *Polska a Brandenburgia-Prusy w drugiej połowie XVII wieku. Dzieje polityczne* (Poznan, zooz), esp. pp. 61-4. For an account much less sympathetic to Roth, see Droysen, *Der Staat des Grossen Kurfürsten*, vol. 2, pp. 40:1-3.
58. Cited in Nugel, 'Hieronymus Roth', p. 100.
59. The execution was of Christian Ludwig von Kalckstein, who had served in the Polish army and been exiled to his estates in 1668 for plotting the Elector's assassination. On the Kalckstein affair, see Josef Paczkowski, 'Der Grosse Kurfürst und Christian Ludwig von Kalckstein', *FBPG*, z (1889), pp. 407-513 and 3 (1890), pp. 419-63; Petersdorff, *Der Grosse Kurfürst* (Gotha, 192.6), pp. 113-16; Droysen, *Der Staat des Grossen Kurfürsten*, vol. 3, pp. 115-18; Kamiński, *Polska a Brandenburgia-Prusy*, pp. 65-71, 177-9.
60. Thus the complaint of a local official cited in McKay, *Great Elector*, p. 144.
61. Dietrich (ed.), *Die politischen Testamente*, p. 185; Erdmannsdorffer, *Waldeck*, p. 45; Rachel, *Der Grosse Kurfürst*, pp. 59-6z; Peter Bahl, *Der Hof des Grossen Kurfürsten. Studien zur boheren Amtstragerschaft Brandenburg-Preussens* (Cologne, zooi), pp. 196-2.17.
62. McKay, *Great Elector*, p. 114. On the decline in noble financial power and influence, see Frank Gose, *Ritterschaft - Garnison - Residenz. Studien zur Sozialstruktur und politischen Wirksamkeit des brandenburgischen Adels 1648-1763* (Berlin, zoo5), pp. 133, 414, 42.1, 4Z4.
63. On this distinction, applied to a very different German region, see Michaela Hohkamp, *Herr-*

*schaft in Herrschaft. Die vorderosterreichische Obervogtei Triberg von 1737 bis 1780* (Gottingen, 1988), esp. p. 15.

64. See, for example, Konrad von Burgsdorff to Privy Councillor Erasmus Seidel, Diisseldorf, 20 February 1647, in Erdmannsdorffer (ed.), *Politische Verhandlungen*, vol. i, p. 300; Kleve Government to Frederick William, Kleve, 23 November 1650, in Haeften (ed.), *Standische Verhandlungen*, vol. i, pp. 440-41; Spannagel, *Burgsdorff*, pp. 257-60.

65. See, for example, Otto von Schwerin to Frederick William, Bartenstein, 30 November 1661, where Schwerin urges the Elector to drop the excise in the face of protest from the Estates, in Breysig (ed.), *Standische Verhandlungen, Preussen*, pp. 667-9.

66. Protocols of the Privy Council, in Meinardus (ed.), *Protokolle und Relationen*. On traffic in complaints from the Estates see Hahn, 'Landesstaat und Standetum', p. 52.

67. Peter-Michael Hahn, 'Aristokratisierung und Professionalisierung. Der Aufstieg der Obristen zu einer militärischen und hofischen Elite in Brandenburg-Preussen von 1650—1725', in *FBPG*, i (1991), pp. 161—208.

68. Cited in Otto Hotzsch, *Stände und Verwaltung von Kleve und Mark in der Zeit von 1666 bis 1697 (=Urkunden und Aktenstücke zur inneren Politik des Kurfürsten Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg, Part z)* (Leipzig, 1908), p. 740.

69. See Peter Baumgart, 'Wie absolut war der preussische Absolutismus?', in Manfred Schlenke (ed.), *Preussen. Beiträge zu einer politischen Kultur* (Reinbek, 1981), pp. 103-19.

70. Otto Hotzsch, 'Fürst Moritz von Nassau-Siegen als brandenburgischer Staatsmann (1647 bis 1679)', *FBPG*, 19 (1906), pp. 89-114, here pp. 95-6, 101-2; see also Ernst Opgenoorth, 'Johan Maurits as the Stadtholder of Cleves under the Elector of Brandenburg' in E. van den Boogaart (ed.), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, 1604-1679: A Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil. Essays on the Tercentenary of his Death* (The Hague, 1979), pp. 39-53, here p. 53. On Soest, see Ralf Gunther, 'Städtische Autonomie und fürstliche Herrschaft. Politik und Verfassung im frühneuzeitlichen Soest', in Ellen Widder (ed.), *Soest. Geschichte der Stadt. Zwischen Bürgerstolz und Fürstenstaat. Soest in der frühen Neuzeit* (Soest, 1995), pp. 17-123, here pp. 66-71.

71. King Frederick William I attempted to overrule this arrangement but the local election of *Landrate* was restored under Friedrich II; see Baumgart, 'Wie absolut war der preussische Absolutismus?', p. 112.

72. McKay, *Great Elector*, p. 261.

73. This is reported by the British envoy Stepney to Secretary Vernon, Berlin, 19/29 July 1698, PRO SP 90/1, fo. 32.

74. Dietrich (ed.), *Die politischen Testamente*, p. 189.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 191.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

79. Cited in McKay, *The Great Elector*, p. 2.10. On 'powerlessness' see also Droysen, *Der Staat des grossen Kurfürsten*, vol. 2, p. 370, Philippson, *Der Grosse Kurfürst*, vol. 2, p. 238; Waddington, *Histoire de Prusse* (2 vols., Paris, 192.2), vol. i, p. 484.