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Christopher Clark. *Time and Power. Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty years War to the Third Reich*. Princeton. Princeton University Press, 2019. ISBN: 9780691181653 (\$29.95/£25.00).

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Time and Power is an elegant, innovative intervention in what has come to be called the “Temporal Turn.”¹ Christopher Clark, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University and the author of a string of masterful and influential works, turns his attention to the way holders of power imagine temporal horizons, and how these horizons shape what might be called the root metaphor of their style of rule.² Following the pathbreaking work of Reinhart Koselleck and François Hartog, Clark’s *Time and Power* spans the seventeenth to the twentieth century, and focuses on four rulers: the seventeenth-century ruler of Prussia, known as the Great Elector; Prussia’s eighteenth-century enlightened king, Frederick the Great; the nineteenth-century Iron Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, and the dictator Adolf Hitler.³ The focus on major figures is meant to combat a tendency, which Clark sees as being especially prevalent in new work on history and temporality, to write as if only abstract processes brought about shifts in conceptions of time. With astute attention to detail, Clark shows that this is not so—and that fundamental transformations emerged from very concrete historical contexts. At least in the first three chapters (on the Prussian statesmen), he also aligns the rulers with major intellectual figures: The Great Elector with the jurist Samuel Pufendorf, Frederick the Great with the Voltaire of the *Siècle de Louis XIV*, and Bismarck with the theologian-philosopher Ernst Troeltsch and his reflections on the crisis of historicism. Although Clark desists from using the term, the pairing has the effect of making the rulers express something like a wider ‘spirit of the age.’

The detailed readings are masterful. Clark argues that the Great Elector, who ruled for nearly a half century, did not set out to centralize the Prussian state. Rather, he faced decisions, especially in the wake of the cataclysmic Thirty years War, that encouraged a constant confrontation with uncertainty. Particularly in his battles with the estates, the Prussian ruler assumed a permanent anticipatory posture, emphasizing the need to confront a multiplicity of possible futures. By contrast, the estates, with whom he found himself at constant odds, clung to their rights and privileges, and this backwards look, far from conserving the way things were, actually endangered the whole polity. Temporality was thus a central issue in the Great Elector’s struggle with the estates. As these back-and-forth tussles over money and control played themselves out, the Great

¹ Central inaugurating texts of the “turn,” if it may be called that, can now be found in Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

² See, *most recently*, Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper Collings, 2012).

³ Koselleck, *Zeitschichten* (fn.1); François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. Saskia Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

Elector amassed an ever-larger army and did, in fact, come to centralize the state—though less by design than is typically assumed.

If Clark's interpretation of the Great Elector as not setting out in a conscious drive to centralize the state will surprise some, his reading of Frederick the Great as essentially interested in stasis will also give commentators reason to pause. It is true that Frederick's preemptive strike in Silesia in 1740 brought about the midcentury Silesian Wars that caused so much bloodshed and ended by draining the treasuries of any number of states. Yet it bears recalling that most of Frederick's reign occurred after this initial moment. In his writing, and in his actions (the case is stronger for the years subsequent to the Seven Years War), Frederick, according to Clark, was essentially a conservative ruler. Less interested in bending the real to the ideal, the king saw history in terms of a recursive, non-developmental paradigm; in other words, he worked towards a condition of well-ordered temporal stasis.

Bismarck was different again. He understood that the Revolution of 1848 had inaugurated a new political epoch, one that made rulers appear ever more helpless when faced with great historical forces. Bismarck realized that one could at best steer these forces, but attempting to constrain them fully was quixotic, if not ruinous. For Bismarck, the temporal dimension was nevertheless of immense importance. Clark attributes the Iron Chancellor's success to his ability to focus on the moment as a central category of statesmanship. For Bismarck, the moment of decision, not the general philosophy, was load-bearing. He intervened in history any number of times—momentously, for example, in his decision to anchor universal manhood suffrage in the constitution. In these moments, Bismarck was supremely non-ideological, much to the chagrin of supporters and opponents alike. In Clark's interpretation, Bismarck's temporal frame was of immense importance to such history-changing, if momentary decisions. Bismarck, according to Clark, saw history as developmental, not progressive in the sense of movement in a single direction or towards an ultimate goal.

Clark's interpretation of Bismarck as not imaging an ultimate goal is a subtle critique of the Borussian tradition, which imagines state power as that goal.⁴ A temporality fixated on the future also defined the gulf between Bismarck and Hitler. It was, according to Clark, the Nazi dictator who thought primarily in terms of end goals. He spoke of prophecies, end states, final solutions, and an *Endkampf*. This made him fundamentally different than other fascist leaders, like Benito Mussolini, who were anxious to align themselves with the general sweep of modernity. For Hitler, the state was not the end, but merely a means to the preservation and extension of the Germanic race. Hitler's temporal register was indeed future oriented, but with the added sense of being a rejection of history, or at least the post-Westphalian, state-centered, history with which Clark's book begins.

This brief recounting does not do full justice to subtle complexities of Clark's arguments. These arguments are conceptually sophisticated, forcefully presented, and persuasive on many levels. With respect to the Third Reich, however, there remains an open question as to the relationship between ruler and regime, and how, in this interplay, history actually unfolded. The word 'final solution,' for example, fits Clark's cogent analysis of Hitler's basic eschatological stance. But the word itself did not always mean what we now take it to mean.⁵ Originally it pointed to expulsion, not genocide. Hitler's so-called "Second Book," while never published in his lifetime, was full of medium-range foreign policy prescriptions about continental, not world, or end-state hegemony.⁶ Of course, how the rhetoric of the Third Reich functioned is an open question. But for the temporal turn, it does raise the broader issue of whether and how historians can appropriate the rhetoric of the age of the

⁴ For a brief, if scathing, account of what is also known as "the Prussian school" of history, see George G. Iggers, *The German Concept of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 90-123.

⁵ Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

⁶ Gerhard L. Weinberg, ed. *Hitler's Second Book. The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, trans. Krista Smith (New York: Enigma Books, 2003).

extremes to gauge its underlying sense of time. However we answer this question, Clark has offered a rich and compelling analysis that will influence the very grammar with which we write political history.

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