

“Body Shaming” Democracy: Reich President Friedrich Ebert Being Mocked (c. 1924)

Abstract

Thanks to an unauthorized photograph, the first president of the Weimar Republic, SPD politician Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925), was mocked from his first day in office in 1919 until his death in 1925. The photograph showed him bathing with the Social Democratic Defense Minister Gustav Noske. The photograph could have become a symbol of a civil and accessible democracy. Instead, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* used the photograph in a postcard (c. 1924) that presented the democratic politics of the day (“jetzt” or now) in shameful contrast to the glorified military masculinity of the past (“einst” or then), as represented by Kaiser Wilhelm II and Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg in uniform. Ebert was portrayed as having “the wrong body” and the Republic was apparently “the wrong politics” for a “German” nation.

Source



Source: Original: Postcard “Einst und Jetzt” [“Then and Now”]. Wilhelm II and Hindenburg in uniform. Ebert and Otto Braun in bathing suits, c. 1924. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Nachlass Kurt Schimmel, P 2 Bü 30.

Available online at: <http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=1-584310>.

Also reprinted in Walter Mühlhausen, “Die Weimarer Republik entblößt. Das Badehosen-Foto von Friedrich Ebert und Gustav Noske,” in Gerhard Paul, ed., *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder 1900 bis 1949*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, pp. 236–43, p. 240.

Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg

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