Erinnerungen, Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau

Biography:

Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau (1855-1937), was an ultraconservative German politician (Reichstag deputy) and east Prussian junker who was influential in the nationalist and antisemitic Agrarian League from the 1890s to the early 1930s. When Oldenburg-Januschau died in 1937, the east Prussian Oldenburg family lost its former vibrancy and influence in both East Prussian society and German politics. The family estate, now in Poland, experienced multiple ownership transfers since the death of Oldenburg-Januschau and suffered severe damage during World War II and Soviet occupation. Nonetheless, the legacies of the old east Prussian junker lived on in both the Erinnerungen, and in the works of his grandson Hans Graf von Lehndorff (1910-1987) who was a German surgeon and writer.¹

Today, the Westpreußen - Archiv, a personal database run by Christa Mühleisen has kept a record of the Oldenburg-Januschau family along with a collection of rare photographs where one can learn about the old junker who stubbornly hold onto the outdated junker beliefs, and revisit the past grandeur of the Januschau estate.²

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² http://www.aefl.de/ordld/Januschau/januschau1/januschau_1.htm
Summary:
“The Rural Landlord and His People”, in Erinnerungen.

In this excerpt from his memoir, Oldenburg-Januschau draws upon his own experiences (c. 1883) to argue that the selection of obedient, resident farm laborers was essential for the successful operation of a large estate.

For the purpose of this project however, the Erinnerungen in their entirety are traced as the original source. I found no translated versions nor reprinted versions of the Erinnerungen originally published in 1936, except for the excerpted passage on GHDI, which is also collected in the Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1870-1914. Dokumente und Skizzen in 1982. Nevertheless it is an important historical source for the reconstruction of late 19th and early 20th centuries German politics and elite society. Erinnerungen should not be read as a simple autobiography. Instead, for the many academic works found in this research, the value of the Junker’s memoir lies in its historical accounts and its ability to provide a Junker’s perspective on late 19th and early 20th century German conservative politics, east-Elbian agrarian society, and the attempts of Prussian conservative elites to restore their power in the post-WWI period.

The most frequently quoted sentence from Oldenburg-Januschau’s memoir (and from, seemingly a Reichstag record as well as memoirs of other Prussian politicians) is the quote “The Kaiser and King of Prussia, must be able at any time to tell a lieutenant to take ten men and close the Reichstag.” Due to the lack of a complete translated version of the Erinnerungen, the exact wording of the quote in English varies from author to author. Nevertheless, it is a quote filled with Prussian conservatism and monarchism and best describes the mentality of Prussian conservatives and Junkers like Oldenburg-Januschau himself. While being a windfall of this project, a separate source exploration dedicated to the origin and later applications of the quote seems to be doable and will prove to be an enchanting quest.

Exploration Results:

Searched Terms: Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, Erinnerungen, Bund der Landwirte, Januschau, Junker, Junker Prussian


From GHDI. Excerpt taken from the original publication and translated by Erwin Fink from German into English.


From UCSB Library Search. Cites the original publication of the book on p. 763. Described as “The memoirs of one of the most influential and intransigent of the old Prussian Junkers, who was close to Hindenburg when the latter was President.”


From UCSB Library Search/ Proquest. Quotations *presumably* taken from the *Erinnerungen*. Oldenburg is described by Pascal as the representative of the “Junkerdom” who the “tough, violent, ruthless” East Prussian Junkers (to be distinguished from Brandenburg and Pomeranian Junkers) found to be a worthy champion for the cause of maintaining their political influence and agricultural interests. Oldenburg, reactionary and monarchist, supported military dictatorship and said that “The Kaiser, as commander in chief, must be able to command a lieutenant to take ten men and shut the Reichstag”.


From WorldCat/ Melvyl. Request pending, University of Maryland. This is the only

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English academic work on the person of Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau that I could find.


From UCSB Library Search; original edition was a dissertation published in 1945. For Muncy, Oldenburg-Januschau was a prominent conservative leader and aggressive agrarian who represented the interests of the larger Junker society. His memoir serves as evidence of the shift of Junker political tendency in both the Reichstag and Prussian Diet from a party of principle to a party of interests that felt obliged to follow the elective and parliamentary system.


From GHDI. A collection that contains the reprinted version of the *Erinnerungen* excerpted on GHDI, on page 188-89. The first edition was printed in 1974, the second edition in 1977.


From UCSB Library Search. For Carsten, the memoir plays multiple roles. Oldenburg-Januschau’s family history serves as an example of the rapidly increasing estates of the Junker class in the 19th century. It demonstrates a classical model of Junker estate operation, and the relationship between the lord and his tenants. It also demonstrates the Junker sentiment and reaction to the agrarian crisis that occurred after 1878. Lastly, it records the political and social life of the Junkers and the Prussian Officer Corps, and their reactions to the abdication of Wilhelm II and to the political changes that followed. (To the many Junkers and the Prussian Officer Corps, as described by Oldenburg-Januschau, the abdication of the Kaiser meant the collapse of their world).

From UCSB Library Search. Lüdtke describes Oldenburg as a Junker who incarnated the classical idea of the Prussian Landjunker in the Wilhelmine Reich, and who during the first days of the 1918 November Revolution sought to the last to organise a military counter-revolution in Berlin⁴. Oldenburg’s reference in his memoir provides a direct pointer to the life and qualities of an east-Elbian Prussian Junker. It not only “testifies to the arrogance of power,” but also “denoted a ruling claim which distinguished between conscious assent and blind obedience” between the Prussian landed-elites and their tenants⁵.

  From Google Book. The book takes Oldenburg-Januschau’s memoir as an example of land ownership in 19th and early 20th century Prussia⁶.

  From UCSB Library Search. A passage from the Erinnerungen cited from Lüdtke, Police and State in Prussia, 1815-1850 (Lüdtke, 1989). “The memoirs of the Junker… Oldenburg-Januschau are often presented as evidence of the persistence of old habits of dominance and deference in the countryside despite the collapse of the old order in Berlin”⁷.

  From Google Book. Text in German. Please refer to the end of assignment for the excerpt.

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From JSTOR. Oldenburg-Januschau is described by Muncy as a stalwart old reactionary who was ever eager to close the Reichstag with “a lieutenant and ten men” (Muncy, 2009, 484). For Muncy, Oldenburg-Januschau’s memoir serves to reconstruct the Junkers’ post-WWI attempts for political influence, where they, including Oldenburg-Januschau, sought to influence Weimar Republic president Hindenburg’s political decisions. Under which they were able to remove every chancellor and minister who threatened their interests and eventually put Hitler into chancellorship⁸.


From Google Book/ UCSB Library Search. The book accessed the excerpt “The Rural landlord and His People” in *Erinnerungen* from GHDI. For Linklater, the account serves as an example to depict the dynamic relation between peasant resistance to landlord power and the order and obedience enforced by the landlord with an iron fist⁹. It is also used to show the Junkers’ response to the gradual dismantling of the Gutsherrschaft and the fall of traditional aristocratic dominance over eastern Prussian lands by the end of the 19th century.

**German Text:**


“Was schließlich, und dieser Punkt war und bleibt in den Vorstellungen über den Landadel zentral, die Fähigkeit zur Manipulation der Landbevölkerung angeht, hatte der Adel in den Landbünden, vor allem in von bürgerlichen professionals geleiteten Apparaten mitgestaltet, die sich auf Massenorganisation und -agitation verstanden. Die neueren empirischen Arbeiten zum Wandel ostelbischer Herrschaftsverhältnisse auf dem Land

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