

CANADIAN STUDIES AND CANADIAN HISTORY IN GERMANY: PAST DEVELOPMENTS AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

German academic interest in Canada dates back to the 1780s when the University of Göttingen began to systematically acquire exploration and travel accounts by Europeans who had ventured abroad to Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The study of Canadian topics in Germany continued to be limited to a few geographers until the early twentieth century. Only then did Canada also elicit interest in such disciplines as literature and economics. Yet, neither in geography nor in the other disciplines did the study of Canada acquire any real attention. Instead, Canadian studies settled for a minor role in German academia.

For the first thirty-odd years following World War Two this situation did not change. Until the late 1970s the preoccupation with Canada remained the pastime of a few individuals working in a variety of disciplines and without formal connection. The continued neglect of Canada during this period might seem surprising. After all, hundreds of thousands of Germans left Germany to settle in Canada during the post-war period. Moreover, the new trans-Atlantic alliance forged in the early stages of the Cold War brought (West) Germany and Canada into close contact in politics, military, economics, and culture.

Yet several factors worked - and to a certain extent still work - against increased academic preoccupation with Canada. Unlike in North America, area studies do not form part of the traditional German university pattern. Although area studies did make some headway after the Second World War, they never attained a major status in German academia. Largely overshadowed by American studies, until the late 1970s Canadian studies continued to lead a somewhat obscure existence. While academics appointed to positions in North-American or British and North-American history or culture are quite autonomous in their choice of teaching and research subjects, during the first three decades following the war very few of them turned to Canadian topics.

In the course of the late 1960s and the 1970s academic interest in Canadian topics slightly increased. Owing to the work of such pioneers as Kurt Jürgensen and Rainer-Olaf Schultze the study of Canada also gained a foothold in the disciplines of history and political science during this period. In 1977, the Canadian embassy sponsored and organized the first conference of German Canadianists. The conference was part of the embassy's ambitious plan to institutionalize Canadian Studies in Germany. Coinciding with German academics' growing awareness of things Canadian, the implementation of this plan removed some of the obstacles to the flourishing of Canadian studies and ushered in a new phase in the existence of Canadian Studies in German academia.

The 1977 meeting inaugurated a series of conferences which in 1980 culminated in the creation of the Association for Canadian Studies in the German-Speaking Countries. Set up with the support of the Canadian government, the Association became the institutional home of Canadianists in the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria and (German-speaking) Switzerland. In the course of the 1980s Association membership soared. A decade after its creation it counted 500 members and, thus, had become the world's third-largest Canadian Studies association (after those in the United States and Canada).

Association activities are varied. They include an annual conference which usually takes place in February in Grainau, Bavaria, located in the splendid setting of the Alps close to the Austro-German border. In addition, the Association puts out a biannual trilingual journal, the *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, and a series of monographs under the series title 'Contributions to Canadian Studies.'

The expansion of the Association's membership has been paralleled by a moderate surge in the teaching of Canadian topics at German universities. A keystone in this development has been the creation, with Canadian aid, of the Institute for Canadian Studies at the University of Augsburg, Bavaria, in 1985. Although there is a certain concentration of courses on Canadian topics at other universities, including most notably the University of Kiel and the University of Trier, the University of Augsburg is the only German academic institution to grant an M.A. degree in Canadian Studies.

The teaching of Canadian topics is also well established at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North-American Studies at the Free University in Berlin. Since 1982 the Kennedy Institute possesses a visiting professor programme jointly funded by the Canadian government and the Free University. Besides scholars in various other disciplines, the programme brought to Berlin such Canadian historians as Kenneth McNaught, Donald Avery, and J.M. Bumsted.

While teaching and research in Canadian topics has soared in such disciplines as literature and political science the same does not hold true in the case of history. German history departments heavily focus on German and European history, thus limiting the growth potential for scholarship in Canadian history. During the 1980s the proportion of historians among the membership of the Association for Canadian Studies in the German-Speaking Countries fluctuated between six and ten per cent. In 1996, 77 of the Association's 695 members belonged to the Association's history section. Some 42 of these 77 members had registered in two or more sections. The current head of the history section is Udo Sautter. His e-mail address is : udo.sautter@unituebingen.de.

Despite these constraints, historical research on Canada has expanded in recent years. Current research projects that attest not only to the growth of the field but also to the variety of interests among its practitioners include: research on French-Amerindian relations in seventeenth-century New France conducted by a research team of the University of Mannheim headed by Wolfgang von Hippel; research on bicultural cohabitation in Waterloo, Ontario, conducted by a research team of the University of Bochum headed by Wolfgang Helbich; research on immigrants to Canada by Dirk Hoerder, recipient of the 1996 John G. Diefenbaker Award; and research on national identity in Québec by Ingo Kolboom, head of the Centre interdisciplinaire de recherches franco-canadiennes/Québec-Saxe at Dresden Technical University.

Much of the increase in the teaching and researching of Canadian studies and Canadian history in Germany has been the result of a variety of scholarship, fellowship, and exchange programmes for students and faculty, most of which were set up in the 1970s and 1980s. These include several programmes sponsored or administered by the Association as well as the Canadian embassy's Faculty Enrichment Programme and the Minister of External Affairs' Government of Canada Award.

In addition, there are German sources of funding, including the German Research Association (the rough equivalent of SSHRCC), the German Academic Exchange Service, and the Volkswagen Foundation. In recent years, however, some of these programmes have been severely cut back.

These cutbacks constitute a major problem Canadian studies and Canadian history in Germany are facing today. In a field that is still a relative newcomer to the German academic landscape restrictions on funding of programmes that have been crucial in the expansion of the field may entail damaging consequences. It is to be hoped that both the Canadian government and the Canadian academic community will continue to support Canadian studies and Canadian history in Germany. Such support promises to be all the more redeeming, because the increasing cultural diversification of Germany makes Canada's experience with cultural diversity a subject matter of great interest to German society.

Ralph Güntzel. *Dr. Güntzel recently completed his PhD in history at McGill University; he is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North-American Studies at the Free University in Berlin.*

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Susan Zeiger
Regis College
235 Wellesley Street
Weston
MA 02193.