Max Braubach

Max Braubach, professor of medieval and modern history at the University of Bonn and biographer of Prince Eugene of Savoy, died on June 21, 1975, at the age of seventy-six. Born at Metz of parents from the Rhineland (his father was a mining engineer), Braubach was just finishing his Abitur at a Strassburg gymnasium when the Battle of Verdun was at its height. He joined the German army, and in 1919 the young Husarenleutnant a. D. matriculated at Bonn, where he completed his work for a doctor of philosophy degree in 1922 with a dissertation supervised by Aloys Schulte. Three years later his Habilitationsschrift, a biography of Max Franz, the last elector of Cologne, was in print. Soon thereafter Schulte retired, and after Bonn had sought in vain to lure Heinrich Ritter von Srbik from Vienna, Braubach was chosen, at the age of twenty-nine, as ordinarius of this chair, which was reserved for a Catholic historian. Thus his extraordinarily long tenure as full professor at the University of Bonn spanned the last years of Weimar, the entire National Socialist period, and the first decades of the Federal Republic. Braubach later recalled that, although as a young man he had been a patriot of traditional stamp, he finally became an opponent of National Socialist "one-sidedness" and developed a deep commitment to Franco-German reconciliation.[1]

Braubach was an exceptionally productive historian, the author of more than twenty books, two hundred articles, and a thousand reviews. Although his writings include a well-known account of Prussia's rise to great power status (1933) and some studies on German contemporary history, his main attention as a scholar was devoted to two themes: (1) the history of the prince-bishopric of Cologne, and (2) the relations between France and the Holy Roman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his last major work, *Wilhelm von Fürstenberg 1629-1704* (Bonn, 1972), these two themes flowed together. During the early years of his career the regional theme predominated,[2] but later he concentrated on the complex of relations involving France and the empire. Publications on the Peace of Westphalia were followed by a large monograph, *Versailles und Wien von Ludwig XIV bis Kaunitz* (1952), in which Braubach elaborated the thesis that the roots of the diplomatic "revolution" of 1756 go back to 1715. Meanwhile, Prince

[1] In a delightful account of the reunion of his class at the Strassburg Gymnasium on its fiftieth anniversary. "Der Abituriententag," *Rheinischer Merkur,* November 18, 1966.

[2] Among his principal works on this theme are *Die vier letzten Kurfürsten von Köln. Ein Bild rheinischer Kultur im 18. Jahrhundert* (1931); and *Kurköln: Gestalten aus zwei Jahrhunderten rheinischer Geschichte* (1949).

Eugene of Savoy, who was a product of Versailles but whose career was largely associated with the court in Vienna, increasingly occupied his interest. Some of Braubach's preliminary studies on Prince Eugene and his times were integrated in *Geschichte und Abenteuer: Gestalten um den Prinzen Eugen* (1950).

Braubach's five-volume biography of Prince Eugene (1964-1965) was his crowning achievement. By his own description it is an old-fashioned work; it is close to the sources, leisurely in pace, and without fanciful interpretations of the prince's character. Although Braubach did not indulge in polemics with previous biographers, he in fact demolished the thesis of those who had sought to make of Eugene a national *(völkisch)* German hero. Braubach's Prince Eugene is a soldier-statesman with a sure instinct for power and a deep-seated concern for his own *gloire;* he employed his talents in building Austria into a modern great power by rounding out and consolidating the emperor's domain. The work contains a large section on Prince Eugene's cultural contributions, but, on the whole, Braubach did not devote much attention to institutional and social aspects of the period. His primary concern was the governing elites and individual personalities.

Although he was a man of the archives, Braubach was anything but the stereotype of the bent-figured desk-bound German scholar. In appearance he remained lithe and youthful; he played tennis regularly—a game at which he excelled. He was outgoing, socially at ease in all company; it could be said of him, as Herder wrote of Kant, that he never lost "the happy sprightliness of youth." His later years brought many marks of distinction. He served as rector of his university and was an honorary doctor of the University of Clermont-Ferrand and the recipient of the Bundesverdienstkreuz. When his birthday was celebrated, it was often repeated that he, not Prince Eugene, was the last *edler Ritter.*

East Lansing, Michigan PAUL R. SWEET