



HELMUT KOENIGSBERGER

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1918–2014

AT THE AGE OF eleven Helmut Georg Königsberger informed his family that he wanted to be a university professor of History. Captivated from youth by his father's bedside stories from Homer's Trojan War and the Odyssey, and by his grandfather's gift of an eight-volume illustrated world history, he had found the subject easy and congenial at school. The family objected strenuously. Having excelled for generations in medicine, science, architecture and business, they expected him to embrace a useful and lucrative profession.¹ It is indicative of his determination and commitment that despite opposition, exile, war and financial difficulties, he succeeded in becoming a leading and influential historian of Europe.

Born on 24 October 1918 in Grünau, Berlin, Helli Koenigsberger (as he liked to be called) was the youngest of the five children of Georg Königsberger, Chief Government Architect, and Käthe Born. He enjoyed a happy and privileged childhood in a highly cultured, affluent and loving household. Music was ever-present, involving all generations; plays were written and performed. Swimming and sailing were early and lasting passions. Georg's salary protected them from the full impact of their serious losses in the financial crises of the 1920s. This charmed life came to an end suddenly: Georg died in 1932, leaving them vulnerable when the Nazi party came to power and this family of Christian converts found themselves labelled as Jews and subjected to increasing discrimination.

¹H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Fragments of an unwritten biography', in P. Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich: Refugee Historians in Post-War Britain* (London & New York, 1998), pp. 99–117, this at pp. 101–2. Peter Kingshill (née Königsberger) remembered Georg 'as a first rate story teller': *Footnote. A Memoir* (privately produced, 2007).

As Helli Koenigsberger put it, ‘the certainties of life had suddenly disappeared’.²

The Berlin Königsberger children and their closest relatives had been raised as Lutherans and German patriots, and had no inkling of their Jewish ancestry until 1933.³ Even in later life Koenigsberger knew little of Judaism, as his wife, Dorothy, confirmed. Both grandfathers had been non-practising Jews and fully integrated; his parents, like many of their generation, had converted to Christianity. As his maternal uncle, the Nobel-prize physicist Max Born, explained, they had been brought up in secular households ignorant of Jewish ‘rites and traditions’. As a rational being, he argued, religious affiliation should be seen primarily as a vehicle to integration.⁴ Helli Koenigsberger responded to taunts of being non-German and a Jew by arguing, using reason and history. He also searched for alternatives to ‘destructive nationalism’, which he found in the Paneuropa movement of Count Coudenhove-Kalergi. But the betrayal of his friends—as he put it—scarred him.⁵ Dorothy found that while he would answer her questions about these events, he became so angry that she ceased to raise the subject soon after their marriage. He rarely spoke of this period of his life and when he did, he employed a few incidents (usually the same ones) which provided instances both of hostility and support for the family, giving the impression that he harboured no bitterness.

The family was saved by his elder brother, Otto. Born in 1908, he was a brilliant architect who won the prestigious Schinkel Prize for Architecture in March 1933. He persuaded Käthe to send the family abroad, but Jewish organisations ‘flatly refused to help as we were not Jewish by religion’—as their sister Marianne recalled. Both the Quaker Society and Max Born, in exile since the summer of 1933, came to their aid, and in April 1934 Koenigsberger joined Adams’ Grammar School in Newport, Shropshire.

² Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, p. 102; Peter Kingshill gives invaluable details of their young lives in *Footnote*.

³ N. T. Greenspan, *The End of the Certain World: the Life and Science of Max Born, The Nobel Physicist who Ignited the Quantum Revolution* (London, 2005), p. 196: ‘Until the Nazi takeover, the children [of Käthe and Georg] had not even known about their Jewish heritage.’ The same was true of cousins Peter and Konrad, as noted in Peter Kingshill, *Footnote*, pp. 31–6; and K. Kingshill, *On the Precipice of Prejudice and Persecution* (Bloomington, IN, 2008), pp. 62–8, 73–5. The same situation was true of several of the émigrés included in Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich*.

⁴ M. Born, *My Life: Recollections of a Nobel Laureate* (London, 1978), pp. 26–7, 29, 42, 155, and citation on p. 159. Greenspan, *Max Born*, pp. 10–13, 58–9 and 61–2.

⁵ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, pp. 102–3; H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Curriculum Vitae for the British Academy’ (henceforth, BA CV).

His sisters Elizabeth and Marianne also went to England; Susi went to the USA and Otto became an archaeologist in Egypt. As Käthe refused to leave until 1939, Koenigsberger returned to Berlin during school holidays and, while he appeared fully integrated in Newport when his cousin Peter joined him in 1935, he admitted later that he had been miserable. He wrestled with the problem of identity: he felt rejected by Germany so he 'was not German any more' but did not feel English, nor a Jew. By then he was agnostic, but the one personal detail he volunteered even to relative strangers for much of his life was that he had been brought up as a Lutheran. Perhaps, as for his cousin Konrad, a 'Christian identity was . . . the only thing left of my childhood',⁶ but the information also served to dispel erroneous, if common, assumptions about his origins prompted by the German accent he retained to the end of his life.

Thanks to an Exhibition and a local authority scholarship he went up to Cambridge in 1937 and read History at Gonville and Caius College. From then until 1940 he lived 'a continuation of a greatly idealised version of my former home life'. He loved the intellectual stimulus and the 'enchanting life' of Cambridge, in which music was omnipresent. A first in Part I of the History Tripos augured well, and as his final exams loomed he was already discussing doing research. But on 12 May 1940 he was interned as an enemy alien. Expecting it to be short-lived he took little other than revision notes, only to find himself deported to concentration camps in the Isle of Man and Canada. It was a brutal end to the second idyll of his young life. Although determined to remain calm and optimistic, he experienced insecurity, uncertainty and fear. Crowded behind barbed wire fences in Douglas, surrounded by companions suffering from severe neurosis and even madness, he felt like an animal in a cage. Typically, he said nothing of this later, and instead gave amusing and uplifting accounts of collective lectures and music-making.⁷ On a rare occasion he described to me his conflict with members of a Jewish organisation in Canada, who offered to secure his release and provide material help if he 'reconverted to Judaism'. When he explained that he was not a Jew they accused him of attempting to hide his origins, and then argued that it was not his fault he had been deprived of a Jewish upbringing, offering to 'remedy' this. Their persistence angered him, as did the Canadian

⁶Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', p. 103, and BA CV; Konrad and his mother rejected Lutheranism because of its German origins and opted for Presbyterianism: Kingshill, *On the Precipice*, pp. 70–4, citation on p. 74. Other family members became Quakers.

⁷Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', pp. 103–6, and BA CV. I have also drawn on some of his private letters from this period.

government's order to divide internees into Jews and Gentiles, ignoring complaints that this replicated Nazi policy, and that many internees did not know which category they fitted into.

After eight months of internment, Koenigsberger returned to England. As he had been awarded a 'war degree' he lacked the double first that would have secured him a scholarship for historical research. He decided to join the armed services, since this would speed up his naturalisation, open the way for a grant later and make a positive contribution to the war. Although no longer a pacifist, he did not want to shoot anyone, however. Nor did he want to join the Pioneer corps as other émigrés did, since doing menial tasks without hope of a commission did not appeal to him. He applied for the Air Force, Navy and Home Guard, and while awaiting their decision took on various jobs. He spent much of 1941–4 working as a schoolmaster, which served to persuade him he had no vocation for this. In 1942 he visited his old tutors in Cambridge and persuaded them to allow him to work unofficially on a Ph.D. while continuing with school teaching. He had made limited progress by the time he was called up in 1944. He joined the Royal Navy as a Writer (special) branch in July of that year, one of the thirty or so 'ex-Germans and Austrians' who called themselves His Majesty's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens. Required to anglicise his name, after consulting his brother and mother who rejected both a permanent change for the family or his suggestion of Mountroy, he became Hilary George Kingsley for the duration of his service. His work deciphering and translating German naval messages was neither heavy nor particularly interesting. Since it was secret and done mostly at night, the rest of the crew thought he was a loafer as well as an intellectual, and he was marginalised. After the war ended he wanted to join the Control Commission in Germany as an educator, but as with other émigrés he was denied the officer rank secured by other members. When they complained of discrimination, the Navy abruptly demobilised them in October 1945.⁸ At which point, Koenigsberger resumed his name and went back to Cambridge to continue with his doctoral work despite having insufficient funds, but with the promise of financial support from his brother Otto, who resigned himself to his brother's passion for history. Fortunately for Koenigsberger, he soon acquired the financial grants that saw him through to completion of his Ph.D. in 1949.

⁸ Koenigsberger, BA CV; H. Fry, *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans who Fought for Britain in the Second World War* (Chalford, 2007), pp. 135–45 on the Royal Navy; also Julius Carlebach in Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich*, pp. 6–7.

These experiences made Helli Koenigsberger tough and resilient. He had taught himself to be tolerant and he cultivated equanimity in situations beyond his control. He learnt to seize whatever chances came his way. His student Margaret Jacob noted that his response to human folly was a wry smile, as if he had seen it all before. Rarely did his exterior calm slip. A colleague in King's College London recalled one such occasion, when a candidate voiced ideas on electoral support for Hitler that Koenigsberger objected to and he refused to terminate the interview until the candidate conceded. Injustice and incitement to violence challenged his equanimity when dealing with Luther. Having praised the reformer's qualities, Koenigsberger condemned him for 'justifying and even encouraging some of the most appalling actions of his contemporaries', and for his lack of mercy, which 'was, and still is, revolting'.⁹ Koenigsberger's inner calm was first nurtured by his mother, who in their darkest moments in Berlin (as he recalled in a private letter) sought to persuade him that there was '*eine vergeltende Gerechtigkeit*'. He initially resisted this belief in retributive justice, but was close to accepting it by the end of the war, and his wife Dorothy informed us at the funeral that he was sustained by a profound conviction that no one evades justice. He refused to discuss this with her, but left her with the impression that it was both a profound and spiritual belief, but in no sense religious.

His optimism largely intact, and his zest for life heightened, Koenigsberger was approachable and charming but not demonstrative with people, and often appeared somewhat detached. As was the case with other members of the family, music provided an outlet for deeper emotions. To celebrate his release from internment he bought himself the Busch Quartet's recording of Beethoven's Op. 131, the most ethereal of the composer's sublime late quartets. Wherever he went, Koenigsberger played violin (sometimes viola) in orchestras, and found or founded chamber groups which specialised in the classical repertoire, especially Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. He always loved opera and frequently attended concerts. 'As religious sensibilities declined', he wrote in 1970, 'there appeared a new psychological need in men, a kind of emotional void, and this need or void was filled primarily by music.'¹⁰ His final illness was triggered by a fall in which he saved his violin rather than himself.

⁹H. G. Koenigsberger (ed.), *Luther: a Profile* (London etc., 1973), Introduction pp. ix–xviii, citations on p. xvi and p. xv. He also condemns Luther's refusal to compromise and 'unwillingness to consider the moral problems inherent in the political consequences of his religious actions' (p. xv).

¹⁰H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Music and religion in Early Modern European History', in J. H. Elliott

Doctoral work and first monograph: 1945–51

By the time Koenigsberger formally registered for a Ph.D. in Cambridge in 1945 he had already formulated many of the ideas, theories and principles that characterise his trajectory as a professional historian, as he emphasised in autobiographical works. He attributed to his father's wonderful narratives the conviction that history should be fun; and to his early immersion in his grandfather's World History books a sense of the course of European history, and an awareness of 'the equality of all human experience'. In his mid teens he 'learned to use history as an argument' and became 'permanently immune to the pull of any political charisma from any person, living or dead'.¹¹ The 'appallingly jingoistic' history he was taught in German and British schools left him with a 'growing conviction that the approach to European history in the traditional way, through the history of national states, was fundamentally misconceived', and that the history of each country 'could be understood only in comparison with and in the context of European history'.¹² English parliamentary history prompted him to ask why the trajectory of representative institutions in Germany had been so different.¹³ Other German and Austrian émigrés from similar backgrounds who became historians displayed similar concerns, and were instrumental in developing European and comparative history in Britain.¹⁴

More unusual was Koenigsberger's choice of specialism and the theory of history he developed. From the wide-ranging undergraduate curriculum he chose a largely political course on Renaissance Italy which required him to learn Italian. He variously attributed his decision to his father, who had nurtured his fascination for Italy and the Renaissance;¹⁵ to Professor Previtè Orton, who persuaded him of 'the peculiar fascination of

and H. G. Koenigsberger (eds.), *The Diversity of History: Essays in Honour of Sir Herbert Butterfield* (London, 1970), pp. 35–78, citation on p. 38. Sophia and Katie Kingshill have confirmed that this pattern is frequent in members of the Königsberger family and it was equally true of the Borns. In a postscript to Max Born's autobiography (*My Life*, pp. 297–8) his son Gustav Born wrote of him: 'feelings . . . found resonance in the varieties of classical music he loved . . . but his emotions remained largely inaccessible'.

¹¹ Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', pp. 101 and 102.

¹² *Ibid.*, citations on p. 104 and p. 103 respectively.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁴ For example, Francis Carsten, Edgar Feuchtwanger, E. P. Henneck, Werner E. Mosse, etc. in Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich*.

¹⁵ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Le confessioni di uno storico', *Il Pensiero Politico*, 23, n. 1 (1990), 93–100, at 93. My thanks to Massimo Giannini who secured a copy for me.

Mediterranean civilization’;¹⁶ and to Goethe, whose description of Italy ‘has never been surpassed and I had lived with it and longed for it all my life. And that was why, as a student, I chose to work on a subject in Italian History.’¹⁷ During internment he attended the lectures of Johannes Wilde, an expert on Michelangelo, and, more importantly, of Otto Demus, who ‘insisted on seeing art within its social-historical context, precisely the approach I had been looking for when studying the Italian Renaissance’.¹⁸ When first considering research in 1942, he thought of studying Giordano Bruno, but then accepted Previtè Orton’s suggestion to research Sicily in the sixteenth century. His parents had been there, and he knew it to be a beautiful place. Besides, he was attracted to tackling ‘one of the most neglected fields of historical study’, which, while requiring him to learn Spanish—Sicily was part of the Spanish Monarchy—did not need Latin.¹⁹ He admitted to his brother Otto that it was not the most interesting period to study, and briefly wondered whether the subject was sufficiently important. Significantly, he started by studying the Sicilian Parliament, and it was only when he realised there was some published work on this that he broadened his research to include Sicily’s relations with the king of Spain and his viceroys.

Otto remained unconvinced by his younger brother’s choice of career, despite providing some financial support. In June 1943, writing from India, where he had resumed his architectural work, he sent recommendations for reading which included philosophical, psychological and sociological works. Otto was a polymath who made outstanding contributions in several fields. One of his early achievements was to illustrate Max Born’s book, *The Restless Universe*, which was one of several books he now recommended. Otto argued that unlike science, history had failed to produce satisfactory historical laws, and that it lacked the precision of mathematics or physics, and he challenged Helli to develop a mathematically based theory of history, as well as to devise ways to treat historical processes with statistics, and, finally, to produce historical laws.²⁰

¹⁶ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, p. 106; H. G. Koenigsberger, *The Government of Sicily under Philip II of Spain: a Study in the Practice of Empire* (London & New York, 1951), p. 40.

¹⁷ H. G. Koenigsberger, *Atmosfera di Sicilia. Una frequentazione che dura da cinquant’anni*, ed. Salvatore Vecchio (Caltanissetta, 2002), citation on pp. 73–4. In Sicily he often made references to ancient Greek literature: *ibid.*, pp. 26, 49–50, 72–82.

¹⁸ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, p. 106.

¹⁹ Koenigsberger, *The Government of Sicily*, p. 40, *cit.* p. 43; ‘Fragments’, p. 108 and ‘Le confessioni’, 93 offer minor variants of his choice.

²⁰ P. Wakely, ‘Cities of light from slums of darkness’, in <http://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/jan/26/guardianobituaries1> – accessed 26 May 2015. M. Born, *The Restless Universe* (London and Glasgow, 1935). I have been able to piece the discussion together from some of Helli’s private letters.

Helli Koenigsberger immediately rose to the challenge. He agreed that history should be conceived differently, and decided to devote himself to detecting its patterns and rules. Deeply impressed by Born's book, especially the material on the laws of chance and causality, and Born's ability to apply strict and accurate laws to molecular motion, despite its haphazard nature and the importance of chance, Helli Koenigsberger also seized on the fact that statistical methods were used in physics to deal with a large number of random occurrences. His approach to history had always been theoretical, and at this juncture he judged the quality of other historians by this measure. Although he later claimed that the Marxist historians he encountered during internment left him with 'a lasting aversion' to their interpretation of history,²¹ his letters to Otto in the 1940s show that he approved of many aspects of their approach. After all, they viewed history 'dynamically', and had produced a grand theory; they dared to construct laws of probability; and they had attempted to synthesise will and determinism, politics and economics. They also appreciated the influence of psychology on social and economic structures. What he rejected even then were extreme forms of the theory and its mechanistic application.

For several months during 1943–4 the brothers discussed their 'mathematical' or 'statistical' theory of history and soon came to the conclusion that comparative parliamentary history would be a good model to trial their theory. The list of problems and imponderables grew with every epistolary exchange: how could one evaluate religion or parliament in mathematical equations? How could one include multiple factors that explained a situation, or set out the repercussions of economic phenomena, in graphs? Koenigsberger was already convinced that parliaments had their own 'natural laws', but he could not see how he could render the different trajectory of European parliaments in graphs that would demonstrate these laws. Alerted to their discussions, Max Born dismissed their attempts to apply the laws of chance or the analytical tools he had described in the context of wave particles to history, which, unlike physics, was not a quantitative and measurable subject. He failed to dissuade them.

Naval service intervened, and when Koenigsberger resumed his studies in Cambridge in the autumn of 1945 he decided for pragmatic reasons to continue research on the government of Sicily in the sixteenth century using traditional historical methods. His aim was to complete the Ph.D. in two years, so as to be in a position to get a university job quickly. As early

²¹ Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', pp. 106–7, citation on p. 107.

as February 1946 he informed Herbert Butterfield that once the thesis was finished he intended to work on a comparative study of legislative and representative assemblies in Europe from the middle ages to the seventeenth century. After that, he would research the political influence of nationalism from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Butterfield approved of his choices, and Helli Koenigsberger reassured Otto that both subjects would enable him to develop general ideas and theories of history.

Despite such careful planning, his career almost ended at the first hurdle. The manuscripts he needed for his doctoral thesis had been put in storage during the war. Until the reading rooms in the British Museum reopened, he was forced to work on topics with readily available printed primary and secondary sources. Two topics were quickly turned into papers and published: one, on English merchants in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1947); and the more important article on the revolt of Palermo of 1647, published in 1946.²² The latter was a subject virtually unknown outside Sicily and Koenigsberger devised his article to complement R. B. Merriman's influential 1938 book, *Six Contemporaneous Revolutions*.²³ Using materials in several languages, he provided a clear narrative of the complex events leading to the revolt of Palermo and how it evolved. The article demonstrated his ability to synthesise and to select vivid vignettes which brought events to life. Moreover, placing the revolt in Merriman's European-wide context enabled him to offer a fresh interpretation for its failure. Emboldened by its favourable reception, he sent a copy to the Professor of Modern History at the University of Palermo, Virgilio Titone, who showed his appreciation by addressing Koenigsberger as '*Egregio professore*' (distinguished professor), as Koenigsberger often gleefully recalled.²⁴ It was the start of 'a close friendship with one of the most extraordinary minds in modern Italy'.²⁵ Titone, Koenigsberger acknowledged, 'became my teacher, my guru and my friend' as well as 'my guide'.²⁶

²² H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The revolt of Palermo in 1647', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 8 (1946), 129–44; H. G. Koenigsberger 'English merchants in Naples and Sicily in the seventeenth century', *The English Historical Review*, 62 (1947), 304–26.

²³ V. Titone, *Sicilia e Spagna* (Palermo, 1998), with an Introduction by H. G. Koenigsberger [henceforth 'Introduction to Titone'] p. 8, p. 10.

²⁴ Koenigsberger, 'Introduction to Titone', p. 10.

²⁵ Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', p. 108.

²⁶ Koenigsberger, *Atmosfera de Sicilia*, p. 33, and his 'Introduction to Titone', p. 10 respectively. His supervisors, Previtè Orton and, on his death in March 1947, Sir Herbert Butterfield, knew little about the subject, although both were very supportive, and Koenigsberger (*The Government of Sicily*, p. 40) thanked the latter for his 'invaluable advice on the technique of historical writing'.

Teacher, guru, guide: powerful terms for a man who chose words carefully and was not given to hyperbole. Koenigsberger described Titone as an extraordinary personality, an excellent historian, a man of letters, a journalist and ‘an eccentric’.²⁷ Largely forgotten now, even in Sicily, Titone was a polymath, whose diverse and prolific output by 1946 included plays and novels, literary criticism, current affairs and learned works of history and sociology. Born in 1905 he had studied under Benedetto Croce and soon rejected disciplinary boundaries, refusing to specialise, and trusting above all in his capacity for rigorous reasoning. He was immensely learned and cultured, and an innovative thinker. Titone was one of the first to study the use of dissimulation in early modern politics; to place political ideas (including reason of state) in the context of early modern European culture; and to challenge the Weber thesis with its suggestion that Protestantism had contributed to the development of Capitalism. He anticipated many of the insights produced by later historians in the debate on the crisis of the seventeenth century. Rejecting all ideologies and religions, Titone was also a fearless critic, taking on the Italian Fascists in the 1930s and the Mafia in the 1950s. For him, history was a tool to critique and improve society; and to ensure maximum impact, he argued that historians must cultivate an elegant and accessible style with the best qualities of creative writing.²⁸

Fortuitously, in the spring of 1947 Titone finished a remarkable if brief monograph on Sicily under Spanish rule—Koenigsberger’s research project.²⁹ Using new and little-known documentation, he produced a wide-ranging account of Sicilian government, society, economy and culture which challenged many prevailing beliefs, especially the notion that Sicily’s backwardness had been caused by Spain’s despotic rule. He confirmed the theory of one of his colleagues, C. A. Garuffi, that the Spanish Inquisition had been popular in Sicily, and explained its crucial if ambivalent role in Sicilian politics. He demonstrated that the primary aim

²⁷ Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, 97–8. C. Messina, ‘Helmut Koenigsberger e Virgilio Titone’, *Spiragli*, 4, ns. 2–3 (1992), 25–39, esp. 26, 30–2 and 35–6.

²⁸ Koenigsberger, ‘Introduction to Titone’, pp. 10, 12, 16, 18 and S. Mugno (ed.), *Omaggio a Virgilio Titone: atti del convegno di Trapani* (Palermo, 2002), in particular the chapters by Salvatore Costanza, ‘Virgilio Titone o della ragione tra retorica e antiretorica’, pp. 19–23; Eugenio Guccione, ‘Virgilio Titone, storico del pensiero politico’, pp. 78–86; Giacinto Lentini, ‘Storia e sociologia nel pensiero di Virgilio Titone’, 25–54; Giovanni Marrone, ‘La solitudine di Virgilio Titone’, pp. 87–96; Lucio Zinna, ‘Virgilio Titone narratore’, pp. 55–61; and Aurelio Pes, ‘L’opera de Virgilio Titone’, pp. 63–7.

²⁹ V. Titone, *La Sicilia Spagnuola* (Mazara, 1948), reprinted in idem, *Sicilia e Spagna*, pp. 27–144. The preface is dated 4 April 1947.

of the Spanish monarchs had been to maintain order, and to this end they had collaborated with Sicilian elites and frequently capitulated to parliamentary demands that limited taxation, hence the enduring loyalty of most Sicilians, who had a vested interest in resisting innovation. Koenigsberger considered Titone one of the first historians to grasp the composite nature of the early modern state.³⁰ Underpinning Titone's historical and sociological research was his belief that humanity was shaped by forces of expansion and contraction (*espansione e contrazione*) which coexisted, but periodically one trend became dominant and the tipping point would often be reflected in popular unrest.³¹ Contrary to existing theories, he argued that unrest was more likely to happen in periods of economic expansion, which did not exclude (and sometimes caused) acute crises such as famine; and that it was often triggered from above, by monarchical reforms. He maintained that prior to the nineteenth century, mass violence was the result of complex and often mixed motivations, and invariably evolved in an unpredictable fashion. Among the multiple factors behind such episodes, however, two were discernible: the desire (a) to rectify the immediate crisis and (b) to restore an idealised past. Titone was adamant that before the nineteenth century, popular movements were rarely revolutionary—that is seeking to overturn the established political and social order—and even then only for a limited time.

From such premises it is easy to understand why Titone argued that Koenigsberger had failed to understand the events in Palermo in 1647 which he presented as a *revolution*, caused by a declining economy and political repression by the Spaniards, whom he accused of depriving 'the mass of the people' of their political rights. For Titone, the reverse was true. Nevertheless, Titone was impressed that Koenigsberger had avoided some serious pitfalls of earlier scholars and made perceptive comments, supported with new documentation. He was also persuaded by the novel, European dimension.³² When Koenigsberger arrived in Palermo for research in November 1947, Titone welcomed him warmly and, as Koenigsberger admitted, put 'much of his time and all his great knowledge of the island and its history most readily at my disposal'.³³ Neither

³⁰ Koenigsberger, 'Introduction to Titone', p. 24.

³¹ Lentini, 'Storia e sociologia', pp. 43ff, and Marrone, 'La solitudine', especially pp. 89–90 in Mugno (ed.), *Omaggio a Virgilio Titone*.

³² V. Titone, 'La Rivolta di Palermo nel 1647', *Nuova critica*, 2 (1947) reprinted in his *Sicilia e Spagna*, pp. 145–50, criticisms on p. 150. Koenigsberger, 'Introduction to Titone', p. 10 and elsewhere recalled the praise, not the criticisms.

³³ Koenigsberger, *The Government of Sicily*, pp. 40–1.

man generally encouraged intimacy, but each found in the other a kindred spirit. Titone was generous and humorous and, besides providing practical help, he nurtured Koenigsberger's cultural and intellectual outlook, taking him on several journeys.³⁴ The two men shared ideas and documentation, and 'we soon found that we agreed on the nature of Spanish rule in Sicily'.³⁵ Besides having an immediate impact on Koenigsberger's doctoral thesis, Titone inspired him to work on cultural history and creativity, and convinced him that it had to be put into a broad social and political context.³⁶ Only the theory of alternating phases of expansion and contraction failed to convince Koenigsberger fully, but he admitted to being influenced by it.³⁷ The two men converged on many levels, not least in privileging ideas and reasoning, and dismissing disciplinary boundaries.³⁸

The urgent need for a job was one reason for the rapid publication of Koenigsberger's doctoral thesis, completed in 1949, which appeared as a short monograph—'an essay' is how he termed it—in 1951. *Sicily under Philip II of Spain* made an immediate impact. Based on primary documentation, it covered an unusually wide range of topics for the time, including political, social and economic history. Outside Sicily, it was a novel topic. It was tackled in an innovative fashion and written with flair. The brief conclusion offered a distinctive and negative view of Philip II, who was blamed for failing to develop a new theory of empire. The book did far more than fill a gap in knowledge. His arguments that early modern government consisted of constant negotiation and compromise, that Sicilians were content with their 'foreign' monarch, loved the Inquisition, and possessed a powerful parliament, were regarded as startling and novel. It is only in retrospect that he appears in some areas as a transmitter of ideas. Given the limited historical understanding of early modern European history the book made a considerable impact both inside and outside Britain.³⁹ As the Catalan scholar Xavier Gil put it, it was the earliest and probably the clearest exposition of the operational

³⁴ Examples of Titone's kindness and support in Koenigsberger, *Atmosfera*, pp. 84–96 and 'Introduction to Titone', p. 10; also Messina, 'Helmut Koenigsberger e Virgilio Titone'.

³⁵ Koenigsberger, 'Introduction to Titone', pp. 12, 20, 22.

³⁶ He discussed their interactions in 'Fragments', p. 112; 'Le confessioni', 93, 97–8; and the 'Introduction to Titone', pp. 12–20, but he once said that his father was 'the original stimulus'.

³⁷ Koenigsberger, *Atmosfera*, p. 88.

³⁸ Costanza, 'Virgilio Titone o della ragione tra retorica e antiretorica', pp. 19–23 in Mugno (ed.), *Omaggio a Virgilio Titone*.

³⁹ For example, the favourable review by P. Chaunu, *Annales*, 9, n. 1 (1954), 135–6.

limits of power in the early modern period.⁴⁰ The belief that absolute monarchs were absolute in practice; that all states of the Spanish Monarchy other than Castile were treated as colonies; that the peripheral regions hated the Spaniards—among other topics—proved remarkably persistent in many countries, making the book's novelty and usefulness last for decades.⁴¹ Outside Spain its value was further enhanced by J. M. Batista i Roca's extensive foreword, which provided a concise account of Philip II's court and government, albeit from a Catalan-nationalist perspective. Geoffrey Parker described it to me as 'a stunning preface' and it was certainly used in Britain independently.⁴²

The book's enduring relevance also owed much to political and historical developments in Spain and Italy. After it was reissued in 1969 under a new title, *The Practice of Empire*, it was translated into Spanish (1975)—one of the many foreign works then appearing in translation. Younger scholars in Spain and Italy had reacted against the nationalist and political links of many of their own historians, and privileged the work of foreign scholars, whom they regarded as politically unaligned and of higher intellectual quality.⁴³ Manuel Rivero Rodríguez and Nicoletta Bazzano were typical of their generation: in their early work on Sicily, they used Koenigsberger and ignored Titone. *The Practice of Empire* became a model for a series of case studies, including those of Fernando Bouza Álvarez on Portugal and Manuel Rivero Rodríguez on Italy, that have transformed our understanding of the Spanish Monarchy.⁴⁴ A second Spanish edition appeared in 1989 with an epilogue by the eminent Spanish

⁴⁰ X. Gil, 'Del estado a los lenguajes políticos, del centro a la periferia. Dos décadas de historia política sobre la España de los siglos XVI y XVII', in J. M. de Bernardo Ares (ed.), *El Hispanismo Anglonorteamericano. Aportaciones, problemas y perspectivas sobre Historia, Arte y Literatura española (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, 2 vols. (Córdoba, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 883–918, this at p. 886 and p. 888.

⁴¹ Until the 1970s many Italian scholars persisted in blaming Spanish cultural, social and political repression for the country's backwardness, see N. Bazzano, *Marco Antonio Colonna* (Rome, 2003), pp. 14–15. My findings that Habsburg government was based on negotiation were still being challenged by senior British scholars in the 1980s.

⁴² See also J. Martínez Millán, 'La dinastía Habsburgo en la historiografía Española de los siglos XIX y XX', *Libros de la corte*, 5, n. 7 (2013) n.p. (Librosdelacorte.es)

⁴³ H. G. Koenigsberger, *The Practice of Empire* (Ithaca, NY, 1969); H. G. Koenigsberger, *La Práctica del Imperio* (Madrid, 1975); Martínez Millán, 'La dinastía Habsburgo en la historiografía Española'.

⁴⁴ Bazzano, *Marco Antonio Colonna*, p. 17—she rectifies this in a forthcoming article 'Il ruolo istituzionale del viceré: conflitti ed equilibri politici nella Sicilia degli Asburgo' which she kindly allowed me to read. Conversation with Rivero Rodríguez. Curiously, Lucien Febvre's excellent and wide-ranging case study, *Philippe II et la Franche-Comté* (Paris, 1912), although known, appears to have made relatively little impact outside France.

historian, Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, who highlighted both its positive contributions and its shortcomings, particularly the criticisms of Philip II's government which reflected Koenigsberger's nineteenth-century vision of the state.⁴⁵ Italian scholars used the Spanish translation until 1997, when an Italian translation appeared following the controversy caused by Osvaldo Raggio's radical interpretation of the early modern state in 1995, which used some of Koenigsberger's arguments, at times out of context, and in support of contrary conclusions.⁴⁶

New directions, 1950–66

Notwithstanding its impact, Koenigsberger did not dwell on his first monograph in autobiographical writings, presenting it as a stepping stone that 'led me directly to my next primary interest', which was the study of early modern Parliaments. He credited Titone with reawakening his desire to understand why so many parliaments had failed.⁴⁷ This makes it appear all the more strange that he should have turned next to economic history—indeed, his first two jobs were in economic history: a lectureship at Queen's University, Belfast (1948–51) and a senior lectureship at the University of Manchester (1951–60). He explained that once he had finished his thesis he was drawn to the then fashionable topic of the rise and decline of the gentry, and specifically the debate whether economic data could be used to explain political activity. Surprisingly, he did not mention the discussions with his brother Otto which had already fired his enthusiasm for using statistical data to explain political choices. What he set out to do was an innovative, comparative study of the evolution of property and politics in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Piedmont and Hainault. Both areas had excellent primary records and secondary studies to draw on, but no one had employed statistical analyses on the data, or a comparative approach. Crucially, their representative assemblies had met radically different fates: the former was abolished and the latter flourished.

⁴⁵H. G. Koenigsberger, *La Practica del Imperio* (Madrid, 1989), epilogue by Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, pp. 245–58.

⁴⁶H. G. Koenigsberger, *L'esercizio dell'Impero* (Palermo, 1997); F. Benigno, 'La Sicilia nell'età di Filippo II. Considerazioni sui rapporti fra centro e periferia nella monarchia cattolica' in E. B. Cebrià (ed.), *Felipe II y el Mediterráneo*, 4 vols., vol. 4 (2), *La monarquía y los reinos* (Madrid 1999), pp. 439–51, especially pp. 442–9.

⁴⁷Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', p. 109 and citation on p. 110.

His initial findings were published in 1952 in an article that gave a detailed account of the parliament of Piedmont's trajectory over two hundred years, linking it to economic and social trends. It contained interesting insights, but the statistical analyses failed to provide a direct correlation between economic data and political choices, and did not explain the parliament's abolition.⁴⁸ Work on the Belgian archives yielded rich economic data on Hainault which Koenigsberger published in 1956.⁴⁹ Again, he had to admit that 'the evidence for the motivation of political actions provided by statistical analysis of the economic fortunes of different social groups . . . is suggestive but not conclusive. It is not sufficient in itself.'⁵⁰ Even in retrospect he did not admit failure, rather noting the fact that model-building was more difficult than he had thought. Having dismissed a raft of competing theories (including those of Tawney, Stone and Trevor-Roper) as 'economic reductionism', and social-science models as inappropriate for the historian,⁵¹ he decided that he ought to emulate the history of revolutions which had combined multiple single and comparative studies. By 1970 Koenigsberger was convinced that through this method they were now close to creating 'a generally acceptable pattern for all revolutions and revolutionary movements'.⁵² Further research on the various representative assemblies of Italy and the Low Countries, he believed, would allow him to 'build up the complex pattern of the social and political development' of all Europe, and thereby illustrate the causes of its instability.⁵³

Until the mid-1950s Koenigsberger had used archival documentation. He was convinced that it was the key to novel interpretations: 'a considerable amount of new material has been introduced'—he wrote in his first monograph—'and, in consequence, different conclusions have often been reached'.⁵⁴ Yet, after brief visits to archives for his Piedmont Hainault project, he did not return to the study of unpublished manuscript author-

⁴⁸ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The Parliament of Piedmont during the Renaissance, 1460–1560', *Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, 9 (Louvain, 1952), 67–122.

⁴⁹ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Property and the price revolution (Hainault, 1474–1573)', *The Economic History Review*, ser. 2, 9 (1956), 1–15.

⁵⁰ H. G. Koenigsberger, *Estates and Revolutions* (Ithaca, NY, 1971) p. 9; 'Le confessioni', pp. 95–6.

⁵¹ Koenigsberger, 'Le confessioni', pp. 95–6.

⁵² Koenigsberger, *Estates and Revolutions*, p. 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9; 'Le confessioni', pp. 95–6.

⁵⁴ Koenigsberger, *The Government of Sicily*, p. 40. It explains why he seemed so surprised that I had managed to produce novel insights with documentation that had been known about and sometimes used before.

ities until after retirement. Dorothy Koenigsberger suggested that this was because he preferred to work with easily accessible materials, and this was clearly the case. But perhaps there was more to it than that. Partly because of financial considerations, his doctoral research abroad in 1947 was limited yet, even so, it was not entirely devoted to the archives. He spent only forty-seven days at the Archivo General de Simancas, the most important archive for his topic, taking twenty-five days off during his stay—some, but not all, obligatory feast-days.⁵⁵ After two days in Naples he reckoned he ‘had found as much material in the archives as I thought I was likely to find’.⁵⁶ We do not know how often he worked in ‘the gloomy Archivio di Stato’ in Palermo (his description), but soon after he arrived, he missed a session to visit Monreale: ‘the excuse to myself was that I had to get the “feel” of the country I was working on, as well as reading sixteenth-century government papers’.⁵⁷ Earlier, in May 1946, he complained to his brother that gathering and processing primary documentation was so time consuming it was preventing him from devoting sufficient time to theory. It is worth noting that Titone also gave up archives around this time, and occasionally even failed to provide a critical scholarly apparatus, because this enabled him to mix historical, political, philosophical, literary and sociological elements more easily.⁵⁸ Later, Koenigsberger praised Sicilian scholars because they were not ‘slaves of their specialisms’ and because they saw culture as ‘a many-sided pursuit in which literature, history, music, art and the social sciences do not exclude each other’.⁵⁹

Whatever his reasons, the change of methodology coincided with a move away from economic history. While his ultimate goal remained to identify the ‘recurring functional patterns’ in European history,⁶⁰ he had decided to focus on comparative parliamentary history, encouraged by John Roskell, one of his colleagues at Manchester University, and Helen Cam, president of the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions (ICHRPI). They invited him to join the Commission, which became one of the most important and lasting commitments of his life. In 1955 Koenigsberger published a

⁵⁵ He was there from 8 July to 17 September 1947. I am grateful to the Archivo General de Simancas for allowing me to see the records.

⁵⁶ Koenigsberger, *Atmosphere*, p. 95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–82, citations on pp. 72, 74.

⁵⁸ Lentini, ‘Storia e sociologia’, p. 39 (in Mungo (ed.), *Omaggio a Titone*) argued this is what kept his ideas fresh and stimulating, and allowed him to express his humanity.

⁵⁹ Koenigsberger, *Atmosphere*, pp. 67–8.

⁶⁰ Koenigsberger, *Estates and Revolutions*, pp. 15–16.

remarkable article of lasting influence, inspired by Herbert Butterfield's lectures: 'The Organization of Revolutionary Parties in France and the Netherlands during the Sixteenth Century'.⁶¹ Using French, Dutch, Italian, German and English printed materials Koenigsberger analysed two immensely complex, intertwined events, providing a cogent, compressed narrative in which political, religious, economic and social motivations are clearly explained in elegant and accessible prose. He demonstrated the importance of theology and dissected the use of language, inspiring further research on these crucial topics. His even-handed treatment of both governments and people; of Catholic and Protestant; of France and the Netherlands was exceptional. It is still admired by experts and remains essential reading for students sixty years later. A further article on the States-General of the Netherlands followed in 1958 which clearly showed the influence of ICHRPI members Emile Lousse and Antonio Marongiu, pioneers of a comparative approach in parliamentary history, where Koenigsberger announced his decision to devote himself to a comparative study of European representative assemblies.⁶² That year also saw the publication of an informative and accessible chapter on Charles V in the *New Cambridge Modern History*, a traditional and occasionally romantic piece of political history which was nevertheless very widely read by generations of students.⁶³

Inspired by discussions with Titone, Koenigsberger also ventured into cultural history. 'Decadence or Shift? Changes in the Civilization of Italy and Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' appeared in 1960.⁶⁴ It was his attempt to develop a general theory of culture and creativity. Starting from a logical deduction based on biological and historical evidence, Koenigsberger argued that creativity and genius were equally distributed in the whole of humanity, and that the historian's task was to account for the different levels of artistic achievement in different periods and cultures. This could only be done by placing art in a broad context with political, social, religious and economic trends. His results

⁶¹ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The organization of revolutionary parties in France and the Netherlands during the sixteenth century', *The Journal of Modern History*, 27 (1955), 335–51.

⁶² H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The States-General of the Netherlands before the Revolt', in *Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, 18 (1958), 141–58.

⁶³ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The empire of Charles V in Europe', in G. R. Elton (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 2 (Cambridge 1958), pp. 301–33.

⁶⁴ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Decadence or shift? Changes in the civilization of Italy and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ser. 5, 10 (1960), 1–18.

challenged the traditional view that Italian culture had declined after the Renaissance. Creativity, he argued, had simply shifted from painting and political thought to music, architecture and science. His choice of examples left him open to accusations of subjectivity, and the short final section touching on Spain, the Low Countries, Germany, France and England, while confirming his extraordinary geographical and linguistic range and commitment to comparative history, was too superficial to be entirely persuasive. He was taken aback by the strong reactions the article provoked and for years referred to it as a preliminary sketch; but he never wavered from his fundamental arguments.⁶⁵ What mattered most was the fact that many historians were inspired by his example to research cultural history.

Koenigsberger was happy in Manchester, despite an inauspicious arrival: on his first day he was run over and taken to hospital. For eight years he shared a house with Harold and Joan Perkin, who provided the stability he had longed for, as well as intellectual stimulus—both were highly innovative social historians. Joan Perkin remembers him as a ‘very eligible bachelor figure in the University’, holding regular musical soirées and parties, and as ‘a friend with a lively sense of humour, though some people found him difficult to get to know’. He left in 1960 to take up the Chair of Modern History at the University of Nottingham—the extraordinary breadth of his work, both thematically and geographically, surely influencing his rapid promotion. His inaugural lecture (10 March 1961) confirmed this, offering a comparative study of the powers of deputies to European parliaments. He expanded on some of these findings in an interesting article on patronage and bribery during the reign of Charles V, which addressed a lively debate at the time and stimulated further research on patron-client relations.⁶⁶ One of his students at Nottingham described him as a brilliant lecturer who gave ‘inspirational one-to-one tutorials’, and who—unusually—treated his students as adults.⁶⁷ He also treated research students and young scholars as equals, which was flattering but at times also disconcerting, because he tended to

⁶⁵ On the opposition, and defence of his original theory, Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, 98–9.

⁶⁶ The lecture was on 10 March 1961 and published as H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘The powers of deputies in sixteenth-century assemblies’, *Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, vol. 24 (1961), pp. 232–43; H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Patronage and bribery during the Reign of Charles V’, *Anciens Pays et Assemblées d’Etats*, vol. 22 (Louvain, 1961), pp. 166–75.

⁶⁷ Giles Oakley, *The Guardian*, 19 May 2014, www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may19/helmut-koenigsberger-obituary-letter (accessed 22 January 2015).

assume that we could do whatever he was capable of doing, and in as many languages.

For some years Koenigsberger combined visits to his family in the USA with vacation work. He was teaching at Brooklyn College, New York, in the summer of 1957 when he first encountered Dorothy Romano. She opted for his course on a whim: she didn't much like any of the choices, but she was intrigued by his odd name. The cultural and social history he taught resonated with her and inspired her to become a historian of ideas. She was a striking young woman: highly intelligent, beautiful and vivacious, and Koenigsberger contacted her when he returned to the USA the following year. Despite parental hostility they remained in touch and after graduating in 1961, 'half running away' as she put it, she came to London and they married. It proved an extraordinarily close and enduring personal and intellectual partnership. Dorothy has often asserted that Helli Koenigsberger was essentially a family man, and it is true that after their marriage and the birth of the twins, Laura and Francesca, in 1963, the immediate family was the heart of his world. He was determined to emulate his father, playing with the twins and reading to them from the classics. Visitors soon appreciated that historical discussion and even music must yield to the demands of the twins, or the other no less demanding pillars of the household, the dog and the cats. Both the pets and the twins were infinitely inquisitive and inventive, and their frequent interruptions were invariably met with indulgence. Koenigsberger responded affectionately and retreated into bemused but contented silence as he was enveloped in lively, often inconsequential, chatter. June Walker, who worked with him in London for many years, reckoned that he was 'very self contained . . . capable of pursuing quietly his own thoughts despite any amount of noise and chaos around him'.

Family commitments may account for the pattern of publications during Koenigsberger's six years at Nottingham: the inaugural lecture, an article linking the Reformation with revolution, and a series of articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.⁶⁸ A vital development from these years was his decision to accept John Elliott's invitation to create a new monograph series on Early Modern European History, which Cambridge University Press launched in 1966.⁶⁹ The combination was extremely successful:

⁶⁸ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The Reformation and social revolution', in J. Hurstfield (ed.), *The Reformation Crisis* (London, 1965), pp. 211–23.

⁶⁹ J. H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven, CT, 2012), p. 59, and conversations with the author.

launched by Elliott's vision and contacts, the series benefited from Koenigsberger's unusual capacity for close and deep reading that detected gaps and inconsistencies, his wide reading and his principle that history must be fun to read. Koenigsberger advised Geoffrey Parker to add a chapter to his book and place the Netherlands 'in Spain's strategic vision' as he told me recently, adding that it was 'a brilliant idea . . . I had failed to realize its importance'. It improved the book substantially and later gave rise to a separate book—'all from one lunchtime conversation!' Discussing a manuscript with him could be an unnerving experience, despite his kindness. Robert Frost blanched on seeing ten pages of closely written comments to his manuscript, but the result was a different and greatly improved book. Elliott and Koenigsberger edited more than fifty volumes, establishing a distinctive, early modern European history in Britain and helping to launch many a young scholar's career. It was a remarkable achievement.

American interlude: Cornell, 1966–73

The Koenigsbergers maintained strong links to the USA and in 1966 moved to Cornell University.⁷⁰ Their cultural sophistication made them stand out. Koenigsberger organised chamber music and secured season tickets for the Metropolitan Opera which involved a six-hour drive, during which he kept the twins entertained narrating tales from Greek, Roman and German classics. Clive Holmes was so impressed by Koenigsberger that he took up a post at Cornell and found him a supportive and intellectually stimulating colleague. That was also the case for a group of bright, committed students whom he inspired to become early modern European historians, among them Margaret Jacob, Phyllis Mack Crew and Philip Benedict. By then, Koenigsberger was completing the first of three outstanding general textbooks, but paradoxically his lecturing style was unsuitable for large and diverse audiences. He was quiet and reflective, full of passion for detail, and read elegant, well-constructed papers. This did not appeal to the majority of students, and the exceptional quality of those who did follow him did not give Koenigsberger sufficient leverage to secure the pay rises he felt he was due, nor an appointment for Dorothy, whose intellectual calibre was not in question. She secured a teaching job

⁷⁰ Koenigsberger, *Fragments*, pp. 110–11.

elsewhere, but the long commute made life with two young children difficult.

The student unrest of 1968–9 caused lasting and deep divisions in Cornell University, with heated debates on race and exclusion, as well as democracy and what a university was or should be.⁷¹ Koenigsberger took a stance that put him in a minority and worsened his already poor relations with the head of department. The subsequent divisions over the Arab-Israeli conflict widened the gulf. Ironically, one of their worst clashes was over Fernando, Koenigsberger's dog, who roamed the campus and interrupted lectures, most memorably one by Hannah Arendt. When Fernando relieved himself on the new departmental carpet, there was a major row and, as Laura commented of her father, 'with Helli it was a matter of love me, love my dog'. Any offence to or rejection of Fernando (later Orsino) was taken personally, and he was angry and upset when dogs were banned from the campus. The decision to leave Cornell was finally prompted by the need to find appropriate schooling for the twins, who are dyslexic. There was no provision for them there.

Despite these difficulties, the years at Cornell were productive. In 1968 there were three publications for a wider readership: two articles and an outstanding textbook written with George Mosse, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*.⁷² It rapidly established itself as the most accessible, wide-ranging and useful textbook of this period. Unusually for the time, it mixed economic, social, religious, political and cultural history, and treated Europe as a whole rather than as proto-national units. It was translated into several languages and in 1989 a second, emended edition was issued. It remains one of the most widely read of all his works and has been used by generations of students across the globe.⁷³ Cornell University Press reprinted his monograph on Sicily, and issued two collections of articles which greatly helped to disseminate these works. Having revisited the topic of Sicily's parliament, he also penned a short, vivid portrait of Philip

⁷¹G. Lowery, 'A Campus Takeover that Symbolized an Era of Change', 16 April 2009, *Cornell Chronicle*, at <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2009/04/campus-takeover> (accessed 20 February 2015) confirms that divisions remained 'raw' for decades.

⁷²H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Western Europe and the power of Spain', in R. B. Wernham (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 3 (1968), pp. 234–318; H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The European Civil War', in H. R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), *The Age of Expansion* (London and New York, 1968), pp. 143–74; H. G. Koenigsberger and G. L. Mosse, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1968). All were translated into several languages.

⁷³G. Q. Bowler was brought in to help update it. Many original interpretations remained unaltered, however, a tribute to the originality and vision of Koenigsberger and Mosse.

II in 1971. Two years later a useful book of excerpts from and on Luther was published.⁷⁴

His creativity had not dimmed. It was clearly in evidence in an article on music and religion which was published in a volume he co-edited with John Elliott to honour Herbert Butterfield. It is a pioneering, erudite piece, which, notwithstanding its modest title, ranges from ancient Greece to twentieth-century Europe, and includes illuminating discussions of the philosophy, theory and use of music, and its psychological impact. The piece exudes enthusiasm and passion, and still delights with its inventiveness.⁷⁵ K. W. Deutsch's application of sociological models to historical themes proved the starting point for two striking articles which appeared in 1971 and 1975. The first inspired Koenigsberger to reconsider the Reformation and present the controversial and novel argument that far from breaking up the Catholic Church, it had arrested its disintegration. He was more critical of Deutsch in the article on Spanish nationalism, an area of historical research that was only just developing then, and to which he made this single but important contribution. Koenigsberger was particularly concerned to put the topic on a sound methodological footing, discouraging the use of inappropriate sociological models and undue reliance on literary sources.⁷⁶

In search of theories and models of the early modern state and creativity, 1973–2001

Koenigsberger's return to England in 1973 was largely thanks to the intervention of John Elliott, who proposed him as a suitable successor to the Chair of History at King's College London. His inaugural lecture (25 February 1975) reprised the project to provide 'a satisfactory overall

⁷⁴Koenigsberger, *The Practice of Empire*; Koenigsberger, *Estates and Revolutions*; H. G. Koenigsberger, *The Hapsburgs and Europe, 1516–1660* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1971); H. G. Koenigsberger (ed. and Introduction), *Luther: a Profile* (New York and London, 1973); H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The Parliament of Sicily and the Spanish Empire', *Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions*, vol. 34 (Palermo, 1967), pp. 81–96; H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The statecraft of Philip II', *European Studies Review*, 1 (1971), 1–22.

⁷⁵Koenigsberger, 'Music and religion'.

⁷⁶H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The unity of the Church and the Reformation', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1 (1971), 407–17; H. G. Koenigsberger, 'National consciousness in Early Modern Spain', in O. Ranum (ed.), *National Consciousness, History and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1975), pp. 144–72.

theory' for what he regarded as 'the problem of power or, rather, the distribution of power' in early modern Europe. At the very least he was confident he would 'define some characteristics' of such a theory by examining relations between monarchs and parliaments.⁷⁷ He criticised social-science-based models and particularly the works of Otto Hinze and Norbert Elias, whom he had admired in the past, arguing that only a comparative, historical approach could identify 'functional patterns'.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the impressive display of scholarship and linguistic skills, he was forced to conclude that he had not yet found a satisfactory model, or even 'a simple formula applicable to all European countries'. The lecture ended with a cryptic remark that he explained later was a covert attack on the Annales School, but which appears to suggest that historians should return to traditional methodology: 'we are left to pursue not only theories but also the traditional tasks of the historian: to analyze specific events and chains of events and, not least, to tell the story of events'.⁷⁹

The lecture touched on many live debates and rehearsed some of his earlier contributions, including the impact of religion on politics, and the importance of foreign intervention in internal power struggles. He argued that most states in the early modern period were what he termed composite states, 'including more than one country under the sovereignty of one ruler', who was obliged to negotiate with all of them in different ways. This fundamental structural element had not been sufficiently understood, he argued, because most historians continued in thrall to national paradigms and nation-states.⁸⁰ A few had grasped this but lacked a suitable term. Two examples suggest themselves to me: Dietrich Gerhard who had wrestled with terms such as 'regional individuality' and 'dynastic unions',⁸¹ and Jaume Vicens Vives who had referred to 'an association . . . of differentiated, sometimes totally disparate, communities'.⁸² Koenigsberger had been slow to get to this point. As late as 1969,

⁷⁷The version most used is H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Monarchies and parliaments in early modern Europe – *dominium regale* or *dominium politicum et regale*', *Theory and Society*, 5 (1978), 191–217, citation on p. 195.

⁷⁸Koenigsberger, 'Monarchies and parliaments', p. 205.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 196, 215. He explained it in Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', pp. 111–12.

⁸⁰Koenigsberger, 'Monarchies and parliaments', p. 202.

⁸¹D. Gerhard, 'Regionalism and corporate order as a basic theme of European history', in R. Hatton and M. S. Anderson (eds.), *Studies in Diplomatic History: Essays in Memory of David Bayne Horn* (Harlow, 1970), pp. 155–82, this at pp. 158–9—part of a German article of 1952.

⁸²J. Vicens Vives, 'The administrative structure of the state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in H. J. Cohn (ed.), *Government in Reformation Europe, 1520–1560* (London and Basingstoke, 1971), pp. 58–87, citation on p. 64—a translation of a 1960 Spanish article. My own

when he retitled his first monograph, he ‘was not yet sufficiently clear about the distinction between an empire and a composite monarchy’.⁸³ The insight—and the term—arose from his discussions with John Elliott, and both men have credited the other with its formulation. Koenigsberger used it in print in 1971 and the inaugural lecture gave it prominence, but it is apt that it should have been Elliott’s 1992 article that embedded the term.⁸⁴ Conrad Russell was one of many who were inspired by Koenigsberger’s lecture and urged British historians to shed their insular vision, as Koenigsberger proudly recalled in several autobiographical fragments. In a 1988 lecture Koenigsberger successfully used the same approach and ideas to prompt an equally important reinterpretation of the American Revolution.⁸⁵

The London inaugural lecture also caused considerable controversy. Koenigsberger’s argument that cooperation (or ‘the spirit of community’) had not been the norm in early modern states, and that relations between monarchs and representative assemblies were always ‘a struggle for power’, was and remains vigorously contested. At the time, Geoffrey Elton distinguished himself by describing the theory as ‘balderdash’ and marshalling a wealth of documentary evidence against it.⁸⁶ Equally problematic was Koenigsberger’s assertion that all early modern European states fell into two categories, as described by Sir John Fortescue in the late fifteenth century: *dominium regale* and *dominium politicum et regale*. Put crudely (as he admitted he sometimes did), the first developed into absolute monarchies and the second into parliamentary states. Influenced by colleagues at the ICHRPI he addressed some of the criticisms in an article on Italian parliaments, emphasising the medieval origins of Europe’s representative assemblies.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, he was now acutely

clumsy attempt to use a contemporary term ‘The Spains’ (Las Españas), baffled people and was soon abandoned.

⁸³ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, pp. 114–15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109 and in the 1971 Introduction to Koenigsberger, *Estates and Revolution*, p. 13. Elliott, *History in the Making*, pp. 61–2; and J. H. Elliott, ‘A Europe of composite monarchies’, *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), 48–71.

⁸⁵ Published as H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Composite states, representative institutions and the American Revolution’, *Historical Research*, 62 (1989), 135–53. F. Benigno, *Mirrors of Revolution: Conflict and Political Identity in Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout, 2010), Chapter 1 on revisionism and especially p. 50, n. 83 on Russell and Koenigsberger.

⁸⁶ Koenigsberger, ‘Monarchies and parliaments’, p. 195; Koenigsberger frequently mentioned Elton’s attacks both in autobiographical fragments and conversation. Benigno, *Mirrors of Revolution*, chapters 1 and 2 for a wider discussion of the historiographical debates.

⁸⁷ H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘The Italian parliaments from the origins to the end of the eighteenth century’, *The Journal of Italian History*, 1 (1978), 18–49. He dedicated *Politicians and Virtuosi*

aware that his comparative methodology and use of wide-ranging examples had failed. He decided to change tack and focus on a case study of the Netherlands. This accounts for a spate of specialist articles, such as the fascinating study of why the States General became 'revolutionary', once again demonstrating the importance of integrating the study of ideas (legal, religious, civic) and events, and linking social, political and international elements.⁸⁸ His sole, brief foray into the debate on 'the crisis of the seventeenth century' in 1982 led him to conclude that the topic was defunct, unlike 'the protean subject of representation'. He argued that historians had failed to create a satisfactory model because they built on false premises regarding the nature of the early modern state, and applied anachronistic social-science models. A combination of traditional historiographical tools, narrative history and comparative analyses, he argued, would have given better results.⁸⁹

Besides work on the estates of the Netherlands, he continued to refine his ideas on creativity, publishing two further articles (1979 and 1982): the first, ostensibly on republics and courts, finally provided the promised update on the relationship between artistic and scientific creativity and socio-economic, religious and political forces. It was not a model, but a sophisticated and persuasive piece, which provided a list of 'the conditions of the clustering of creative activities'. The article on science and religion was the counterpart to his earlier work on music and religion.⁹⁰ In

to Cam, Marongiu and Lousse. As Hamish Scott pointed out to me, historians such as Dietrich Gerhard had also employed a similar long-range and comparative approach.

⁸⁸ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Why did the States General of the Netherlands become revolutionary in the sixteenth century?', *Parliaments, Estates and Representations*, 2 (1982), 103–11; H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Orange, Granvelle and Philip II', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 99 (1984), 573–95; H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Formen und Tendenzen des europäischen Ständewesens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', in P. Baumgart (ed.), *Ständetum und Staatsbildung in Brandenburg-Preussen* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 19–31. By 1984 the project was described by the editors of his Festschrift as an analysis of 'the problem of Dutch and Belgian historiography in relation to representative institutions and the growth of absolute monarchy in Europe as a whole': P. Mack and M. C. Jacob (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of H. G. Koenigsberger* (Cambridge, 1987) p. 2.

⁸⁹ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The crisis of the seventeenth century. A farewell?', in Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi*, pp. 149–68; citation from his 'Fragments', p. 111.

⁹⁰ A paper of 1977 appeared as H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Republics and courts in Italian and European culture in the 16th and 17th centuries', *Past & Present*, 83 (1979), 32–56; another from 1978 became H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Science and religion in early modern Europe', in S. Drescher, D. Sabeian and A. Sharlin (eds.), *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London, 1982), pp. 168–93. In Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', pp. 112–13 he wrote: 'Later I developed and, I hope, refined this concept' in 'Sinn und Unsinn des Dekadenzproblems in der europäischen Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit', in: Johannes Kunisch (ed.), *Spätzeit: Studien zu den Problemen eines historischen Epochenbegriffs* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 137–157. He returned to

1986 these and other articles were reissued in a collection, *Politicians and Virtuosi*, which made a great impact: in Janet Nelson's words, they 'fizz with intellectual energy'. Fernando Bouza, now an outstanding exponent of cultural history, told me that this volume effectively opened up a new subject area in Spain, not least as a result of Koenigsberger's defence of the right of historians to study culture and creativity. He continued to develop these themes in lectures and articles well into the 1990s, promoting the use of *histoire des mentalités* and repeatedly urging historians to discard both Marxist and Freudian-based theories. In the introduction to *Politicians and Virtuosi* Koenigsberger expressed scepticism about the possibility of providing models or 'complete explanations for major historical processes'. By 1989, however, he was again confident that European cultural patterns could be detected and understood, and that a satisfactory general model of European creativity could be constructed. What it required, he argued, was a number of studies taking complex historical developments, cultural traditions, physical, moral, economic and social factors, circumstances and psychology into account.⁹¹

At the other end of the spectrum, Koenigsberger accepted a commission to write two 'American-style' textbooks covering the history of Europe from 400 to 1789, which were published in 1987 and remain among the most accessible introductions to a wide range of topics in European history; ideal for students and general readers.⁹²

As head of the History department at King's College London, Koenigsberger provided stimulating intellectual leadership, prodding his colleagues (in Peter Marshall's words) 'to be a little less parochial' and promoting European history. He was very supportive to young scholars there, and in the regular seminars he attended at the Institute of Historical Research. After Cornell, he had no appetite for university politics, and he never entirely grasped the complexities of the London University federal degree. With the imposition of savage financial cuts and major degree reforms, however, there was a need for active intervention in often unpleasant debates that he did not always meet. Moreover, his external commitments required a great deal of attention, especially the ICHRPI where he was successively Secretary (1955–60), Secretary-General

the topic in 'The idea of decadence in early modern history, or the apples of Freia', *European History Quarterly*, 22 (1992), 163–85.

⁹¹ Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi*, introduction pp. ix–xii, citation on p. xiii; Koenigsberger 'Le confessioni', 98–9.

⁹² H. G. Koenigsberger, *History of Europe, 400–1789* [vol. 1, *Medieval Europe*; vol. 2, *Early Modern Europe*] (London, 1987).

(1960–75), Vice-President (1975–80) and President (1980–5). He recruited younger scholars and those working on more contemporary periods, introduced annual meetings, and helped to found a journal.⁹³ He was also vice-president of the Royal Historical Society 1980–2, and continued heavily engaged alongside Elliott editing the Early Modern Europe monograph series, not to mention extensive reviewing of new publications.

To mark his retirement in 1984 two former students, Phyllis Mack and Margaret C. Jacob, edited a volume of essays in his honour. The editors emphasised the extraordinary range of his research and praised the novelty, subtlety and enthusiasm that informed his work, highlighting the ‘profound connections between political behavior and cultural values’ that he had uncovered.⁹⁴ Whereas others saw him as reserved, they perceived him as a shy and modest man, ‘a generous, unassuming, immensely charming . . . human being’ whose social and intellectual companionship they found ‘a source of great pleasure’.⁹⁵ He had no intention of giving up work. The plan was to finish his project on the Netherlands and then write a book with his wife Dorothy on music and religion. Sadly, her ill-health and subsequent decision to devote herself to writing poetry prompted them to abandon this.⁹⁶ In any case, during 1985 when he was a visiting professor in Munich he had reconfigured his work on the Netherlands: ‘from being just a case study, it has moved to the centre of my comparative view of early modern representative assemblies’—by which he meant that it would be an integral part of his formulation of a general theory of history. He variously presented it as ‘a study in mentalities’ and the culmination of thirty years of research into the estates of the Netherlands;⁹⁷ and he continued to publish detailed articles on the region.⁹⁸ As the end result of the Dutch revolt had been the creation of a republic, he organised the obligatory conference of his Munich residence on republics and

⁹³ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, pp. 110–11; V. Cromwell, ‘Introduction’, to *Parliaments, Estates and Representations*, 28 (2008) pp. 1–3, special edition dedicated to Koenigsberger on his ninetieth birthday.

⁹⁴ Mack and Jacob, *Politics and Culture*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, citations on p. 2 and pp. 3–4.

⁹⁶ Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, p. 100.

⁹⁷ He discussed the project in Koenigsberger ‘Fragments’, pp. 111–12; Koenigsberger, ‘Le Confessioni’, 96–7 and citations at 99; Koenigsberger ‘Las Cortes de Castilla’, pp. 940–1.

⁹⁸ H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Prince and State General: Charles V and the Netherlands (1506–1555)’ (The Prothero Lecture. Read 7 July 1993), *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 4 (1994), 127–51. H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘The politics of Philip II’, in Festschrift for De Lamar Jensen, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27 (1994), 171–89.

republicanism, thereby making a major contribution to this under-researched topic.⁹⁹ In time, he came to appreciate that European republics had very different theoretical foundations and trajectories. In a characteristically wide-ranging, comparative essay published in 1997, he acknowledged that some republics had been as absolute as any monarchical regime, but his fundamental conviction that ‘republicanism and its identification with liberty remained a living political tradition’ in Europe remained unshaken.¹⁰⁰

In his effort to understand why some parliaments had succeeded, he experimented with different approaches. He tried to establish what impediments an absolutist prince might encounter; he also tested the theory that social structures determined the outcome of the struggle for power, before deciding that to identify the circumstances that allowed a parliament ‘to maintain or improve its position against the attacks of the monarchy’ and to explore how far it was ‘possible to construct a model for the crisis between princes and parliaments’, he needed to study successful parliaments. The result was a 1989 article comparing Sweden, England and the Netherlands, enlarged in a lecture of 1997 (published in 2001) which also added the cortes of Castile.¹⁰¹

As in earlier works, he attacked Whig, Marxist and social historians but, with characteristic honesty, he admitted that his critics were right to say he had over-estimated the power of some parliaments, especially in England and Castile; and for having equated *dominium regale* with absolutism. In turn, he accused his critics of under-estimating the powers of representative assemblies, and for failing to adopt the terms *dominium regale* and *dominium politicum et regale*, which he persisted in promoting as the clearest definition of early modern states, and the way that contemporaries understood their own polities, irrespective of the fact that they did not use these terms. He continued to argue that monarchs and parliaments

⁹⁹H. G. Koenigsberger (ed.), *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der frühen Neuzeit* (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 11, Munich, 1988).

¹⁰⁰H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Republicanism, monarchism and liberty’ in R. Oresco, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 43–74, citation on p. 73.

¹⁰¹H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Riksdag, Parliament and States General in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in H. Stjernquist (ed.), *The Swedish Riksdag in an International Perspective* (Stockholm, 1989), pp. 59–74, citations on p. 67. H. G. Koenigsberger, ‘Las Cortes de Castilla y los Estados Generales de los Países Bajos. El papel de los Parlamentos en la Europa Moderna’, in J. M. de Bernardo Ares (ed.), *El Hispanismo Anglonorteamericano. Aportaciones, problemas y perspectivas sobre Historia, Arte y Literatura española* (siglos XVI–XVIII), 2 vols. (Córdoba, 2001) vol. 2, pp. 937–61.

were locked in an endless competition for power and only cooperated on the brief occasions when they were united by a common enemy.¹⁰²

In the 1989 article he identified three ‘necessary conditions’ for a Parliament to be successful: (1) by the sixteenth century it had to be part of a *dominium politicum et regale*; (2) the parliament must have developed a myth that they, not the monarch, were the true representatives of the interests of the people; and (3) a major crisis had to occur to stimulate members of the representative institution to make claims for their own, superior authority. He stressed that these conditions were not sufficient, since a successful outcome depended on ‘the unpredictable intervention of outside forces’. Historians, he argued, ‘cannot escape their task of telling the story of contingencies’.¹⁰³ In the 1997 lecture, Koenigsberger added a further three ‘necessary conditions’ for success: (4) there had to be external intervention in favour of the parliament; (5) religious divisions must be present as they alone provided a sufficient ideological basis for opposition to the monarch; and (6) the representative assembly must have control of state finances already.¹⁰⁴ The Neapolitan historian, Giuseppe Galasso, saw this as another example of Koenigsberger’s penchant for applying ‘schematic criteria in a mechanistic fashion’ to early modern governments, which was particularly regrettable—as he emphasised to me—since these governments were characterised by the need for permanent change and adaptation. Too prescriptive for some, Koenigsberger’s attempts at model-building did not go far enough for others. He now admitted that he had failed to provide a global model that would account for the political trajectory of Europe, and in the 1997 lecture he asked whether studying relations between parliaments and rulers was the most important historical topic of research. After all, royal absolutism had not led to twentieth-century totalitarianism, any more than early modern parliaments had led to twentieth-century democracy. Although he did not answer, he went on to argue that his six ‘necessary conditions’ gave historians ‘illuminating comparison and partial generalisations’. He went on to state that he did not believe any further insights would emerge, at least not using traditional methods such as narrative history, the history of events or studies on major figures.¹⁰⁵ On occasion, he continued to defend ‘the search for generalisations, models or theories’ and to attack all

¹⁰² Koenigsberger, ‘Riksdag’, pp. 62–3 and 66; Koenigsberger, ‘Las Cortes’, pp. 939–45.

¹⁰³ Koenigsberger, ‘Riksdag’, pp. 72–4, citations on p. 74.

¹⁰⁴ Koenigsberger, ‘Las Cortes’, pp. 942–5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 960–1 and 942–3.

forms of teleology, declaring himself to belong to the ‘Anglo-American positivist view of history’.¹⁰⁶

Koenigsberger’s later work was marked by his profound conviction that Aristotle’s vision that the state was there to create ‘the good life’ for its citizens had survived in Europe for centuries, along with a powerful desire for the rule of law and rejection of tyranny.¹⁰⁷ As he put it in 1990, Europe’s history was marked by the endless struggle between two fundamental concepts: *quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbetur*, which had inspired Europe’s representative assemblies; and the more recent, Roman law-based concept that upheld monarchical power: *quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem*.¹⁰⁸ These ideas preface his second and last monograph, *Monarchies, States Generals and Parliaments: the Netherlands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, published in 2001. A quotation from Aristotle’s *Politics* opens the book, followed by a celebration of his epigram *Eleutheria* (freedom or liberty)—‘the most revolutionary definition of the state in the history of political thought’, he wrote, while admitting that it was also seldom embraced by governments.¹⁰⁹ The title reflects the dual purpose of the book: both a general work and an in-depth case study.

Conscious that it would be his final, major work, Koenigsberger took stock of his enduring aim to identify and represent historical laws. He acknowledged his failure to write a comprehensive comparative history of representative assemblies and argued that no one would do so. Even if they did, ‘it would not give us a general law of the historical relations between monarchies and parliaments’. Historians, he concluded, could ‘observe certain tendencies or even regularities’, but they could not ‘predict or retrodict the outcome’ because this was dependent on contingencies. It was this realisation that prompted him to change tack: ‘I have therefore chosen a different format: that of presenting in some depth the relations between the monarchy and the States General of the Netherlands.’¹¹⁰ The book provided a richly documented, detailed political history of the Netherlands—‘the first substantial account . . . of the way the early modern Netherlands were in practice governed’, as the Netherlands expert, Alastair Duke, remarked. It fills important gaps in knowledge but, as Duke also pointed out, it did not significantly alter our

¹⁰⁶ Koenigsberger, ‘Fragments’, p. 116.

¹⁰⁷ Koenigsberger, ‘Las Cortes’, pp. 960–1.

¹⁰⁸ Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, 94.

¹⁰⁹ H. G. Koenigsberger, *Monarchies, States Generals and Parliaments: the Netherlands in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2001), prologue pp. 1–15.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

understanding of the region, and the very complexity of the area and period studied in such depth makes it a difficult book to handle.¹¹¹

Thereafter Koenigsberger opted for ‘minor occupations’ as he put it, such as transcribing and editing his father’s First World War memoirs.¹¹² He continued to write reviews and read historical works into his nineties. Music became an increasingly important occupation. For many years Helli and Dorothy held wonderful dinner parties, with fine food and wines, in which Koenigsberger excelled as a raconteur.¹¹³ The respect and affection of family and fellow academics were evident in the large gathering to celebrate his eightieth birthday. As he grew frailer his world became increasingly limited to the immediate family: Dorothy remained his chief companion, alongside Laura and her husband Patrick; Francesca and Peter; and the grand-daughters, Victoria and Simone, to whom Koenigsberger spoke German as toddlers in the hope that they would absorb something of their heritage. Never critical and always supportive of the younger generations (who did not share his academic or intellectual interests), they reciprocated his care and affection. External recognition of a more official kind came relatively late: in 1989 he was elected Fellow of the British Academy and thoroughly enjoyed taking part in its gatherings. In 1997 he received an *Encomienda* in the Spanish Order of Isabel la Católica, and two years later he was made an Honorary Fellow of King’s College.

The unusual breadth of Koenigsberger’s publications, many of which were translated into several languages, makes it impossible to give a general evaluation of the impact he made. His textbooks and essays in reference works reached a very wide public, and he is recognised as a pioneer and innovator in several specialised fields. Historians have very diverse visions of his oeuvre, reflecting their own geographic or thematic specialism. Nevertheless, he saw a clear thread running through his career: ‘the ultimate aim of my work and the primary motivation for my research—and this might sound pretentious—is liberty; and parallel with this—and this might sound banal—to understand the problem of political power. The two issues are firmly interconnected.’¹¹⁴ He was not the only German

¹¹¹ Alastair Duke’s review, *English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), 443–5.

¹¹² Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, p. 100.

¹¹³ The Sicilian episodes collected in his *Atmosphere* give a flavour of this.

¹¹⁴ Koenigsberger, ‘Le confessioni’, 94: ‘Mi sono sempre occupato di questi studi perché il fine ultimo del mio lavoro, e la prima motivazione delle mie ricerche – anche se può suonare pretenzioso – è la libertà, e, nello stesso tempo, - anche se può sembrare banale – lo studio del problema del potere politico: si tratta di due problemi strettamente connessi’.

émigré historian of his generation to think along these lines,¹¹⁵ but he was more optimistic than most, hence his decision to dedicate his final book to the European Parliament. Just as representative assemblies in the past had resisted absolutism, he believed Europe under a parliamentary regime would resist dictatorship.¹¹⁶ In 1973 he told June Walker that it was vital to promote and strengthen representative government, and this could be done through the study and writing of history, particularly the history of representative assemblies. To the end (he died on 8 March 2014), he continued fighting for liberty in Europe with the most powerful weapon he could wield: history.

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Friends and colleagues were no less generous: I received indispensable information from Joan Perkins about his life in Manchester; from Clive Holmes about Cornell; while June Walker, Peter Marshall, Andrew Porter and Janet Nelson did the same for King's College London. I have used comments made by participants to the Colloquium held in Helli Koenigsberger's honour at King's College London in May 2014, including those of Margaret Jacob, Henry Cohn and Robert Frost, as well as from valuable details sent by Geoffrey Parker in October 2014. Important insights emerged from discussions with a number of Spanish and Italian historians, particularly with Xavier Gil, Fernando Bouza Álvarez, Giuseppe Galasso, José Martínez

¹¹⁵ As can be seen in several autobiographies published in Alter (ed.), *Out of the Third Reich*, as well as in the life of Geoffrey Elton, another German exile attracted to Paneuropa as a youth and to the study of parliament later. Elton too disliked religion. As Patrick Collinson noted in a rare insight in his BA memoir, 'the ardour with which [Elton] attacked anyone with axes to grind, determinists, and teleologists, was at root a passion for liberty and order, rooted in his adolescent experience of ideological menace': P. Collinson, 'Professor Sir Geoffrey Elton, 1921–1994', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 94 (1997), pp. 429–55, at 446–7, citation on p. 442.

¹¹⁶ Koenigsberger, 'Fragments', p. 109.

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