

## Summaries

*Heinrich August Winkler*

The Dispensable Class. On the policy of the Third Reich towards the middle classes

The policy of the Third Reich towards the middle classes may be subdivided into three stages. From the assumption of power by the National Socialists until summer 1933, it appeared *at first* as if the middle class ideologists of the NSDAP would carry their point on a broad scale. An economic system organised on the basis of the estates as desired by those forces met, however, with the resistance of big industry and bureaucracy. In summer 1933, O. W. Wagener, one of the most important ideologists in favour of the estates, was deprived of his influence; boycott activities against department stores and consumer co-operatives were banned by the party leaders. This introduced a *second* stage in the national-socialist policy towards the middle classes which lasted until September 1936: a period where small trade and the crafts were still treated with a certain forbearance. The »achievements« which crafts and trade could claim for themselves during those years were largely not due to pressure exerted by any middle class party structure but to allies the National-Socialists had amongst the traditional elite of power. For reasons of armament industry, the »Reichswehr« supported the compulsory guilds in the crafts. The »Großer Befähigungsnachweis« (»grand certificate of qualification«) was introduced by Reichs-Minister of Economics Schacht who intended to thus put a stop to the political emphasis in vocational training as planned by Robert Ley, the leader of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Workers' Front). The announcement of the »Four-Year Plan« in September 1936 introduced the *third* and last stage in the national-socialist policy towards the middle classes: war-time economy taking priority, the crafts and small trade lost more and more of their importance. – The conflicts between Schacht and Ley illustrate how little backing trade and crafts had in the »Party«. Unless more influential co-partners in power spoke for small industry, their demands were not granted. For Hitler, the middle class businessmen were a *quantité négligeable*, anyway. Himmler's statement that the crafts would have a great future in the new, Eastern-European »Lebensraum« could not conceal the fact that small independent businessmen were considered as insignificant in terms of war-time economy, and were, therefore, further »combed out« for labour. The social class who, together with the farmers, had made the major contribution towards the election successes of the NSDAP before 1933, had to pay dearly for their illusions.

*Claus-Dieter Krohn / Dirk Stegmann*

Small Industry and National Socialism in an Agricultural and Small-Scale Industrial Region. The Example of Lüneburg, 1930–1939

As a rule, class-specific studies which are oriented towards social history and which, based on Geiger's theses (1932), throw a light on the affinity between small middle class industry and National Socialism have not gone beyond generalising statements. The present study (based on unpublished sources in state and private archives), therefore, concentrates on a well-defined agricultural and small-scale industrial region in the north-eastern part of the Prussian province of Hanover, the district of Lüneburg, during the period from 1930 to 1939. The economic and social situation of the crafts and small trade and industry during the crisis after 1929 is analysed; it becomes evident that political radicalisation in the direction of the NSDAP started relatively late – in contrast to other comparable regions. The decisive factor for this was a relatively well-balanced economic infrastructure and specific relationships between the crafts, trade, agriculture, and small industry. The nazification in the actual sense on the part of the middle classes started only after 1933. This development was encouraged, by, on the one hand, the protectionist policy of the national-socialist regime towards the middle classes; this policy was furthermore backed up by a parallel course of enforced personal union in the holding of offices in the party and in organisations of small industry in the »Gau« (district) of East Hanover. On the other hand, anti-semitism and a latent anti-capitalism acquired a significant integrating function, especially for those tradesmen and craftsmen who, when positions and offices were distributed, had not been directly integrated into the hierarchy of the national-socialist system of rule. In spite of some feeling of insecurity as a consequence of the forced rearmament policy since 1936, identification with the system remained intact until the beginning of the war.

*Dörte Winkler*

Problems of Women at Work versus Women's Ideology. Working women in Germany, 1930–1945

Since women have started to work outside their homes, i. e. since the beginning of industrialisation, gainful employment of women met with resistance in factories, shops, and offices. Workers, both manual and clerical, and civil servants, they all rejected the idea of working women as soon as those women threatened to become a competition. Nevertheless, gainful employment of women, including wives, spread steadily since entrepreneurs no longer wanted to do without female manpower in general. Low wages for women played a part in this just as did the increasing demand for manpower in the secondary and tertiary sectors of economy. Such economic constraints and the profit interest of the entrepreneurs were the decisive factors, after the National Socialists assumed power and before, in the years of crisis 1929 to 1933, so that gainful employment of women was not abolished – in spite of all the demands and promises to the contrary. As a consequence of the overheated armament boom in the »Third Reich«, the absolute number of working women even increased considerably by autumn 1939. But neither the wages nor the chances for a career at work or a social career improved in any way for women – in comparison to men.

Nor did the war change this situation. Throughout the whole war, there was never an all-encompassing labour service for women although this was demanded repeatedly by the armed forces high command, parts of bureaucracy, and by some party leaders. Respective plans finally failed because of Hitler's resistance; he rejected a compulsory labour service for women, primarily for ideological reasons. On the other hand, the economic system during the war depended, even more than before the war, on the many million women who were already at work. This resulted practically in introducing a privileged status for non-working women from the upper and middle classes whereas an even greater burden of work was imposed on those women from the working classes who had had to go to work in order to contribute to the family's earnings before 1939. It is, therefore, entirely without any basis to say that National Socialism had realised an egalitarian »Community of the people« or even only conveyed a belief to a majority that it endeavoured seriously to reach this aim.

*Michael H. Kater*

Middle Class Youth Movement and Hitler Youth in Germany, 1926–1939

The historiography of the German youth movement in the Weimar era as well as of the Hitler Youth well into the period of the Third Reich has so far been characterized by one-sided interpretations. It has either been pro-youth movement and anti-Hitler Youth or vice versa, because to the present day historians have, for a variety of reasons, avoided to treat both phenomena as belonging to the same general problem. On the basis of largely new source material, the author attempts to show that the so-called bourgeois youth (*bündisch* youth) of the twenties and thirties may be regarded as an ideological precursor of the official state youth of the Nazi Regime. After a comparison between both formations even in the time period before Hitler's accession to power, it becomes evident that the *bündisch* youth was marked by the same characteristics as the Hitler Youth, with differences only of degree. These factors were an extreme nationalism, anti-parliamentarian attitudes, a xenophobia which culminated in outright racism, and a *völkisch* ideology with all its ramifications. In discarding the conventional wisdoms on the subject, the author arrives at the interim conclusion that the *bündisch* youth displayed a marked tendency toward fascism. The reason why they did not wholly subscribe to National Socialism and/or the Hitler Youth before 1933 was their pronounced sense of elitism which was opposed to the seemingly democratic gestures of Adolf Hitler and his party at the time. Beyond that, the *bündisch* groups were insisting on absolute institutional independence from the Hitler Youth; this in turn was the result of a strong sense of self-assertion. – After Hitler's coming to power this self-assertion gave way to a principal readiness on the part of the youth movement to adjust to the changed situation. Genuine conviction as well as crude opportunism served as motives. In exploring these issues more in depth, the author concludes that the much talked about »political resistance« of the one-time *bündisch* youth within the Hitler Youth after 1933 did not exist in this form at all, and if it did, it must be questioned from an ethical point of view. For it becomes quite apparent that the socio-political motive was heavily determined by very specific bourgeois class interests. – The concluding section of this study examines the relationship between *bündisch* and Hitler

Youth from the vantage point of a possible integration of bourgeois youth into the Nazi movement. The author finds it reasonable to assume that, structurally, National Socialism was indeed able to integrate German bourgeois youth into the movement by using the Hitler Youth. This integration occurred in the course of a process that was characterized by factors of coercion as much as by choice. Whether this integration took place according to social criteria, is a question which the author finds difficult to answer because of a certain dearth of relevant source material bearing on this issue. The author's final judgment in the paper concerns the integrational function of National Socialism in the ideological sector. He writes: »The institutional fusion between Hitler Youth and *bündisch* youth between 1933 and 1939 was a logical consequence of a common ideological persuasion, whose origins can be found in the politically conservative disposition of Wilhelmian bourgeois society predating the fascistic era, as well as in the pseudo-revolutionary, anti-cultural and anti-rational stance of the early National Socialists«.

*Christoph Kleßmann*

On the Legal and Social Situation of the Poles in the Ruhr Area during the Third Reich

Based on an outline of the situation in the Weimar Republic, this essay examines the changes and continuities which existed for the Poles in the Ruhr area with regard to their position under law and to their social situation. It is shown that the rights guaranteed by Hitler to the Polish minority so that they could continue to maintain their cultural traditions (language, clubs, religious ceremonies, etc.) were again and again jeopardized by the lower-level authorities in the political party and in the government so that the organisation that represented Polish interests, the »Federation of Poles in Germany«, was involved in a long-lasting conflict with German authorities. Although the Ruhr Poles, being a minority in diaspora, were not directly affected by the political struggles concerning the German-Polish border, their situation remained dependent on the respective constellations in foreign policy. This was illustrated and emphasised at the beginning of the war in 1939 when most of the club presidents were arrested as so-called »leading brains« and sent to concentration camps. Persecution by the National Socialists considerably accelerated the process of assimilation. After 1945, however, Polish organisations were again established in the Ruhr area.

*Karl Teppe*

Social Insurance – An Example of Social Policy in the Third Reich

In the final stages of the Weimar Republic, questions connected with social insurance were one of the focal points in the internal political conflicts, and they also had considerable significance for putting the power of the National-Socialist system on a firm basis. The reasons were, firstly, of a financial and economic nature; in addition, the problem of old-age pensions which belongs into the greater context of the efforts made for a new social system was of fundamental political importance. The various laws on the subject, conceived by, and finally carried with the backing of, officials in different Ministries of the Reich, served to put social insurance on a financially and organisationally sound basis

but followed the traditional structure of social insurance. In contrast, there were strong forces in the NSDAP and especially in the DAF (German Workers' Front) which urged the abolition of social insurance in favour of a social security system interwoven with numerous political provisos. It is true that these plans failed because of the internal contradictions and resistance of the National-Socialist regime but the system of social security was nevertheless largely subjected to the political expediencies of the regime. This is exemplified by the fact that the cuts introduced by Brüning in 1931 and by Papen in 1932 under the emergency decrees were mostly continued till 1941 and 1942, and that the way in which old-age pensions were granted was by and large very restrictive. The freezing of old-age pensions was an integral part of consumer control and connected with the more comprehensive aims of skimming off mass purchasing power and integrating old-age pensioners in the mobilisation of potential manpower. The same applies to the purpose-oriented measures in the fields of population and health policy which, considered in isolation, appear to be quite progressive but which owe their promotion, in the first place, to more important priorities in the field of armament and military economics.

*Hans-Erich Volkmann*

The Programme of the NSDAP in External Trade, 1930–1933

Analysing National-Socialist economic policy, economic historians of different scientific schools have unanimously stated the lack of any binding economic programme. Those who read merely the official programme which was drafted at the beginning of the 20ies and remained unchanged until 1945 will have to agree with these findings. Yet, economic events in the Third Reich followed a precisely defined, all-encompassing maxim expressed in the brief formula »self-sufficiency in the greater economic area«, a formula which was coined between 1930 and 1933. Being a symbiosis of pan-European and customs union ideas and of the claim for hegemony, it formed the economic key-note of National-Socialist Germany in the period between 1933 and 1945. The »Großraumtheorie« (theory of greater areas) as it was called was considered an alternative to the world-market-oriented principle of free trade which latter, in the views of well-known economists, economic politicians and industrialists, had become extremely questionable during the economic crisis. – The plans for establishing an economically motivated, self-sufficient greater economic area in Central Europe did not merely coincide with Hitler's ideas of territorial expansion. By including Scandinavia, the neutral Western-European states, the Iberian peninsula, and Italy in a Central-European economic block, they even exceeded them by far. Neither Hitler's claim to hegemony nor a self-sufficient greater economic area could eventually be put into practice with peaceful means. The National-Socialists, once having assumed power, were determined to risk these armed conflicts. After 1933, market economy was transformed into what was called »Wehrwirtschaft« (military or defence economy) which, according to National-Socialist definition, had the task of »preparing the whole economy during peace-time for total war«.

*Dirk Stegmann*

Antiquated Personalisation or Socio-Economic Analysis of Fascism?  
An Answer to H. A. Turner's Criticism of my Theses on the Relationship  
between National Socialism and Big Industry before 1933

The present contribution continues a scientific controversy which started in 1973 in the »Archives for Social History«, went on during the International Meeting of Historians in Bochum in the same year, and was expanded further in the years 1975 and 1976 through essays and books. The focal point of this controversy is the question as to the way in which German big industry (and heavy industry in particular) reacted to the ascent of the NSDAP to the status of a mass party during the economic world crisis, and whether it assisted, directly or indirectly, the process of the so-called assumption of power (Macht-ergreifung) – if so, to which extent. On the basis of new empirical findings, the essay discusses the range and concrete results of the personalistic point of departure in research and of those schools of thought which, against the background of social and economic changes, attempt to describe collective mentalities in the political actions of big industrialists: The attitude of big industry towards the economic programme of the NSDAP, the change in the projected aims of the party especially after 1932 (establishment and function of the Keppler group; causing Feder to withdraw into the background and the loss of power of the Strasser wing in the NSDAP) and finally the political background of the events which led to 30th January, 1933.

*Gerhard Beier*

Documentation

Bills Concerning a Limitation of the Powers of the German Workers'  
Front in the Year 1938

Texts from the files of the Reichs-Chancellery and from the part-estate Dr. Johannes Krohn in the Federal Archives in Koblenz, document bills of the Reichs-Ministry of Labour (RAM) and of the Reichs-Chamber of Economics (RWK) dating back to the first half of the year 1938. The background to this are advances made by the German Workers' Front under Robert Ley, claiming more influence and more rights due to the increasing lack of manpower. Hjalmar Schacht thought this would endanger monetary stability; Hermann Göring feared it might be detrimental to rearmament in the context of the four-year plan; the entrepreneurs objected against what they called »driving up the wages«, and the Reichs-Ministry of Labour saw an opportunity to finally take action against Robert Ley. Under this constellation which was encouraged by Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann, bills were drafted in both RAM and RWK which were meant to rob the Workers' Front of its powers and to build up a so-called »self-administration« intended to decisively strengthen the influence of the National-Socialist government and of the entrepreneurs as against the German Workers' Front. Although only some of these drafts entered into force through decree by Hermann Göring, Robert Ley had to drop his ambitious plans and even renounce any influence on economic or social policy. As from summer 1938 on, the desired aim of a »social renewal« lost more and more ground to Hitler's ambitions in foreign policy, and was finally shelved in the Reichs-Chancellery a few weeks after the beginning of the war.

*Friedhelm Boll*

Spontaneity of the Grassroots and Political Function of the Strike  
1914–1918. The Example of Brunswick

For the purpose of a comparative, locally limited historical study on the subject of »mass movements 1917–1920 in the territory of present-day Lower Saxony«, some thoughts are presented on the framework for interpretation, and these thoughts are applied to the example of the strike movement in Brunswick. A first step summarises the results of previous research on this local revolutionary movement and on the development of the Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD) and examines the question as to which were the requirements for the constitution of a strong mass movement and thus also for a strong USPD. Industrial conurbation areas may be considered one indispensable condition; but they are often complemented by additional components which are decisive for the radical tendency of a movement: Party press, party tradition, role of personalities (as in the case of S. Miller). With the aid of an interpretation approach, these criteria are systematically structured and given a sound theoretical basis in a second step. This is done against the background of Negt/Kluge's thoughts on »the proletarian public«. The realisation that mass movements need communication centres in order to develop and articulate a joint intent is a fundamental factor in the study of the development of workers' opposition movements and of individual parts of their organisation. The author considers these as the most relevant communication centres for the establishment of the »counter-public«: big industrial plants, shopping queues, illicit trade, workers' residential areas, Social-Democratic press, Social-Democratic organisations (party, trade unions, opposition groups). – In a third step, the author illustrates the radical tendency of the Brunswick development by examining the strike movement (complete table of strikes) and, by way of additional evidence, quotes some socio-structural data (structure of industry and labour) and gives a brief outline of the local party and trade union history. As an explanation for the dominance of the USPD which was unique in Germany, he gives the fact that the centres of the »counter-public« presented a *uniform and radical* interpretation of reality.