

Christoph Sachße / Florian Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland*, Bd. 2: Fürsorge und Wohlfahrtspflege 1871–1929, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln/Mainz 1988, 272 S., kart., 59,80 DM.

*Soziale Bewegungen. Jahrbuch 3: Armut und Ausgrenzung*, hrsg. von Heinz-Gerhardt Haupt, Annette Jost, Gerhard Leithäuser, Ulrich Mückenberger, Christian Riechers, Hans-Josef Steinberg, Volker Ullrich, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York 1987, 229 S., kart., 28 DM.

The Nazis gave a murderous new definition to the nineteenth-century distinction between the »worthy« and the »unworthy« poor. Using the case files of millions of Germans compiled by the Weimar welfare state, the Nazis identified and segregated those they deemed »racially and biologically unfit«, and then »re-educated«, sterilized or annihilated them. How had the state welfare system managed to penetrate German civil society so deeply that it was able to furnish the Nazis with the data and the bureaucratic machinery they required for the implementation of their racial dystopia?

*Christoph Sachße* and *Florian Tennstedt*'s excellent second volume of their history of social welfare in Germany provides many of the answers to this question. The origins of the Weimar welfare system can be traced back to the 1890s, when the deficiencies of the existing poor law were brought into sharp relief. The poor law was punitive and repressive. It treated only the symptoms of poverty, not its causes, and it discriminated against those it relieved by depriving them of the right to vote and other civil liberties. Bourgeois social reformers argued that the German state would have to do more to promote the health and welfare of the German people as a whole than the existing framework of the poor law allowed, if Germany was to become a world power, and if its political order were not to be undermined by the spread of socialism amongst the poor and underprivileged. This project required that welfare activities be removed from the shadow of the old poor law. Only by eliminating the stigma attached to poor relief, could the welfare system reach a constituency that was larger than the »deserving poor«. Alongside the old poor relief system there now emerged maternal and infant welfare centers, public health agencies that campaigned against tuberculosis and venereal diseases, youth welfare officers and housing inspectors.

The new ideology of social welfare made no concessions to socialism but drew its justification instead from what Sachße and Tennstedt call the »scientification of the social«. The application of science to the study of society was meant to achieve a broad political consensus on social reform and remove social policy decisions from the realm of political debate and conflict. The social policy and public health experts, not the politicians, would structure the German welfare system according to the imperatives of »social hygiene« and the emerging »human sciences«. The expansion of welfare activities provided new careers for the sons and, increasingly, the daughters of the educated middle classes. Social work emerged as a profession dominated by middle class women whose gender, so it was argued, uniquely qualified them for their new public roles.

World War One and the inflation produced the so-called »new poor«, consisting of war widows, war invalids and middle-class victims of the post-war hyperinflationary spiral. The Weimar Republic could not treat them with the contempt that the old poor law displayed towards even the »deserving poor«. The Weimar constitution and subsequent welfare legislation awarded German citizens social as well as political rights. Yet even at its highpoint, the Weimar welfare system was a problematic achievement. Millions of Germans received new benefits but only at the cost of being subjected to surveillance and social disciplining by the state. And after 1929, under the crushing burdens of world depression, mass unemployment and the fiscal crises of local government authorities, millions of Germans were again subjected to treatment reminiscent of the worst features of the old poor law system.

The authors who have contributed to *Soziale Bewegungen. Jahrbuch 3* go more deeply into

the social history of poverty and social welfare than Sachße and Tennstedt. *Michael Grüttner* paints a fascinating picture of the »floating population« in the period of German industrialisation. He shows how the social reform impulse of the 1890s was fueled by bourgeois fears that the slum areas where mobile, casual laborers lived would infect urban society with debilitating diseases and political radicalism. *Anselm Faust* explores trade union attempts to create unemployment benefit schemes before World War One and he connects these pre-war initiatives with the construction of a state unemployment insurance system in the Weimar Republic. *Arne Andersen's* study of the politics of unemployment in Bremen shows that the unemployed were neither passive nor resigned to their fates. But the protests they staged and the types of »self-help« they engaged in did not always conform to the Bremen KPD's preconceptions of proper proletarian behaviour. German communists saw the unemployed primarily in terms of the service they might render to the broader, revolutionary class struggle. The KPD created a fatal gap between its politics and the everyday experiences of the unemployed by refusing to pay sufficient attention to unemployed workers' immediate needs and interests.

One of the most intriguing and original contributions to this volume is *Adelheid von Saldern's* study of financial and housing policy at the local level during the Depression. She shows how a political decision to make the working-class bear the brunt of the Depression's impact was translated into an apparently objective language of fiscal necessity. In this process, local governments were deprived of their autonomy and the welfare system was progressively gutted. Drawing on local welfare files in Hannover and Frankfurt archives, von Saldern vividly demonstrates what these developments meant in human terms. She draws particular attention to the largely neglected problems of the millions of German tenants who faced eviction and homelessness.

The other essays in this collection provide useful points of comparison with *Sachße* and *Tennstedt's* book by taking us considerably beyond its chronological and geographical framework. *Barbara Riedmüller* discusses the discrimination against women that permeates systems of social insurance and social welfare not only in Germany but in most other western nations. *Ulrich Billerbeck* asks provocatively whether the threat of mass unemployment might not also be seen as an opportunity to articulate a political programme for the satisfaction of non-material as well as economic needs. And in their piece on poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, *Gerhard Leithäuser* and *Günther Karl* outline the fundamental differences between western European concerns and the problems that confront countries in this region.

*Sachße* and *Tennstedt's* book is primarily an intellectual, organisational and administrative history of social welfare in Germany between 1871 and 1929. *Soziale Bewegungen. Jahrbuch 3* shows us that it is also possible to describe the impact of the welfare state on the everyday lives of ordinary Germans and to reconstruct popular reactions to the welfare system. But both volumes make important new contributions to the history of social welfare in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany.

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III. Internationales handwerksgeschichtliches Symposium. Veszprém 18.–24. 10. 1986, Red.: Péter Nagybakay und Gábor Németh, 2 Bde., Ungarische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Veszprémer Akademische Kommission, Veszprém 1987, 374 S. und 376 S.

In der neueren, seit etwa zwei Jahrzehnten an vielen Orten erfreulich belebten handwerksgeschichtlichen Forschung nimmt Ungarn einen führenden Platz ein. Das ist im wesentlichen das Verdienst des Arbeitskreises für Handwerksgeschichte der Veszprémer Akademischen Kommission der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, der seit den 1970er Jahren auf diesem Felde viel geleistet hat. Mit der Erarbeitung großer Bestandsübersichten (etwa des