

**Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte**

Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris

(Institut historique allemand)

Band 32/3 (2005)

DOI: 10.11588/fr.2005.3.63925

---

Rechtshinweis

Bitte beachten Sie, dass das Digitalisat urheberrechtlich geschützt ist. Erlaubt ist aber das Lesen, das Ausdrucken des Textes, das Herunterladen, das Speichern der Daten auf einem eigenen Datenträger soweit die vorgenannten Handlungen ausschließlich zu privaten und nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken erfolgen. Eine darüber hinausgehende unerlaubte Verwendung, Reproduktion oder Weitergabe einzelner Inhalte oder Bilder können sowohl zivil- als auch strafrechtlich verfolgt werden.

once more after the inflation, taxes were biting, debt levels had risen, and prices were falling. The result was an explosion of peasant disturbance across the Reich, seizing the headlines in Schleswig-Holstein but scarcely less disruptive elsewhere. The crisis led to the foundation of the Green Front in 1929, an attempt to consolidate the voice of German agriculture which – bearing in mind the title of the book – is dealt with rather cursorily. What followed – the infamous Eastern Aid and the accusation against Brüning of »agrarian bolshevism« – is horribly familiar but needs to be related. The detail on the fragmentation of the agrarian lobby in the late 1920s and early 1930s is presented through the disputes between the *Reichs-Landbund* and DNVP leaders – Martin Schiele, Karl Hepp, Alfred Hugenberg, and others – and the turmoil at local level in Baden, Brandenburg, and Thuringia, and the infiltration of the *Reichs-Landbund* by National Socialists such as Werner Willikens at Reich level and many other petty figures in the villages and country towns.

Along the way, due credit is given to the supportive activities of the *Reichs-Landbund* for its members. It did provide a sense of social involvement and practical advice on taxes and agricultural methods. As a network incorporating small farmers and noble estate-owners across most of the Reich, it was a significant organization, but one which proved itself very fragile in the face of severe economic difficulty. As Merkenich tells us, it had its ceremonies and its songs, including the »Landbundlied«, which, somewhat unimaginatively, was sung to the tune of the »Deutschlandlied«. It was about Germany and God and the peasantry, but it was also about »enemies«, »evil«, »need«, »death«, »mockery«, and »struggle«. Every other word spoke of resentment, anger and hostility. All this rhetoric dropped away when Hitler was appointed Chancellor. On 22 March 1933 the *Reichs-Landbund* leadership made a declaration to him, which ended with the words »Dienst am Vaterlande. Unser Acker ist Deutschland!« All one can say is that they did not serve it or plough it well.

Jonathan OSMOND, Cardiff

Stefan FEUCHT, *Die Haltung der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands zur Außenpolitik während der Weimarer Republik (1918–1933)*, Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, Bern et al. (Peter Lang) 1998, 565 p. (Moderne Geschichte und Politik, 10).

From the National Assembly elections in January 1919 to the eve of the Reichstag elections in July 1932 the SPD was the largest parliamentary party in Germany. However, it only furnished the Reich Chancellor in 1919–1920 and 1928–30 and the Foreign Minister for an even briefer period from June 1919 to June 1920. Hermann Müller was that person until he nominated Adolf Köster to take the portfolio in his short-lived first cabinet. One might therefore be forgiven for thinking that the foreign policy of the SPD in the Weimar Republic is of only marginal historical interest. This would be mistaken, since the party played an important stabilising role during the tenure of the Foreign Ministry by Gustav Stresemann from 1923 to 1929.

Feucht certainly believes that a study of the SPD's approach to foreign affairs is instructive, not just about the missed opportunities of the years after the First World War, but also in terms of current debates about social democratic foreign policy. He mentions the question of intervention abroad by democratic powers, and in the light of the later Iraq situation his observations are even more pertinent today. His main concern, however, is to explore the development of Social Democratic thinking from the years of the Kaiserreich, through the approval of war credits in 1914, the early crises of the Republic, the period of Locarno, to the strident debates about foreign policy in the years leading up to the National Socialist seizure of power. He does so on a sound basis of archival and published sources.

The first quarter of the book sets out the broad framework of Social Democratic foreign policy, with an emphasis on its democratic, pacific, and internationalist tone. The SPD in

the 1920s was not only behind the League of Nations principle but also – significantly for later – in favour of a United States of Europe. Apart from Müller and Köster, Rudolf Breitscheid and Rudolf Hilferding were the main spokesmen on foreign policy, the latter also providing its theoretical basis. Feucht also makes it very clear, however, that there was a fundamental tension within SPD thinking caused by the patriotic hurt of the lost war and Versailles. The SPD was revisionist in its aspirations, but in support of Stresemann's efforts in this direction.

The rest of the volume is devoted to four case studies, which demonstrate the complexity of an ›ethical‹ foreign policy in practice. The first is about the continuing German military presence in the Baltic states in 1918–19. Here there was a conflict between SPD support for the self-determination of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, German national interest, and anti-Bolshevism. This was exemplified in the bizarre figure of August Winning, a Social Democratic trade unionist appointed as *Generalbevollmächtigter* of the Reich for the Baltic lands in November 1918. Feucht explores in detail what proved to be an adventurous disaster for Social Democratic foreign policy. The second case study is more familiar: the *Ruhrkampf* of 1923. Here the SPD had both the national interest in mind, and also a specific role in relation to the workers of the Ruhr. Feucht is careful to point out, though, that the SPD still hoped to find a solution through its contacts with French socialists. The third instance is the debate about the Locarno Treaties, during which the SPD played an important role, despite some internal dissent and sometimes difficult dealings with the French socialists and the British Labour Party. SPD policy, summed up by Hilferding as ›realistic pacifism‹, was disappointed in its broader internationalist aspirations, but for a time was crucial in shoring up Stresemann and the rehabilitation of Germany on the European and world stage. The final case study deals with the general question of Social Democratic approaches to disarmament. In the main the SPD favoured international moves towards disarmament, but this affected primarily the other powers. Within Germany, the SPD had problems in coming to terms with the Reichswehr, and by the early 1930s was more concerned about the threat from the National Socialists. During its reluctant tacit support of Brüning's government it was forced to make compromises on armaments issues.

Feucht ascribes to Social Democratic foreign policy thinking a forward-looking, modern approach which, even without some errors by the SPD, frankly stood little chance in the domestic and international politics of the interwar years. Gustav Bauer's commendable emphasis at the beginning of the period on honesty in domestic and foreign policy and Hermann Müller's honourable reference to Kant's ›Perpetual Peace‹ would have to wait for at least some fruition until the *Ostpolitik* of fellow Social Democrat, Willy Brandt.

Jonathan OSMOND, Cardiff

Norman H. LAPORTE, *The German Communist Party in Saxony, 1924–1933. Factionalism, Fratricide, and Political Failure*, Oxford, Bern, Berlin u. a. (Peter Lang) 2003, 399 S., 1 Abb.

Die historische Kommunismusforschung wurde in den letzten Jahren von einem Konflikt erfaßt, in dem sich ein vor allem von Klaus Michael Mallmann vertretener sozial-kultureller Ansatz gegen eine politische Geschichtsschreibung ›von oben‹ wandte, als deren Hauptvertreter der Nestor der deutschen Kommunismusforschung, Hermann Weber, hingestellt wurde<sup>1</sup>. Ich habe in diesem Streit, die Position vertreten, daß die an sich unproduktive Frontstellung zwischen einer angeblichen ›Geschichtsschreibung von oben‹ und einer

1 Klaus Michael MALLMANN, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung*, Darmstadt 1996.