

tion all are called upon to help the beneficial purgatory work of the NKVD (“every honest citizen”, “every patriot”, “every worker”). Even in those instances where those helping the NKVD are identified and specific social groups named, care was taken to maintain a certain balance. When Maier cites a series of five reports which, according to him, are irrefutable evidence that the Stakhanov movement was massively aiding the NKVD (p. 400, notes 160–164), he neglects to mention that these five reports appeared in special issues in which an NKVD celebration was extensively covered. The first of these reports Maier has misinterpreted. There is no doubt that the millions of eyes and ears which the NKVD is quoted as having at its disposal clearly belonged to workers in general and not the Stakhanovites in particular.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is also questionable whether the second and fourth reports cited refer exclusively to the Stakhanovites.

One reason for this one-sided interpretation is the fact that Maier, as he himself admits in his bibliography, studied an “incomplete set” (*Pravda*) or single issues (*Za Industriializatsiyu*) of some of his sources. But does not he himself indicate here that his research is not complete?

Leo van Rossum

HACHTMANN, RÜDIGER. *Industriearbeit im “Dritten Reich”. Untersuchungen zu den Lohn- und Arbeitsbedingungen in Deutschland 1933–1945. [Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Band 82.]* Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1989. 464 pp. DM 86.00.

In this study, which grew out of a dissertation supervised by Reinhard Rürup, Hachtmann initially asks the question why the industrial working class did not mount stronger resistance to the nazi regime. He locates the main cause for this phenomenon – all the more mysterious since the nazis had deprived the working class of all its rights – in the changes effected by the drive towards modernization and rationalization in industry, which transformed the working and social conditions of the working class. According to Hachtmann, the new practices were first introduced on a large scale in 1935–1936 and subsequently extended to much of manufacturing industry, also during the Second World War. (In general, it must be said that research on this worldwide revolutionary development is still very patchy.) The intriguing aspect of Hachtmann’s argument seems to me his contention that the defeat of the German working class was not a direct consequence of the nazi dictatorship and the system it imposed, but a phenomenon which transcended that system and whose development therefore should be investigated also in different countries and different periods. Recognizing this, Hachtmann shows, with refreshing clarity, certain continuities between the pre-war period and developments in the Federal Republic of Germany.

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, 18 July 1937, “U bolshevikia slovo ne raskhoditsia s delom!”. See also Gábor T. Rittersporn, *Simplifications staliennes et complications soviétiques. Tensions sociales et conflits politiques en URSS 1933–1953* (Paris, 1988), p. 174, who likewise thinks that the author of the *Pravda* article was referring to the “people” and “workers” in general.

The various studies on the social conditions of the majority of the population (workers, peasants, white-collar workers) during the 1930s have until now been contradictory. Historians have frequently painted the situations of these groups in black on black. In any case, left-wing and other anti-fascist forces at the time saw clearly enough how the state and employers ruthlessly pursued the interests of rearmament and profit against working people. The workers' organizations were smashed. By means of a constant threat of terror the new government also ensured that working conditions and wage levels were removed as issues in the contractual bargaining, such as remained, between workers and employers. Employers in fact found themselves in a position where, with the help of state regulations and institutions, they could dictate conditions in the workplace and keep wages low. Yet despite this, as contemporaries already observed, the nazis were able to win over large sections of the working class to their cause. This cannot be explained solely by propaganda and manipulation. It is undeniable that the eradication of mass unemployment within a few years and Hitler's foreign-policy successes (especially after 1938) made a great impression and consolidated the regime's position domestically. Research has also shown that actual earnings in the war economy outstripped collectively agreed and state-determined rates and that the discrepancy between real and set wage levels grew larger as time went on.

Hachtmann investigates, for the first time in such detail and with innovative methods, the social impact on the industrial working class of the "breakthrough" in manufacturing production and organization mentioned above. The study deals primarily with wage levels, working conditions and corporate social policy during the 1930s. But the chapters on the relationship between rationalization and skill levels among industrial workers and about the "work-related deterioration of health" are also of great interest.

Hachtmann relies on a profusion of detailed information, dates and figures to show the congruence of the interests between the nazi regime and the armaments industry, especially the mutual compatibility between the planning and rationalization policies of the corporate sector in general and big business in particular and the regime's measures in the areas of wage and social policy. The nazi's wage policy consistently applied the brakes to keep real incomes as low as possible. It was successful policy in its own terms, "although it was not based on a clearly worked-out strategy; rather, the regime's interventions in wage determination were invariably ad hoc and devised for the short term" (p. 126). The state and the nazi party also supported the increasingly effective wage-depressing activities of the assessors of the National Board for Working Time Studies (*Reichsausschuß für Arbeitszeitstudien*, REFA [known as the National Board for Work Studies] after 1936, even against the sporadic opposition of the National-Socialist Factory Cells Organization (*Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation*, NSBO) and the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, DAF). "Nationalist-socialist performance medicine" relied on draconian measures to reduce sickness levels and turn "anti-social elements", "idlers" and the "work-shy" over to nazi terror. Sickleave, insurance benefits and other provisions were savagely cut.

In turn the modernization and rationalization and the more or less closely related wage and social policies pursued by the employers produced results which dovetailed with the political and racist objectives of the nazi regime. According to

Hachtmann, modern rationalized mass production, in particular assembly-line work, was introduced on a large scale from the mid 1930s onwards. Unfortunately he is able to support this key thesis only by individual case studies and indirectly by figures on the development of labour productivity. One therefore has to be sceptical of the absolute form in which the thesis is presented here. Moreover, it is in my view overdrawn at least as far as the pre-war years are concerned. But Hachtmann is right to say that the many new factories and production plants which were set up during the rearmament drive and the war were very productive. He shows that mass production and assembly-line work and the corresponding new wage systems had a strongly disciplinary effect. The production line "must have had destructive influences on social communication" (p. 83). It is also telling that the nazis considered women "well or better suited" than men for such activities as assembly-line work requiring "little mental effort" (p. 85). Later on during the war foreign forced-labour convicts (both male and female) replaced German workers in much of the assembly-line work, particularly in the armaments industry.

While high earning power and good career prospects were always kept open as a possibility for highly qualified German (male) workers, the wage and income differentials continued to widen – within overall significantly reduced levels of wages and real incomes compared to the 1920s – between branches of industry, skilled and unskilled workers, men and women, larger and smaller companies, urban and rural areas, and regions. This social disintegration of the working class made it easier for the regime to achieve the kind of social integration it postulated in political and ideological terms in the "community of the people" ( *Volksgemeinschaft*). And the introduction during the war of foreign labour on a large scale led to a further erosion of solidarity among German workers. The nazi regime promoted and justified the creation of an "underclass" of foreign workers underneath the German industrial working class on the basis of its crass racist ideology. The introduction of foreign labour was thus given a special fascist stamp by its reliance on racism and terror. But as a social phenomenon with profound political implications it also proved characteristic (like many other phenomena investigated by Hachtmann) of today's modern industrial countries.

Hachtmann concludes that the overall process he has analysed in his study precipitated a loss of solidarity, an increase in discipline and a strengthening of social integration among the German industrial working class – precisely what the regime intended. "In addition to the political and legal upheaval which the nazi takeover brought about, it was structural factors rooted in the modern industrialized capitalist societies which caused the 'paralysation' of the working class" (p. 308). This is a stimulating thesis, constituting a special variant of the "modernization thesis" within the context of the theory of fascism.

In addition to this summary of the study I would like to make some further remarks. It is of great interest and necessary for better understanding to fit the specific German development analysed here into the international trend of the truly epoch-making modernization of the production apparatus that existed in the early years of this century. In this worldwide race, which was launched after the First World War, the United States was from the beginning well ahead. But relative positions in this race of the Western European countries should be studied and determined more closely. By the 1930s Germany was beginning to make up for the

handicaps imposed on it by the economic conditions of the post-war settlements. The obstruction of its economic expansion, combined with its own economic dynamism, strengthened the hand of politically extremely aggressive revanchist forces within the ruling class. The nazi dictatorship, intent from the beginning on rearmament and war, carried out the aims of these forces in foreign, domestic and economic policy. Hachtmann shows how the dictatorship accommodated the need for modernization in the German economy. Although he posits his variant of the modernization thesis fairly uncritically, it seems plausible enough to me insofar as his study overall leaves no doubt that the nazi dictatorship and nazi policy fostered and accelerated this development, although they were not its driving forces. The main actors and beneficiaries of this process were, and after 1945 remained, the employers, above all big business.

Because of his specific sociohistorical approach, Hachtmann's study leaves open the problem of how the nazi regime's support of industrial modernization compared with the situation in other capitalist countries, and what advantages and disadvantages this kind of fascist economic support had for modernizing big capital (quite apart from the effects and implications of the war).

The question of the relationship between modernization and the "paralysization" of the industrial working class cannot be limited to the fascist regime of Germany between 1933 and 1945 either. It deserves to be analysed within the context of the history of the labour movement in the second half of the twentieth century. As far as the nazi period is concerned, it seems to me that Hachtmann puts the emphasis wrongly. The key factors in the disarming and paralysing of the working class at this time were surely the "political and legal upheaval" and the conversion of Germany into a war economy (in other words, the regime's use of fascist terror as the primary means of moulding the world of work), the bandwagon effect of the regime's initial economic and political successes, and, although less important, the effect of nazi ideology and demagoguery.

*Dietrich Eichholtz*