

## National socialism and the new middle class

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## National Socialism and the New Middle Class

In the recent literature devoted to the sociology of Weimar politics, a new consensus concerning the social bases of National Socialism appears to be emerging. According to this view, the NSDAP did not simply represent a party of lower middle class revolt or a movement of declassé mass man but a catch-all party of middle class protest. Unlike the traditional bourgeois parties of the center and right, the NSDAP succeeded in bridging the considerable cleavages which had long divided the major elements of Germany's socially heterogeneous *Mittelstand*. By 1932 it had, therefore, become a unique phenomenon in German electoral politics, a successful party of bourgeois integration.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, this National Socialist constituency was neither stable nor static. The social composition of the Nazi electorate changed significantly between 1924 and 1932, and support for the party varied in intensity, duration, and depth from one group to another. Within some segments of the middle class the pattern of support was clearly crisis related, surging in bad times, receding in good. In other groups, support was both consistent and strong, reflecting more fundamental sociopolitical affinities.<sup>2</sup> Because of the changing contours of the Nazi constituency, efforts to understand the social dynamics of German fascism must focus on the shifting patterns of middle class electoral sympathies, isolating trends within each of the *Mittelstand's* major components.

Of these patterns, perhaps none is more problematic or misunderstood than the relationship between National Socialist voting and the white collar employees and civil servants of the "new middle class".<sup>3</sup> White collar employees, though not necessarily their civil service counterparts, are usually linked with the farmers, shopkeepers, and self-employed artisans of the "old middle class" as representatives of a *Kleinbürgertum* traumatized by the disruptions of the post-war economy and hence a prime source of recruitment for the radical right. The success of the NSDAP among the marginal entrepreneurs of the old middle class has been documented by

<sup>1</sup> See Linz, Juan J., Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective, in: Laqueur, Walter (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide. Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1976, S. 3-121.

<sup>2</sup> Childers, Thomas, *The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11 (1976), S. 17-42.

<sup>3</sup> The classical definition of "the new middle class" as a "Zwischenschicht" between the entrepreneurial *Mittelstand* and the blue collar proletariat was formulated by Emil Lederer in two works: *Die Privatangestellten in der modernen Wirtschaftsentwicklung*, Tübingen 1912, and his later collaborative analysis with Jakob Marschak, *Der neue Mittelstand, Grundriß der Sozialökonomik*, Tübingen 1926.

a variety of empirical methods. Indeed, these independent *Mittelständler* were to remain the hard core of National Socialist electoral support from 1924 through the campaigns of 1932.<sup>4</sup>

The voting preferences of white collar employees, on the other hand, have been inferred almost exclusively from the political orientation of the organized *Angestelltenverbände*, which together represented only about one third of the white collar labor force. Moreover, the resulting portrait of white collar political behavior tends to be further distorted by the literature's concentration on the right wing *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* (DHV), while the liberal and socialist unions, which in 1931 still represented the majority of Germany's organized white collar employees, have attracted very little scholarly attention.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, civil servants have been almost totally ignored in the analysis of Weimar voting. Relatively few studies of their organizations are available<sup>6</sup>, and most investigations of the electoral preferences of the new middle class have treated civil servants and white collar employees together, as if the two were socially identical. Though this approach may have a certain statistical utility, the distinction between *Angestellte* and *Beamte* must be drawn if important variations of socioelectoral behavior are to be isolated and important clues in tracing the social foundations of fascism are to be uncovered.

During the Weimar period, the new middle class made up approximately twenty per cent of the German labor force. Of these salaried nonmanuals, forty-one per cent were employed in the commercial and transportation sectors, twenty-seven per cent in industry and handicrafts, and twenty-two per cent in administrative and profes-

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Winkler, Heinrich August, *Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus: Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik*, Cologne 1971; Heberle, Rudolf, *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig Holstein 1918–1932*, Stuttgart 1962; and Childers, *Social Bases*.

<sup>5</sup> The DHV has been the subject of a number of scholarly works. See, in particular, Hamel, Iris, *Völkischer Verband und Nationale Gewerkschaft*, Hamburg 1967, and Jones, Larry, E., *Between the Fronts: The German National Union of Commercial Employees from 1928 to 1933*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, 48 (1976). Also of interest are the memoirs of Krebs, Albert, *Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP. Erinnerungen an die Frühzeit der Partei*, Stuttgart 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Among the most useful studies of the civil service are Runge, Wolfgang, *Politik und Beamtentum im Parteienstaat. Die Demokratisierung der politischen Beamten in Preussen zwischen 1918 und 1933*, Stuttgart, 1965; Morsey, Rudolf, *Zur Beamtenpolitik des Deutschen Reichs von Bismarck bis Brüning*, and Fenske, Hans, *Monarchisches Beamtentum und Demokratischer Staat*, both in *Demokratie und Verwaltung*, Schriftenreihe der Hochschule Speyer, Berlin, 50 (1972). Although focusing on a later period, Caplan, Jane, *The Politics of Administration: The Reich Interior Ministry and the German Civil Service 1933–1943*, in: *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), S. 707–736, as well as Mommsen, Hans, *Beamtentum im Dritten Reich*, Stuttgart 1966, provide important perspectives on the Weimar years.

<sup>7</sup> See, in particular, Samuel A. Pratt's often cited *The Social Bases of Nazism and Communism in Urban Germany. A Correlation Study of the July 31, 1932, Reichstag Election in Germany*, M. A. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1948.

sional services. More than any other occupational groups, white collar employees and civil servants were urban dwellers. Over two thirds of the middle class lived in cities with over twenty thousand inhabitants, almost half in the large metropolitan centers of over one hundred thousand residents.<sup>8</sup>

Of its two major components, white collar employees in the private sector were certainly more numerous, comprising about sixty-one per cent of the economy's salaried nonmanuals. Measured by objective economic criteria, they were also harder hit by the recurrent economic dislocations of the era. White collar salaries were low and unemployment high, especially during the inflation and stabilization crises of later 1923 and early 1924. In May 1924, for example, when National Socialist candidates appeared on German ballots for the first time, the ratio of applicants to available jobs in sales stood at fifteen to one, a ratio exceeded only by that of white collar clerical employees.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as unemployment in other occupational categories abated during the period of relative prosperity between 1924 and 1929, joblessness among white collar personnel persisted at disturbingly high levels. In banking, the most prestigious white collar sector, the stabilization of the mid-twenties brought rationalization and the layoff of thousands. From a high of 320 000 employees in 1923, white collar positions in banking fell to 100 000 in 1928.<sup>10</sup>

With the onset of the depression, the situation of the white collar population deteriorated more rapidly. Between 1928 and 1932, salaries in banking and retail commerce, by far the largest private employers of white collar labor, fell by approximately twenty-six per cent. More serious, however, was the relentless rise of joblessness among white collar personnel. In September 1928, 80 000 white collar employees received unemployment compensation. Two years later the figure had swollen to 261 000, and by December 1932, 522 000.<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Preller has estimated that whereas 2,4 % of all white collar employees were unemployed in 1927, 13,6 % were jobless in 1932.<sup>12</sup>

Though certainly more insulated than their counterparts in the private sector, civil servants also claimed to be victimized by the economic woes of the period. Most traumatic were the austerity measures introduced by the Reich government in 1923 which resulted in a mass layoff of public officials. Forced into drastic budget slashing by the exigencies of stabilization, the Reich dismissed 164 000 civil servants and employees between November 1923 and April 1924, and state and local govern-

<sup>8</sup> Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, Bd. 408, S. 173.

<sup>9</sup> These economic data have been collected from the Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1924–1925, S. 289. For a contemporary analysis of the economic plight of the white collar employee see Nothaas, Josef, Die Stellenlosigkeit der Angestellten, in: Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv, 16 (1927), S. 290 f.

<sup>10</sup> Dreyfuss, Carl, Beruf und Ideologie der Angestellten, Dissertation, Munich, 1933, translated by WPA and Department of Social Science, Columbia University New York 1938, S. 214.

<sup>11</sup> Speier, Hans, Die Angestellten vor dem Nationalsozialismus. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der deutschen Sozialstruktur 1918–1933, Göttingen 1977, S. 72.

<sup>12</sup> Preller, Ludwig, Sozialpolitik in der Weimarer Republik, Kronberg und Düsseldorf 1978, S. 167.

ments were compelled to take similar measures. It is estimated that nearly 750 000 public officials and civil employees lost their jobs. Since civil servants enjoyed special legal privileges, among which was a position of permanent tenure, the emergency measures of 1923–24 were viewed by the Reich's civil service's associations as a direct challenge to the unique legal and social status of the German *Beamtentum*. Job security, once a striking advantage of the public servant over his counterpart in the private sector, was no longer a reality.<sup>13</sup>

Civil servants also complained of a decline in real income. In the months before the May elections of 1924, the salary of a low ranking civil servant in a major urban area was even lower than that of a retail clerk.<sup>14</sup> Although civil servants of all ranks suffered a decline in real income, the highest echelons were hardest hit. Officials in the top five grades saw their real income shrink to between twenty-seven and thirty-five per cent of their pre-war levels. This loss was considered even more onerous since, as one civil service commentator observed, "the highest officials were very poorly paid even before the war." These civil servants were also less able to rely on supplementary income from investments since many had placed their money in government bonds with fixed rates of interest.<sup>15</sup>

Lower level officials also experienced a contraction of real income, though to a lesser extent. During 1923 real incomes in the lower ranks amounted to between forty-three and eighty-two per cent of the pre-war standards. Yet, many middle and lower level civil servants were forced to augment their income with a second job. Teachers, in particular, seem to have been hard hit by the inflation. Responding to a survey on income and living conditions, a number of academics reported that they were forced to work for day wages as manual laborers while others were compelled to sell personal belongings to maintain the standard of living to which they had become accustomed. At the German Natural Sciences Conference in 1922, one scholar voiced his fear that due to the inflation, which at that time had not approached the fantastic proportions of the following year, Germany's "cultured middle class" was "about to disappear".<sup>16</sup>

Legislation enacted in 1927 at last brought some improvement in civil service salaries, but the deepening depression after 1928 again precipitated a crisis atmosphere within the *Beamtentum*. Although civil servants continued to enjoy greater job security than white collar employees, public officials were jolted by a series of emergency measures which substantially reduced pensions and pay. Between December 1930 and February 1932, civil service salaries were slashed by approximately twenty per cent, and reduction of pensions and other benefits were staples of the Brü-

<sup>13</sup> See Caplan, Jane, *Politics of Administration*, S. 708–711.

<sup>14</sup> *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1924–1925*, XLIV, S. 286.

<sup>15</sup> For an impassioned attack on this "levelling process" see Weber, Alfred, *Die Not der Geistigen Arbeiter*, München und Leipzig 1923, S. 16–25 und S. 41–51.

<sup>16</sup> Schreiber, Georg, *Die Not der deutschen Wissenschaft und der geistigen Arbeiter*, Leipzig 1923, S. 42.

ning recovery program. Although never implemented, cutbacks in government personnel, reminiscent of the layoffs of 1923–24, were widely feared.<sup>17</sup>

In this increasingly bleak situation, many educators and university administrators were deeply concerned about the paucity of available positions for their graduates, many of whom had discovered their expectations for a civil service career destroyed by the economic dislocations of the post-war period. Even before the depression, unemployment among professionals, particularly teachers, had reached exorbitant levels. By 1930 mounting public concern was expressed about the "emergence of an intellectual proletariat in the younger generation." Within just a few years, one troubled observer warned, an "army of 120 000 unemployed academics" would exist in Germany. These jobless scholars would represent "battalions of agitators" who, by "arousing and whipping up the masses", would "shake the *Volk* and the state to their foundations".<sup>18</sup>

Given these severe economic pressures, both white collar employees and, to a somewhat lesser degree, civil servants appear to have been primed for radical political behavior. According to the traditional interpretation, the steadily declining economic fortunes of the white collar population exacerbated an already advanced case of status anxiety and resulted in a gradual radicalization of the *Angestelltenschaft*. Examination of the relative strengths of the white collar unions, the most frequently cited evidence of this radicalization, does, indeed, reveal that a rightward gravitation of white collar sentiment had begun by at least 1925. In 1920, the *Afa-Bund*, a Free Trade Union associated with the SPD, accounted for almost forty-eight per cent of organized white collar labor, while the christian-nationalist *Gedag*, with its major affiliate, the DHV, represented about thirty-two per cent and the liberal GDA twenty-one per cent. By 1931, however, the *Gedag* had surpassed the Afa to become the largest white collar union.<sup>19</sup> Though not formally affiliated with any political party, the *Gedag* maintained close ties with the conservative DNVP until 1928 and thereafter its rank and file appears to have been successfully infiltrated by the National Socialists. In 1930 one union associate estimated that half of the DHV's members had voted Nazi in the Reichstag election of that year.<sup>20</sup>

To explain this apparent white collar attraction to National Socialism, historians and sociologists have traditionally stressed the preoccupation of salaried employees with the maintenance of their precarious middle class status. Lodged between the entrepreneurial *Mittelstand* and the blue collar proletariat, white collar employees

<sup>17</sup> See Mommsen, Hans, *Die Stellung der Beamtenschaft in Reich, Ländern und Gemeinden in der Ära Brüning*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte zur Zeitgeschichte*, 21 (1973), S. 151–165.

<sup>18</sup> Achner, Leonhard, *Der Arbeitsmarkt der geistigen Berufe*, in: *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv*, 20 (1931), S. 481–495.

<sup>19</sup> Figures for union membership are found in Kocka, Jürgen, *Zur Problematik der deutschen Angestellten 1914–1933*, in: Mommsen, Hans, Petzina, Dietmar, Weisbrod, Bernd (Hrsg.), *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf 1974, S. 799.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, Larry E., *Between the Fronts*, S. 473.

are said to have experienced a mounting fear of social decline, of proletarianization.<sup>21</sup> Certainly the non-socialist white collar unions were insistent on preserving a social and occupational position strictly segregated from blue collar labor. Both the liberal and christian-nationalist unions endorsed the preservation of separate social agencies for white collar employees. These organizations, such as the white collar insurance and health administrations, perpetuated the gap between manual and non-manual labor and were intended to do just that. Similarly, both unions shared a corporatist view of the white collar role in society, each seeing the *Angestellten-schaft* as an "estate", a distinct social order with its own unique economic and spiritual role in politics and society.<sup>22</sup> Although the NSDAP maintained an ambivalent attitude toward the future of unions, whether white or blue collar, its espousal of a corporatist economy and the concomitant maintenance of a distinct white collar *Stand*, is said to have been a major factor in attracting white collar support.<sup>23</sup> Yet, in spite of the apparent vulnerability of the white collar/civil service population to the social and economic vicissitudes of the Weimar period, electoral support for the NSDAP within the new middle class appears to have been far less extensive than the traditional literature suggests. A regression analysis<sup>24</sup> of voting in a sample of one hundred and thirty-five geographically distributed, socially diverse, and predominantly Protestant communities ranging in size from fifteen thousand to over a million inhabitants reveals that the Nazi-new middle class relationship was surprisingly tenuous, even after the onset of the depression. The weakness of this relationship is particularly striking since the NSDAP found its most extensive and consistent support, especially after 1928, in precisely such Protestant areas.<sup>25</sup> However,

<sup>21</sup> Winkler, for example, states categorically that "the white collar workers were the group which was most afraid of proletarianization". Similarly, Franz Neumann maintains that the "salaried and professional employee did not want to 'be reduced to the level of the masses'. He fought to retain his tenuous middle-class status." See Winkler, Heinrich A., *From Social Protectionism to National Socialism: The Small-Business Movement in Comparative Perspective*, in: *Journal of Modern History*, XLVIII (1976), S. 10, and Neumann, Franz, *Behemoth. The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944*, New York 1944, S. 411.

<sup>22</sup> See Fischer, Fritz W., *Die Angestellten, ihre Bewegung und ihre Ideologie*, Dissertation, Heidelberg 1931, and Jobst, Rudolf, *Die Deutsche Angestelltenbewegung in ihrer Stellung zu Kapitalismus und Klassenkampf*, Dissertation, Jena 1930, S. 72-76.

<sup>23</sup> Kocka, *Problematik*, S. 807-808.

<sup>24</sup> The figures in the tables below are partial regression coefficients. Such coefficients indicate the amount of change to be expected in the dependent variable for every unit of change in the independent variable when the effects of a third variable are statistically controlled. In Table I, for example, the Nazi vote increased .225% for every one per cent increase in the number of salaried non-manuals in a city, controlling for the effects of the Catholic population. For an introduction to regression analysis in electoral research see Tufté, Edward R., *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1974, S. 65-77 und S. 134-148.

<sup>25</sup> For the effects of religious affiliation on National Socialist voting see Burnham, Walter Dean, *Political Immunization and Political Confessionalism: The United States and Weimar Germany*, in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1972), S. 1-30.

before 1930 the white collar/civil service variable proved to be a much stronger predictor of both the liberal and conservative votes than of the Nazi. In the pre-depression era electoral sympathies within the new middle class appear to have been distributed between the two traditional alternatives of bourgeois politics. After 1928, however, the liberal figures dropped steadily, and the National Socialist coefficients surged, peaking in 1930. Thereafter, the strength of the Nazi-new middle class relationship slipped markedly, while the conservative coefficients exhibited a sustained rise. Even in the critical election of July 1932, when the NSDAP received 37.3 % of the vote, the new middle class remained more strongly related to the conservative DNVP than to the National Socialists. (See Table 1).

Table I: New Middle Class and Party Vote in Predominately Protestant Communities (N=135)

	1924a	1924b	1928	1930	1932a	1932b
NSDAP	.154	.047+	.078	.225	.188	.154
DNVP	.281	.481	.336	.193	.208	.294
LIB (DDP + DVP)	.212	.146	.286	.277	.066+	.099

The new middle class also lagged far behind other social variables as a predictor of the Nazi vote. Both the self-employed of the old middle class and the *Berufslose*, an amorphous census category of pensioners, investors, and others "without occupation"<sup>26</sup>, proved to be much more strongly related to Nazi electoral performance than the white collar/civil service population, even after the calamities of the world economic crisis descended on the Republic. (See Table 2).

Table II: National Socialist Vote and Occupational/Social Group in Predominately Protestant Communities (N=135)

	1924a	1924b	1928	1930	1932a	1932b
Berufslose	.496	.306	.154	.603	.800	.681
Self employed	.394	.046+	.365	.498	.672	.583
White Collar/ Civil Service	.154	.047+	.078	.225	.188	.154
Blue Collar	-.146	-.044+	-.076	-.231	-.291	-.205

Predominately Protestant Communities = those towns and cities with a Protestant population exceeding sixty per cent of total inhabitants. In Tables I-IV, the figures are regression coefficients, controlling for %Catholic in the population. A + indicates that the coefficient is less than two times the standard error.

<sup>26</sup> This group did not, however, include the unemployed.



Although some variations in this pattern emerge if the sample is divided into categories of large, medium, and small communities (*Groß-, Mittel- and Landstädte*, to use the census nomenclature), the Nazi-new middle class relationship is not directly related to size of community. In his correlation analysis of the July election of 1932, Samuel Pratt discovered that while the Nazi-white collar coefficients were stronger in cities of between fifty and one hundred thousand inhabitants (*Mittelstädte*) than in the larger metropolitan centers (*Großstädte*), they sank once again in the smaller communities of the sample (*Landstädte*).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, while the *Mittelstädte* demonstrated the highest coefficients, only eight per cent of Germany's new middle class resided in such cities.<sup>28</sup> Even if the largest cities are excluded from the sample, the white collar/civil service variable still rates far below the old middle class and *Berufslose* as a predictor of the National Socialist vote. (See Table 3).

Table III: National Socialist Vote and Occupational/Social Group in Predominately Protestant Communities of less than 100 000 Inhabitants (N=112)

	1924a	1924b	1928	1930	1932a	1932b
Berufslose	.501	.311	.142+	.632	.867	.699
Self employed	.396	.288	.345	.500	.636	.532
White Collar/ Civil Service	.199+	.119+	.102+	.312	.348	.254

The figures of Tables 1–3 strongly suggest that the depression simply did not bring the sharp crystalization of support for National Socialism within the new middle class so often assumed in the literature. Moreover, if the new middle class is further divided into its two component groups, an equally surprising socioelectoral pattern emerges. In the two key elections of the depression era, those of September 1930 and July 1932, the civil service variable proved to be a stronger predictor of the National Socialist vote than did its white collar counterpart in the *Mittel- and Großstädte* where over half of the salaried population resided. While the white collar coefficients rose steadily, peaking in the final election of 1932, the civil service coefficients followed the curve of Nazi electoral fortunes, reaching their apex in July 1932. (See Table 4).

Although the figures of both salaried groups prove significantly weaker than those of the old middle class and *Berufslose*, the surprisingly strong civil service coefficients are particularly suggestive. Because of their well established position in the state, civil servants, even in the middle and lower grades, enjoyed greater job security, often a higher level of education, and certainly greater social prestige than the vast majority of their counterparts in the private sector. Indeed, this disparity in

<sup>27</sup> Pratt, *Social Bases*, S. 78.

<sup>28</sup> *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Vol. 408, S. 173.

Table IVa: Party Vote and White Collar in Mittel- and Großstädten (N=80)

	1930	1932a	1932b
NSDAP	.244	.304	.733
DNVP	-.342	-.338	.784
LIB (DDP + DVP)	.277	.779	.335

Table IVb: Party Vote and Civil Service in Mittel- and Großstädten (N=80)

	1930	1932a	1932b
NSDAP	.488	.696	.387
DNVP	.172	.153	.320
LIB (DDP + DVP)	.102+	-.747	-.391

status, both legal and social, was keenly felt by the white collar unions which strove unceasingly to have their members recognized as "Privatbeamte".<sup>29</sup> Despite efforts of the Weimar government to "democratize" the *Beamten*, the civil service, as Theodor Geiger pointed out in 1932, retained much of its former character as "a social caste".<sup>30</sup> Thus, while civil servants, especially of the middle and lower ranks, appear to have possessed a varied social background,<sup>31</sup> pressure for conversion to the sociopolitical norms of *Beamten* was probably much greater than in white collar positions. According to Ralf Dahrendorf, civil servants, regardless of rank, were much more likely to identify with "the ruling classes" than would private employees.<sup>32</sup>

However, the special legal and social status of the *Beamten* had been under mounting pressure since the collapse of the Hohenzollern monarchy, and the political as well as economic dislocations of the early republic had produced, in Peter Merkl's words, "a whole crisis stratum in the military and public service".<sup>33</sup> During the turbulent Brüning years, civil service resentment over the challenge to its privileged po-

<sup>29</sup> Kocka, *Problematik*, S. 792.

<sup>30</sup> Geiger, Theodor, *Die soziale Schichtung des Deutschen Volkes. Soziographischer Versuch auf statistischer Grundlage*, Stuttgart, 1932, S. 98.

<sup>31</sup> See Nothaas, Josef, *Sozialer Auf- und Abstieg im deutschen Volke*, Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Soziologie, 9 (1930), S. 72-73.

<sup>32</sup> Dahrendorf, Ralf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Stanford, 1959, S. 51-57. According to Dahrendorf, this identification with the established structure of state and society renders civil servants less likely to engage in radical political activity than white collar employees.

<sup>33</sup> Merkl, Peter H., *Political Violence under the Swastika. 581 Early Nazis*, Princeton 1975, S. 54.

sition surged, spreading beyond the officials of the national administration to the *Land*, *Kreis* and municipal levels as well. As the crisis deepened, the parties of the anti-republican right, especially the NSDAP, were prepared to capitalize on the growing malaise.

In Württemberg, for example, where curtailment of salaries and benefits was particularly sharp, government officials were shocked at the "tone" of protesting civil servants. It was disturbing, one state minister remarked after hearing the complaints of university faculties, that "the professors have made their relationship to the state dependent on a triviality such as the abolition of emeritus status".<sup>34</sup> Symptomatically, in the district around Trier, police reports noted that interest in National Socialist rallies had become „very great not only among the small and middle businessmen but also among many civil servants of the court, customs, finance, and railroad administration."<sup>35</sup>

More ominously, however, investigators in Chemnitz discovered that an informal "Association of National Socialist Police Officers" had been founded, and Reichswehr officers reported an increase of Nazi sympathizers in the ranks of the army.<sup>36</sup> During a single week in early 1932, the Brunswick NSDAP held six rallies specifically for civil servants in municipal, state and Reich governments as well as for officials in the postal and customs services and employees of the state and private banks.<sup>37</sup>

Nazi appeals to the civil service electorate were quite prominent in the party's campaign literature both before and during the depression era. Between 1924 and 1932 National Socialist solicitation of the *Beamtentum* sounded two major themes. First, the party appealed to the threatened elitist tradition of the *Berufsbeamtentum*, lamenting that its unique and elevated status in the state and society had been debased by the "democratic excesses" of the Weimar system. Nazi electoral propaganda relentlessly pounded on the necessity of preserving the elitist status of the *Beamtenstand* against the demeaning incursions of "*Parteibuchbeamten*". Specifically, the party decried the Republic's policy of "democratization" of the civil service, which allegedly resulted in the promotion of unqualified personnel through the patronage of the SPD and DDP. In their first electoral campaign of 1924, the Nazis loud-

<sup>34</sup> Besson, Waldemar, *Württemberg und die deutsche Staatskrise 1928–1933*, Stuttgart 1959, S. 241–250.

<sup>35</sup> Heyen, Franz-Josef, *Nationalsozialismus im Alltag. Quellen zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus vornehmlich im Raum Mainz-Koblenz-Trier*, Boppard am Rhein 1967, S. 67.

<sup>36</sup> Orlow, Dietrich, *The History of the Nazi Party 1919–1933*, Pittsburgh 1969, S. 195.

<sup>37</sup> Noakes, Jeremy, *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921–1933*. London 1971, S. 173–174. Rallies for particular occupational groups were standard components of National Socialist propaganda technique. Nor were such rallies confined to the large cities of towns. William S. Allen notes, for example, that in "Thalburg", a community of ten thousand inhabitants, an evening meeting devoted to "The Civil Service and National Socialism" attracted an audience of over 1 500 persons. Allen, William S., *The Nazi Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town 1930–1935*, Chicago 1965, S. 44–45.

ly demanded the dismissal of all "revolution officials" and their replacement by "trained professional civil servants". Preservation of a "professional civil service", the Nazis reminded the *Beamtentum*, had been a plank in the original National Socialist platform adopted in 1920.<sup>38</sup>

Second, National Socialist propaganda laid heavy stress on what it viewed to be the unjust economic burden which the civil service had been forced to bear in the post-war period. Weimar partisan politics, the Nazis charged, had blocked the career advancement of qualified civil servants, while Weimar economic policy had steadily eroded the public official's standard of living. In both elections of 1924, for example, the National Socialists maintained that civil servants had borne the brunt of the government's harsh stabilization program, a charge repeated with added vehemence after the introduction of Brüning's austerity measures in 1930-31. The party consistently bemoaned the "monstrous" decrees which reduced salaries and pensions and charged the Brüning government with the harassment of rightist officials. When the regime instituted a two and one half per cent tax on civil service salaries following the acceptance of the Young Plan, the Nazi press charged that "all civil servants and employees of the Reich, the state governments, the municipalities, the Reichsbank, the Postal Service, and even members of the military" were being forced to pay Germany's unjust reparations. Not just high ranking officials, but "the great mass of civil servants", *Der Angriff* maintained, "must pay the Young tribute!"<sup>39</sup>

The long battle over the Young Plan also allowed the NSDAP to pose as an advocate of greater freedom of political expression for civil servants. The Prussian law forbidding civil service membership in the NSDAP or KPD was condemned as "the latest abomination of the "system" and during the party's referendum against the plan, the Nazis publicly charged the government with initiating "a campaign of terror" against civil servants who supported the right wing campaign. Nazi officials were being fired, the NSDAP contended, by a government infamous for its promotion of "Social Democratic and Democratic party members and notorious incompetents".<sup>40</sup>

National Socialist campaigns also stressed the shrinkage of job opportunities in the civil service, allegedly the product of Social Democratic patronage and government retrenchment. In 1924, the party called for the revocation of the emergency ordinances pertaining to personnel cutbacks and in subsequent campaigns refused to allow the SPD or the liberal parties to forget their participation in the governments responsible for those measures.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the völkisch/National Socialist campaign pamphlets, Rep. 240, Acc. 1941, Berliner Landesarchiv.

<sup>39</sup> *Der Angriff*, 17. August (1930).

<sup>40</sup> *Ebenda*.

<sup>41</sup> The two liberal parties, in particular, found themselves on the defensive. "Can one forget", one DVP publication asked plaintively, "that at the close of last year (1923) the German Reich stood before the imminent collapse of its finances and thus before hunger and turmoil? At that

While Nazi emphasis on these themes appears to have found substantial resonance within the troubled *Beamtentum*, particularly in the critical elections of 1930 and July 1932, the Nazi-white collar relationship was considerably weaker and more problematic. Although the Nazi-white collar coefficients do follow a gradually ascending curve, the figures are surprisingly low. Even in December 1932, as the liberal coefficients continued to fade, the white collar variable was a stronger predictor of the conservative vote than of the National Socialist. Fear of social decline, of *Proletarisierung*, was undoubtedly a powerful motivating force in the radicalization of some elements of the salaried population, particularly after the onset of the depression. Indeed, Pratt found joblessness among white collar employees and National Socialist voting to be strongly related.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, it is perhaps significant that the Nazi-white collar figures reached their zenith in December 1932, the month in which white collar unemployment peaked.<sup>43</sup> Given the grim economic realities of the depression, National Socialist promise to reduce unemployment and, more vaguely, to establish some form of corporatist social order may have been quite alluring to white collar employees threatened by joblessness or shrinking salaries.

However, while these aspects of the Nazi appeal may have attracted distressed white collar employees, much of Nazi propaganda was directed against institutions which were quite central to the economic survival of the *Angestelltenschaft*. In order to win the support of artisans and shopkeepers, the NSDAP ruthlessly condemned the large department stores where so many white collar employees worked as well as the consumer cooperatives where many white collar employees purchased their food and other necessities.<sup>44</sup> In fact, National Socialist stress on the plight of small business and the peasantry, its ambivalence, if not overt hostility, toward white collar unions, and its prominent solicitation of the working class vote were hardly calculated to attract white collar support.<sup>45</sup>

time it was necessary to take all measures without long deliberations which would balance the budget and protect the Rentenmark from deterioration", Berliner Stimmen. Zeitschrift für Politik, Nachrichtenblatt der DVP im Wahlkreisverband Berlin, Nr. 19 (1924). The DDP also complained that "the question of civil service incomes and personnel cutbacks" had been used by the Nationalists and the National Socialists "for ruthless agitation against the Republic and the governing parties". One Democratic Reichstag deputy, in fact, conceded publicly that "a reduction of such brutality should never have been allowed." See the Berliner Tageblatt, 3. Mai (1924).

<sup>42</sup> Pratt, *Social Bases*, S. 177–178.

<sup>43</sup> Preller, S. 168.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Bruchner, Hans, *Warenhauspolitik und Nationalsozialismus*, Nationalsozialistische Bibliothek, 13 (1931) as well as the same author's *Die sozialkapitalistischen Konsumvereine*, in: Nationalsozialistische Bibliothek, 11 (1929).

<sup>45</sup> Nazi appeals to the entrepreneurial *Mittelstand* are treated extensively in Winkler, *Mittelstand*, while the party's efforts to capture a working class constituency are explored in Kele, *Max, Nazis and Workers. National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919–1933*, Chapel Hill 1972.

Moreover, in a political culture where status formalization, based largely on occupation, was sharply pronounced,<sup>46</sup> and campaign literature was, therefore, addressed explicitly to *Handwerker, Bauern, Beamten*, etc., the paucity of such direct appeals to *Angestellte* in Nazi electoral propaganda suggests a basic ambivalence toward this very heterogeneous segment of the population. While artisans, shopkeepers, peasants, pensioners, civil servants, and workers received prominent coverage in Nazi campaign literature, white collar employees were usually treated more generally as components of the "*Arbeitnehmerschaft*" or as "*Arbeiter der Faust und der Stirn*". White collar employees fell between the well defined social fronts of German politics, even in Nazi propaganda.<sup>47</sup>

If the National Socialists were ambivalent about the *Angestelltenschaft*, that ambivalence appears to have been reciprocated by the white collar labor force. Although white collar employees were over-represented in the party in 1930, their relative share of the NSDAP's membership shrank during the three years before the National Socialist *Machtergreifung*.<sup>48</sup> In part, this may be due to the troubled relationship between party and the DHV, which refused to support Hitler's presidential candidacy in the spring of 1932, and the increasingly radical rhetoric of Nazi propaganda, which to some white collar circles appeared "Marxist". While the Nazi linkage of blue and white collar labor as "workers of the hand and the brain" was consistent with the party's evocations of a classless *Volksgemeinschaft*, the social leveling implied in the concept certainly ran counter to the sociopolitical policies of the non-socialist white collar organizations of the Weimar period.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, in evaluating white collar electoral support for the NSDAP, it is important to remember that approximately thirty per cent of the salaried population was female. In those districts where votes were tabulated by sex, women proved less likely to support National Socialism than their male counterparts.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Parsons, Talcott, *Democracy and Social Structure in Pre-Nazi Germany*, in: Parsons, Talcott, *Essays in Sociological Theory*, New York 1964, S. 112.

<sup>47</sup> Kele notes that the terms "workers of the Faust und Stirn" or "workers of the Hand und Kopf" were used with increasing frequency after 1928. It is also significant that, as Kele observes, "the Nazis had difficulty determining which Germans should be classified as "workers of Stirn". Kele, *Nazis and Workers*, S. 10 und S. 143-144.

<sup>48</sup> Schäfer, Wolfgang, *NSDAP: Entwicklung und Struktur der Staatspartei des dritten Reichs*. Hannover und Frankfurt a. M., 1957, S. 19.

<sup>49</sup> Kele, *Nazis and Workers*, S. 203. Statements such as that made by Reinhold Muchow, the director of the NSBO, on May Day, 1930, might certainly have been seen as radical by status conscious white collar employees. On that day he announced that the NSDAP, "the radical political group for a national and socialist reorganization of the state and economy of the Germans, thinks the time has come to accept the leadership of the proletariat of hand and head". *Der Angriff*, 1. Mai (1930), quoted in Kele, *Nazis and Workers*, S. 154.

<sup>50</sup> See Tingsten, Herbert, *Political Behavior. Studies in Election Statistics*, Bedminster 1963 and Shively, W. Phillips, *Party Identification, Party Choice and Voting Stability, The Weimar Case*, in: *American Political Science Review*, 66 (1972), S. 1203-1225.

Without survey data, of course, any effort to establish motivational impulses behind a Nazi vote must remain a matter of educated speculation. Declining economic power and social prestige obviously drove some white collar employees and civil servants to the National Socialist banner, as the traditional literature suggests. However, it is significant that the data collected by Theodor Abel and re-interpreted by Peter Merkl indicate that frustrated upward mobility was a very salient factor in prompting a commitment to the NSDAP. Over fifty per cent of the urban upwardly mobile Nazis in the Abel-Merkl sample were either civil servants or white collar employees.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Ronald Rogowski's recent study of the social origins of the Nazi Gauleiter reveals that a large proportion of these leaders were not products of lower middle class backgrounds at all but rather upwardly mobile persons with secure economic careers, many in the civil service.<sup>52</sup>

More research on the motivational aspects of the Nazi vote is necessary and our conclusions on that issue must remain tentative. However, given the extraordinary social diversity within the new middle class, especially among the white collar workers in the private sector,<sup>53</sup> portraits of the salaried non-manual population as a backward looking group obsessed with social status and hence more readily radicalized than other elements of the German *Mittelstand* simply obscure a very complex sociopolitical reality. Certainly distinctions between civil servants and white collar employees should be drawn, and, ideally, distinctions of political and social orientation within each of these heterogeneous groups as well. While the best method for isolating important socioelectoral trends across a broad national sample, the ecological statistical techniques employed here do not permit an analysis of political variation within either group.<sup>54</sup> More case studies of civil service and white collar organizations, attitudes, and political activities are, therefore, desperately needed.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Merkl, *Political Violence*, S. 62–76.

<sup>52</sup> Rogowski, Ronald, *The Gauleiter and the Social Origins of Fascism*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19 (1977), S. 399–430.

<sup>53</sup> For figures on the diverse backgrounds of white collar employees see *Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Angestellten. Ergebnisse und Erkenntnisse aus der großen sozialen Erhebung des Gewerkschaftsbundes der Angestellten*, Berlin 1931, S. 47, and Speier, Hans, *The Salaried Employees in German Society*, mimeograph, Columbia University, Department of Social Sciences and WPA, New York, S. 91.

<sup>54</sup> The literature on ecological statistical analysis is extensive. Among the most useful explications of the strengths and weaknesses of ecological analysis are Lichtman, Allan J., *Correlation, Regression, and the Ecological Fallacy: A Critique*, in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4 (1974), S. 417–343, and Kousser, J. Morgan, *Ecological Regression and the Analysis of Past Politics*, in the same journal, 4 (1973), S. 237–262.

<sup>55</sup> Analyses of the civil service during the Weimar period are woefully few in number. A provocative revision of the traditional view of white collar employees is to be found in Coyner, Sandra J., *Class Consciousness and Consumption: The New Middle Class During the Weimar Republic*, in: *Journal of Social History*, 3 (1977), S. 310–331.

What, then, do the figures presented above suggest and what are their implications for an interpretation of fascism? Above all they indicate that the startling thrust of National Socialism between 1928 and 1932 cannot simply be attributed to a traumatized lower middle class of peasants, small shopkeepers, and white collar employees threatened by proletarianization. Although low ranking civil servants lived on virtually proletarian incomes, the *Beamtentum*, regardless of grade, enjoyed greater job security, usually a higher level of education, and greater social standing than the *Angestelltenschaft* of the private sector. Support for the NSDAP within the new middle class was therefore not only the product of sociopolitical panic by a lower middle white collar electorate but an anti-systematic protest by an injured, resentful, and traditionally conservative social elite as well.

Finally, unlike the Nazi-old middle class relationship, which remained strong and consistent throughout the Weimar period, white collar and civil service support for the NSDAP appears to have followed a rather clear pattern of protest voting, surging in periods of economic distress and subsiding upon the return of more "normal" times. In periods of economic crisis, civil servants and white collar employees augmented the nucleus of National Socialist supporters within the old middle class to form a broadly based movement of middle class protest. While long standing discontent with the social and political evolution of post-war Germany rendered important elements of the *Mittelstand* susceptible to the various appeals of National Socialism, economic crises, in both 1923-24 and 1929-33, provided the necessary catalyst for the socioelectoral dynamic of Nazi success at the polls. Thus, while the NSDAP had, indeed, become a party of bourgeois integration, the coalition of socially heterogeneous forces which it had forged between 1928 and 1932 remained tenuous, its cohesion dependent on the persistence of economic turmoil. The economic dislocations of the period affected the diverse elements of the *Mittelstand* in different ways and support for the NSDAP varied from group to group. Only when the shifting composition of this support is recognized can the examination of National Socialism move away from one dimensional class analysis and focus on the complex set of social dynamics which lay at the root of fascism's success.