

Reviewers' Report

Qian Chen, *Individual-Volk Concept in Nazi Ideology: Ideological Prehistory and Nazi Power-Seizure*, Master Thesis, Central European Comparative Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague 2019.

As the title indicates, this master thesis deals with the ideological predecessor to the ideology of German National Socialism and with ideology's role in the Nazis way to power in Germany. The thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first one focuses on the idea of *Volk* (people) and German nationalism prior World War I. The second explores the reasons why Nazis eventually succeeded and took control of the Weimar Republic. The third chapter looks at the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) both in theory and practise after Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933.

The weak spot of the thesis might be that the author did not clearly formulate its research question and methodology. Rather, there is a number of research interest formulated in the Introduction. The thesis then oscillates between a history of ideas (Chapter 1), socio-economic and political reasons for the collapse of democracy in Germany and the rise of Nazis in early 1930s (Chapter 2), and the Nazi concept of 'people's community' (Chapter 3). What I miss is a clearer 'red thread' that would connect these three parts and that would follow a clear line of argumentation. Do the author think that there was a German special path (*Sonderweg*) through modern history so that the coming of Nazism was pre-programmed in German nationalism or was it more a specific chain of events that brought the Nazis to power? The thesis also put emphasis on the theoretical articulation of Nazis national policies where it seems to be relatively coherent but we learn not much about its practical application and social responses to it. Especially about indifference or even resistance to Nazi ideological claims.

From the formal point of view, it should be noted that the thesis is well-researched and deeply anchored in relevant secondary literature. The author demonstrates good competence in working with secondary literature and cites their sources properly throughout the text. What should have been perhaps more explained in the introduction is the consultation of unpublished archival materials from the German Federal Archives in Koblenz that is sometimes referred to but it is rather marginal with regard to secondary literature that makes the main thrust of sources. The thesis is written in good academic English, with only few typing errors.

Summing up, the thesis demonstrates a strong research and writing skills and deep interest and knowledge. Formally, it fulfils the criteria for a master thesis. What I missed was a more focused approach to the topic that would not try to capture diverse aspects of the historical path of Nazism but would follow a clearer line of argumentation. Especially Chapter 2 seemed to me to be out of place compared to Chapters 1 and 3 that corresponded with each other more. I recommend the thesis for defence and a **B** grade.

Dr Václav Šmidrkal

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