

PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY

A REVIEW OF GERMAN-LANGUAGE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS
ON PHILOSOPHY
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WITH BIBLIOGRAPHIES

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Emigrants – Itinerant Workers – Guest Workers. Population, Labour Market and Migration in Germany since the Mid-nineteenth Century [“Auswanderer – Wanderarbeiter – Gastarbeiter. Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts”] Ostfildern: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1984; Vol. 1: XIV, 428 pp., Vol. 2: XIV, pp. 429–822

The complex problems covered in this edition, which have still not been treated completely exhaustively in their full extent and consequence, have to be seen against the following background for the nineteenth century: The period from 1800 to 1900 brought the transition from an agrarian to an industrial state. With the political unity achieved in 1871 also came a unification of the German economic area. The economic change was also accompanied by a social one: modern industrial society came into being. About 1830, along with the industrial development, which has gone down in history as the Industrial Revolution on account of its speed and intensity, a revolutionary process also came about in the transport sector, marked by the construction of railways with all its consequences.

These stirring and exciting events in the nineteenth century were accompanied by another process which was of great importance in their formation: the development of the population. Thus the number of inhabitants increased from 24.8 to 35.5 million between 1816 and 1860, and this despite the not inconsiderable losses through emigration. During the period from 1841 to 1860, for instance, no fewer than 1,463,900 persons emigrated from Germany. The importance of the development of the population for industrialisation is based on the great need which the new industries and their methods of production had for cheap labour. Apart from that, the process of industrialisation set off extensive internal migratory movements from rural areas to industrial centres. Accordingly, there were a series of cases of rural communities developing into large cities within just a few decades in industrial conurbations. Their very appearance was shaped by their production plants and working-class districts, both of which were in many cases interwoven, and

of quite repellent hideousness. Social tensions were already programmed by this, quite apart from the economic plight.

Since the nineteen-sixties, the population question has been influenced by the problems involving guest workers, i. e. the hiring of foreign labour as a result of the shortage of workers on the German labour market. This is, by the way, something which also played a not inconsequential role in the nineteenth century, especially from the eighties on. With the about turn in the labour market situation in the meantime leading to mass unemployment, there is now a double social question, namely that of the German unemployed on the one hand, and the much more difficult one the unemployed foreign workers on the other hand, as the state of education, language problems, but also the preferential treatment given to German workers when employees are being hired, make the position of the guest workers generally particularly precarious.

The mass of problems resulting from this are covered in the two volumes under review here, based on the present state of research. Even though, understandably enough, definitive conclusions are not yet drawn, as the questions under review, especially with respect to the twentieth century, are still fluid, there are, nevertheless, interesting insights into the very problematical and factually involved subject matter. Apart from that, reference is also made to the consequential problems. Taken as a whole, the contributions clearly illustrate that the problems of emigrant and itinerant workers, but above all of the guest workers, represent a special form of the social question in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Research into this, and that is something which also becomes clear, is still in its infancy in many respects.

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