

DISCUSSION

BETWEEN AUTHORITARIANISM AND TOTALITARIANISM: SOME REMARKS ON A CONTROVERSY

Wilfried Jilge

Last year, Christoph Boyer, Jaroslav Kučera, Ralf Gebel, Václav Kural, and Ronald M. Smelser presented their views concerning one of the most controversial topics in the present German-Czech dialogue¹. The immediate cause for the debate was a contribution entitled *Die Deutschen in Böhmen, die Sudetendeutsche Partei und der Nationalsozialismus* (Germans in Bohemia, the Sudeten German Party, and National Socialism) by Christoph Boyer (Dresden) and Jaroslav Kučera (Prague)², and the

¹ Die Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront (Partei) 1933–1938. Zur Bestimmung ihres politisch-ideologischen Standortes. BohZ 38/2 (1997) 357–385.

² Nationalsozialismus in der Region. Beiträge zur regionalen und lokalen Forschung und zum

sharp criticism uttered by Friedrich Prinz in a review for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*³. The discussion on the pages of our journal, in turn, triggered quite a few reactions among our readership. One of the most interesting comments was sent in by Wilfried Jilge, and this is published in the present issue. Jilge deals, first and foremost, with the political and ideological background of the *Kameradschaftsbund* (KB), an organization which until about 1935/36 united some of the closest adherents of Konrad Henlein and exercised political leadership within the *Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront* (SHF). The dichotomy of "traditionalists" versus Nazi "radicals" as used by some researchers to signify a clear-cut divide between the KB and its opponents in the SHF prevents, according to this author, a critical assessment of ideological continuities and discontinuities, both existing between the national and *Ständestaat* ideology of the KB and National Socialism. The ideology of an authoritarian, corporate state in connection with the vision of German hegemony in Central Europe as cherished by the KB was in clear violation of the principles of liberal democracy which lay at the roots of the First Czechoslovak Republic, the admittedly justified criticism of its nationality policy notwithstanding.

internationalen Vergleich. Ed. by Horst Möller, Andreas Wirsching, and Walter Ziegler. Munich 1996, 273–285.

³ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, August 15, 1996.