

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



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### The People's Community in the Context of Racially Determined Nazi Social Policy

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#### Abstract

**Introduction.** The article is devoted to the study of Nazi social policy as a tool for eliminating class conflicts through the creation of a racially homogeneous people's community, designed to become a pillar of the regime. The purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the racial aspects of Nazi social policy.

**Materials and Methods.** The authors relied mainly on publications in periodicals of the Third Reich; issues of the Imperial Legislative Gazette; documents published abroad; works of foreign scientists which are not translated into Russian, with the exception of Evans' monograph. The article is based on an interdisciplinary approach; theoretically, the authors are guided by the theory of totalitarianism, which retains significant potential when addressing Nazi issues. A special role in solving the problem was played by the method of system analysis, which made it possible to reveal the essential aspects and the priority role of a racially oriented social policy designed to unite the German population of the Third Reich in the ranks of the people's community.

**Results.** The racial aspect of Nazi social policy was its basic element. The social security system and socially oriented programs were designed exclusively for racially "full-fledged" compatriots. "The people's community" included "the production community", corporate organizations of the small and middle urban bourgeoisie, "the Imperial Food Estate", and the bureaucratic corps. The exclusion of the Jewish population from the number of recipients of state social support, along with other forms of discrimination, was a prelude to "the final solution of the Jewish question".

**Discussion and Conclusion.** Without being implemented in practice, the thesis about the people's community had a serious propaganda effect. In the pre-war years, the Nazis attempted to create a specific version of a totalitarian-social state in which the principle of racial discrimination acted as one of the fundamental ones. Systemic social policy based on racial theory allowed the Nazis to create an effective mechanism for preventing social conflicts and achieve consolidation around the regime of most of German society.

**Keywords:** social policy, the people's community, nazism, propaganda, charity, discrimination

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Оригинальное теоретическое исследование

### Народное сообщество в контексте расово обусловленной нацистской социальной политики

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#### Аннотация

**Введение.** Статья посвящена изучению нацистской социальной политики как инструмента устранения классовых конфликтов посредством создания расово однородного народного сообщества, призванного стать опорой режима. Цель исследования состоит в проведении комплексного анализа расовых аспектов нацистской социальной политики.

**Материалы и методы.** Авторы опираются в основном на публикации в периодических изданиях Третьего рейха; выпуски Имперского законодательного вестника; документы, опубликованные за рубежом; работы зарубежных ученых, не переведенные на русский язык, за исключением монографии Эванса. В основу статьи положен междисциплинарный подход, в теоретическом плане авторы руководствуются теорией тоталитаризма, сохраняющей значительный потенциал при обращении к нацистской проблематике. Особую роль в раскрытии проблемы сыграл метод системного анализа.

**Результаты исследования.** Расовый аспект нацистской социальной политики являлся ее базовым элементом. Система социального обеспечения и социально ориентированные программы были рассчитаны исключительно на расово «полноценных» соотечественников. В «народное сообщество» включались «производственное сообщество», корпоративные организации мелкой и средней городской буржуазии, «Имперское продовольственное сословие», чиновничий корпус. Исключение еврейского населения из числа получателей государственной социальной поддержки, наряду с другими формами дискриминации, стало прелюдией к «окончательному решению еврейского вопроса».

**Обсуждение и заключение.** Не будучи реализован на практике, тезис о народном сообществе имел серьезный пропагандистский эффект. Уже в 90-е гг. XX в. нацистами была предпринята попытка создания специфического варианта тоталитарно-социального государства, в котором в качестве одного из основополагающих действовал принцип расовой дискриминации. Носившая системный характер и основанная на расовой теории социальная политика позволила нацистам создать эффективный механизм предотвращения социальных конфликтов и добиться консолидации вокруг режима большей части немецкого общества.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная политика, народное сообщество, нацизм, пропаганда, благотворительность, дискриминация

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**Introduction.** Despite decades of intensive research on various aspects of Hitler Germany's domestic and foreign policy, this area of scientific research has not lost its relevance yet. On the contrary, in modern conditions, the latter has only increased, which is most directly due to the current events in Ukraine, resulting from the formation of a neo-Nazi regime here with the support of the United States of America and its Western allies as well as a noticeable increase in the influence of right-wing political parties and organizations in a number of countries of the European Union as a reaction to the inability of their state leadership to propose effective ways to solve the economic, social and other problems associated with increased immigration flows, anti-Russian sanctions and the provision of weapons to Kyiv. The purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the essence and significance of the racial aspects of Nazi social policy.

**Materials and Methods.** The article is based on an interdisciplinary approach; theoretically, the authors are guided by the theory of totalitarianism, which retains significant potential when addressing Nazi issues. A special role in solving the problem was played by the method of system analysis, which made it possible to reveal the essential aspects and the priority role of a racially oriented social policy designed to unite the German population of the Third Reich in the ranks of the people's community.

**Results.** In the context of this, the analysis of factors which contributed to the strengthening of the Hitler regime, which managed to unite the bulk of German society around itself in a short time (1933–1939) including those who had previously followed the Communists and Social Democrats, is of particular interest. Among these factors, along with propaganda and terror, one of the main ones was the social policy pursued by the National Socialists. Moreover, if the main directions of the latter found coverage in the research literature [1], then the problem, which this article is devoted to, has not been subjected to special research. Meanwhile, the racial aspect of Nazi social policy was one of its basic elements. The social security system and numerous socially oriented programs implemented in the Third Reich were designed exclusively for racially “full-fledged” compatriots.

**“Production Community”.** Having come to power in the wake of the global economic crisis, which resulted in an extreme aggravation of the domestic political situation in Germany, the National Socialists proclaimed the establishment of “a class world” in the country as one of their main social goals. In this regard, Nazi propaganda put forward the slogan of the formation in Germany of “the people's community of all Germans”, the equality of which would be determined not by social status, but by the purity of blood, which testified to belonging to “the Nordic race”. Back in 1925, the idea of creating such a community was made by the German specialist in racial theory G. Gunther. Based on “the racial and eugenic way of thinking”, “the Nordic ideal”, he saw in contemporary generations of Germans “a community” responsible for “preserving the Nordic nature of a given people in a greater purity” [2].

Taking into account the primary need to stabilize the situation in the industrial sector of economy, most severely affected by the global economic crisis of 1929–1933, the role of the backbone of “the people's community” was assigned to the production community. According to “the Law on the Regulation of National Labor” of January 20, 1934, the

primary cell of the latter was “the community of the enterprise” represented by its Fuhrer (entrepreneur) and retinue (workers and employees), who were charged with the obligation to carry out conflict-free interaction with each other for the benefit of “the people and the state” [3].

The core of the production, and to a large extent, “the people’s community”, was to become the German Labor Front (DAF), established on May 10, 1933, which replaced the former trade unions of the “classless” corporate organization, whose members were simultaneously “workers of mind and fist” (“blue collars” and employees) as well as employers. In Hitler’s decree of October 24, 1934, as the main task of the DAF, the education of all working Germans was proclaimed “in the spirit of supporting the national socialist state and instilling in it a nationalist worldview” [4]. The latter was considered to be an important component of the racial worldview. Compliance with the racial criteria of Nazism was a prerequisite for membership in the DAF which was responsible for the implementation of a wide range of social programs. Especially popular among the population were those that were carried out by the organization “Strength through Joy” (KdF) operating under the auspices of the Labor Front. Being founded on November 27, 1933 with a strong financial base provided by membership fees, deductions from wages and salaries, subsidies from DAF funds, it regulated leisure, recreation, entertainment for workers and employees: provided them with subsidized sanatoria and holiday-homes passes, developing tourism as a form of vacation, distributed cheap tickets to theaters and cinemas, cultivated sports in enterprises, and conducted “educational” activities in the spirit of disseminating the ideas of National Socialism [5].

A particular pride of KdF was the fleet, numbering 12 ocean liners by 1938. Propaganda dubbed them “classless” ships, since all the cabins on them, except for the location above or below the waterline, were the same. This, along with the obligatory joint participation in each journey of workers, employees and employers “united” by German origin, was presented by the media as a clear confirmation of the reality of the existence of “the people’s community” in the Third Reich [6]. According to the head of DAF R. Ley, this practice should have contributed to a change in the worldview of both those and others in the National Socialist spirit forcing them to abandon the social stereotypes characteristic of previous eras [7].

It was KdF that took over the practical implementation of Hitler’s favorite idea, inspired by the example of Henry Ford of creation a cheap “people’s car” (“Volkswagen”) in Germany, and also monitored the solution of the blue-collar housing problem. According to “the socio-political point of view” that DAF should have been guided in this matter, it should have ended the housing shortage by clearing the working quarters of large cities of their characteristic “poor shacks” [8]. When creating workers’ settlements, priority, along with veterans of the Nazi Party and large families, was given to married couples whose racial origin and political loyalty were not in doubt [9]. However, the intensification of military preparations led to a sharp reduction in housing expenditure. The implementation of the relevant plans was postponed to the post-war period. However, during the war years, the housing problem in large cities was partly solved at the expense of Jews who were forcibly evicted from apartments which were transferred to German families in need of better living conditions [1].

According to one of the Nazi propaganda publications, the social programs implemented by KdF gave part of the workers a sense of their own “elitism” in relation to the “non-Aryans” as well as the “realization” that belonging to “the people’s community” provided them with the opportunity to use the benefits produced by them, in former times accessible only to representatives of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia [10]. This contributed to their consolidation around the regime.

**Integration of the middle class into “the people’s community”.** In addition to workers and employees of industrial enterprises, the urban middle and petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and bureaucracy were to be integrated into “the people’s community”.

In March and April 1933, the Nazis carried out boycott campaigns against Jewish-owned trading enterprises and wealthy artisans of Jewish origin. On May 12, 1933, the corresponding restrictions were enshrined in “The Retail Protection Act” [11]. All this gave rise among the above categories of the urban bourgeoisie hopes for the fulfillment of the requirement contained in the program of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) to socialize large department stores owned by Jews.

However, in the same year, the Nazi policy towards department stores began to make a turn towards their preservation which was partly dictated by fears of rising unemployment due to the dismissal of their staff. The racial issue was resolved through the aryanization (German: Arisierung) of Jewish property. The new owners of department stores and their branches were large banks which were previously their creditors [12].

In addition, according to the instructions of the authorities of November 12 and 23, 1938, the trade and craft spheres were to be completely cleansed of Jews by December 31 of the same year [11]. However, this process gave nothing to small artisans of “Aryan” origin, forcibly included in the Imperial estate of German craft. With the beginning of the accelerated preparation of Germany for war, craft workshops, which were unable to make the necessary contribution to this process, and small shops were liquidated.

The agricultural sector has also undergone strict social and racial regulation. Over three million peasant farms and about three hundred thousand processing enterprises were included in the Imperial food estate created on September 13, 1933 [13]. In addition to solving economic problems, it was responsible for “preserving and strengthening the German people” [14].

On September 29, 1933, this measure was supplemented by the adoption of "The Law on Inherited Households" (the latter included land holdings ranging from 7.5 to 125 hectares, recognized as the most profitable), which enshrined the principle of racial selection. In accordance with it, the peasant had to be a person of German or related blood who could prove the impeccability of his origin since January 19, 1800 [15]. However, the blood purity factor was not the only one taken into account in this case. As the Nazi expert on racial problems, Loeffler, noted, since it was the peasantry that was to form the core of a healthy German nation in the future, those who suffered from hereditary diseases should be excluded from its ranks [16].

The social ostracization of farmers who were not "Aryans" often turned into a tragic grotesque. As the famous German journalist of Jewish origin Bella Fromm reports in her famous diary, her acquaintance, a Jewish peasant, who usually sold her oil and flowers, told her that his fellow villagers, in accordance with the practice characteristic of small rural settlements, acquired the share of a bull for service. However, the Nazis banned the reproduction of livestock owned by Jews. "I was ... stunned to learn about the existence of such a thing as «a non-Aryan cow»", Fromm admits [17].

The concept of "people's community" was largely the basis of racial extermination carried out in the sphere of public service. "The Law on the Restoration of Professional Bureaucracy" of April 7, 1933 included "the Aryan paragraph" which provided for the professional disqualification of officials of "non-Aryan" origin [4]. As a concession to President Hindenburg, an adherent of the idea of "trench brotherhood", an exception was made for Jewish participants in the First World War. However, in 1935 this "letter of protection" lost its force. According to "The First Prescription to the Law on Imperial Citizenship" of November 14, 1935, all, without exception, Jews who were still in public service were subject to dismissal not later than December 31 of that year. Even earlier, the marriage to a woman of "non-Aryan" origin began to be considered as a legal basis for the resignation of a civil servant [18]. Finally, racial barriers to an official career were fixed by "The Law on German Bureaucracy" of 1937 [19].

**Racial dimension of the National Socialist charity system.** The same approach, according to zealots to prevent racial pollution of the nation, should have been at the heart of the social welfare system and, above all, charity. Gunter insisted that providing social support to "handicapped" persons threatened to increase the process of "uncontrolled reproduction of flawed... race" and the death of the state [2].

One of the key aspects of Nazi social policy was the creation of nationwide charitable organizations. The largest among them was the National Socialist People's Charity (NSF), created in 1933 under the auspices of NSDAP. From the very beginning, it was focused on fulfilling the task of preserving and increasing the viability of the German people, and therefore, its activities should be guided by a racial-hygienic and hereditary-biological approach [20]. The Reich Minister of Labor also recalled the need to focus on "healthy forces of people" in his address to the leadership of NSF in 1935 [21]. Thus, from the very first days of NSF's functioning, all "non-Aryans" were excluded from its clients.

The organization "Winter Relief of the German People", equated to state institutions, was guided by the same principles. Since 1933, it annually conducted campaigns among the population to collect food, things, money for needy compatriots. Collecting money prevailed and were coercive. At the same time, the bulk of funds was provided at the expense of monthly payroll deductions [22]. According to Hitler, the activities of Winter Relief were designed to demonstrate "national solidarity" of the Germans who performed their sacrificial duty towards "the people's community" [21].

The exclusion of Jews from all categories of recipients of social support from the state and various charitable organizations, along with other restrictions imposed on them following the adoption of the infamous "Nuremberg laws" on September 15, 1935, in the pre-war period, led them to a state of «social death» [23] which became a prelude to "the final solution of the Jewish question".

**Discussion and Conclusion.** Not fully sharing the position of I. Kershaw, who investigated the state of public opinion in Nazi Germany, who considered that the social and economic policy pursued by the National Socialists was unable to smooth out the social antagonisms characteristic of Weimar Germany, further escalating them [12], we believe that the concept of the ideology of "the people's community", which occupied an important place in Nazi ideology and was widely used by the Nazis in the implementation of socio-political programs, remained an ideal construction taking its place among other National Socialist mythologems, since in practice there was no talk of breaking social barriers.

In the production sphere, the social status of the Fuhrer of the enterprise remained out of reach for "the retinue"; the protectionist demands of the petty and middle bourgeoisie were ultimately ignored by the leaders of the Third Reich, and their corporate values were sacrificed to the economic needs of the regime burying their utopian dreams of a petty bourgeois economy based on the principles of self-government; the beneficiaries of Nazi agrarian policy were not all the peasantry, but junkers and grossbauers (better-off peasants); mainly large business benefited from the aryanization of Jewish property; the activity of charitable organizations was largely based on the principle of self-financing.

Nevertheless, in propaganda terms, the thesis of "the people's community" has proven its effectiveness. In addition to overcoming the consequences of the global economic crisis of 1929–1933, the regime owed this to a very large extent to its implementation of a wide range of social programs designed for various segments of the German population and in the conditions of a one-party system that contributed to the degradation of the class consciousness of most of the latter.



Among other things, social policy in the Third Reich acted as an instrument of racial selection which manifested itself with particular force in the field of social assistance. The exclusion of “non-Aryan” and “racially inferior” population from the ranks of “the people’s community” and, automatically, from the circle of patronized by the Nazi charitable organizations, allowed the German authorities, on the one hand, to reduce the corresponding costs, and, on the other, to instill compatriots who fell into the circle of the “chosen”, a complex of their own elitism.

As a result, in our opinion, in the pre-war years, the Nazis attempted to create a specific version of a totalitarian-social state which was based on the principle of racial discrimination. Along with the suppression of any manifestations of ideological dissension and total propaganda, it was precisely the systemic racially oriented social policy, designed exclusively for members of “the people’s community”, that allowed the Nazis in the period 1933–1939 to create an effective mechanism for preventing social conflicts and achieve consolidation around the regime of most of German society which on the eve of Germany’s entry into the war seemed especially important to the political leadership of the Third Reich.

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