

The "Seaside Resort of the 20000": Fordism, Mass Tourism and the Third Reich

Hasso Spode

Today, sociologists and economists tell us that we live in a „post“ society: postmodern, post-Fordist, postindustrial. If 'industrial' means coal mines and steel mills, this is not entirely wrong, but if it means the basic principles that govern our world, it is a fallacy, mixing the ever changing surface with the hidden structure. This structure is known under terms such as division of labor, efficiency or rationality. Many elements of this structure can be traced back to the Early Modern Period, some even to the Middle Ages and to Antiquity; its concrete shape, however, emerged step by step since late 18th century, and its victory can be dated - metaphorically, if not literally – as having taken place in just one year: 1936. In 1936, the structure finally exceeded the boundaries of the sphere of production and started to invade the whole rest of the world - the computer was born.

One might think that the history of the computer does not have much to do with the history of tourism. In fact, there are strong links. Although tourism is regarded (and sold to us) as a counterpart to our frantic, efficient everyday life, as a realm of relaxation, of playful values and practices - as a mass phenomenon, as everybody knows, tourism and tourists are inevitably part of the very same machinery which they try to elude. The flight from efficiency is organized by efficient means. Let us have a look at these means¹.

"Modern Times"

In February 1936, Charlie Chaplin's new film was released: 'Modern Times', the tragicomic parable about depravation through technology. Chaplin succumbs to the rhythm of the assembly lines; the machinery runs faster and faster, culminating in an apocalypse. The film was a huge success; for it dealt with a topic that was the subject of much controversy on both sides of the Atlantic: "rationalization".

It was not only about the new form of factory organization. Rationalization had entered consciousness as something that permeates all "spheres" of life. Some, such as Max and his less known brother Alfred Weber, saw rationalization as a fatal destiny, forcing people into an "iron cage" of dependency, ushering in the "domestication of the world", wiping out all freedom and spontaneity. However, others, such as Frederick Winslow Taylor, saw rationalization as the vehicle that would transport humanity into a happy future of full department stores and order books.

This debate can be traced back at least as far as Rousseau and Voltaire and is, as we know, still unresolved². Between the wars, however, it dominated thought with tremendous force. For levels of meaning were bestowed on the concept of rationalization:

Firstly: a logical meaning to refer to the basics, the universal principle of efficiency.

Secondly: a philosophical meaning was sometimes linked to this first level; its purpose was to refer to the interpretation of long-term historical processes in the Western World (as analyzed by Marx, Weber, Durkheim and others).

Thirdly: a technological or economic meaning to refer to the most recent stage in this process (as analyzed by Taylor, Münsterberg, Gilbreth, Bedeaux and others).

Finally, mentioned here only for the sake of completeness: a psychological meaning, namely the use of pseudo-rational justifications for irrational behaviour (as defined by Sigmund Freud).

The rationalization discourse between the wars generally referred to the third level, meaning mass production, meaning "Taylorism" and "Fordism"³. These were the catch words which stirred up the public, frightened the workers, inspired the managers and divided parties and trade unions. The basic principle, however, still did not move the people; it still remained in expert circles. But it proved to be highly universal - the *grammar of rationalization* became visible.

This grammar is based on the idea of disassembling and recombining: Breaking complex processes down into their individual components, then combining them again to form a new structure. That which is superficial can be discarded; that which is mixed can be separated. The processes, dirtied with significance, with meaning and morality, with traditions and arbitrariness, these processes have been melted down to the pure scaffolding of relations – as translucent as crystal and as unsurprising as double-entry bookkeeping⁴. The practical application of this idea also requires internal transport systems and a central clock, a metronome which coordinates the machinery.

Essential aspects of the grammar of rationalization were formulated by economists and mathematicians in the 19th century and, at the same time, practically applied to assembly-line work – first, in Cincinnati's and Chicago's slaughterhouses, and from 1913 onwards, in Henry Ford's car factory in Detroit. The assembly line was less an application of theories; rather, the new organization of logic and the new organization of work resulted from the same *Zeitgeist*. But, in turn, the assembly line directly inspired the attempt to automate not only production, but also thinking. In 1936, as already mentioned, the computer was born, i.e., the universal calculating machine (a device so universal that not only can it count numbers, but it can also play music, show movies or process texts like this one). The concept of the computer was simultaneously worked out in England, the USA and Germany. The mathematicians Alan Turing and Emil Post designed their computer theories on a sheet of paper (initially in order to solve the problem: "what does calculation mean?"), whereas the engineer Konrad Zuse started to build a real "calculating-plan based calculator" out of sheet metal, driven by the motor of a vacuum cleaner⁵. All three had the new, radical forms of the division of labor in mind and their concepts were more or less identical, using components such as interchangeable programs, storage areas, processing units, in and output units, central clocks, and foremost: the principle of decomposing every operation into its basic elements. As everybody knows, their invention heralded a new era - from now onwards, thought, too, was to be taken over by machines.

And a further pioneering invention is associated with the year 1936: the holiday machine. On May 2nd, Robert Ley, leader of the German Labor Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*), laid a foundation stone on the island of Rügen. "The most colossal seaside resort in the world" was to be built by the Baltic Sea. Millions of German workers were to recuperate here and simultaneously demonstrate the superiority of that which is genuine, national socialism. Such a task had nothing to do with the nostalgic ideology of „blood and soil“; it required cold-blooded, modern solutions – it required a holiday from the assembly line.

"Kraft durch Freude"

Two years earlier special trains had rolled all through Germany. Within a week, ten thousand "worker-vacationers" were carted from the grey cities to the clear mountain air. This cheap travel was accompanied by an unbelievable torrent of propaganda. The organizer was the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*⁶. More precisely, the travel department of the affiliated leisure organization with the bombastic name *Nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude"* (National-Socialist Community "Strength through Joy"), abbreviated as NSG "KdF" or simply KdF.

KdF had been founded in November 1933, thus marking the provisional end of a harsh internal dispute on the role of the *Arbeitsfront*, an offspring of the small National Socialist trade union of the Weimar Republic. Ley's plans to form an almighty, corporativistic Nazi union had been thwarted: the Labor Front, although the biggest and the wealthiest organization in the "New State", was reduced to a mere Party's instrument of propaganda and means for controlling the workplace. But how could the Labor Front "win the hearts of the workers" without supporting their interests? For it had to keep out of the industrial disputes, so the Labor Front looked for another sphere of activity - and found leisure time. Of course, Ley did not admit his defeat when he held his speech⁷ at the KdF's founding congress. Instead, he made it look like a victory opening the prospect of a "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*), where all Germans will have equal access to the cultural assets. In his speech, Ley drew a line between the ongoing debates on the perils of rationalization - the loss of "joy" at work, the "ruin" of physical and mental health, the increase in "nervousness" - on one hand, and, on the other, on the justified "envy" and the "inferiority complex" of the workers, fueled by "Marxist" ideology. By offering the masses all sorts of once privileged leisure activities, Ley announced, KdF would become a decisive tool for overcoming class struggles and for improving health and performance by assuring the "complete relaxation of body and soul".

At that time, holiday trips did not have high priority among the KdF's planned activities. In particular, the head of the new organization (and also chief of the Reichs-Radio Chamber), Horst Dressler-Andress, primarily sought to bring "high" culture - the arts, literature and classical music - to the workers; indeed, KdF arranged concerts and exhibitions in the factory halls (even of „degenerated“ artists like Nolde). However, the focus of the activities was changed quickly, since in May 1934, the first KdF trains had met with an overwhelmingly positive response. The initiators - foremost Ley, Dressler-Andress, and the head of the travel department, Bodo Lafferentz - were themselves surprised by their success and promptly expanded the travel program⁸. They were pleased that they had stumbled into an enormous gap in the market.

From now on, the founding of KdF was traced back to a *Führer's* order: "I want every worker to get sufficient holiday time, and I want everything to be done so that these holidays and his other leisure times become a real recreation."⁹ With four fifth of KdF's turnover, the travel department (*Amt Reisen, Wandern, Urlaub*) soon became the most important of all of KdF's branches; many people only regarded KdF as a state-owned travel agency. In 1934, the *Deutschland-Berichte* of the exiled Social Democratic Party (*Sopade*) already noted that the holiday trips make KdF an important propaganda tool, whereas the other activities - such as sports or theater - are hardly ever mentioned in the people's chats¹⁰.

The idea of turning the holiday trip into a mass-produced article was not at all new; in the end it goes back to the first package tour organizers, among whom Thomas Cook became the most successful one after he started his famous excursion to a temperance meeting in Loughborough in 1841. However, organized holiday trips had not yet been able to achieve a social breakthrough. Although, since the late 19th century, British workers and employees flooded the seaside resorts on Sundays, these excursions were far from bourgeois tourism. With respect to time and the monetary budget, and to the practices and the meanings, the 'proper' holiday trips remained a privilege of small minorities¹¹.

Organizing 'bourgeois-style' tourism as mass tourism was first put to the test on a larger scale in Fascist Italy. Since 1931, the *Duce's* leisure organization *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (OND) sent "popular trains" through the country¹². In the first year more than half a million travelers took advantage of the discount of up to 50%. However, the living standards of the "masses" were too low to afford such a trip without substantial subsidies from their employers; after the initial euphoria had dissipated the number of participants declined to about 100000 per year.

But the concept of "popular trains" remained fascinating. When the Nazis picked up the Fascist model, they did so with German perfection and rapidly overtook their prototype¹³. Soon "Kraft durch Freude"

became the world's biggest tour operator¹⁴. With an average of 35 Reichsmark for an all-inclusive package tour in 1934 the KdF prices fell by approximately two thirds compared to the "cheap" tour operators in the Weimar Republic - not to speak of the prevailing individual 'bourgeois' tourism! In the first years the program was expanded vigorously. The peak was reached in 1937 when nearly 1.8 million enjoyed the KdF holidays and an additional 8.4 million the KdF excursions (in terms of figures this corresponded to a fifth of the German population older than 15). Obviously, this was an upper limit which the regime was neither able nor willing to exceed. The capacities of the transport systems (in particular the railways which had to serve the growing needs of the *Wehrmacht*), as well as the spending power of the lower classes did not allow for a further increase without vast subsidies by the *Arbeitsfront* or the employers. In the last two prewar years the numbers of KdF travelers slightly declined. However, the figures were unique at that time and are still impressive.

KdF trip participants

Year	Participants (mill.)	
	Travels ^(a)	Short trips ^(b)
1934	0.5	1.9
1935	1.1	5.2
1936	1.4	7.3
1937	1.8	8.4
1938 ^(c)	1.6	8.7
1939 ^(d)	1.2	6.2

Source: calculations from Spode 1982, p.298

a) Holiday trips, including cruises, skiing holidays etc. (3 to 21, mostly 7 to 12 days).

b) Excursions and hiking tours (1 or 2 days; hiking tours sometimes 6 days or more).

c) Including 0.3 mill. participants in longer travels and 1.6 million in short trips from the annexed territories (esp. Austria).

d) Not comparable with the other years: Firstly, it is uncertain whether participants from the annexed territories are included. Secondly, on the 1st of September, KdF travel stopped due to the war (in 1940 it started again on a smaller scale, partly in cooperation with the *Wehrmacht*; global figures are not available).

By the outbreak of the war, some 8 million journeys had been sold by KdF, almost a tenth of which - more than 700000 - were spectacular cruises abroad with the KdF fleet. Taking all trips together even more than 45 million had traveled with KdF in the prewar years¹⁵. (In comparison, in 1937, the largest British non-profit operator, the *Worker's Travel Association*, organized 61000 trips: this corresponded to 4% of the KdF trips - not including the short trips sold that year.) Of course, only the longer holiday trips - as the mass produced copy of the 'bourgeois' way to travel - were really a sensation. To provide some examples: a seven day all-inclusive tour to beautiful Reit im Winkel cost 28 RM; ten days at the seaside resort of Heiligenhafen 44 RM; a seven day "reduced offer" into the Swabian Jura only 16 RM. In addition to those 'normal' holiday trips there were also 'special' tours, e.g., an eight-day skiing course in Bavaria costing 48 RM. The absolute highlight, though, became the cruises. They were not included in the original plans. The first KdF ships put to sea for the Isle of Wight in May 1934 - exactly one year after the smashing of the unions. A seven-day cruise to Norway cost 42 to 63 RM (calculated from the distance to the harbor of departure), an eighteen day journey to Madeira, a traditional destination of the English upper class, about 120 RM¹⁶.

With great relish, propaganda cited the travel program of the Social Democrat trade unions (ADAV) for the year 1933: only twelve tours had been announced with prices ranging from 42 RM - a three day excursion - to 350 RM. And now: workers strolling through exclusive resorts and spas, tanning themselves on the decks of luxury cruisers! In the beginning, many people, particularly those hostile to the new regime, thought this was a mere propagandist lie. But they soon learned that it was at least partially true when posters lured: "Now you, too, can travel!" or more poetically: "Weave your own dream carpet!" The impression was so strong that planned was to send a political detainee from Dachau on a trip to Norway - for "he is an obdurate communist and may be convinced by the facts"¹⁷. The underground opposition, on the other hand, was alarmed, worrying that this could really work. The *Sopade-Berichte* were at least ambiguous about KdF: "Some get enthusiastic, some grumble." According to the correspondents, the regime's social policy was usually harshly criticized by the workers, whereas KdF is often reported to be a great success among the workers. Former union officials were told: "Now we see what our subscriptions are really good for." From Southern Bavaria, e.g., it is said that "according to the concurring reports of all (Social Democrat) comrades, KdF is a positive achievement for the regime. These trips get more and more popular, and how cheap they are is astonishing."

To understand this euphoria one should keep in mind that although excursions and even short holiday trips were nothing new for blue-collar workers, longer 'proper' tourist travel, however, remained in the realm of rather small social groups¹⁸: the upper classes, the old and, increasingly, the new middle classes, as the 'harbingers' of modern lifestyle and mass consumption¹⁹. Although tourist travel had remarkably increased in the last five decades, the boundary between blue and white-collar workers had not really been challenged; the holiday trip was thought of as something for the "moneybags". No wonder the propaganda could now chime: "Travel is no longer a privilege for the wealthy classes. Thanks to KdF every national comrade is now able to partake in tourism."²⁰ This was certainly in keeping with the perceptions of the vast majority of the people, both in Germany and abroad. Of all Nazi mass organizations, KdF became by far the most popular.

And in addition, the holiday entitlements for the workers were greatly improved. In 1938 more than 87% of the workers in the metal-processing industry enjoyed a yearly holiday of six to twelve days²¹. Even the *International Labor Office* in Geneva had to willy-nilly acknowledge the German holiday policy as exemplary.

Socialism of Deed

KdF provided indisputable evidence of how effectively the grammar of rationalization can be applied to the production of the consumer good 'holiday trips'; just as Henry Ford had demonstrated with his *Tin Lizzie* how one could turn an unattainable object of desire into a mass-produced article.

The Nazi version of Fordism was called "Socialism of Deed" (*Sozialismus der Tat*). This term suggests that National Socialism - in contrast to the labor movement - really improves the situation of the workers, and thus makes the working *class* and their "Marxist ideology" obsolete. The "cultural mission" of KdF, *Reichsleiter* Dressler-Andress wrote, is "to overcome the old contrast between work and man"²². Perhaps Dressler-Andress really had a "revolution" in mind which breaks with the curse of alienation in industrial society (Rosenberg called him a "cultural Bolshevik"). However, more often and less pathetically, "Socialism of Deed" was simply defined in terms of "standard of living". In this connection the regime concentrated on reducing the costs of some selected, prestigious commodities to such an extent that they could symbolically represent the breakthrough to mass consumption that the worker parties had failed to give the masses: radios, cars, and travel. Only in the latter case did Germany actually achieve an exceptional position.

To quote Hitler: „The National Socialist state, the National Socialist community (*Nationalsozialistische Volksgemeinschaft*) are thus endeavouring to make everything accessible to our national comrades (*Volksgenossen*) that was formerly the privilege of a limited social class. (...) This is an objective that in the beginning appeared to be unimaginable. At that time there were not few who believed: this program looks so much like Marxist promises, that it cannot come true. Well, my national comrades, it is truly on the way to being fulfilled!“²³

Travel became a substitute both for higher wages and for civil and social rights. As Kühnl already put it: the Labor Front "was not to produce social justice but the illusion of social justice". The ideological framework was formed by the ideal of the classless "people's community"²⁴: In order to disguise the abolishment of participation in the factories, white and blue-collar workers (in the Nazi speech: "workers of the brow and workers of the fist") were labeled both as "followers" (*Gefolgschaft*) who were bound to the "leader" of the firm (*Betriebsführer*) by mutual "loyalty and duty". Altogether all Germans - except, of course, those of racial or social "inferior quality" - form the community of equal "national comrades". The space in which this banishment of hierarchy had to take place was conceived of as outside the crude sphere of power, politics and work - in the realms of culture, leisure and consumption. A truly pioneering concept.

Of course, time was all too limited for this to be really translated into action. The cash had to flow first into the producer goods and armaments industries. Wages had to remain low, both to safeguard the profits of the firms and to avoid an increasing demand for consumer goods, in particular for imported raw materials and commodities. Fostering holidays offered at least a partial solution to the regime's conflicting objectives: taming the working class and preparing for war. Spending the money in the domestic tourist industry reduced the demand for limited goods and imports; and improving the holiday entitlements contributed to keeping the wages low and thus also to reducing the spending power freely disposable²⁵. Both could be sold as an "improvement of the standard of living". Moreover, in this context, KdF functioned as an instrument for "allocating social prestige" to the workers²⁶. "There is probably no nation", the newspaper of the Labor Front commented on the first cruise to Madeira, "which takes so much care of the working people (*Werkstätige*) as Germany."²⁷

To sum up: The field of 'holidays' promised to combine many different functions in an ideal way. First of all:

- Providing for the integration of the working class into the *Volksgemeinschaft* - despite the fact that the workers had been deprived of their rights and the Labor Front was prohibited to act as a substitute for the smashed unions.

- Providing for consumer control according to the needs of military build-up.

Further objectives were²⁸:

- Giving a push for the tourist industry which since 1930 was in a severe crisis.

- Promoting the health and performance of the work force.

- Strengthening the "love for Germany" and overcoming regional fractioning and hostilities, e.g., among Bavarians and Prussians (an idea already promoted by Ludwig Jahn a hundred years before).

- Allowing the employers to award diligent or conformist workers by donating a prestigious holiday trip to them.

- Creating a safety valve for activists from the Party's left wing: KdF offered a playground to those who were frustrated by the regime's social policy and its alliance with big business.

- And finally, KdF tourism as a whole but especially the KdF fleet could function as an instrument for foreign propaganda, thus at least mitigating the grim image of the Third Reich - "our KdF ships are ambassadors of peace"!

By and large, holiday policy was essentially inner policy²⁹. The final goal, however, of all politics of the regime's inner circles, including Ley, was foreign policy, namely war: first "smashing the chains of Versailles", then expanding the *Lebensraum* according to the visions of the German master race. The

regime therefore could not elude the self-created dilemma of "guns instead of butter" (as Göring called it), or better: it postponed its solution on the day after the victorious *Blitzkrieg*. Until then, the Nazi version of Fordism was curtailed by Hitler's secret order that Germany had to be "ready for war" by 1940. The regime was forced therefore to preach old-fashioned abstinence, too. The slogan "Socialism of Deed", however, could have come from Henry Ford himself. From pushing efficiency and destroying participation in the firms to the concept of defining the social status by consumer opportunities - the Third Reich certainly swam with the mainstream of rationalization and modernization.

The „seaside resort of the 20000"

Back to that 2nd of May 1936, when a foundation stone for an immense KdF town was laid on the island of Rügen, in the bay of Prora. What were the grounds from which this project emerged?

The response to the attempt to offer cheap travel oriented by middle-class standards was surprisingly positive, but unexpected problems also manifested themselves, specifically in two respects³⁰: First, it became clear that unskilled workers, and above all whole working-class families, were hardly in a position to come up with the travelling expenses without further subsidies - a flagrant violation of the propagated family policy. Second, the tourist industry proved to be rather ungrateful. Instead of applauding the fact that their spas and seaside resorts were suddenly filled with KdF-holidaymakers, the associations complained that KdF was taking clients away from the commercial operators and chasing off the "solvent public"; they rightly perceived that even without KdF, things were going up again.

No better demonstration of the "shattering of bourgeois privileges" was really required. However, in this conflict of aims, the KdF's head office was guided less by its egalitarian propaganda mandate, than by the complaints of the middle classes: the retreat from the luxury hotels began: KdF tourists were increasingly sent to undeveloped touristic destinations, such as Eastern Bavaria (and later to former Austria). In the beginning more than 60% of the KdF holiday trips lead to traditional German spas and beauty spots, six years later less than 5%.

Nevertheless: At the seaside the strategy of "no friction" with established tourism could hardly be implemented - the capacities were limited. The seaside holiday could, however, not be entirely removed from the program. Thus, the plan was made to put its own tourist towns on the beaches. In 1935, Ley explained that the *Führer* had given him instructions to "think through the possibilities of a mass seaside resort with 20000 beds"³¹. Five such "mass resorts" were to be planned: on Rügen, near Kolberg, Königsberg, Kiel, and Danzig. In 1940 there was even talk of ten such resorts. Three to four million people would have been guided through these holiday factories each year.

Rügen functioned as the pilot scheme; it should be completed before the coming war³². However, in the beginning there was an embarrassing delay. On July 30th 1935, with a handshake, Malte von Veltheim, Duke of Putbus, indicated his agreement to "hand over" part of his property near Prora as a building lot - whatever "hand over" may mean in this context. The document was legally hardly worth the paper it was written on since it states neither the size of the lot, nor the price, nor even the new owner. It appears that Ley was in a hurry to snatch the uniquely lovely land away from the Duke: a gently curved bay, pine forests, a wide, white beach³³.

One of the signatories of the strange agreement was the architect Clemens Klotz. Acquainted with Ley since 1925, he had joined the NSDAP in 1933 and became Ley's favorite architect. Hitler made him *Professor*; however, he did not think highly of him - Klotz once had been a member of the *Werkbund*³⁴. Alfred Rosenberg, the guardian of "blood and soil", was not quite wrong when he gibed, Klotz lacks "deepening": indeed, this architect was able to master every style ranging from the cool elegance of New Realism to the impressive pomp of neo-classicism and historicism.

A day after Ley's handshake with the Duke of Putbus the headline of *Der Angriff* read: "Führer's order: Five huge KdF seaside resorts!" The plans have "already been commissioned"³⁵. The latter seems to tally with the truth: Ley could present a first draft of the blueprints in September; a month later, on the occasion of the second anniversary of KdF, there already was an exhibition of "plans and models" including a doll's house showing the standardized décor of the guest-rooms³⁶. In February 1936, however, for as yet obscure reasons, a competition was suddenly announced. Albert Speer, Hitler's favorite architect, was entrusted with carrying it out³⁷. He selected eleven participants from quite diverse directions, including, beside Klotz, such prominent names as Giesler, Bestelmeyer and Tessenow. Meanwhile, without the competition having been decided, Ley staged the already mentioned laying of the foundation stone. Finally, in August, the Olympics had been opened; Hitler viewed the draft plans on display in Berlin, only to announce, that his choice was the - modified - design by Klotz after all³⁸.

The concept was brilliantly simple, functionally thought through and also perfectly adapted to the given local circumstances: An almost five kilometer long arc. The "residential wings" stretch behind a wide promenade parallel to the beach, a gently and evenly curved bay; geometrically this makes one sixteenth of an imaginary giant circle.

The center of this complex comprises a square of 400 by 600 meters. Towards the sea there is a massive quayside (with bridges for KdF cruisers) and on the opposite side the festival hall. Adjoined to the two remaining sides of this square are the six-storey "residence wings". Each of these buildings extend over more than two kilometers, containing over 7000 identical "living and sleeping cell units".

All of the "cell units" allow for a view of the sea. They "measure 2.20 by 4.75 m and are all identically furnished with two beds, a washstand with running water and waterproof curtain, wardrobe (...) table, chairs and a couch". Each pair is connected via a communicating door, so that a six-member family could be accommodated. Furnishings, kitchenware, bedding, even the complete set of beach utensils, right down to the bathing suit, are designed according to rational principles.

Towards the woods, stump-like wings are attached to the residential buildings at regular, close intervals; they contain mainly the stairwells and the bathrooms. Thus, approaching from the backside one faces an endless row of identical backyards and staircases. On the ocean side, on the other hand, ten massive, though slender "dining buildings" protrude, each seating 2000 "guests". These wings extend all the way to the water and thus divide the beach into eight, just over half a kilometer long segments - the vacationers' "home area". Here, calculations said, each guest is provided with five, or according to other calculations ten, squaremeters of the beach. The rounded ends of the "dining buildings" resemble the stern of a ship - with its plentiful light and glass this was a "cheerful" architecture with elegant simplicity, praised the professional journal *Baugilde*.

Numerous secondary facilities were planned inland. Among them a train station, 5000 underground parking lots, residential areas for 2000 employees, a power station, theaters and cinemas, two indoor swimming pools with artificial waves - and a slaughterhouse. A complex of such dimensions requires excellent logistics. The problems associated with "bringing, distributing and transporting large masses of people back out", as the *Baugilde* put it, were, "with the aim of total efficiency, brought close to a mature solution".

Excursus: The beautiful machine

The plans for the complex at Prora were awarded a *Grand Prix* at the World Fair in Paris in 1937. They were less inspired by Speer, than by Henry Ford: an outstanding example of Fordistic architecture. Prora was a rational "dwelling machine" - a term coined by Le Corbusier. Together with Jeanneret he had planned to put the inhabitants of Algiers into a row of tower blocks, up to 90 meters high, stretching along the beach for twelve kilometers; this dimension, Le Corbusier explained, would meet

the new realities of modern times. According to the *Charter of Athens* from 1933, architecture had to be social hygiene. The International Style celebrated the aesthetics of the washable, the *tabula rasa*, the Great Series. In this sense, the KdF-resort at Rügen was indeed a beautiful machine, a machine for producing health and loyalty, a machine designed in accordance with the grammar of rationalization. Even today, one is impressed by the "consequently functional solution" and the "elegant figure" according to the "principles of New Realism"³⁹.

We have become accustomed to assigning strange, colossal buildings, such as the *Reichsparteitag* area in Nuremberg, to Nazi ideology. But this can be deceptive. Just as modern architecture could also be found in Germany, conversely, so too could its avant-garde all too easily succumb to the fascination of the boundless power of the central government. Le Corbusier, although Communist, admired the French Fascist leader Pierre Winter, dreamt of the destruction of Paris to build it anew with mathematical precision. The new formation of the world and its people demanded the political framework of a revolution from above. But where else if not in Germany was the way clear for the efficient doers - into the most far-reaching planning areas imaginable⁴⁰.

Priority was naturally given to everything that had to do directly with war; all the more impressive is that Ley managed to budget 100 million RM for his project on Rügen⁴¹. It became the second largest 'civil' construction site in the Reich, after the *Autobahn*; thousands of people working there in the middle of a once untouched nature reserve. "This luxurious 'resort for the rabble' is a thorn in the flesh of German bourgeois conformists", as exiled Social Democrats enviously put it: "It is one of the most effective architectural advertisements for the Third Reich⁴²." In the summer of 1939 construction - except for the festival hall and the dining tracts - had almost been completed. Nonetheless, production in the holiday factory never started up; the premature outbreak of war forestalled the opening - planned for 1940.

At this point a digression into the further fate of this complex shall be added. During the war bombed-out, after the war displaced persons were put into the "residential wings". Then the Red Army, since 1950 the National People's Army used the - meanwhile partly destroyed - buildings. In 1994 the last soldiers withdrew - what should happen to the ruins, the buildings, and the 3.5 million squaremeters of land? Investors promised to reconstruct the nearly half-preserved complex for the original tourist purpose. Community action groups, on the other hand, would like to turn the remains, or at least parts of them, into a museum that denounces the inhumanity of the Nazi regime. They perceive the gigantic construction as a "word of stone" - a term coined by Hitler on another occasion. Consequently, Prora stands for the "megalomania" and "terror" of the Third Reich: Prora is a "place of offenders"⁴³. Since the "only objective of KdF was to stabilize a criminal system", Prora beach must not become a holiday paradise. Unfortunately, rogues and heroes cannot be distinguished that neatly.

Firstly, symbolic attributions to buildings are rather a mirror of their physical shape than of their former and present function. After the war, in particular bombastic constructions like the Tempelhof Airport (start of its construction, by the way, was 1936) were taken over gladly by the Allies, especially by the Americans; in the collective memory Tempelhof Airport is not associated with "megalomania and terror" but with "freedom and democracy"⁴⁴. Secondly, as we have seen, the complex of Prora would be a poor example for the "inhuman" neo-classicism favored by Hitler as "words of stone"; instead it represents the austere principles of Fordistic architecture according to the *Charter of Athens*. Nowadays, of course, many people wonder how "human" these principles might be. Be that as it may, in the sixties and seventies thousands of beaches and suburbs were filled with much uglier shoeboxes - a matter of taste, but there is no doubt: what Prora stands for is less typical for a certain regime than for a certain stage of "modern times".

"A New Lifestyle"

What conclusions can be drawn? A quantification of the tourism in the Third Reich suggests that KdF achieved a ten percent share of the German tourist market (in terms of overnight stays). Also roughly one out of ten workers is likely to have at least one time traveled with KdF until 1939 (if one counts only the longer trips); among the skilled, younger male workers this share was probably even higher. Both proportions are appreciable, but they are, at the same time, not a social breakthrough⁴⁵. As ever, tourism as a whole was dominated by the middle and upper classes. Even among the KdF travelers the new middle classes formed the majority; and from year to year their share increased.

Calculations allowed for a holiday in the KdF-seaside resort costing 12 to 20 RM. This is a price level that would have put a holiday trip within the reach of unskilled workers or entire families. The test-tube town on Rügen might have thus possibly been able to increase the travel intensity in the working class nearly by half. Even this would still not have done a lot of good - with some 2 to 3%, the travel intensity among the manual workers had remained very low. The Nazi regime did not actually manage to push tourism to a new social level. "For official use only", this was voiced by the Institute of Work Science of the DAF as early as 1938. KdF is the futile attempt "to use organized intervention to achieve effects that are in conflict with the existing social structure"⁴⁶. A sober analysis of the "Socialism of Deed"!

All the same, however, KdF was the first operator to capture an appreciable share of the total tourist market. Of considerable significance in the long run was in particular the psychological impulse that had bred this dream machine. The figure of eight million KdF vacationers was large enough for that. A lot of people partook in 'proper' tourism for the first time in their lives - and could enthusiastically tell their family, colleagues and friends about it, thus reinforcing the impression that suddenly everybody has the chance to travel⁴⁷. KdF officials were fully aware of that phenomenon: "If you enjoyed your holiday trip, be happy about it. However, we ask you not to keep this joy to yourself, but to tell it to your workmates, too"⁴⁸. And even if KdF did not invent this dream machine, the regime had certainly demonstrated to the world how to tackle the industrialization of travel - consequently applying the grammar of rationalization to this difficult consumer good, from the excellent logistics and the price policy to the holiday factory at Rügen.

In this sense, KdF had indeed "helped a mass desire (...) on its road to success", as a dissertation had put it⁴⁹. Transforming the production from a craft into an industry inevitably changes not only the sentimental and financial value of the product but also the product itself. KdF established a new level of tourist behaviour: between the proletarian excursion and the distinguished bourgeois travel. The propaganda was right in saying the KdF vacationer is a new type of vacationer and the KdF holiday, though orientated according to the bourgeois model, is a new type of holiday: less formal, less costly, less individual⁵⁰.

This trend must certainly be seen in longer terms, starting with the years before World War I, and it is not a peculiarity of German development. Even so, and with this in mind, the six "Kraft-durch-Freude" years represent a turning point in the history of tourism, both in psychological and engineering terms. The means of modern mass tourism had been developed, the dams of pent-up demands had been shaken and they gave out as soon as purchasing power permitted after the war⁵¹.

This was when Ludwig Erhard, the Federal Republic's first and most influential Minister of Commerce, called for the "will to consume" (*Wille zum Verbrauch*). He saw it as the precondition for his "Social Market Economy": a white revolution which promised "prosperity for all" - and at the same time curbed all Socialist "experiments" (which had initially been favored even in his Christian-Democrat Party). Mass consumption would "finally overcome the old conservative social structure", the "traditional hierarchy" with its "resentment between 'rich' and 'poor'"⁵². And indeed: both the bourgeois high culture and the proletarian culture or the labor movement, respectively, with its ties, practices,

ethics and ideologies, were finally buried under the piles of goods produced and consumed in the "affluent society". Regarded in this way, Robert Ley was not entirely wrong when he declared: The best thing that the *Führer* gave his nation - a "new lifestyle"⁵³.

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¹ This article is based on Spode 1997, as well as on Spode 1982, and on my lectures held at the congress of the German Studies Association in Houston 2000 and at the congress in Sion 2001. For stylistic assistance I am deeply indebted to Gabi Rosenstreich and Catherine Briand-Prideaux Lara.

² Because it remains unclear as to whether "progress" improves or spoils the world (cf. Spode 1995).

³ A brilliant analysis of mental changes: Rabinbach 1992.

⁴ "Alles Ständische und Stehende verdampft, alles Heilige wird entweiht", as Marx put it in the Communist Manifesto (Spode 1997, p.11). For examples and basic features, see the great study on "mechanization" by Giedion 1948; further literature: Spode *ibid*.

⁵ Zuse's computer, the Z1, was finished in 1938 but did not work safely; three years later the Z3, based on the same logic but using relays instead of mechanical switches, worked properly. At the same time, Turing, too, started to develop a computer (which finally cracked the secret code of the Wehrmacht) and, in America, Stibitz (1940) and Aiken (1944) built computers (with logic architectures which are different from today's).

⁶ For further information on the German Labor Front (DAF) see the pioneering study by Mason 1975 (an English version without the sources is entitled: *Social Policy in the Third Reich*, Oxford 1993); from the broad literature here I only recommend Mai 1986; Heuel 1989; Zollitsch 1990; still useful is Schumann 1958 (all dealing partly also with KdF, esp. Heuel, pp.418ff).

⁷ Ley 1937, pp.23ff. Ley drew from Italian sources and especially mentioned Hendrik deMan, a social scientist at the union-affiliated Akademie der Arbeit (later a politician in occupied Belgium) who had called for a "struggle for the joy of work" in the face of the alienation due to rationalization.

On KdF generally see the dissertations by Moyer 1967 and Buchholz 1976 (with lots of material but also with contentious interpretations); esp. with respect to tourism Spode 1980 and 1982; overviews: Spode/Steinecke in Spode 1991; Weiß in Beckstein 1993; Corbin 1995 and in particular Baranowski 2001.

Speaking of „joy“ in the Third Reich and not of terror might deserve an explanation. In the seventies, social and economic historians had shifted the focus of research from the 'bad' aspects of Nazi rule to the 'good' ones, to the improvements, advantages and rewards offered in combination with suppression

(cf. e.g. Mason in Sachse 1982). However, abysmal terror and cruelty seem more fascinating than the peace years with everyday life's peculiar 'normality'. In the past decade, war and genocide again dominated the public and scholarly view of National Socialism. Research has revealed some devastating new facts and features; but gazing only on the final years of the regime has doubtful consequences. Not only does it produce reclaims into dubious theories about a deviant "special path", as Daniel Goldhagen's huge success on the book market has demonstrated - if not into ordinary German bashing as a proven tool to externalize the evil - but it also detracts attention from universal structures and potentialities of totalitarian systems, thus obscuring their capabilities to attract and bind people and to cope with structural challenges. To deal with tourism in the Third Reich, therefore, is also an implicit critique of current mainstream research, an attempt to recall the need for research in broad frameworks and long term processes, in the mechanisms of integration and modernization, in short: in those aspects that paved the way for the final catastrophe - and partly also for the consumer society that emerged after 1945.

⁸ Dressler-Andress, after never-ending quarrels about the cultural policy between Ley, Goebbels and Rosenberg, was replaced in 1938 by Lafferentz (cf. Bollmus 1970), a brilliant organizer, related by marriage to the Wagner family and not interested in any "cultural revolution". During the war, he worked for the KdF-Cars and for the „Bergung“, responsible for the civilian population in reach of military operations - KdF proved to be an apprenticeship in moving masses of people. Dressler-Andress, on the other hand, was pushed away as a cultural attaché to Krakow.

⁹ Because he wanted a "people with strong nerves" in order to make "really great politics". Despite this opaque hint at the regime's real, otherwise concealed, objectives this (possibly alleged) "order" was repeated again and again (e.g., Reichsamltsleitung 1938, p.12).

¹⁰ Sopade 1(1934)6, pp.A23ff; the travel department as the "jewel" of KdF: *ibid.* 5(1938)2, p.A22, and the pathetic dissertation by Krapfenbauer 1937, p.23. Sopade published - first in Prague, since 1938 in Paris - reports from undercover "correspondents" on everyday life in Germany. On this valuable source cf. Voges 1981, pp.332ff.

¹¹ For an overview, see Corbin 1995.

¹² On the "taylorized" leisure activities of the OND cf. de Grazia 1981 (on travel: pp.179ff); also see Liebscher 1998.

¹³ KdF was strongly inspired by the OND - KdF's initial name was "After Work" which means Dopolavoro - but it was more than a mere copy. Cf. Spode 1982, pp.288ff and especially Liebscher *op.cit.*

¹⁴ It is hard to obtain solid data. The records of the KdF Reichsleitung were destroyed in 1945. The overall figures published by KdF were incomplete and contradictory to the extent that they are worthless without critical recalculations. The data presented here are therefore constructed from many different sources, including a representative data set based on KdF programs; nevertheless, they remain estimations. All following figures (and the sources and methods used) acc. Spode 1982, pp.296ff; on the prices also 1997, pp.20f and 26; before 1933: Keitz 1997, pp.112ff.

¹⁵ Including approx. 2 mill. from Austria and the Sudeten. For additional information on tourist activities during the war, see the brilliant case studies by Gordon 1998 (Paris) and Frese 1996 (Westphalia).

¹⁶ KdF ran up to nine ships at a time (four had been bought and two big high-tech cruisers had been launched, the rest was chartered). In the beginning, most cruises lead into the Norwegian fjords (once a favorite tour of Emperor Wilhelm II), although the passengers were not allowed to disembark; later the program was expanded to Sweden, Portugal, Italy and Libya, Greece etc. In contrast to the other KdF trips, the foreign trips and cruises needed heavy subsidies. For details on the cruises, see Frommann 1977.

There is no room here for a discussion of the (real) wages and the worker household budgets. Roughly speaking wages ranged from 1500 to 2500 RM per year; and about 1 % of the household incomes - among the unskilled less, among the skilled or those with no children more - was spent on excursions or trips.

¹⁷ Acc. Spode 1982, p.321. For the following citations cf. fn. 10.

¹⁸ Cf. Spode 1980, pp.284ff, and 1997, pp.19f. In order to acquire planning data, in late 1933 a poll was taken among the employees of Berlin's Siemens Works: 45% had made excursions (Ausflüge) and 32% a holiday trip (Reise). This looks like a lot but it is not. Up to 48% of the total of the 42000 (mostly male) informants were white-collar workers, a stratum in which holiday trips were already rather common. This means that the share of blue-collar workers, who never had traveled in their lives, must have been considerably higher than 68% (probably more than 90%); thus the quota of those manual workers who traveled within the last year (i.e. the „travel intensity“) was minimal. Source: Siemens-Mitteilungen, Nr.151, July 1934, p.113. This was the only big survey on leisure activities; unfortunately, the results were presented in a vague manner and the original data are lost (I thank Carola Sachse for this hint; cf. her remarks in Beckstein 1993, pp.317f). For an overview of the results, see Buchholz 1976, pp.20f; whereas Keitz insists (1997, p.176; in Brenner 1997, p.63; in Beckstein 1993, p.208) on a travel intensity of 20% among Siemens' blue-collar workers; indeed an "outstanding result" - however, calculated incorrectly. Accordingly, her attempt to show that the Weimar Republic pointed the way for holiday trips in all social strata (e.g., 1997, p.13 and 19) is not very convincing (cf. next fn. and briefly Corbin 1995, p.462).

¹⁹ ... especially middle-ranked civil servants, like teachers, and salaried employees (and here especially the female and the younger ones in the cities), including also a small stratum of the working class, the "labor aristocracy", which even runs special travel agencies - and thus fueled the "envy" of the average workers: a point of departure for the regime's efforts to isolate the elite of the labor movement from the rank and file (cf. Heuel 1989, pp.224ff). See generally the inspiring interpretation of consumption patterns by Spree 1985 and the abundant statistics by Triebel 1991, which show that the changes in consumption patterns in the "sphere of culture" during the Weimar Republic were chiefly a matter of the "bourgeois middle-class strata" but hardly affected the "manual working" majority (p.415).

²⁰ Acc. Spode 1997, p.24.

²¹ 8% more than 12 days and 5% less than 6 days: calc. acc. Jahrbuch, ed. by Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut der DAF 4(1939)II, pp.99ff; for the objectives see *ibid.* 1(1936)I, esp. pp.117ff. There are no comparable data for the Weimar Republic; but if one counts the wage agreements, the improvement is obvious: in 1931 61 % of the agreements fixed the minimum duration of the holidays at 3 days or less, in 1937 only 15%; a maximum of 6 days was fixed in 1931 in 30% of all settlements, in 1937 in only 4%. For further details and the legal aspects cf. Spode 1982, pp.277ff.

²² See fundamentally Dressler-Andress 1936. Opening „culture to all“ remained a guideline for cultural policies in both German states.

²³ Speech on occasion of the KdF cruiser 'Robert Ley' being launched in March 1938, acc. Marrenbach 1942, p.357.

²⁴ Kühnl 1971, p.129. On the Volksgemeinschaft, see e.g. Lüdtkke 1991; Sachse 1982 and fn. 6.

²⁵ It was estimated that this improvement was equivalent to 1 to 3 % of the total wage sum (Mason 1975, p.1252 and 1263). On consumption-control see *ibid.* and Petzina 1968, also Berghoff 1996.

²⁶ As Buchholz 1976, p.139, put it; a similar stance was held by Schoenbaum 1968, pp.143ff, in his great, though contentious overall picture of the Third Reich.

²⁷ Arbeitertum, 1st March 1935, p.3. The term „Werkstätige“ was rarely used; it stemmed from Lenin and was later common in the GDR.

²⁸ On these further points, which cannot be discussed here, see the literature in fn. 7 and also, much stressing the last point, Liebscher 1999.

²⁹ All rumors before and after 1945 that the KdF buildings and ships were secretly designed to serve warfare purposes proved to be wrong.

³⁰ Cf. Spode 1982, esp. table 6.

³¹ Ley 1939, p.74. Acc. Dressler-Andress (verbal report to the author) it was Ley himself who had the idea.

³² On the project see with respect to architecture Leser 1991; also Wilkens 1998 and the illustrated book by Rostock/Zadnicek 1995 (both with very critical judgements).

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, p.138.

³⁴ The Deutsche Werkbund, together with the Bauhaus, the leading association for modern design and architecture, was closed down in 1933. The so-called International Style, however, was not completely banned, as monumental neo-classicism, on the other hand, was not a unique feature of the Third Reich. Cf. Frank 1985; see also fn. 44.

³⁵ *Der Angriff*, 31st of July 1935, p.1.

³⁶ Ley 1939, pp.74 and 93; also see *Arbeitertum*, 15th of Dec. 1935, p.1, showing Hitler and Ley visiting the models.

³⁷ See - also for the citations in the following paragraphs - *Baugilde* 18(1936), pp.819ff; *ibid.* 20(1938), pp.822ff; Marrenbach 1942, pp.361ff; also fn. 32.

³⁸ The only major modification was that the festival hall was to be built according to the neo-classical design by Erich zu Putlitz - a difficult mixture of styles, as, between the lines, the *Baugilde* criticized. In 1939, however, the erection of the festival hall was postponed.

³⁹ Leser 1991, pp.216ff. At the same time, in England, too, artificial seaside resorts - though smaller than Prora - were built in accordance with the International Style (cf. Ward/Hardy 1986).

⁴⁰ "It was the youngest and most flexible academic elite ever ruling in Germany": cf. Aly/Heim 1993, here p.487.

⁴¹ Cf. Ley 1939, p.93.

⁴² *Sopade* 6(1939)4, p.A64.

⁴³ „Täterort“ acc. Hoppe 1999 with discussion (cf. also fn. 32).

⁴⁴ About the airport - designed by Sagebiel, famous since the Airlift 1948/49 and still used for civil aviation - see Heisig/Thiele 1998. Although different in style, the airport's basic structure is identical to that of Prora - a sector of a gigantic tooth wheel (cf. Spode 1997, pp.35ff). Another neo-classical "word of stone" by Sagebiel in Berlin, Göring's Reichsluftfahrtministerium, also found its way into new political systems: in the GDR it accommodated several ministries, today the finance minister - and is not a subject of scrupulous debates, like numerous other buildings from the thirties, ranging from the IG-Farben-Haus in Frankfurt (used as US headquarters) to the Haus der (Deutschen) Kunst in Munich, and also from the Trocadéro in Paris to Los Angeles' Central Station. Coda: Having finished the manuscript, I found a brilliant essay by M. Schreiber in *Der Spiegel* No. 25, 2001, pp.160ff: Only long after the war the „Nazi architecture“ became a mighty symbol of evil in the eyes of the German cultural elite, thus „ennobling“ it afterwards and surpassing its actual propaganda effect by far - a „moral exorcism“.

⁴⁵ It is possible that a majority of the workers participated in KdF short trips; however, excursions were not a new practice for them. Only the 'proper' holiday trips had psychological and propagandistic impacts; more precisely: The analysis of reports (from Gestapo informers and from the resistance) as well as of KdF trip data suggest to distinguish a first 'sensational phase' from a second 'adaptational phase': since 1937/38 KdF was increasingly regarded as second-class tourism, and, at the same time, salaried employees, in particular "bigwigs", took over the more attractive and expensive tours. Both

curtailed the propaganda effect. Cf. Frommann 1977, pp.181ff; Spode 1982, pp.299ff, and 1991, pp.85ff; prices in Prora: 1997, p.38.

⁴⁶ Here acc. Bühler 1940, pp.383ff.

⁴⁷ See Reulecke 1989, p.373, as well as Dussel/Frese in Beckstein 1993, p.96, on Westpahlia, speaking from "mental effects" which – irrespective of the poor actual figures - paved the way for the postwar increase in tourism.

⁴⁸ Urlaubsreisen 1937. NSG "Kraft durch Freude" Gau Berlin, Berlin n.d., p.99.

⁴⁹ Führsatz 1938, p.52.

⁵⁰ See e.g., Kahl 1940.

⁵¹ On the breakthrough of mass tourism in both German states, see Beckstein 1993 (esp. Schildt) and Spode 1996 as well as Storbeck 1993 and Haus 1996. To give an idea of the quantitative changes: today, the biggest German tour operator alone, TUI, sells some 6 million trips every year.

⁵² Erhard 1957, pp.7 and 233.

⁵³ Marrenbach 1942, p.356.