

Riese, Christina:

## Hunger, Armut, Soziale Frage

Sozialkatholische Ordnungsdiskurse im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871–1918), Paderborn 2019.

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In scholarship on the Catholic milieu, the notion of a relatively self-contained, anti-modern social sphere was long the dominant interpretation. Critics of this viewpoint have argued first and foremost that it fails to adequately account for the diversified social groups and multiple binding forces of the Catholic life experience.

The present study picks up with that line of critique, examining Catholic social discourses on ›order‹ (›Ordnungsdiskurse‹) and, in the process, the debates about ›hunger,‹ ›poverty,‹ and the ›social question‹ that were conducted within the Catholic milieu. It starts with the observation that lacking nutrition and under-nourishment in the industrial society of the German Empire were perceived as a volatile potential threat to the established notions of political and social order and gave rise to various cultures of activism. In the process, it becomes evident that the Catholic diagnosis of a disintegrating social order contributed greatly to the internal cohesion of the Catholic milieu.

Using a broad base of sources, the central sites of Catholic communication about ›hunger,‹ ›poverty,‹ and the ›social question‹ are examined: 1) the annual general congresses of German Catholics (Katholikentage), as a platform for discourses on ›order,‹ reveal the strong influence of bourgeois beliefs and a tendency toward cautious, moderating rhetoric that owed much to the Catholic ›unity‹ paradigm. The memory of the French Revolution as the ultimate threat scenario in respect to Catholic views on social order was an ever-present subtext. 2) By contrast, the Vinzenzvereine (chapters of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul) represented the traditional practices of Catholic relief for the poor, where operations were guided by motives of morality and individual salvation. In practice, a paternalistic culture of encounter was informed by a clear downward gradient of social dignity, in which those who needed and received help themselves conformed to the expectations of the helpers. 3) The diocesan Caritas (Catholic Charities) chapters were among the newer, fast-growing organizations. Their manner of dealing with inadequate nutrition and undernourishment during the First World War casts light on institutionalized emergency care in the minefield of mutual distrust between cities and the countryside, on personal commitment and institutional centralization, and on cooperation with public welfare agencies and confessional defense reflexes. 4) Together with the Catholic association Arbeiterwohl (Workers' Welfare), the textile factory of Mönchengladbach entrepreneur Franz Brandts can be seen as a laboratory for the establishment of a social reality that linked bourgeois Catholic ideas of ›order‹ with considerable transfers of knowledge. Bourgeois visions of family and education were informed by the notion of an ›honorable‹ life befitting one's social standing, not however by the reality of social mobility; in an already industrialized work environment, they continued to ascribe traditional social roles to both men and women. (5) Even in their self-description, the workers' associations conceived of themselves as ›fighting units‹ that sought to secure the material, social, and religious status of the Catholic labor force. The associated conceptions of ›order‹

were discussed in terms of the compatible inner-Catholic notion of the ›estate‹ (social rank; ›Stand‹) and in clear dissociation from social democracy. Clerics who were active in pastoral care for workers no longer saw themselves only as representatives of church but also of the social interests of workers. Conflicts engendered by the paternalism of the clergy or the self-confidence of workers, which could occur in the context of debates about how to live a ›Catholic‹ life, were voiced only cautiously. By contrast, the ritualized religious practice within associational life was an important locus of representative visibility in the Catholic milieu and beyond; it was itself part of Catholic objectives in regard to ›order.‹

On balance, the study demonstrates that the scenario of social threat articulated in various communication contexts brought forth multiple Catholic-Socialist notions of order that were developed within the Catholic milieu into various strategies for crisis management. Thus, the Catholic milieu in the German Empire is revealed to be more diverse than long assumed. In that respect, the study contributes significantly to an updated perspective onto a hotly debated field of Catholicism studies.