

In this issue

The links between contemporary history and its respective present are an abiding theme in historiographical reflection. How can we successfully incorporate the ties between explored and experienced time – which are always there anyhow – into historiography without succumbing to mere presentism and interpreting historical constellations simply as precursors to the present? *Frank Bösch* offers a programmatic contribution to this discussion with his analysis of crises and their aftermaths since 1979. In this synopsis of European and global developments, we can see that especially in that year numerous events and trends came together that appear heterogeneous and even contingent at first glance. Precisely this factor, however, allows for various ‘lines of sight’ on a differentiated contemporary problem history.

Frank Bösch, since October 2011 co-director of the Centre for Contemporary History, is also the new co-editor of this journal. He is taking the place of Christoph Kleßmann, who since the inception of the journal has enriched the ‘Studies in Contemporary History’ with his dedication and commitment. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his efforts. We are also very pleased that with Cornelia Brink (Freiburg), we were able to win a renowned historian as a new member of our board of advisers.

In the article on the year 1979 and its ramifications, one chapter is dedicated to energy policy, an aspect that has just recently become a focus of contemporary history. In this field, we can analyse political decision making processes as well as technical, economic and ecological dimensions. A pioneer who has for some decades now pointed out these sorts of productive connections is *Joachim Radkau*. The interview with him opens this issue’s debate section on ‘contemporary histories of environment’, conceived by *Melanie Arndt*. *Christof Mauch*’s contribution on Rachel Carson’s ‘Silent Spring’ in the ‘rediscovered classics’ section (fifty years after the book first appeared) also fits in with this topic.

One important research perspective of the ‘Studies in Contemporary History’ is Visual History. In this issue, various contributions present and discuss visual source material: *Stefanie Middendorf* uses French comics (*bandes dessinées*) as a probe in order to analyse changes in conceptions of culture and cultural policy in the course of the twentieth century. *Julia Werner* acknowledges the online archive of the memorial Yad Vashem as a rich fund which should, however, be further improved with regard to its usability and accuracy. *Eliane Ursula Ettmüller* points out the significance of caricatures in the overthrow of the Mubarak regime in early 2011 and investigates the longer tradition of this medium in Egypt.

Two detailed articles in this issue offer new insights in the more classical areas of German contemporary history research: *Immanuel Baumann*, *Andrej*

Stephan and Patrick Wagner sum up the central questions and results of their research project on the history of the *Bundeskriminalamt* (BKA). As with similar ‘commissioned research’ of the past years, the main topic of this study is the continuities in staff and mentalities from the National Socialist era. Beyond more or less scandalous individual cases, historiographical interest has come to focus more on ‘organizational cultures’ and the ways they dealt with the caesura of 1945. For early West German postwar society on the whole and the newly reinstituted democracy, the authors attest a “‘success” particularly in that a catastrophe never took place’. Due to the BKA’s significant increase in personnel in the 1970s, former Nazi police officers came to inhabit a minority position. They no longer significantly influenced the concepts and practices of the agency. *Peter Hoeres’s* article on Axel Springer’s image of America and the transformation of conservatism also addresses mental reorientations in West Germany. Whereas initially Springer and his newspapers regarded the USA with ambivalence – even criticism – this changed fundamentally in the context of ‘1968’. It is telling that Springer himself never admitted to or critically reflected this change, but rather purported to have always been a friend of America and a supporter of close relations between Europe and the United States. Conservative hardliners in West Germany who continued to view the United States critically, on the other hand, were increasingly isolated.

The section ‘rediscovered audio classics’, which was initiated last year, is again taken up in this issue with contributions by *Philipp Gassert* (on the song ‘Ein bisschen Frieden’ by the singer Nicole) and *Ole Löding* (on BAP’s ‘Kristallnacht’). Both songs are from 1982 and today, thirty years later, can be seen as pop-cultural contemporary documents in specific historical constellations. A further article in the section ‘rediscovered classics’ is dedicated to the sociologist Daniel Bell, who died in January 2011, and his book ‘The Coming of Post-Industrial Society’ from 1973. *Ariane Leendertz* places this work into a theoretical and political context. For contemporary history research that is attentive towards the present, Bell’s work has many important impulses to offer – despite or even because of its contradictions. At the same time, this contribution points towards our next theme issue, which will focus on the history of the information society and ‘computerization’.

The Editors

(translation: Eva Schissler)