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Svea Koischwitz: *Der Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft in den Jahren 1970–1976: Ein Interessenverband zwischen Studentenbewegung und Hochschulreform*, Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag 2017, 541 pp., € 70.00 [D]/€ 72.00 [A], ISBN 978-3-412-50554-7.

In the last years, contemporary history has noted an increasing number of studies about the 1970s in West Germany. With studies focussing on social and student movements and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the period has initially been characterised as a “red” decade.¹ Yet recently there has been a marked shift in perspective, as a focus of research turned to conservatives and opponents of the political left and their means of politicisation and mobilisation.² Svea Koischwitz’ Ph.D. thesis about the *Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft* (BFW), roughly translated as ‘The Association for Freedom of Science’, is exemplary for this trend. Founded on 18 November 1970, the BFW served as a cross-party defence alliance against higher educational and socio-political processes of ‘1968’. Of the founding members, cultural philosopher Edith Eucken-Erdsiek was the only woman. The three professors Hermann Lübbe (philosophy and political theory), Hans Maier (political science, also Bavarian Minister of Education and Arts from 1970 to 1986) and Walter Rüegg (sociology and classical philology) formed the first executive board who, alongside the extended board, defined the main objectives of the association. Professors did not only play a crucial role in the founding of the BFW, but also served as representatives of the association to the public.

In 2016, Nikolai Wehrs published his Ph.D. thesis about the BFW in which he analysed the role of the BFW in the context of the intellectual debates of the 1970s. He showed that the impulses of ‘1968’ also intensified development of conservative ideas and concluded that the association had impacted greatly on general political and cultural changes in this decade.³

In contrast, Koischwitz focuses on the association itself, leading her to look not only at the central association but also at the two biggest local sections, Bonn and Berlin. With membership applications, Koischwitz provides new sources to show a cross section of the member structure. Both studies have a prosopographical approach with overlapping interview partners, but Koischwitz expands the scope of the interview partners by adding non-professorial viewpoints to analyse values and reasons for joining. Even though

- 1 Gerd Koenen: *Das rote Jahrzehnt: Unsere kleine Kulturrevolution 1967–1977*, Köln 2001.
- 2 Livi Massimiliano/Daniel Schmidt/Michael Sturm (eds.): *Die 1970er Jahre als schwarzes Jahrzehnt: Politisierung und Mobilisierung zwischen christlicher Demokratie und extremer Rechter*, Frankfurt a.M. 2010.
- 3 Nikolai Wehrs: *Protest der Professoren: Der “Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft” in den 1970er Jahren*, Göttingen 2014.

Koischwitz recognizes that with Ursula Besser (politician, German Christian Democratic Union, CDU) she also includes a woman and her perspective (p. 26), she never discusses specifically female experiences or applies methods of gender history. Instead, she combines university history, political science research of associations and approaches of biographical and generational research (p. 32).

In two chronological and one systematical chapter, Koischwitz describes the BFW from its foundation to its decline, thereby focusing on its period of prosperity as the main part of the study. Her account is divided into three distinct phases: a phase of development (1970–1972), a peak phase (1972–1973) and a turning point (1974–1976). Furthermore, she also outlines a preparation period from 1968 to 1970 and thus emphasises the significance of 1968 as a turning point, which was often understated in the recent past.⁴ Koischwitz' main interest is to analyse the genesis and development of the BFW (p. 16).

First, she outlines the foundation of the BFW and the changes in universities at the end of the 1960s. Educational expansion, student movement and reforms of higher education are interpreted as central points for founding the BFW. Professors perceived threats to their position in the university from the student movement as well as from the state and its higher education policy. Koischwitz's thesis is that two main catalysts brought the members of the BFW together (p. 77): the participation of students in university administration and the fear of science becoming ideologised. Combining the interview partners' specific generational experience with their reasons for joining, Koischwitz argues that the association must be seen as a heterogeneous movement at least until the mid-1970s (p. 281). This led to a constellation in which members with different political positions were unified by shared attitudes and values in relation to higher education policy. Autonomy for higher education, democratisation of universities and academic freedom were the cornerstones of this debate.

In the years between 1970 and 1976, the BFW dominated the discussion concerning these issues. In campaigning against the positions of the student movement whilst holding key positions in certain universities, and positioning its members as experts in the discussion over higher-educational policy, the BFW enjoyed great success and did not only influence intellectual debates, but political decisions like the German Higher Education Framework Act (HRG).

The comparison of the sections in Bonn and Berlin is a particularly constructive perspective. The different local occurrences expose the diversity of negotiation processes, politicisation and mobilisation as well as major internal disparities in organisations. This is furthermore supported by abandoning the characterisation of the 1970s as a 'black' or 'red' decade. Svea Koischwitz's book is valuable for contemporary historians who are interested in the history of organisations, intellectual history as well as university history.

4 Udo Wengst (ed.): *Politischer und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland vor und nach 1968*, München 2011.

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