

ensured that relatively few marriages were performed during both March and December, but it is clear that internal as well as external pressures maintained popular adherence to the Christian calendar. The number of conceptions dropped precipitately during Lent. There was less conjugal observance of Advent, and Croix notes a tendency away from Lenten abstinence over the century.

The work on which this study is based is staggering; Croix examined the records of more than one hundred sixty thousand births, eight thousand marriages, and fourteen thousand deaths. He has organised it clearly and concisely, integrating the tables and graphs into the text. A few similar sets of documents survive from other parts of Britain; one hopes they will be plumbed with the same flair and ingenuity.

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WOLFGANG BERGER. — *Das St.-George-Hospital zu Hamburg. Die Wirtschaftsführung eines mittelalterlichen Grossshaushalts.* Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1972.

Berger's book is a study in medieval accountancy. It is an exhaustive survey of the economic records of a charity foundation in North Germany. The *Spital* of St. George outside the town walls of medieval Hamburg functioned from the later thirteenth century as a home for lepers. It received cases from four urban parishes, keeping lepers off the Hamburg streets for several centuries. It provided old age insurance for a number of town officials, burghers and their dependents. It was also a retreat for those in the fifteenth century who wished to do penance in their last years of life, and thus seek a surer path to heaven.

From the 1440s onwards detailed accounts have survived, notably the kitchen records or *Kohenbücher*. Berger uses these and allied economic archives to reconstruct the household budget of this famous medieval urban hospital, from which price data were already tabulated in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> The reader has to contend with a mass of graphs, and tables as text. He is given the burial cost of a poor leper (one mark), the cost of candle-light at the altar (four shillings), and the cost of a church-warden when processing at Christmas (six pence), as well as total income, expenditure and the hospital's investments in rents, houses and lands.

It is not an easy book to read. Detail predominated but the patient reader will find it full of useful piecemeal evidence for an understanding of standards and expectations of common burgher life in fifteenth and early sixteenth century North Germany.

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### *Prices and Wages in Late Medieval Germany*

URSULA HAUSCHILD. — *Studien zu Löhnen und Preisen in Rostock im Spätmittelalter.* Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1973.

The town of Rostock on the South Baltic provides Dr. Hauschild with archive evidence to test the general thesis of Professor Abel that in fifteenth century Germany labourers' wages had reached a level of adequacy, compared to prices of basic food stuffs,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M.J. ELSAS, *Umriss einer Geschichte der Preise und Löhne in Deutschland*, Leiden 1936-49.

that was not reached again until the late nineteenth century era of industrialization. To Abel the sixteenth century provides the great divide between late medieval affluence and early modern "hard times" for those with only their labour to sell.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hauschild tests this thesis in the light of specific, regional evidence. She concludes that for Rostock between 1250-1530 there was no particular wage affluence, nor was there any serious decline in the ratio of wages to prices at the end of that period. There was no drastic "scissors" movement between prices and wages in Rostock during these centuries, although wages were hardly ever sufficient to keep labouring families very far off the hunger line. She concludes:

The wages of skilled building labourers could generally just cover the cost of feeding a family of five. The wages of the lower groups (unskilled labourers and porters) lay close to the barest minimum level for keeping body and soul together, although these wages did improve during the course of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

This does not contradict the Abel thesis, but it does modify it considerably. Yet there are weaknesses. Firstly, Hauschild stops short at 1530, which she admits is far too early. It may still turn out that Rostock wage labourers experienced immiseration relatively late in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Secondly, Hauschild's evidence very cautiously confirms Abel in that the fifteenth century did seem to be an era of *relative* prosperity for the wage-earner, albeit still of extremely modest proportion in the case of Rostock's labour-force.

That even this relative prosperity was so meagre is an important modification of Abel. Hauschild's book shows that we must be much more cautious in expecting any late medieval rise of wages over prices. Any such trend was certainly not as significant as Abel would lead us to believe. Hauschild's work on Rostock now shows that up to the 1530s prices and wages were rising in rough unison but that wages still generally lagged behind prices for the urban work-force and their families.

The value of Hauschild's study is that it provides the first really detailed evidence for constructively modifying the Abel thesis that late medieval wage rates were so good that a similar degree of prosperity was not achieved again by labouring families until the nineteenth century. Hauschild now needs to take her analysis of the Rostock evidence beyond the 1530s.

Hauschild's technique is interesting. Using wage and price data from unusually rich town council, treasury, market, fiscal, monopoly and charity records, she sets up a "shopping-basket" for five (two adults, two children and one domestic or poor relative), representing a basic household. The *Korb* or basket contains bread, meat, fish, butter-fat, salt and beer (pp. 153-167). Quantities consumed per head are then taken from surviving budgets that North German charity hospitals themselves calculated in the sixteenth to eighteenth century.

Thus every year a late medieval Rostock family of five may be said to have expected to consume (according to the by no means generous standards of the poor and charitable hospitals of its own, or slightly later, pre-industrial times, and *not* according to any anachronistic, modern calorie counts) — about 4500 pints of strong and weak beer, 2500 lbs of rye bread, 800 lbs of beef, 100 lbs of fish, 70 lbs of butter-fat, and 160 lbs of salt.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. ABEL, *Massenarmut und Hungerkrisen im Vorindustriellen Deutschland*, Göttingen, 1972, and a fuller version published in Hamburg and Berlin, 1974. See "Prices and wages in early modern Germany," *Histoire Sociale-Social History*, No. 14, 1974, pp. 379-81.

<sup>2</sup> Translated from Hauschild, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Contrast A. HERZOG, *Die Lebensmittelpolitik der Stadt Strassburg im Mittelalter*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1909. A very useful survey is E. MASCHKE (ed.), *Gesellschaftliche Unterschichten in den südwestdeutschen Städten*, Stuttgart, 1967.

Hauschild then calculates the amount that this cost in local coin at local prices for each year in the period 1400-1530 for which she has sufficient archive data. She then does the same for day wage rates in a number of skilled, semi and unskilled jobs, taking the large number of saints' days and holidays of pre-Reformation society carefully into account. Although she still fails to budget for rent, heat, clothing, illness and under or unemployment, she has tried to avoid the pitfalls attached to price data converted to silver bullion rates, as well as avoiding anachronistic nutritional predictions of any basic standard of living. She is to be respected for attempting to compare like with like, for despite the inevitable crudities due to the lack of more sophisticated records, late medieval and early modern expectations have been taken as their own norm and used to measure basic standards of living for their own period of time.<sup>4</sup>

Table 19 (p. 167) presents this evidence in terms of bricklayers' and porters' wages above all between 1400-1530. In this period an unskilled labourer is thought to have been able to feed his family for only about one-third of the time. The saw-mill worker and bricklayer could feed their family throughout the period. Journeymen carpenters and tylers achieved this level for something over 90% of the time. Jobbing carpenters and handymen were, however, only a little better off than the wholly unskilled. The subsistence line in this so-called "affluent" fifteenth century can thus be drawn for Rostock between the skilled and semi-skilled. The semi-skilled joined the unskilled on wages that may well have only kept their families satisfied in one year of three between 1400-1530. This was surely no great achievement. The late medieval period was an era of "hard times", too.

Dr. Hauschild is to be congratulated for having used German local archive evidence to test and to modify the Abel thesis. She has not overthrown that thesis as she seems to claim in her conclusion. But she is perfectly correct in demanding further studies of other late medieval German municipalities to show whether or not Rostock was typical in its failure to achieve wage affluence for the common man and his family in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

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NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS. — *Society and Culture in Early Modern France. Eight Essays.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.

Students of French history and of social history will be grateful for this collection of Natalie Zemon Davis's best essays of the past decade. Although three of them have already appeared previously (and one of these has recently occasioned an interesting exchange of views between a French scholar and the essayist in *Past and Present*), the other five essays were new or not readily available. Moreover, the eight essays together have a significance which individually they lack. The book as a whole studies the formation of the artisans and *menu peuple* of Lyon through the changes brought about by the Reformation and the spread of printing. To a lesser degree it considers the nature of the peasantry of the surrounding countryside in the same period. Lyon normally provides the 'case study', but such cases are placed in a general French and European setting and have wide implications.

The first essay deals with religious and economic tensions within the printing industry in sixteenth-century Lyon. It demonstrates that although a significant proportion of journey-

<sup>4</sup> Her approach is very sensitive when compared with the latest fashion of calculating wages in terms of hours worked for kilogrammes of bread, a recent crude but useful example of which is G. VIGO: "Real Wages of the Working Class in Italy: Building Workers' Wages (14th to 18th Century)," *The Journal of European Economic History*, 3, 1974, pp. 370-99.