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**THE ISSUE OF 'ROBOT' AND OF HEREDITARY SUBJECTION  
AT THE VIENNA REICHSTAG DURING THE REVOLUTION OF  
1848**

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the abolition of hereditary subjection and compulsory labour duties ('Robot', or 'Fronarbeit', or 'robota') during and after the revolution of 1848/49. In the summer of 1848 the Vienna Reichstag was the scene of long and heated debates regarding the conditions and mechanisms for the abolition. The study describes these debates and the motivation behind the positions taken by the right-wing and left-wing factions in the parliament. The author then analyzes the law which eventually abolished hereditary subjection and Robot (31 August 1848), including the implementing regulations of 4 March 1849.

KEYWORDS

Austrian Empire; revolution of 1848/49; agriculture; rural population; hereditary subjection and Robot

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Among the most fundamental social and economic issues facing Austria in the period leading up to the revolutionary events of March 1848 (the Vormärz period) was the failure to address the problems connected with the underdeveloped agrarian sector, which was based on the division of land ownership between ownership title (dominium directum) and possessory title or tenancy (dominium utile) – in other words, on the institution of heredi-

tary subjection (Erbuntertänigkeit, or poddanství in Czech). After the revocation of Josef II's 1789 taxation and urbarial patent (which would have introduced 'reluition' – i.e. the replacement of all or most feudal duties with monetary payments) the issue of hereditary subjection was shelved for a further six decades. The law passed in September 1798 emancipating subjects from compulsory labour duties ('Fronarbeit' in German, usually known as 'Robot' in Austria, from the Czech 'robota') was rather ineffective, as it left reluition entirely as a matter of mutual agreement between subjects and their feudal lords. This meant that reluition was entirely dependent on the willingness of the lord in question – and faced with rapid inflation, feudal lords were reluctant to enact such a change. In December 1846 a new court law granting emancipation from *Robot* was passed; however, again it relied on a voluntary agreement between the lord and his subject. This law enabled either reluition or a one-off payment (abolition). The literature states that the abolition of *Robot* in Vormärz Bohemia affected over 100 large manors and numerous smaller municipal estates worked by free shepherds, peasants with hereditary rights or peasants farming on a different contractual basis. In the neighbouring Habsburg province of Moravia, reluition apparently applied to five-sixths of all villages during 1848, though this claim is not supported by detailed analysis.<sup>1</sup>

The demands of the rural population in 1848 were hardly excessive. František Roubík has carried out an analysis of petitions sent by rural inhabitants of Bohemia to the National Committee in 1848. There were 580 petitions in total, 465 in Czech and 115 in German, signed by 7 000 people from all strata of rural society (peasants, smallholders, cottagers, farm workers, day-labourers, millers, inn-keepers and tradesmen). Only nine petitions demanded the complete abolition of *Robot* without any payment of compensation. The degree of political engagement among the peasant population was low, with only eleven petitions dealing solely or mainly with political questions.<sup>2</sup> The petitions sent to the Moravian provincial assembly contain only scattered references to how emancipation should be achieved.<sup>3</sup> In view of this low level of political engagement, it is no wonder that the rural popula-

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<sup>1</sup> **P. HEUMOS**, *Die Bauernbefreiung in den böhmischen Ländern 1848. Anmerkungen zu den ökonomischen, sozialen und politischen Verhältnissen der Agrargesellschaft*, in: R. JAWORSKI – R. LUFT (eds.), 1848/49. *Revolutionen in Ostmitteleuropa*, München 1996, pp. 221–237, here p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228–229. Heumos takes his information from **Fr. ROUBÍK**, *Petice venkovského lidu z Čech k Národnímu výboru*, Praha 1954.

<sup>3</sup> **J. RADIMSKÝ – M. WURMOVÁ**, *Petice moravského lidu k sněmu z roku 1848*, Praha 1955, p. 15.

tion was satisfied by the abolition of hereditary subjection, and lost interest in revolution once the act of abolition had been passed on 7 September 1848. The rural population would probably have been satisfied even by the 'mere' abolition of *Robot*.

However, even the abolition of *Robot* was not easy; ultimately, the process was expedited by the emergence of a radical situation which required a quick solution. The landowning nobility in the Czech lands took a very conservative view of the question of hereditary subjection; this attitude was due mainly to the specific features of the large manors in the Czech provinces compared with the Alpine provinces of Austria. Czech nobles wanted to preserve the patrimonial system, whereas the Lower Austrian estates – motivated by economic considerations – wanted to replace this system partly with state authorities and partly with local government bodies. This difference in opinion was due to the fact that the manorial estates in the Czech lands were much larger than in the other Austrian provinces, and the proportion of those estates taken up by dominical land was higher. This meant that the nobility of Bohemia and Moravia were prosperous enough to bear the costs of implementing patrimonial systems of administration and justice. They saw this patrimonial administration as their traditional right, which in their view justified their high status within the economic and social system. An increasing number of large landowners were willing to give up their right to receive *Robot* (provided that sufficient compensation was provided), but the Czech nobility would not countenance the abolition of hereditary subjection itself (i.e. the abolition of the patrimonial system as such). They had no interest in the political emancipation of non-privileged strata of society.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of hereditary subjection had already been discussed at sessions of the provincial assemblies in the pre-revolutionary period. However, it was not until after the outbreak of the Vienna revolution, on 24 March 1848, that a council of ministers was held in the city, involving the fifteen most important Bohemian and Moravian landowning lords plus two Lower Austrian landowners. The majority agreed that it was essential to announce the abolition of *Robot* as soon as possible; labour duties were to cease at the end of March 1849, and questions of compensation were to be discussed by a future Reichstag. The meeting did not discuss the possible

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<sup>4</sup> R. MELVILLE, *Adel und Revolution in Böhmen. Strukturwandel von Herrschaft und Gesellschaft in Österreich um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Mainz 1998, especially pp. 1–88. On several aspects also R. MELVILLE, *Adel und Grundherrschaft in Böhmen an der Schwelle des bürgerlichen Zeitalters 1780–1850*, in: H. FEIGL – W. ROSNER (Hrsg.), *Adel im Wandel*, Wien 1991, pp. 75–90.

abolition of the system of hereditary subjection as a whole; it focused solely on *Robot*. Moreover, the abolition of *Robot* was to apply only to the Czech lands, where the peasant revolt was at its most acute (the patent covering the Czech lands was issued on 28 March, abolishing *Robot* from 31 March 1849). Later, similar patents were issued for other provinces, effective from different dates. According to a document issued by the cabinet in response to the second Prague petition, other changes ensuing from the abolition of hereditary subjection (the abolition of the patrimonial court system and the abolition of relations of hereditary subjection in their entirety) were to be dealt with by the appropriate provincial assembly and the interior ministry.<sup>5</sup>

A similar line was taken by the Pillersdorf Constitution of 25 April 1848, two sections of which stated that the Reichstag would deal with the abolition of feudal relations. The most important section (Section 55) stated that one of the first tasks of the Reichstag would be to examine the provincial assemblies' proposals concerning the constitution and compensation for land burdens ('Grundlasten'). The constitution thus explicitly declared that land would be released in return for payment; the Reichstag and the provincial assemblies were merely to discuss the specific possibilities for implementing this change.<sup>6</sup> On 25 July 1848 Franz Thun-Hohenstein and Jindřich Clam-Martinić, also acting on behalf of other landowners, delivered a petition (addressed to the Emperor) to the Prague provincial government office. In this document, the noblemen requested a decision on *Robot*; the question of compensation was to be left to the provincial assembly to decide.<sup>7</sup> František August Brauner had already presented his demand for a general abolition of *Robot* and other feudal duties (in return for payment of compensation) during the March talks in Prague. By then, Czech politicians had added their voices to those calling for the question of hereditary subjection to be resolved by the provincial assembly. Soon afterwards, they had to face the fact that matters of hereditary subjection (and thus also *Robot*) would fall within the purview of the Vienna Reichstag, which would deal with the issues centrally for all non-Hungarian provinces. The Reichstag opened on 22 July 1848.

The Reichstag was an exceptionally democratic institution for its time; this was mainly a consequence of the Viennese revolution of 13 March

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<sup>5</sup> **R. ROSDOLSKY**, *Die Bauernabgeordneten im konstituierenden österreichischen Reichstag 1848–1849*, Wien 1976, pp. 23–26.

<sup>6</sup> **E. BRUCKMÜLLER**, *Die Kudlich-Legende*, in: *Arhivistika – zgodovina – pravo. Vilfanov spominski zbornik*, Ljubljana 2007, pp. 324–325.

<sup>7</sup> **W. BENNESCH**, *Hans Kudlich: Der Bauernbefreier Oesterreichs*, Prag 1932 (unpublished dissertation), pp. 100–101.

1848, which ousted Metternich and forced the Emperor (or rather the state council) to implement changes. The political elites of the Vormärz era paid a heavy price for their refusal to tackle urgent problems. The revolution was a consequence of the regime's inability to find adequate solutions to pressing issues connected with hereditary subjection and the patrimonial system of administration, national emancipation movements, and the general public dissatisfaction with the police state and censorship. The situation was further aggravated by the economic changes brought by industrialization, together with the problem of pauperization and poor harvests.<sup>8</sup> The Viennese revolution was led by students and the city's intelligentsia – typically urban groupings who had little awareness of the problems facing rural populations. Nevertheless, rural issues were among the first problems to be discussed by the new Reichstag.

The first proposal was put forward by the law student Hans Kudlich, who came from the village of Úvalno (Lobenstein) in Austrian Silesia. A member of the German left, Kudlich presented his proposal for the abolition of hereditary subjection to his fellow party members Adolf Fischhof, Ludwig Löhrner and Franz Schuselka before the opening of the Reichstag, pointing out that it was essential to gain the trust of provincial inhabitants by putting forward practical suggestions. His fellow deputies from the German left agreed.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, on 25 July, Kudlich submitted a written draft proposal (dated the previous day) to the presidency of the Reichstag: "From this time, hereditary subjection is to be abolished, along with all rights and duties ensuing therefrom, with the exception of provisions pertaining to whether said rights and duties are to be abolished in return for payment, and if so, of what sum."<sup>10</sup> On the following day, Kudlich addressed the assembled deputies and gave grounds for his proposal. He presented the abolition of hereditary subjection (including *Robot*) as a continuation of the emancipation efforts begun by Josef II, and stated that the aim of his proposal was to give the peasantry the same legal status as state citizens. Hereditary subjection was to be abolished by a ceremonial proclamation of parliament. Kudlich stated that it was ironic that the sovereign Austrian people determined its own constitution on a democratic basis, while in the provinces the situation was not far removed from the old system of serfdom. He added that even in the parliamentary chamber, subjects served side by side with state citizens, though the citizens were subject only to the rule of

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<sup>8</sup> E. BRUCKMÜLLER, *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs*, Wien – München 2001, p. 278.

<sup>9</sup> H. KUDLICH, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Wien 1873, Vol. II, pp. 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages nach der stenographischen Aufnahme*, Vol. I, Wien 1848, p. 159.

law, while the subjects were burdened by restrictions a thousand times more onerous. Kudlich's statement in this regard drew on his personal experience; he was the son of a peasant who himself was a subject of the Liechtensteins. For Kudlich's family, *Robot* and other feudal duties not only represented a financial burden; more significantly, they represented social restrictions which were at odds with the growing self-confidence of an increasingly prosperous farming family. The next part of Kudlich's speech, in my opinion, presents the political interests of the German left rather than his own personal attitudes. He emphasized that in order to increase the chances of the proposal being passed, he had deliberately omitted to deal with the issue of whether or not compensation would be paid in return for the abolition or whether the details of the abolition would be handled by individual provincial assemblies. In conclusion, Kudlich expressed the opinion that the proposal should not be discussed in committees, but by the entire Reichstag.<sup>11</sup> This was eventually what happened; every last detail had to be discussed by the parliament, which greatly prolonged the discussions.

Why, then, did Kudlich leave open the question of possible compensation, when just a few weeks before – as part of his candidacy for the Reichstag – he had clearly stated that he was against any compensation being paid? Kudlich later rejected criticism from right-wing critics who claimed that such statements had been merely a calculated manoeuvre by the radical left aiming to garner support from the peasantry as the revolution continued.<sup>12</sup> This opinion was expressed (among others) by Anton Springer, who claimed that the German left was well aware of the need to keep the rural areas in a state of tension, and therefore attempted to have only the basic framework discussed in parliament, leaving the question of compensation open as long as possible. Such a tactic would benefit the left by strengthening its political capital not only in the rural provinces, but also in relation to other parliamentary groupings.<sup>13</sup> In his memoirs, Kudlich explained his strategy as a tactical concession to his political rivals, as he was aware that

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<sup>11</sup> **H. KUDLICH**, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Vol. II, pp. 91–94.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>13</sup> **A. SPRINGER**, *Geschichte Österreichs seit dem Wiener Frieden 1809*, Part II: *Die österreichische Revolution*, Leipzig 1865, p. 414. The German left moreover attempted to postpone the promulgation of the Austrian constitution by taking up parliamentary time with the issue of hereditary subjection. If the Frankfurt parliament approved the German constitution before the Austrian constitution came into existence, any Austrian constitution would probably have been closely based on the Frankfurt document; this was the left's primary motivation for their delaying tactics.



his radical ideas would cause him to be isolated.<sup>14</sup> In my opinion, Springer's account is more convincing; I would add that while most of the German left took a flexible approach to the issue, Kudlich's own views on the immediate abolition of hereditary subjection were firmly held.

Kudlich's speech met with a warm reception in the Reichstag, as was admitted even by one of his political rivals, the conservative Josef Alexander von Helfert: "... Hans Kudlich was slim, with a symmetrical figure, of medium height, sinewy, with an upright posture, light-coloured hair and a thin moustache; his entire demeanour had the clear stamp of the self-confident student fraternity and the joie-de-vivre of youth, strongly supported by his bright blue eyes and a generally likeable appearance ...".<sup>15</sup> Immediately after Kudlich's speech, the Tyrolean deputy Strasser pointed out that hereditary subjection did not exist in his province. On the basis of Section 49 of the parliament's rules of procedure, Kudlich's proposal was put to the vote and duly approved, so that the entire matter could be discussed in parliamentary session. This brought a hiatus in proceedings, as according to the rules such a discussion could not begin sooner than three days after the submission of the proposal; however, due to the backlog of other business the discussions only began on 8 August.<sup>16</sup> Two leading figures on the German left mentioned Kudlich's speech in their memoirs. Ludwig Löhner stated that the proposal lacked clarity and was clearly the work of a young man whose knowledge of the peasantry was limited to his own home province. He added that the speech was generally well-judged, with occasional exaggerations such as could be expected from a young man. Franz Schuselka wrote that the idea set out by Kudlich was nothing new; any of the deputies could have presented it, it could have been more practically conceived, and more solid factual grounds could have been given to support it.<sup>17</sup>

Kudlich's proposal opening up the question of hereditary subjection in parliament brought the young Silesian deputy widespread renown, and he soon acquired the nickname 'Bauernbefreier' ('liberator of the peasants'). However, it is important to bear in mind one key fact. The peasants – a social group holding tenancy of large areas of land (until 1848 as dominium

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<sup>14</sup> **F. PRINZ**, *Hans Kudlich. Versuch einer historisch-politischen Biographie*, München 1962, pp. 92–93.

<sup>15</sup> **J. A. HELFERT**, *Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen aus jungen Jahren. Im Wiener konstituierenden Reichstag Juli bis Oktober 1848*, Wien 1904, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. I, p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> **W. SEIFERT**, *Hans Kudlich, der Bauernbefreier*, Wien 1939 (unpublished dissertation), p. 20.

utile) – represented only a small proportion of the total rural population. Far more numerous were small farmers and the landless. For example, in Kudlich's native village of Úvalno in the first half of the 1840s, 152 households out of a total 226 were day-labourers or had similar status.<sup>18</sup> Kudlich's main concern was for the peasantry, as can be seen in his speeches. In his first speech, he began by using the term *Untertan* (i.e. subject) when demanding that subjects be given the same legal status as citizens, but then replaced it with the term *Bauer* (i.e. peasant). In his second speech of 8 August he spoke only of peasants, which he used as a generic description of the entire rural population. The term *Landbewohner* (rural dweller) was not used at all. The most important chapter of the second volume of Kudlich's memoirs is entitled *Der Bauer werde frei!* (Let the peasants be free!), not *Der Untertan werde frei!* (Let the subjects be free!).

This weakness of Kudlich's proposal – the fact that even when discussing hereditary subjection his interest lay primarily with the peasantry and not with the rural population as a whole – was highlighted by Josef Alexander von Helfert in his Reichstag speech of 24 August 1848. At the Reichstag, only peasants spoke on behalf of the rural population – despite the fact that long before 1848 a coalition had been formed between prosperous peasants and their lords in order to pursue a common goal, which was to suppress the rural poor. Both groups were linked by common interests – the maintenance of a cheap workforce (cottagers, farm workers, day-labourers) and the desire to participate in the administration of property and to draw on a contributory fund set up in case of poor harvests, which was practically inaccessible to mere cottagers.<sup>19</sup> Kudlich never addressed the issue of rural areas as a whole, either socially (i.e. the complete structure of the rural population) or territorially (with regard to the differences between provinces caused by climatic conditions and historical development). Conflicts among different strata of society – mainly between cottagers and peasant farmers – are clearly described in the rural petitions submitted to the Moravian provincial assembly in 1848. Peasant farmers and smallholders often prevented the cottagers from accessing municipal pastures, if such land still existed.<sup>20</sup> The cottagers often asked to be allowed to rent a piece of municipi-

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<sup>18</sup> Zemský archiv v Opavě (= Opava Provincial Archive), collection 'Katastr slezský, vceňovací operát obce Úvalno', call sign Sl 461, inv. No. 332, box No. 203.

<sup>19</sup> **P. HEUMOS**, *Die Bauernbefreiung*, p. 234.

<sup>20</sup> **J. KOČÍ**, *Příspěvek k rolnické otázce v Čechách v roce 1848*, *Československý časopis historický*, 1957, pp. 59–85, here p. 69.

pal land in order to improve their living standards, and complained that the peasant farmers rejected these requests.<sup>21</sup>

For the sake of objectivity it should be pointed out that such conflicts did not only affect rural areas, but also urban settlements; it was almost impossible to satisfy all strata of society because the interests of the individual strata often conflicted, and priority was mainly given to the demands of the richer strata, who had greater political influence. In the towns and cities this became clear in the early days of the revolution. It was the labourers and journeymen (who answered the call of the students and swelled the ranks of the students and burghers gathered outside the Lower Austrian provincial assembly in the Herrengasse on 13 March 1848) who provided the crucial weight of numbers which eventually led to the toppling of the Metternich regime. This influx into the centre of the city left the population of the outlying districts to bear the brunt of the street fighting against the army; chaos ensued and the situation spiralled out of control. The suppression of the uprising in the Viennese suburbs, supported by the newly formed National Guard, claimed over 50 lives. At the ceremonial interment of the victims of the March uprising, the burghers attempted to conceal underlying social tensions.

Other critics of Kudlich pointed out that his proposal was ill-considered and excessively radical; essentially their criticism was that Kudlich knew very little about the issues in question. In order to prove to his rivals that they had underestimated his knowledge, Kudlich wrote an extensive analysis of the issue of hereditary subjection in his memoirs; written in the form of an academic study, it stands somewhat aside from the rest of the text. Kudlich countered the accusations that his proposal was ill-considered and too brief by arguing that he was primarily concerned with the formal emancipation of the subjects and their full incorporation into civic society, and that the details of the abolition were to be left to legal experts. He conceded that the motivation for his proposal was entirely personal, as it would affect his parents, siblings and voters, and that it was inspired by his memories of childhood.<sup>22</sup>

Between 26 July and 8 August, when the matter was scheduled to be discussed in the Reichstag, various factions emerged among the parliamentary deputies. One group wanted to postpone the abolition until a new system of state administration had been introduced. Landowners were unwilling to bear the costs of administration if they were to lose their income from the existing feudal arrangements. Another faction, including the Czech

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<sup>21</sup> J. RADIMSKÝ – M. WURMOVÁ, *Petice moravského lidu*.

<sup>22</sup> H. KUDLICH, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Vol. II, p. 99.

deputies, wanted to entrust the entire matter to the provincial assemblies. The German left, as mentioned above, insisted that the matter be discussed by the Reichstag. But what about those who were most affected by the matter – the rural population? The rural proletariat (cottagers and farm workers) did not have the vote, so it is no wonder that they were not represented in the Vienna parliament. It was only peasants who spoke for the rural population in the Reichstag. Out of the total number of deputies there were 97 peasants, of whom 40 were from the province of Galicia. What was the opinion of the German left, the initiator of the proposal to abolish hereditary subjection, on the peasant deputies? Caricatures from the magazine *Wiener Katzenmusik* shown that they were viewed as yokels who could think only of their own backward constituency, or – particularly in the case of the Galician deputies – as puppets deviously manipulated by the Interior Minister Stadion and the forces of reaction. In hindsight, we can state that the peasants were simply promoting their own interests first and foremost – the immediate abolition of all feudal burdens without compensation. They were practically unconcerned with other matters. Many elected peasants held the position of municipal envoys in their home regions, and had bitter personal experience of being harassed by their lord's officials. Others were former soldiers, who had gained a basic education and knowledge of the world during their military service. The best-educated peasant deputies were from the Czech and Austrian provinces; none of them were illiterate. Only ten peasant deputies had been elected to represent the rural provinces of Bohemia. Anton Springer explained this low number partly with reference to the conflicts among national groups, which strengthened the role of the political parties, and partly by the fact that Czech peasants viewed members of the intelligentsia – for example Brauner – as representing their interests. Roman Rosdolsky points to another, in his opinion more important, aspect – the peasants did not expect hereditary subjection to be abolished by the Vienna Reichstag, but by the regional assembly (which included a much larger number of peasant deputies), and furthermore the elections were held immediately after the suppression of the June 1848 uprising in Prague, and voters were affected by the heavy military presence. Rosdolsky also points out that in the Czech lands there was a particularly strong contrast between the peasants and the rural proletariat, which caused a large part of the rural population to become receptive to both the Czech and German members of the urban bourgeoisie. The Reichstag elections in Moravia brought more positive results for the peasantry, especially taking into account the fact that on 1 July 1848 the provincial assembly voted to abolish *Robot* from 1 July of the same year. Despite this fact, out of a total 36 Moravian electoral constituencies eight peasants were elected as Reichstag deputies, plus two

peasant candidates and three representatives of the German left. Out of nine Silesian constituencies, the voters sent three peasants and four members of the German left (including Kudlich) to the Vienna parliament; all seven of these deputies voted for the abolition of hereditary subjection without compensation.<sup>23</sup>

On 8 August Kudlich came up with a more detailed version of his original proposal, evidently in response to criticism for its alleged superficiality: he proposed to abolish the restrictions on personal freedom brought by the system of hereditary subjection, including *Robot*, tithes, and all other duties restricting the freedom of peasant farms except those arising from private legal relationships – i.e. duties arising from the dominium directum or from other legal institutions including various forms of feudal control or tenure and powers invested in reeves and magistrates.<sup>24</sup> Kudlich proposed the formation of a committee consisting of representatives from all provinces (three from each province), which would draft an act for possible (the word ‘possible’ – ‘etwaige’ – was underlined by the author) compensation and the introduction of a new legal system to replace the patrimonial courts. The old courts and political-administrative systems were to remain active until the new systems were set up. A ceremonial proclamation of the abolition of hereditary subjection was to be made, in order to calm the rural population. There then followed a three-hour debate on whether Kudlich had merely refined his original proposal or submitted an entirely new one; in the latter case, the parliamentary rules of procedure would require the new proposal to be put before the appropriate committee for discussion. Eventually, it was decided that the proposal was essentially the same as the original one, and that the changes made were purely formal in nature.

Kudlich was then able to present the grounds for his proposal. He emphasized that through the abolition, the subjects would in fact merely be receiving what was their legal due, or – if there was still any doubt – what had been achieved on 13 March 1848. He stated that only a free man could be a defender of freedom, which was why the peasants must be emancipated. Why did they not emancipate themselves? Their revolts had been brutally

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<sup>23</sup> **R. ROSDOLSKY**, *Die Bauernabgeordneten im konstituierenden österreichischen Reichstag 1848–1849*, Wien 1976, pp. 43–44, 56–61, 85–87; **E. BRUCKMÜLLER**, *Die Kudlich-Legende*, p. 330; **B. BIWALD**, *Von Gottes Gnaden oder von Volkes Gnaden? Die Revolution von 1848 in der Habsburgermonarchie: Der Bauer als Ziel politischer Agitation*, Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bern – New York – Paris – Wien 1996, pp. 172–173.

<sup>24</sup> The precise terms used in German were: Grundherrlichkeit, Bergherrlichkeit, Vogteiherrlichkeit, Schutzobrigkeit, Dorfborgkeit, Lehensverband.

put down by the military. For the peasantry, even worse than physical violence (which they would ultimately rise above) was their intellectual and spiritual impoverishment. They faced an army of clerics, teachers and professors who were bound to the government system by their salaries and the laws governing education. These people caused an intellectual and spiritual debilitation of the rural areas. Kudlich criticized the Austrian aristocracy for failing to follow the example of Galicia and Hungary and not abolishing *Robot* with pride – a step which would compensate for the injustices committed by their ancestors. Kudlich also criticized the provincial assemblies for their alleged lack of democratic progress (with the exception of the Moravian assembly); for this reason he wanted the issue of hereditary subjection to be dealt with centrally, and not left up to the individual provinces.<sup>25</sup>

There then followed a merry-go-round of debates and proposed amendments (a total of 73 amendments at 14 sessions), which lasted almost three weeks. The matter under debate was highly complex, and moreover the situation in rural areas differed greatly among the various provinces of the Monarchy. The stenographic records of the Reichstag sessions show that deputies' proposals concerned several problematic areas. Some deputies pointed out that hereditary subjection and patrimonial courts no longer existed in some provinces, having been replaced by other duties arising from the tenancy of land (as in Tyrol and Vorarlberg). They argued that the Reichstag should deal only with general, universal principles, while the specifics of the process should be left within the remit of the individual provincial assemblies. The German left objected to this proposal; they tended to distrust the provincial assemblies, which were generally more conservative than the Vienna parliament. The left-wing deputies also disagreed with the proposal presented by A. P. Trojan, which stated that a committee should be set up consisting of three representatives of each province, which would immediately prepare a detailed draft of a proposal to abolish hereditary subjection; according to the left-wing deputies, the purpose of Kudlich's proposal was merely to declare certain principles (i.e. the principle of the abolition of the duties arising from hereditary subjection), which would then be followed by committee discussions; discussing the entire proposal in committee would take even longer. The Moravian deputy Alois Pražák disagreed, claiming that the inter-provincial committee would actually expedite the process because it would be able to produce reports on the principles of abolition to be applied in the individual provinces (which could all be drawn up simultaneously). Some deputies, including Dylewski, wanted to leave the question of compensation entirely up to the provincial assemblies, which was

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<sup>25</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. I, 8. 8. 1848, pp. 419–428.

## I. ARTICLES (HD-EH 27/1, 2012)

essentially the view taken by the Czech deputies. From the very beginning, the right-wing deputies attempted to block any chance of abolition without compensation. The Czech deputy Trojan proposed to change the wording of Kudlich's text so that the inter-provincial committee would not draft any law on compensation, but would instead set out principles for 'equitable' or 'reasonable' (in German *billig*) compensation. The Silesian deputy Hein wanted such 'equitable' compensation to be explicitly quantified, though he left open the question whether it would be paid by the subject or the state. Deputy Herndl pointed out that peasants would not be capable of paying compensation without making huge sacrifices, and therefore the law should state that the costs of compensation would be met by the state. The peasant deputies, including Popiel, proposed the abolition of hereditary subjection without monetary compensation in view of the fact that the lords would be compensated by the dissolution of their duties towards their subjects. Deputy Bodnar from Bukovina stated that the boyars in his province had only been able to demand up to 12 days of *Robot* per year, but when the province became a part of the Habsburg Monarchy the peasants had to do *Robot* duties for as many as 150 days or more every year. He argued that the local nobility had thereby already received 'compensation' in advance over the course of the years, and that *Robot* and tithes should therefore be abolished without any further compensation in Bukovina. However, most of the proposals for amendments left the question of compensation open.

Other deputies, for instance Machalski, emphasized that the abolition must not only apply to the duties incumbent upon subjects, but also on the duties incumbent upon the lords; these would be replaced by a relationship based on private law. In the initial stages some deputies expressed the opinion that in the case of landless persons the abolition of hereditary subjection should be without compensation, as the relationship of subjection in such cases was a purely personal one and involved no property rights. Alois Pražák noted that the Moravian provincial assembly had decreed that farm workers and cottager with land of up to three Metzen (roughly 0.6 hectares) should not have to pay for emancipation. Deputy Zimmer immediately proposed that all duties arising from hereditary subjection should be abolished without compensation for farm workers and cottagers holding up to five Metzen; Trojan proposed abolishing *Robot* for members of these groups holding up to six Metzen, as this *Robot* was rendered in return for protection from the lord, which duty was to be taken over by the state.

By 10 August the number of proposed amendments had risen to 44. On the following day, to put an end to this flood of proposals, Kudlich proposed that the Reichstag should vote on the first two points of his proposal, and only then should move on to the other matters (compensation and the issue

of the role to be played by the provincial assemblies). However, this proposal was rejected by the parliament.<sup>26</sup> A group of five deputies – Löhner, Vacano, Kudlich, Umlauf and Hein – then drew up a proposal for an amendment, which was presented by Vacano on 12 August: it stated that hereditary subjection represented a restriction of human freedom and it should therefore be declared illegal and abolished in perpetuity. All duties arising from hereditary subjection should be abolished; a parliamentary committee should be set up (the composition and number of members was not specified) to draw up a detailed text of the law, and the committee should also investigate the question of whether compensation should be provided, and if so to what extent. The government would prepare a draft of a law regulating the activities of courts and administrative authorities, and a ceremonial proclamation would be made to calm the public mood. Unlike Kudlich's proposal of 8 August, this new proposal placed responsibility for the introduction of a new administrative and judicial system in the hands of the government; it also used a very general wording referring to the abolition of all duties arising from hereditary subjection, and thus took into account the lords' duties to their subjects while also avoiding potential difficulties which may otherwise have been caused by incomplete lists of duties. The new proposal continued to leave the question of compensation open. Vacano justified this by stating that any proposed amendments concerning compensation could be postponed until the date on which the committee submitted the proposal.<sup>27</sup>

The discussions continued, including new proposals for amendments. All parties involved were aware that the old system of hereditary subjection was unsustainable, though their views differed on the issue of compensation and the role to be played by provincial authorities. Kudlich's fellow party member Ernst von Violand spoke against compensation; in his opinion, all payments by peasants were equivalent to services provided by the lords. If the patrimonial courts were now to be abolished along with the lords' duties, there would be nothing to pay for. Why, argued Violand, should peasants pay more than any other citizen for general legal protection? If somebody had recently bought an estate in order to oppress his subjects, and was now facing losses, that was entirely his problem: "Men of revolution recognize no historic rights as such; such rights are very often nothing but blatant injustice ( ... ) In my opinion, historic rights are nothing more than the right of the fist, draped in legal and philosophical verbiage." However, it

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 11. 8. 1848, pp. 490–491.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 509.



was also Violand's opinion that 'equitable' compensation should be provided from state funds.<sup>28</sup>

The speech by the Galician peasant Ivan Kapuszczyk represented a coruscating attack on the nobility. Kapuszczyk emphasized that in the past, the Galician nobles had unilaterally increased the extent of *Robot* duties from a hundred to three hundred days per year. He listed a catalogue of inhuman treatment, including physical punishments and other humiliations – peasants had to doff their caps when within three hundred steps of the manor house. His rousing speech, which even today still sends a shiver down the spine, ended with the following words: "And now we should pay compensation for these torments? I hardly think so. The whips that cracked over our heads and the rods that beat our exhausted bodies – yes, we can forgive those. Let that be their compensation."<sup>29</sup>

Another Galician deputy, Borkowski, also opposed any compensation. In his view, the abolition amounted to a social revolution at the very heart of the state apparatus, bringing a new concept of ownership. The exclusive usurpation of many freedoms was the essence of absolutism. If the duties arising from hereditary subjection were illegal, then any property acquired through this system was also illegal, and there was no reason to hesitate to remove such property.<sup>30</sup> Deputy Peitler was in favour of the payment of compensation from the funds of the state or the estates. He proposed that this principle be enshrined in the draft law even before the committee began its work, so that the peasants would know from the very beginning that they would not have to pay.<sup>31</sup> Most of the German left were favoured the payment of compensation by the state, however Peitler's proposal did not fit with their intention of keeping the peasants bound to the parliament – and thus to the revolution – for some time.

The right-wing deputies spoke in favour of compensation, finding their main spokesman in the young lawyer Josef Alexander von Helfert, who considered the non-provision of compensation a form of theft committed against the landowners. Helfert divided the question of compensation into three sub-questions: whether, how, and by whom. He supported the principle of 'equitable' compensation and urged the deputies to vote in favour of this, asking what kind of liberals would be able to give away the property of another person. The feudal provincial assemblies could do so, because

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 16. 8. 1848, pp. 573–575.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 17. 8. 1848. pp. 585–586.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 19. 8. 1848, pp. 642–643.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 14. 8. 1848, pp. 550–551.

the lords were represented in these bodies. However, the Reichstag was not structured according to the individual estates. Helfert argued forcefully that giving away something that is not one's property is theft, and that if the Reichstag were to abolish *Robot* without compensation, it would be doing exactly the same as St Crispin when he stole leather from the rich to make shoes for the poor. The leather in this case was equivalent to the rights of the lords, which the deputies wanted to turn into shoes for the peasants. At this point, several peasant deputies stood up and shouted: "The lords have flayed the skin from our bodies and made their leather from us! We are not thieves, but freely elected deputies." Several furious deputies leapt up from their benches, and if they had not been restrained by some cooler-headed colleagues, Helfert would have suffered physical injury. His speech was interrupted for several minutes. When he continued, he emphasized that there was a rural aristocracy, in other words that rural societies displayed a differentiation of property. He related this to the situation in Bohemia, claiming that Bohemian peasants were rich and could afford to pay for the abolition – and not only that, they wanted to pay for the abolition. In fact, they absolutely must pay for the abolition, because otherwise the cottagers and landless would demand to receive benefits of their own, if the peasants had been relieved of their labour duties.<sup>32</sup>

Other deputies echoed Helfert's support for compensation. Deputy Gredler stated that compensation must be provided, and that he objected to the word 'possible' ('etwaige') contained in Kudlich's proposal. Taking a lawyer's view, Gredler was in favour of compensation because the laws passed by deputies must protect the interests of all social strata (of course this raises the question whether one law can simultaneously protect the interests of all – author's note). He stated that hereditary subjection had arisen as a legal contract,<sup>33</sup> and that if one argued that the landowners had committed theft or fraud – i.e. illegal acts – when accumulating their property, such a claim was baseless when confronted with centuries of documentation of the legal duties of the subjects to their lords. He expressed the opinion that the peasants should not have to bear the full cost of the compensation, but that the state should also contribute, because it allowed the continuation of hereditary subjection for so long even in the post-Enlightenment era, and also because the abolition would bring increased revenues to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 24. 8. 1848, pp. 40–44.

<sup>33</sup> In his memoirs, Kudlich criticized Helfert's and Gredler's ideas as follows: "The relation between subjects and rulers is not similar to that between debtors and creditors, as Helfert and Gredler depicted it ..." **H. KUDLICH**, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Vol. II, p. 110.

the state in future years.<sup>34</sup> Deputy Dylewski concurred that dominical rights and *Robot* could not be declared unjust until the injustice was proved on a case-by-case basis; otherwise the general principle of the protection of property would be breached.<sup>35</sup> Deputy Wieser cited the example of Upper Austria as an argument in favour of compensation; he claimed that most land in that province was owned by citizens, and the majority of the 1900 potential recipients of compensation were owners of small estates with a value below 50 000 gulden.<sup>36</sup> Alois Pravoslav Trojan spoke in favour of compensation and against the proposal that the state should pay; he considered this solution unjust because it spread the financial burden to all, not only to those who were immediately affected by the changes.<sup>37</sup> Deputy Thinnfeld stated that the law governing compensation should not be drafted by a committee, but by a ministry, because draft laws fell within the remit of the government.<sup>38</sup> Among the deputies there were those with a sufficient awareness of the issues to realize that many landowners were municipalities or charitable institutions, which relied heavily on payments from subjects. This strengthened the argument in favour of compensation.

One of the best-informed experts on the issue of hereditary subjection, the lawyer and deputy for Přeštice František August Brauner, made a late entrance to the parliamentary debate. When the Reichstag first convened, he was still incarcerated in connection with his role during the June uprising in Prague. He was released on 8 August, and travelled to Vienna on the following day. In 1841 Brauner had been appointed as a judicial officer at the Auersperg estate in Vlašim (Wlaschim). In 1843 he wrote a document for Prince Auersperg concerning several reforms which were to be implemented on the estate, proposing the abolition of *Robot*. In 1845 he left the service of the Auerspergs. In his book *Böhmische Bauernzustände im Interesse der Landeskultur und des Nationalwohlstandes* (published in Vienna in 1847), which won an award from the Emperor for art and scholarship, he addressed himself to the social and cultural conditions which prevailed in rural areas. He criticized the lack of education which would give peasants the tools to improve the management of their farms. He also supported the modernization of the agricultural sector, which would involve the abandonment of the three-field system and the abolition of *Robot*. Because

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<sup>34</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. I, 16. 8. 1848, pp. 559–563.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. 8. 1848, pp. 590–591.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. 8. 1848, p. 567.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. 8. 1848, p. 537.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. 8. 1848, p. 518.

he supported compensation for this abolition, he recognized that the emancipated peasants would need to have sufficient assets. Brauner dealt with this issue in more detail in a second book – *O robotě a vykoupení se z roboty* (On Robot and the purchase of emancipation from Robot) – which was published in Czech in January 1848. He proposed that the purchase of emancipation should take place on the basis of a private contract signed voluntarily by both parties. The only role of the state would be to ensure that the contract was duly enforced and that the landowners would not take advantage of the peasants' lack of legal awareness. Brauner's books were popularized in the Czech press, especially in the magazines *Květy* and *Svatováclavské poselství*. Brauner's views were based on the conviction that *Robot* was a legal obligation of the subject and a right of the lord, so a just state could not simply abolish this right without compensation. According to the letter of the law Brauner was correct; *Robot* formed part of a tenancy relationship. However, he did not address the question of how many times the initial price had already been paid over the course of the centuries, or how many times the originally contracted *Robot* had actually been worked. The original contractual obligations had been raised unilaterally by the lords. Brauner carried out a detailed analysis of all possible scenarios for the purchase of emancipation from hereditary subjection – what precisely should be purchased and how, who should pay for what, and what the official procedure should be; he also considered the possibility of loan capital and proposed the establishment of a credit institute (as Count Deym had already done in 1844).<sup>39</sup>

Brauner spoke in detail about the issues on 23 August in the Reichstag chamber. At the outset of his speech, he stated that if the nobility had abolished hereditary subjection in return for compensation several months ago, the subjects would have been grateful, but that now the subjects felt the system to be an old-fashioned form of interest still being paid on a long-defunct debt. Brauner spoke of a 'caste' which had remained deaf to the warnings of the modern era and had not heeded the instructions of the government which would have enabled it to retain its honour and material advantages even in the face of the coming storm – a storm which, in Brauner's view, would hardly be viewed by disinterested observers as a premature development. Deputy Rieger differed in his opinion, stating that the personal duties arising from hereditary subjection should be dissolved without compensation, whereas those obligations representing payment in return for the use of property or land should be compensated. He noted that

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<sup>39</sup> V. ČERNÝ, *František August Brauner. Vykonavatel odkazu selských rebelií*, Praha 1948, pp. 29–35; W. BENNESCH, *Hans Kudlich*, pp. 89–92.

*Robot* was partly a personal duty (in the case of cottagers or farm workers), and partly a form of payment-in-kind (for tenant and peasants). He proposed that the duties to be abolished without compensation should include ploughing duties (Pflugrobot) and manual labour duties (Handrobot) if such duties could be proved to have been expanded beyond their original extent as set out in the land tenancy contract. He stated that it would take several weeks to categorize various instances of *Robot* for Bohemia and Moravia. He also listed other types of duties to be abolished without compensation, and claimed that in view of the specific features of individual provinces, the law should not be drafted by the Reichstag, but by the individual provincial assemblies. The compensation to be paid was to be 'equitable'. He also suggested that provincial funds (provinzielle Quellen) could be used to cover the costs of compensation.<sup>40</sup>

On 26 August Kudlich gave his final speech as the originator of the proposal. From private conversations he had reached the conclusion that there was little chance of pushing through a solution without compensation, and that the majority of the deputies would support the payment of compensation by the state.<sup>41</sup> In his final speech he once more emphasized that no assumption of automatic compensation existed, yet on the other hand there could be no question of dissolving the duties of hereditary subjection without compensation, due to many cases in private law. In this question he pointed to section 4 of his amended proposal, which stated that a special parliamentary committee should be constituted to draw up detailed regulations on this matter and to determine whether compensation should be paid for the abolition, and if so how much. Kudlich also took the opportunity to target Helfert, saying that it was a shame that human rights were not enshrined in the records of land ownership and tenancy in the same way that the subjects' duties were, because if human rights were so encoded, Helfert would have more respect for them.<sup>42</sup> After Kudlich's speech, the deputy (and simultaneously minister) Alexander Bach requested the opportunity to speak; this was problematic because the rules of procedure stated that the final speech of the originator of a proposal could only be followed by the vote. Nevertheless, Antonín Štrobach<sup>43</sup> (as the President of the Reichstag) granted the request to Bach in his capacity as minister. Štrobach responded

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<sup>40</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. II. Wien 1848, 23. 8. 1848, pp. 4–8.

<sup>41</sup> H. KUDLICH, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Vol. II, p. 169.

<sup>42</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. II, 26. 8. 1848, pp. 81–84.

<sup>43</sup> I prefer the spelling 'Štrobach' rather than 'Strobach', which is also used.

to Kudlich's protests by quoting Section 31 of the rules of procedure, which stated that a minister always had the right to speak whenever he so requested. Bach said that the question of compensation was so fundamental that it would determine the very fate of the government, and cited extensive statistical data in support of compensation.<sup>44</sup> In his memoirs Kudlich criticized Bach for his interruption, saying that Bach could have submitted the statistics to the chamber earlier, during the three weeks of debates; in Kudlich's opinion Bach's motivation for linking the issue to the fate of the government was merely an empty demonstration of strength – especially as Bach must have known that the majority of the deputies were in favour of compensation anyway.<sup>45</sup>

Discussions continued on 29 August, when Antonín Štrobach presented the parliament with the complete material, consisting of 157 individual points.<sup>46</sup> The Reichstag refused to discuss the proposal in its entirety, preferring Kudlich's suggestion that the parliament should attempt to agree on a joint proposal by the following day. A group of six deputies (including Kudlich) convened, but the deputies were unable to reach an agreement. The right-wing faction in the Reichstag submitted a collective proposal headed by the conservative deputy for Salzburg, Lasser, who was in favour of the abolition of *Robot* and hereditary subjection in return for 'equitable' compensation. Kudlich then declared that no agreement had been reached during the extra day, and so he presented his proposal in the form of questions: 1) Should hereditary subjection be abolished? 2) Should *Robot*, tithes and all obligations arising from hereditary subjection be abolished? 3) Should no compensation be paid for the abolition? 4) Should it be left to a committee to propose which abolished duties should attract compensation and which should not? 5) Should compensation be paid by the state for obligations not arising from private contractual relationships? 6) Should a committee be established consisting of three representatives from each province? 7) Should a proclamation be issued relating to the matter? After Kudlich, Lasser took the floor and formulated his own questions. His first question was similar to Kudlich's, though he spoke not only of abolishing hereditary subjection but also of the protections provided to subjects by lords ('schutzobrigkeitliches Verhältnis'). 2) Should land be released and the difference between dominical land and rustical land abolished? The third question was identical to

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 84–85.

<sup>45</sup> **H. KUDLICH**, *Rückblicke und Erinnerungen*, Vol. II, pp. 171–172, 177.

<sup>46</sup> Material printed in **V. ČERNÝ**, *Jednání říšského sněmu roku 1848 o zrušení poddanství*, *Věstník Československého zemědělského muzea*, 1928, pp. 332–349, here pp. 343–349.

Kudlich's. 4) Should all obligations arising from personal hereditary subjection be dissolved without compensation? 5) Should 'equitable' compensation be paid as soon as possible for the dissolution of obligations arising from land ownership? 6) Should the subjects' rights to pasture, timber and 'Servitutsrechte'<sup>47</sup> be dissolved without the payment of compensation to subjects, and should the lords' rights to pasture, pasture on stubble fields and fallow fields be dissolved without the payment of compensation to lords? 7) Should a draft of the law be prepared by a committee consisting of deputies from all provinces? 8) Should the patrimonial authorities continue to carry out judicial duties and political administration until the introduction of a new system, with the costs borne by the state?<sup>48</sup> Both Kudlich and Lasser declared their own attitudes and goals in the wording of their questions. Kudlich asked "Should no compensation be paid?", while Lasser asked "Should 'equitable' compensation be paid as soon as possible?"

The vote took place on the last day of August. On the basis of a declaration of 31 August, the first vote concerned Lasser's proposal and the second vote Kudlich's proposal. Lasser's first four questions were passed in a secret ballot. His fifth point was subject to a public vote, and his 'equitable' compensation ('billige Entschädigung') was accepted by 147 votes to 144, with 36 deputies abstaining (including Borrosch, Brauner, Fischhof, Smolka, Ohéral and Klaudy). Points 6 and 8 were also passed. Lasser's point 7 was further specified; the committee consisting of deputies from all provinces was to a) prepare a draft law to dissolve obligations arising from concluded contracts of emphyteusis or other divisions of property, in return for compensation, b) discuss the method of dissolution and the regulation of rights given in point 6, c) discuss the extent and sum to be paid for the dissolution including the creation of special funds to cover the costs of compensation within the individual provinces.

The deputies then voted on Kudlich's collective proposal, the first four points of which had already been passed in the previous vote on Lasser's proposal. When voting on the fifth question there was an interesting situation; in the public vote, a majority of deputies (178 : 120) voted in favour of the payment of compensation to landowners by the state. Kudlich's sixth

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<sup>47</sup> The term 'Servitutsrechte' refers to the right to use the property of others, e.g. forests, pastures and rights of way. For peasants these were existentially important rights, mainly with regard to hay, timber and pasture in manorial forests. However, the lords gradually restricted these rights, partly due to the growing value of timber as a result of its increased use in the era of industrialization.

<sup>48</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. II, 30. 8. 1848, pp. 125–127; V. ČERNÝ, *Jednání říšského sněmu*, p. 339–341.

question was also approved (the creation of a committee for compensation, consisting of three representatives of each province), as was his seventh question (the announcement of the law via a ceremonial proclamation). The President of the Reichstag, Antonín Štrobach, then decided to have the deputies vote on Kudlich's three already approved points again, but this time in secret and *en bloc*. This move was of dubious legality; Štrobach pointed out that the rules of procedure allowed for voting *en bloc*, but a more logical interpretation of that provision would have resulted in an *en bloc* vote on all previously approved points from both proposals. In the repeated vote, Kudlich's proposal was rejected by a margin of four votes (152 : 148).<sup>49</sup> The left-wing deputies accused Štrobach of electoral fraud and demanded a recount. The right-wing deputies left the chamber, meaning that the Reichstag no longer had the quorum required to conduct its business.<sup>50</sup>

On 1 September a majority of deputies approved the minutes of the previous day's proceedings; and a protest by the German left against the voting procedure was rejected on formal grounds, as it had not been submitted to the chamber prior to the opening of the session, as was required by the rules of procedure. Discussions on the details of some provisions continued up to 7 September, when an imperial patent announced the new law, though there were no further significant changes. On 2 September the deputy and minister Bach provoked a dispute as to whether the Emperor had the right to approve the law. The German left protested that the Emperor was ranked above the parliament; in a question to parliament, Alois Borrosch asked that the relationship between the ministry and parliament be clarified. Ludwig Löhner then submitted a proposal for the creation of a committee with three members which would prepare the text of the law; discussions on the form of announcement of the law were to be postponed until after the minister's reply to Borrosch's question. However, the right-wing deputies refused to allow any more delays, and Löhner's proposal was defeated by 183 votes to 119. That was on 6 September. The interior minister Doblhoff, replying to Borrosch's question, stated that the constitution had not yet been approved, so it was not yet clear how legislation would be enacted. Nevertheless, he stated, everybody in the chamber was part of the Monarchy, as the free institutions had arisen from the free will ('aus der freien Gewährung') of the Emperor, so the government took the posi-

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<sup>49</sup> According to Reschauer and Smets, the Slavic peasants were confused during the voting, and no longer knew what they were voting for. **H. RESCHAUER – M. SMETS**, *Das Jahr 1848. Geschichte der Wiener Revolution*, Wien 1872.

<sup>50</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. II, 31. 8. 1848, pp. 149–178.



tion that until the constitution finally determined the form in which laws would be enacted, laws would remain subject to approval by the Emperor, and would be announced by the executive. This had no bearing on the future constitution.<sup>51</sup>

The dispute over whether the Emperor had the right to approve the law abolishing hereditary subjection was eventually solved by a compromise; the Reichstag would communicate its resolution to the ministry, which would ensure that the Emperor approved the legislation.<sup>52</sup> On 7 September the parliament approved the final draft of the law, which was subsequently approved by the Emperor and announced in an imperial patent.

The law abolished all differences between dominical and rustical land and dissolved all obligations arising from hereditary subjection. All obligations arising from personal hereditary subjection were abolished without compensation. Compensation was to be paid by subjects to landowners for the dissolution of obligations arising from land ownership. Subjects' restricted rights to use manorial forests and pastures (see footnote 47) were dissolved in return for compensation. The implementation of these provisions was entrusted to the ministries of the interior, justice and finance.<sup>53</sup> The imperial patent did not yet include specific details of the level of compensation, though it did use the term 'billige Entschädigung' (i.e. fair or equitable compensation). The act did not apply to time-limited land tenancy agreements and contracts; compensation for the dissolution of these obligations was to be paid by the subjects in full.

The right-wing deputies blocked Kudlich's proposal that the rural population should be informed of the abolition of hereditary subjection by a ceremonial proclamation of parliament. The battle for the support of the public was clearly continuing; as the abolition was announced via an imperial patent, it was the Emperor who was viewed as the principal benefactor.

On 11 September the Reichstag decreed that each province would delegate five representatives to sit on a committee that would draft detailed regulations governing the purchase of emancipation. One of the five men chosen

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 2. 9. 1848, p. 212; 5. 9. 1848, pp. 229–231; 6. 9. 1848, p. 260; 7. 9. 1848, pp. 285–286, 296.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 6. 9. 1848, p. 278: "... um die beistimmende Fertigung des Kaisers zu veranlassen und sohin den Kammerbeschluss in gesetzlicher Form zur ungesäumten Kundmachung zu bringen."

<sup>53</sup> *Verhandlungen des österreichischen Reichstages*, Vol. II, 7. 9. 1848, pp. 290–291. The final wording of the law is cited according to **Fr. ROUBÍK**, *K vyvazení gruntů v Čechách v letech 1848–1853*, Sborník archivních prací, 1959, No. 2, pp. 160–219, here pp. 168–169.

for Moravia and Silesia was Hans Kudlich, however the committees ultimately did not manage to draft anything – a revolution broke out in October, so the Kremsier Parliament was preoccupied with more pressing matters.

More detailed rules on the compensation were not announced until the patent of 4 March 1849,<sup>54</sup> which was issued simultaneously with the dissolution of the Kremsier Parliament and the imposition of the Stadion Constitution. The form of equitable compensation which eventually came into law had already been outlined in June 1848 by the Lower Austrian official Franz von Mörl, a prolific writer.<sup>55</sup> The March patent abolished (without compensation) *Robot* for farm workers and cottagers resident on subject land. The provincial committees were to use their local knowledge to determine which duties would be abolished without compensation and which would be compensated, on the basis of Sections 5 and 6 of the act of 7 September 1848. When determining the compensation according to Sections 3 and 6 of the act, the committees were to base their calculations on the value of the debt according to the area of the land. Compensation for duties rendered in the form of crops was to be calculated according to the set prices applicable in each cadastral area. The value of other payments-in-kind in the form of agricultural products was to be calculated according to cadastral prices or corresponding land areas. The value of labour duties was to be calculated according to the ratio between the value of forced labour as opposed to free labour; the value of forced labour was not to exceed one third of the value of free labour. From the set value of all abolished duties of subjects, the committee subtracted the value of the services that the lords had been obligated to provide to their subjects. A third of the resulting sum was subtracted to compensate for the tax that the lords had been obligated to pay. The remaining two thirds represented the final value of the compensation; half of this sum was to be paid by the peasant purchasing emancipation, while the other half was to be paid from provincial land reform funds. The annual cost of the emancipation was taken as part of a twenty-year mortgage loan; it was multiplied by twenty and 5 % interest was added per year. The payments were to be made quarterly, but if the peasant had sufficient funds he could pay the entire amount immediately as a lump sum. The pro-

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<sup>54</sup> 152. kaiserliches Patent vom 4. März 1849, wirksam für alle jene Kronländer, für welche das Patent vom 7. September 1848 gilt, wodurch die Durchführung der Aufhebung des Unterthans-Verbandes und der Entlastung des Grund und Bodens angeordnet wird. In: *Sr. k. k. Majestät Ferdinand des Ersten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für sämtlichen Provinzen des Oesterreichischen Kaiserstaates, mit Ausnahme von Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, Vol. 76, Wien 1851, pp. 167–173.

<sup>55</sup> **E. BRUCKMÜLLER**, *Die Kudlich-Legende*, p. 335.

vincial land reform funds contained money not only from former subjects, but also from the provincial budget. In this way, the former subjects owed money directly to the provincial funds.<sup>56</sup> Authorized persons received mortgage bond certificates with a nominal value equal to the value of their mortgage; these were later withdrawn from circulation by means of a lottery. The bonds were popular investments on the Austrian financial market.<sup>57</sup>

When the revolution was crushed, the ultraconservative faction wanted a return to the conditions of the Vormärz era, but the high-ranking officials around the Emperor were well aware that Austria would not be able to maintain its status as a major power without economic reforms. Among the members of the non-absolutist government, it was primarily the 'conservative liberal' Franz Stadion who ensured that the process of land reform did not falter. After Stadion's death his work was continued by Alexander Bach, the son of a Lower Austrian peasant. Bach was ably supported by Carl Friedrich Kübeck von Kübau. The rigorous plans for land reform met with protests from Count Windischgrätz, who had suppressed the June uprising in Prague and the October uprising in Vienna. But the Count's opposition was to no avail. On 22 February 1850 he presented the Emperor with a chronicle documenting the abolition of hereditary subjection. He wrote that in his view, not even a communist would dare to demand what the Emperor's government was implementing. He stated that he was not against the principle of land reform, but against the way it was being carried out. He viewed the level of compensation as too low, tantamount to theft from the landowners. He complained that the currency had been losing its value since the state bankruptcy in 1811. The value of a hereditary tenancy agreement originally yielding 30 gulden had fallen to just 12 gulden as a consequence of the bankruptcy, and after subtracting a third of that value in accordance with the new law, the owner was left with just 8 gulden. Moreover, the Count added, 5 gulden of that sum would have to be paid in taxes (this was an exaggerated figure). The Count evidently 'forgot' that the state bankruptcy also brought great profits to the nobility, because the level of mortgage debts had fallen.<sup>58</sup> According to Windischgrätz, the main cause of

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<sup>56</sup> Fr. ROUBÍK, *K vyvazení gruntů*, pp. 171–178; J. ŠTAIF, *Obezřetná elita. Česká společnost mezi tradicí a revolucí 1830–1851*, Praha 2005, pp. 404–405.

<sup>57</sup> J. ŠTAIF, *Neúspěšný pokus o „patriotický kapitalismus“*. *Čechy ve 40.–50. letech 19. století*, in: J. HÁJEK – D. JANČÍK – E. KUBŮ (eds.), *O hospodářskou národní državu. Úvahy a stati o moderním českém a německém nacionalismu v českých zemích*, Praha 2009, pp. 33–43, here p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> H. FRIEDJUNG, *Freunde und Gegner der Bauernbefreiung in Österreich. Historische Aufsätze*, Stuttgart – Berlin 1919, pp. 42–49.

the conditions which led to revolution was the long dominance of the ethos of centralist absolutism dating back to the time of Josef II, which removed the political rights of the estates and led to a conflict between the federalist principles of the large landowners and the ruthless control of a centralized government. The centralized absolutism of the Schwarzenberg government conflicted with the political goals of the landowning nobility – especially given the fact that the prime minister had a low opinion of the political abilities of his colleagues from the aristocracy. Windischgrätz wanted to restore the pre-March structure of the provincial assemblies, from which deputies would be elected to the imperial senate – which would thus be dominated by representatives of the nobility.<sup>59</sup>

The former subjects were informed in detail by the state authorities about the procedure for the purchase of emancipation from hereditary subjection. They knew that in addition to the provincial land reform committee, each political district would have its own committee, with which they would be able to communicate in their mother tongue. The authorities also won the trust of the former subjects by coopting representatives of the peasantry to assist the state officials in each municipality, thus providing a system of monitoring that would ensure the set procedures would be followed correctly.<sup>60</sup>

The average annual cost associated with the purchase of emancipation purchase of emancipation in Bohemia ranged between 2 and 10 gulden; the total capital burden arising from the equitable compensation package was from 43 to 199 gulden.<sup>61</sup> In Kudlich's home province, Austrian Silesia, the district land reform committees completed their work at the end of February 1851. Their task had been, on the basis of an inventory of all duties arising from hereditary subjection, to calculate their value as a monetary equivalent. The committees arrived at a final figure of 3 811 031 gulden, of which 3 233 514 gulden pertained to large landowners and 419 647 gulden to parishes. The former lord of Kudlich's family, Prince Liechtenstein, received 154 227 gulden as the owner of the Krnov (Jägerndorf) estate and four other Silesian estates; this put him in fifth place among the landowners, after Archduke Albrecht (714 693 gulden), Count Larisch-Mönnich

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<sup>59</sup> **R. A. KANN**, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburgermonarchie*, Vol. 2: *Ideen und Pläne zur Reichsreform*, Graz – Köln 1964, pp. 60–61.

<sup>60</sup> **J. ŠTAIF**, *Neúspěšný pokus*, p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> **Fr. ROUBÍK**, *K vyvazení gruntů*, p. 209.

(238 056 gulden), Count Sulkovsky (200 897 gulden) and Count Wilczek (188 998 gulden).<sup>62</sup>

The process of land reform did not initially affect the usage rights over forests and pastures (see point 7 of the law of 7 September 1848), but this issue was becoming increasingly pressing. Two options presented themselves: either these rights would be dissolved by purchase, or a system of regulation would be introduced. In favour of the first option was its greater economic effectiveness (freedom of action, more efficient farming methods), while the second option had the advantage that the usage rights were generally worth more to the peasants than the value of the monetary compensation that they would receive.

In 1852 the imperial forest act (Reichsforstgesetz) was issued; this new law brought significant restrictions to the widespread use of forests which the peasantry had previously enjoyed. A patent dated 5 July 1853 regulated the right to use pasture land and to take timber. The method used to calculate the level of compensation greatly favoured the landowners, as it was based on prices from 1836–1845. As a result, the peasants lost up to 70 % of the value of their previous rights in kind, receiving in return financial compensation worth less than the value of the rights lost for a single year. In the upland areas that were particularly affected by the law, many peasants experienced serious financial difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

The efficient organization of the emancipation from hereditary subjection proved to be a key factor in stabilizing the post-revolutionary situation in the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Emperor was well aware of this fact. When Franz Josef I came to the throne, and in various acts of state such as the imperial patent of 31 December 1851, it was always emphasized that the process of land reform and emancipation would continue unchanged. The abolition of hereditary subjection and the patrimonial system was the most important social and economic change ensuing from the 1848 revolution, and it affected the majority of the population.

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<sup>62</sup> K. RODAN, *Dějiny zemědělství v Rakouském Slezsku v letech 1848–1914 (Základní vývojové tendence)*, Ostrava 2008, pp. 129–130.

<sup>63</sup> I. LINSBERGER, *War es eine Bodenreform? Das Wiederbesiedlungsgesetz und seine Umsetzung in Niederösterreich*, Wien 2010, pp. 19–22 (unpublished dissertation).

Stanislav Knob

**BUSINESSMEN VERSUS WORKERS, OR STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS  
(CLOSURES) IN AUSTRIAN SILESIA AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH  
CENTURY**

ABSTRACT

Economic struggles between employees and employers, especially the strike movement represents one of the very important factors in the economic history of the 19th and 20th century. The search for the causes of strikes on a regional level depends on understanding the structures between employers and employees. Every such analysis involves many difficulties. It is necessary to keep an unbiased view, set into the contemporary context. Sources don't have to provide answers to all of our questions. The more we know about the social background of the workers and their linkage to businessmen and local conditions, the better we can understand their actions.

KEYWORDS

Strike; closure; lockout; worker; Austrian Silesia; the Ostrava-Karviná mining district

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The research of economical struggles between employees in the Czech lands has so far been oriented from the workers' point of view because most of these works were created in the era of Marxist historiography. The view on separate business subjects is rather schematic, simplified and in-

accurate in these studies. They speak about exploiters, uncompromising capitalists who aren't at all interested in their workers and follow only a vision of profit.

Of course we can say that the relations between employers and employees weren't always been troublefree, often to the contrary, as we will show in this work. On the other hand, it is necessary to say that there was a relatively extensive selection of altruistic activities for the working class, which is among others apparent from the papers presented at the conference which took place in Ostrava on 5th and 6th March, 2009. It is not possible to answer generally if it was the struggle to pacify the situation or real interest in the working class which led the businessmen to this activity, but it is necessary to study each case separately. We often encounter a patriarchal approach of the employer to his employees.

There is a number of economic struggles between employees and employers. Apart from the undoubtedly most important strikes and lockouts (closures), we can name e.g. demonstrations, boycotts, passive resistance, issuing of so-called black lists and other.<sup>1</sup> Strikes and lockouts (closures) are the most frequent, but also the most easily pursuable conflicts of businessmen and workers. We have fairly detailed statistics of them,<sup>2</sup> which are undoubtedly the most comprehensive source for these problems. Unfortunately, not even they are an entirely complete listing. Research of other sources (archives and contemporary press) reveals the occurrence of more strikes and closures.

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<sup>1</sup> **G. SWOZIL**, *Arbeiterkämpfe und „soziale Konflikte“ in Österreich 1870–1914 und ihre rechtliche Beurteilung*. Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorades an der rechtswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Salzburg, Salzburg 1992.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Arbeitseinstellungen im Gewerbebetriebe in Österreich während des Jahres 1894–1914*, Wien 1895–1916. These statistics are classified as the most detailed and comprehensive in the whole of Europe. See e.g. **M. MEYER**, *Statistik der Streiks und Aussperrungen im In- und Auslande*, Leipzig 1907.

### Lockout (Closures) in Silesia<sup>3</sup>

Year	Lockout (Closures)	Number of affected companies	Number of employees of affected companies	Number of "excluded"	Accepted back to work	Fired	Left the company voluntarily	Newly engaged
1906	1	55	7000	7000	7000	–	–	–
1907	1	49	5131	5131	5131	–	–	–
1908	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1909	1	1	1443	1026	1026	–	–	–
1910	1	1	26	20	20	–	–	–
1911	2	33	1245	956	791	59	106	11
1912	2	39	4264	4053	4044	4	5	10
1913	1	1	312	312	312	–	–	–
1914	2	2	1800	961	961	–	–	–
Total	11	181	21221	19459	19285	63	11	21

We can trace the number of lockouts (closures) in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy (Cisleithania) from the year 1894. For separate lands, it is possible only from the year 1906. Only 11 closures took place in Austrian Silesia in the years 1906–1914. We aren't able to make any general conclusions concerning the development or structure of lockouts (closures) in Austrian Silesia based on such a small number. For comparison, we can mention that in the years 1908–1914, 63 closures took place in Bohemia, 15 in Moravia, 62 in Lower Austria, 8 in Galicia, 5 in Upper Austria, 10 in the area around Trieste and 17 closures in the other lands of Cisleithania. The number of closures seems to be adequate considering the size of Austrian Silesia, however the considerable concentration of industry in this land promised a greater number. It may have been caused by the fact that minimum of the closures in Cisleithania took place in the mining industry which was undoubtedly the most conflictful branch in Austrian Silesia. This can also be assumed (but not read from sources) for Silesia.

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<sup>3</sup> *Die Arbeitseinstellungen im Gewerbebetriebe in Österreich während des Jahres 1906–1914*, Wien 1907–1916.



### Basic data regarding the strike movement in Austrian Silesia in the years 1891–1914<sup>4</sup>

Year	Numbers of strikes	Number of companies affected by strikes	Number of employees of companies affected by strikes	Number of strikers	Share of strikers on the number of employees of companies affected by strikes
1891	–	–	–	–	–
1892	1	1	66	22	33
1893	4	25	303	219	72
1894	7	27	23121	15067	65
1895	5	24	2074	584	28
1896	11	32	22423	15720	70
1897	7	11	6572	1330	20
1898	9	9	2572	460	18
1899	10	11	2595	1025	39
1900	9	38	29427	19666	67
1901	9	17	5066	589	12
1902	7	13	8279	1531	18
1903	22	30	11758	4405	37
1904	10	26	1925	1036	54
1905	18	24	10280	4642	45
1906	45	206	53756	18117	34
1907	55	151	50276	25768	51
1908	26	57	21021	9057	43
1909	37	51	17722	8465	48
1910	28	68	10384	3852	37
1911	35	47	22258	7466	34
1912	40	96	37982	18727	49
1913	27	82	23228	9882	43
1914	25	73	16796	9062	54
Total	447	1119	379884	176692	47

The strike movement developed much more notably in Austrian Silesia, as can be seen from the table. Austrian Silesia took a share of 4 per cent of the number of strikes in Cisleithania, but 11 per cent of the number of strikers. This implies that a large number of strikes with a high number of strikers took place here. In the years 1894, 1896, 1900 they were strikes in which more than ten thousand people participated. In the year 1900, in the

<sup>4</sup> *Die Arbeitseinstellungen im Gewerbebetriebe in Österreich während des Jahres 1894–1914*, Wien 1895–1916.

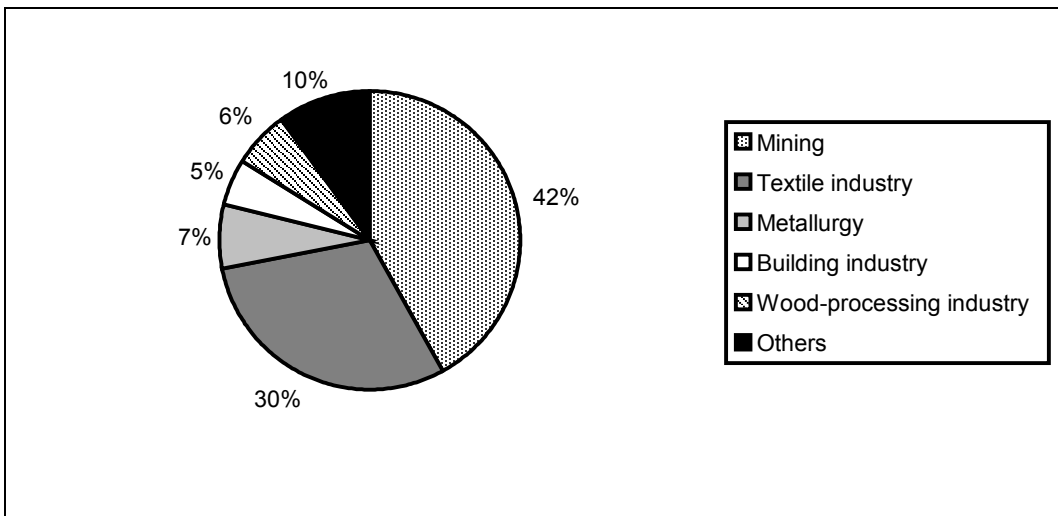
largest strike in the monarchy till then, it was about thirty thousand workers (mainly miners). The other lands took a share in the number of strikes and strikers as follows: Bohemia by 38 and 39 per cent, Lower Austria by 28 and 20 per cent, Moravia by 9 and 10 per cent, Galicia by 6 and 7 per cent, Styria by 4 and 3 per cent, Trieste and surroundings by 3 and 4 per cent, Tyrol and Vorarlberg by 3 and 2 per cent, others by 5 and 4 per cent.

The most common causes of the strike movement in Austrian Silesia were wages (64 %), working hours (9 %), discontent with working regulations (6 %), personal causes, work and human relations, sacking (13 %). I have tried to find the causes of strikes in specific conditions of separate companies on the basis of wider research.

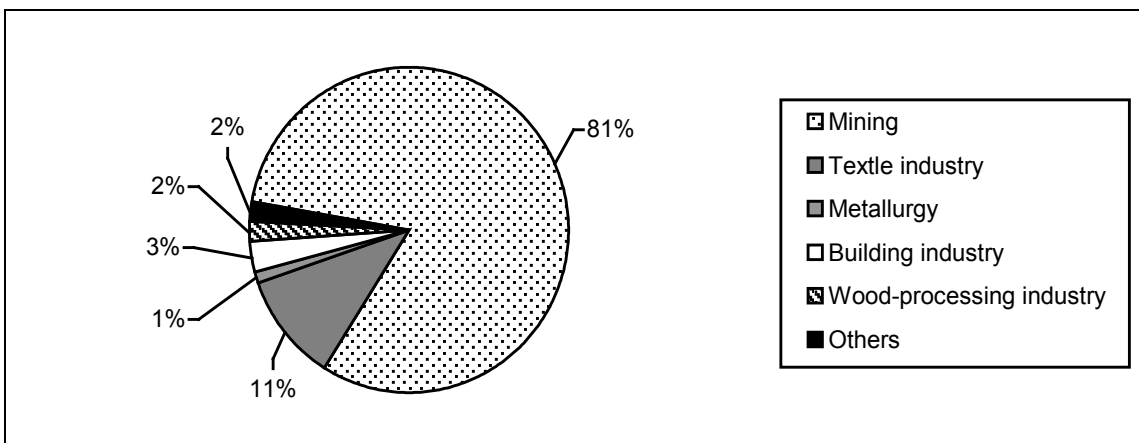
It is optimal to study the strike movement in the mining industry for the following reasons:

1. it is the branch with the greatest tendency to strike in the region. 42 % of all strikes in Austrian Silesia took place within this branch and more than 80 % of the strikers in the region took part.
2. we know all of the mine owners, of whom there isn't a high number and they didn't change much in the studied period. Here we come across the problem that the Ostrava-Karviná mining district, where all Silesian coal mines can be found, stretches partly into Moravia. All of these mines belong to companies which are mentioned below, the strike activity was often connected with the whole mining district, regardless of the land border. In my research I have therefore also taken into account the Moravian part of the Ostrava-Karviná mining district (OKMD).
3. the source base also favours us – statistics don't mention the name of the company, but only the locality and branch, therefore it is necessary to look for information in other sources. We have the most extant archive sources for the strikes in the Frýdek and Fryštát regions, the Police Head Office in Moravská Ostrava is another important source, enough information can be found in contemporary press.

**Share of separate branches of Silesian industry on the number of strikes in the years 1894–1914 (per cent)**



**Share of separate branches of Silesian industry on the number of strikes in the years 1894–1914 (per cent)**



**List of mining companies in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district**

1. Vítkovice Coal and Ore Mining (Witkowitzter Bergbau- und Eisenhüt-tengewerkschaft)
2. Emperor Ferdinand Priveleged Northern Railway Coal Mines (K. k. priv. Kaiser Ferdinands-Nordbahn-Bergbaue)
3. His Excellency Count Johann Nepomuk Wilczek Coal Mines (Excell. Graf Wilczek'sche Bergbaue)
4. Zwierzina's Coal Mining (Zwierzina'sche Steinkohlen-Gewerkschaft)

5. Ostrava Mining Company, before Count Salm Coal Mines, (Ostrauer Steinkohlgewerkschaft vorm. Fürst Salm)
6. Ostrava-Karviná Mining Company, before Heirs of Count Eugen Larisch Coal Mines (Ostrau-Karwiner Montangesellschaft vorm. Eugen Graf Larisch's Erben)
7. Coal Mining Company in Orlová-Lazy (Steinkohlenbergbau Orlová-Lazy)
8. Austrian Alpine Mining Company (Oesterreichisch-Alpine Montantgesellschaft)
9. His Excellency Count Heinrich Larisch-Mönnich Coal Mines (Excell. Graf Larisch-Mönnich'scher Steinkohlenbergbau)
10. His Imperial Grace Archduke Albrecht Coal Mines, Archduke Friedrich from 1895, Austrian Mining and Metallurgic Company from 1905 (Steinkohlenbergbau Sr. kais. Hoheit des Erzherzogs Albrecht (Friedrich) Österreichische Berg- und Hüttengesellschaft)
11. "Marie-Anna" Coal Mining Company of Moravská Ostrava (Steinkohlen-Gewerkschaft "Marie-Anne" in Ellgoth, today Mariánské Hory)

A question arises in connection with the miners' strikes which took place mainly because of wages: why did the miners, who belonged to the best paid workers in the region, form the largest part of the strikers? In the mid 90's the absolute majority of workers in the industrial sector in Austrian Silesia reached an average wage of 70–80 kreutzers per day,<sup>5</sup> while a head miner could earn almost three times as much (up to two gulden per day).<sup>6</sup> It is also very important to point out that most of the personnel didn't reach such high wages. Dragmen and workers above ground had wages roughly comparable to the average, some young miners and women (employed e.g. in coal sorting rooms) received much lower wages. Therefore many young miners (especially dragmen), who wanted to gain further career progress or a pay rise, participated in many strikes. They were mostly young people from the country who were without traditional supervision of their communities and family for the first time, which could lead to their radicalization and

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<sup>5</sup> See **L. SCHÜLLER**, *Die Lohnverhältnisse der industriellen Arbeiter in Schlesien*, Statistische Monatschrift I. (XXII.), Wien 1896, pp. 384–398.

<sup>6</sup> **V. BRDA**, *Dějiny hornické ostravsko-karvinského revíru*, Moravská Ostrava 1913; **J. CHLEBOWCZYK**, *Nominální mzdy v Ostravsko-karvinském revíru v období přechodu ke kapitalismu monopolistickému (na přelomu 19.–20. století)*, in: *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku*, Ostrava 1957; Zemský archiv v Opavě (=Opava Provincial Archive), collection 'Zemská vláda slezská – presidiální spisy'. Místně obvyklé mzdy pro účely nemocenského pojištění, inv. No. 2334, card 4978.

the lack of recognition for authorities. On the other hand the strengthening socialist movement probably played its role with some qualified workers. The founders of the first labour associations were mostly highly qualified workers.

Another reason why also well paid miners were on strike can be seen not in the absolute but real wage value.<sup>7</sup> We can assume that miners responded to the rising living costs living by pressure for a pay rise.

Economic cycles played a fundamental role in the dynamics of the strike movement. In a period of economic upswing, when there was an increase in work productivity, the miners demanded a pay rise. In a period of regression, unemployment rises and the earnings drop. In this period, the workers can't risk losing their job and there is no space for negotiation. The strike movement therefore weakens in periods of economic decline.

The overproduction crises in 1884 and 1891 didn't fundamentally affect coal mining in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district. On the contrary, coal mining continually escalated from 2 034 662 tonnes in 1880 to 3 202 979 tonnes in 1885, then to 4 191 071 tonnes in 1890 and finally to 4 643 753 tonnes in 1895. The cyclicity in the district only started to express itself when the coal from Ostrava ceased to meet the needs of the largely local demand and started to enter more distant markets. Therefore from the end of the 90's, the fate of the region is more and more closely connected to the general economic situation and finally gets into the industrial sphere of influence of the whole continent.

The first phase of the cycle was a deep crisis in the years 1900–1903 which, contrary to all of the previous crises, caused a decline in coal production. The decline in production came already in the year 1900. Its onset accelerated the labour stoppage during a three-month general strike of miners from Ostrava. Coal production decreased by 3.1 % compared to the previous year, even though the strike invoked a perceivable shortage of coal on the coal market and the increasing demand made a temporary increase in coal production possible. In 1902 another decline developed and with it came another decrease in coal production by 7 % compared to 1901. The period of economic depression in the years 1903–1905, which didn't cause any major increasing tendencies in coal mining, was replaced by years of favourable economic upswing. But even this upswing didn't bring any dramatic galvanization of coal production and, on the contrary, the pace of coal mining increase continued to decelerate. Only the hectic armament and preparations for a possible war conflict raised the employ-

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<sup>7</sup> **J. MATĚJČEK**, *Reálné mzdy horníků uhelných dolů v Českých zemích do roku 1914*, *Hospodářské dějiny / Economic History*, 14/1986, pp. 217–319.

ment of the Austrian iron industry and, in dependence on that, also the employment of the Ostrava-Karviná mines, so the crisis symptoms from the years 1912–1913 caused by the Balkan wars were soon overcome. In 1913 coal mining reached a maximum of the pre-war period, a total of 9 823 110 tonnes of coal.

Similar trends can also be observed in coke production, which doubled in the years 1900–1913 (from 11 452 230 q to 25 070 201 q). The cause of this increase was the construction of new coking plants and the modernization of production, i.e. the increase in coking plant efficiency.<sup>8</sup>

The earnings trend in connection with economic cycles was as follows. In 1890 there were two large strikes which, despite their failure, led to some compromise on the part of company owners. This also concerned a pay rise. The second prerequisite of the pay rise in 1890 was the favourable economic upswing. The coal price in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district increased by 8 % in the Silesian and by 12 % in the Moravian part.

Another pay rise took place in the mid-90's of the 19th century, again due to the increased intensity of the strike movement. The upswing factors didn't have a larger impact. The bloodily suppressed May strike in 1894<sup>9</sup> basically ended, like previous strikes, poorly. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable raise in wages in this period. The strengthening labour movement also had an influence on the pay rise.

Another major pay rise was reached thanks to the general three-month-long strike in 1900. The treaty, which was mandatory from the moment the workers started work, assumed a pay rise of 10 to 14 %, 9 hour working time for miners in mines was also achieved.

In the years 1902 to 1905 there was an economic depression which decreased daily wages by 5.3 % only in 1902, in the following year the wages dropped to 93.5% of the value in 1901. This unfavourable level remained for the whole of the year 1904 and a slight increase took place only in 1905. The years 1906–1908 brought a favourable economic upswing. The increase in coal prices also brought a wage increase. The years of economic bloom were used by the trade union which had to concentrate only on defense in the depression years. The character of strikes changed slightly during these years. They are no longer large strikes which would affect the whole district, but a number of small controlled conflicts which are supposed to achieve small specific concessions with particular owners separately. Most often it was the determination of a minimum wage, the raise of current wages, introduction of weekly payroll periods, etc. We can say that

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<sup>8</sup> **M. MYŠKA – C. NEČAS**, *Čtení o revíru*, Ostrava 1969, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> 12 miners were shot and many others wounded during this strike.

the greatest upswing of the strike movement took place during the years 1906–1908. This is evident in the number of strikes and the number of strikers. The following depression of 1909–1911 was much weaker than the previous depression and caused only a slight decrease in coal prices and slowed down the pace of mining increase. The intensity of wage increase was also slowed down.

Armament and accumulating supplies during the Balkan wars and also the preparation for a possible military conflict caused the heavy industry crisis to pass more quickly. Therefore in the years 1912–1913 there was a major increase in mining which had an impact on the raise in wages.<sup>10</sup>

Another fact which in my opinion took a share in the strike movement was the difference in wages between the eastern and western part of the district, between separate coal mining companies, but also between separate mines. Miners from the western part of the district had higher wages than their colleagues in the eastern part, and this applies for the whole period under consideration. This may be caused by different types of seams, which had a lower height (less than 1 m) in the western part of the mining district, but contained higher quality coal, whereas seams in the eastern part of the district were up to 3 m high with lower quality. In the western part of the district mining was performed using the heading-and-stope method, whereas in the the eastern part it was performed by the breast-and-pillar method. A large number of the miners coming to the eastern part of the district were miners from Galicia, who were willing to work for smaller wages. Turnover of miners from mine to mine.

When we talk about the wage level, we must also mention working hours. The staff regulations for the Ostrava-Karviná mining district from the year 1887, amended in 1891, determined the shift length above ground to 12 hours (with ten-hour working time) and 8 to 10 hours underground, which also included the time to go down and up the shaft. However, during an eight-hour shift, the miners committed themselves to overtime work of up to 4 more hours, as necessary. The ten and twelve-hour working time also included breaks. A clean eight-hour shift didn't include break time. The actual working time during a shift wasn't allowed to exceed ten hours. Each worker was obliged to come to work half an hour earlier to be able to participate in name-reading and prayer.

These four ways of determining the shift length could occur in specific cases within the general regulations:

1. A twelve-hour shift with ten-hour working time.
2. A ten-hour shift with working time of the same length.

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<sup>10</sup> J. CHLEBOWCZYK, *Nominální mzdy*, Ostrava 1957, pp. 129–133.

## Stanislav Knob: *Businessmen versus workers ...*

3. Eight-hour working time with added overtime work three to five times a week, so in reality it is ten-hour working time.
4. An eight-hour shift without overtime work.

The rotation of eight-hour and twelve-hour shifts made it possible to settle the fluctuation of pit-coal demand without having to change the number of miners. It offers the workers the possibility to deal with ploughtail in certain seasons.<sup>11</sup> A frequent request, which could also be heard in the largest strikes in the region (in the years 1894, 1896, 1900), was to reduce the working time in mines to 8 hours. This, however, didn't happen in the period under consideration. After the large strike in 1900, nine-hour working time was enacted.

Apart from relatively high wages, a substantial part of the mine personnel also had other benefits: e.g. cheaper living in colonies, rented pieces of land, company co-operative shops, coal rations, schools, hospitals and other. The rent for company flats was roughly 3 gulden a month, whereas ordinary commercial rent in Moravská Ostrava could be up to 12 gulden a month. Information about the development of the housing issue in separate companies is shown in the table. The housing issue, which the businessmen attempted to solve by building labour colonies, arose very urgently with the increasing number of employees who came from more and more distant regions (namely Galicia). The table shows that even mining companies with a high number of employees were able to provide housing in company property for more than a third of the employees. The total average also shows that one third of the mine personnel lived in company flats.

### The number and fraction of employees housed in company properties in the 2nd half of the 19th century

Mining company	Year	Number of employees	Number of company properties	Living there	
				number	%
Vítkovice Coal and Ore Mining	1862	2336	29	217	9.2
	1872	3725	369	1564	42.0
	1882	4648	265	1987	42.7
	1897	9562	416	3551	38.4
Emperor Ferdinand Privileged Northern Railway Coal Mines	1862	1807	25	197	10.8
	1872	3283	121	907	27.6
	1882	2794	209	1567	56.0
	1897	6291	358	2550	40.5

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<sup>11</sup> K. JIŘÍK, *Trojice 1894*, Ostrava 2004, p. 163.



## I. ARTICLES (HD-EH 27/1, 2012)

Mining company	Year	Number of employees	Number of company properties	Living there	
				number	%
His Excellency Count Wilczek Coal Mines	1862	613	23	173	28.2
	1872	925	47	352	38.0
	1882	1346	72	538	39.9
	1897	2781	122	921	33.0
Zwierzina's Coal Mining	1862	350	10	68	19.4
	1872	386	20	152	39.3
	1882	358	26	195	54.4
	1897	419	28	173	41.3
Ostrava Coal Mines, before Count Salm	1862	431	6	40	9.2
	1872	730	37	185	25.3
	1882	832	56	275	33.1
	1897	1630	74	705	43.2
Ostrava-Karviná Mining Company, before Heirs of Count Eugen Larisch Coal Mines	1862	298	4	35	11.7
	1872	556	10	82	14.7
	1882	565	30	148	26.1
	1897	614	42	289	43.2
Coal Mining Company in Orlová-Lazy	1862	322	3	20	6.2
	1872	642	16	96	14.9
	1882	1264	21	126	9.9
	1897	3607	119	808	45.0
Count Heinrich Larisch-Mönnich Coal Mines	1862	588	12	82	13.9
	1872	1020	25	173	16.9
	1882	3582	68	476	13.2
	1897	3637	152	1610	44.2
Archduke Friedrich Coal Mines	1862	168	2	20	11.9
	1872	419	15	120	28.6
	1882	1695	33	264	15.5
	1897	3382	100	691	20.6
"Marie-Anna" Coal Mining Company of Ostrava	1892	269	1	8	2.9
	1897	1120	29	286	20.9
Total	1862	6916	114	852	12.3
	1872	11686	500	3634	31.0
	1882	16084	780	5676	35.2
	1897	33053	1440	11537	34.9

It is evident from these numbers that the number of miners housed in company property increased dramatically from the year 1862. Nevertheless, we can say that due to a great increase in the number of workers, the housing issue could still not be successfully solved. Houses were generally very crowded. Housing of single miners, who, besides dormitories, often lived with their married colleagues, remained a burning problem.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 167–177.

## Stanislav Knob: *Businessmen versus workers ...*

On the basis of the following table we can assume that most miners lived in the proximity of the mines they worked in. The numbers in the < 0.5 hours cell include workers housed mainly in the proximity of the mine.

### Distance to work of miners of some OKMD mines in 1894<sup>13</sup>

Mine	Total miners	Time necessary to commute to work (h)						
		< 0.5	0.5	0.75	1	1.5	2	2.5
3 mines of the Ferdinand Northern Railway	1466 <sup>14</sup>	1216	25	47	133	16	29	0
Mines in Michálkovice	960	715	26	2	9	154	50	4
Jan Josef mine	670	524	54	85	7	0	0	0
Karolina, Šalomoun and Hlubina mines	4373	3761	171	227	96	118	0	0
Count Salm mines	1055	636	186	34	162	17	20	0
Jindřich's Luck mine	602	319	240	9	30	3	1	0

Separate mining companies founded a number of other social and health institutions. In the period under consideration there were these company schools in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district:

1. Founded by Vítkovice Mining
  - a. 1870 two-class school in Doubrava for 223 children;
  - b. 1873 four-class school near the Hlubina mine for 240 children;
  - c. 1895 nursery near the Šalomoun mine in Moravská Ostrava for 68 children;
  - d. 1896 nursery near the Hlubina mine in Vítkovice for 77 children;
  - e. Founded by Count Salm in Polish Ostrava;
  - f. 1877 two-class school for 189 children.
2. Founded by the Gutmann Brothers Coal Mining Company in Orlová
  - a. 1878 two-class school for 223 children;
  - b. Founded by Count Larisch in Karviná;
  - c. 2 schools with eight classes altogether for 853 children and 2 nurseries for 265 children.
3. Founded by the Archduke of Austria near his mines
  - a. 2 nurseries for 249 children.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> Number of miners insured at the hospital cash desk according to a report from the year 1892.

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In the years 1870 to 1882, 4 vocational schools for 990 apprentices were founded in the district, 6 primary schools with 18 classes for 1 730 pupils and 6 nurseries for 696 children. All these schools had their own buildings, 24 male and 5 female teachers and the yearly expenses were 40 000 gulden. The mining companies paid another 20 500 gulden for schools for their employees' children.

In 1874 the Mining School was founded, where theoretical skills were taught in the morning and practical skills in the afternoon. 419 students duly finished their studies at this school by the year 1898 and they immediately found employment in the district. This school obtained government subsidy of 1 500 gulden and 3 000 gulden once every two years. Total yearly operation of the school cost 11 500 gulden, i.e. roughly 120 gulden per pupil.

In 1892 the Vítkovice Ironworks together with the Ferdinand Northern Railway Company founded the school of domestic work for daughters of their employees. The course itself took five and a half months.<sup>15</sup>

From 1865, companies started to build hospitals for the wounded near their plants. In 1891 there were 9 of these institutions in the mining district, with 83 beds, which required 14 600 gulden a year. Many ill were hospitalized in the Vítkovice Mining Company hospital which had 100 beds from the year 1891 and cost the owner 51 300 gulden a year. A hospital was also founded in Moravská Ostrava in Fifejdy in 1898 (100 beds) and in Polská Ostrava (50 beds).<sup>16</sup>

Several charitable associations were founded at the beginning of the 20th century: Orphan Association Ludmila (1908 orphanage in Nová Ves, later also in Mariánské Hory and in Moravská Ostrava), Women's Association Dobromila (supportive function when establishing schools and nurseries), Vacation colony Association (sent children from the Ostrava region for recreation to Zubří in Wallachia and Litultovice in the Opava region).<sup>17</sup>

The illnesses which most afflicted the miners in the district and their families in the second half of the 19th century were tuberculosis and breathing illnesses, which were the cause of death of more than a third of the deceased in Moravská Ostrava in the year 1880. Diseases of the digestive organs were in second place (about 17%) and also epidemics, where typhoid fever, cholera and the so-called dry fever were the most widespread.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> **W. JIČINSKY**, *Bergmännische Notizen aus dem Ostrau-Karwiner Steinkohlenrevier gesammelt vom Jahre 1856–1898*, Mährisch Ostrau 1898, pp. 155–158.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159–160.

<sup>17</sup> **J. BOXAN**, *Sociální a zdravotní dílo na Ostravsku*, Ostrava 1936, pp. 6–8.

<sup>18</sup> **M. MYŠKA – C. NEČAS**, *Čtení o revíru*, p. 48.

In my research I have also targeted the work conditions in mines. We can find only minimum complaints about the technical equipment in statistical sources. It seems from contemporary literature, that the equipment of mines was in accordance with the trends at that time, however the mining technology fell short. Ventilation was attended to rather strictly, because otherwise there was a risk of firedamp explosion. Almost every mine shaft had its own ventilation shaft with powerful ventilators. Mechanization in transport also made progress. However, mining still remained heavy manual labour.

Frequent complaints from miners were directed at human relations. It was namely harsh behaviour on the part of supervisors. I assume it is also necessary to take into account harsh behaviour towards the supervisors on the part of miners. There were also reports of bribery, patronage on the part of corrupted seniors. Reduction of staff could have been a cause of strikes, especially if it concerned a spokesman of the miners. Statistics also mention strikes to discharge an unpopular colleague or senior.

In fine, it is possible to say that in spite of comparatively above standard welfare services of separate mining companies in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district and relatively high wages, the strike movement in the mining industry reached a great extent. I assume that the causes of this situation can be found on the part of the businessmen in insufficiently flexible determination of wages, which would respond to the economic situation. Timely increase or reasonably thought out wage regulation could prevent many strikes. Relatively frequent harsh behaviour of seniors, forceful or violent solving of some problems<sup>19</sup> caused strikes, although the strikers' requirements adverted to deeper causes of discontent.

Miners formed one of the best paid groups of workers. This is comprehensible due to the heftiness and increased risk of the job. There isn't a clear answer to the question, whether a miner's wage would suffice to feed his family. During a period of crisis, larger families might have had problems, especially assuming that the husband's earnings were the only or major income of the family. Single miners, be it head miners or even dragmen, were probably always well off, even though their expenses were generally (calculated for one person) higher, because they mostly took meals in canteens or restaurants, paid rent, dobeysing etc.<sup>20</sup>

I assume that more than the inability to feed the family, by their requirements for a pay rise the miners pursued the comparison of the real wage

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<sup>19</sup> For example, the cause of the large strike in 1900 was a change of night shift working hours, unfavourable for the miners.

<sup>20</sup> **J. MATĚJČEK**, *Reálné mzdy horníků*, pp. 217–319.

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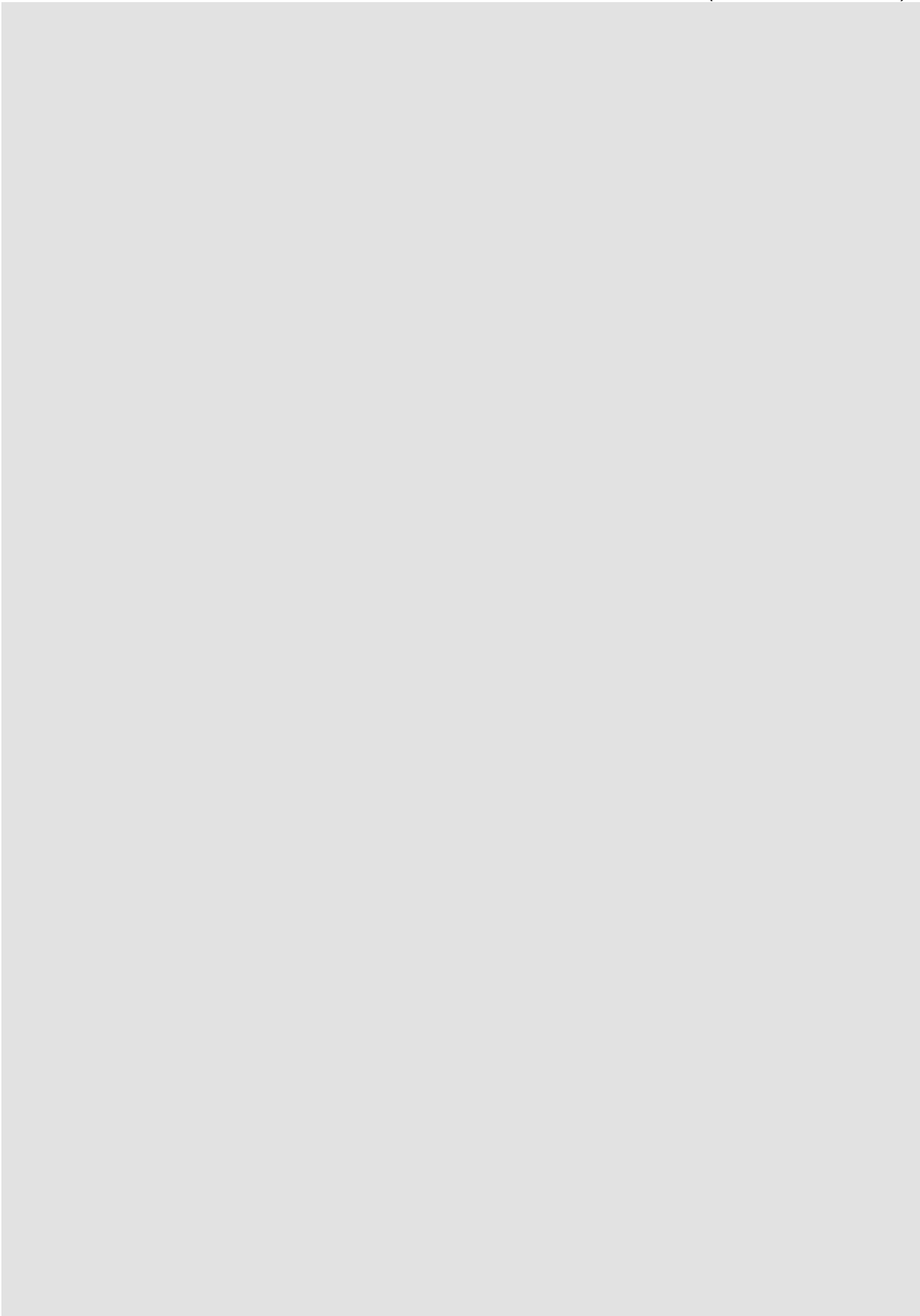
value with living costs or work productivity. During periods of upswing we can see a rise in the strike movement due to the expectation of higher wages for increased demands on work efforts.

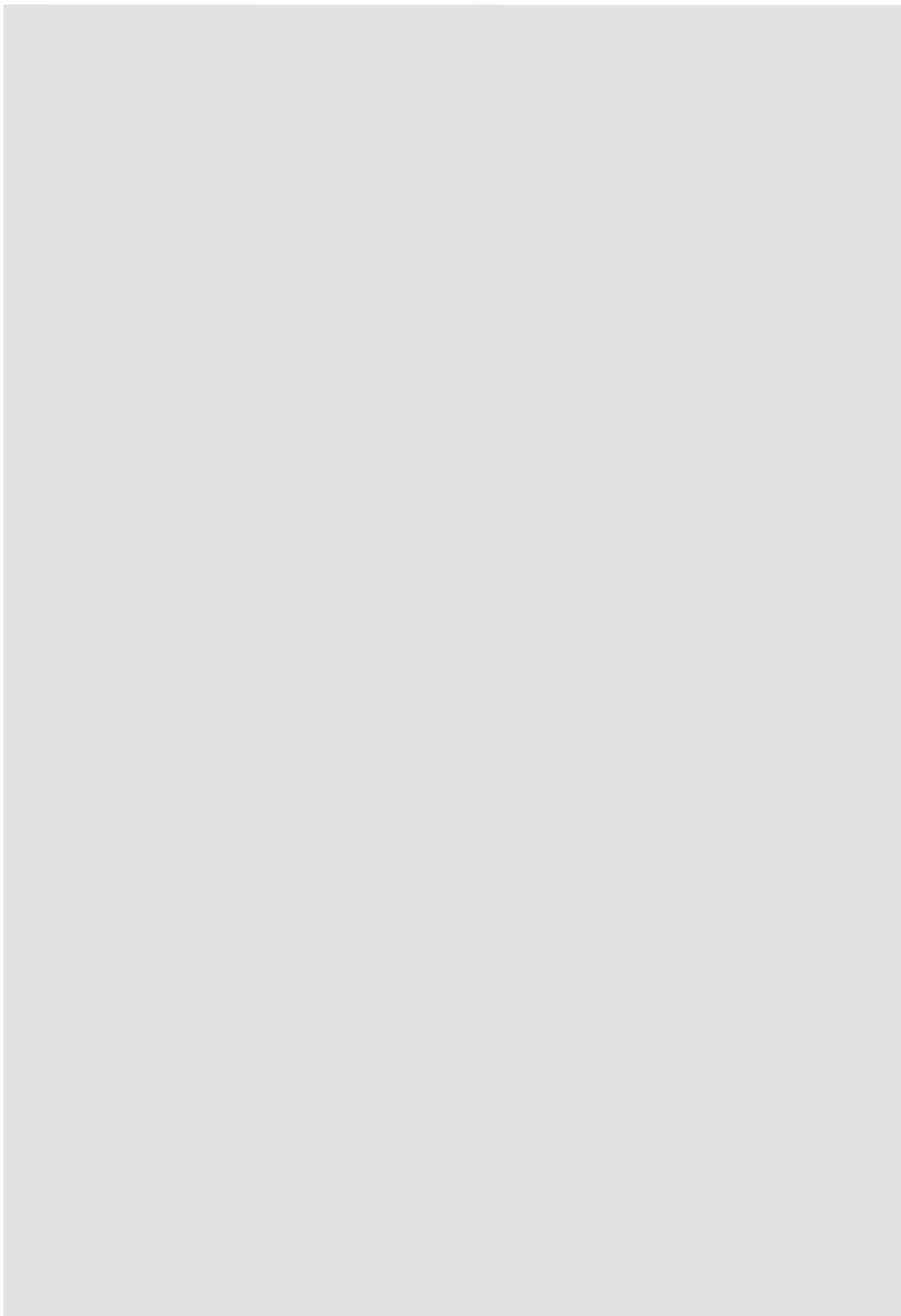
Other frequent causes were the shortening of working hours, human relations, in a smaller extent some complaints about work conditions, there was also a minimal number of complaints about insufficient health and welfare services or mistakes in work safety.

I personally believe that a great part of the causes of the strike movement were due to the mental outfit of the working class. They were often illiterate or semiliterate men coming from the country (often from the poorly developed Galicia). The transition from a society of stiff traditional values to a society which was only transforming into modern society, brought along a number of social problems. Alcoholism, prostitution and general pleasure-seeking were wide-spread. Heavy long-hour monotonous labour led some individuals to the urge to emancipate from this merry-go-round and they sought the solution in a glass of liquor or other pleasures. Lack of education and the predominance of physical labour led to an abundance of violent solutions of all possible problems. Harsh behaviour was accepted as a status of the job. The willingness to strike was relatively high, especially in young miners. Free time could be used for various leisure activities.

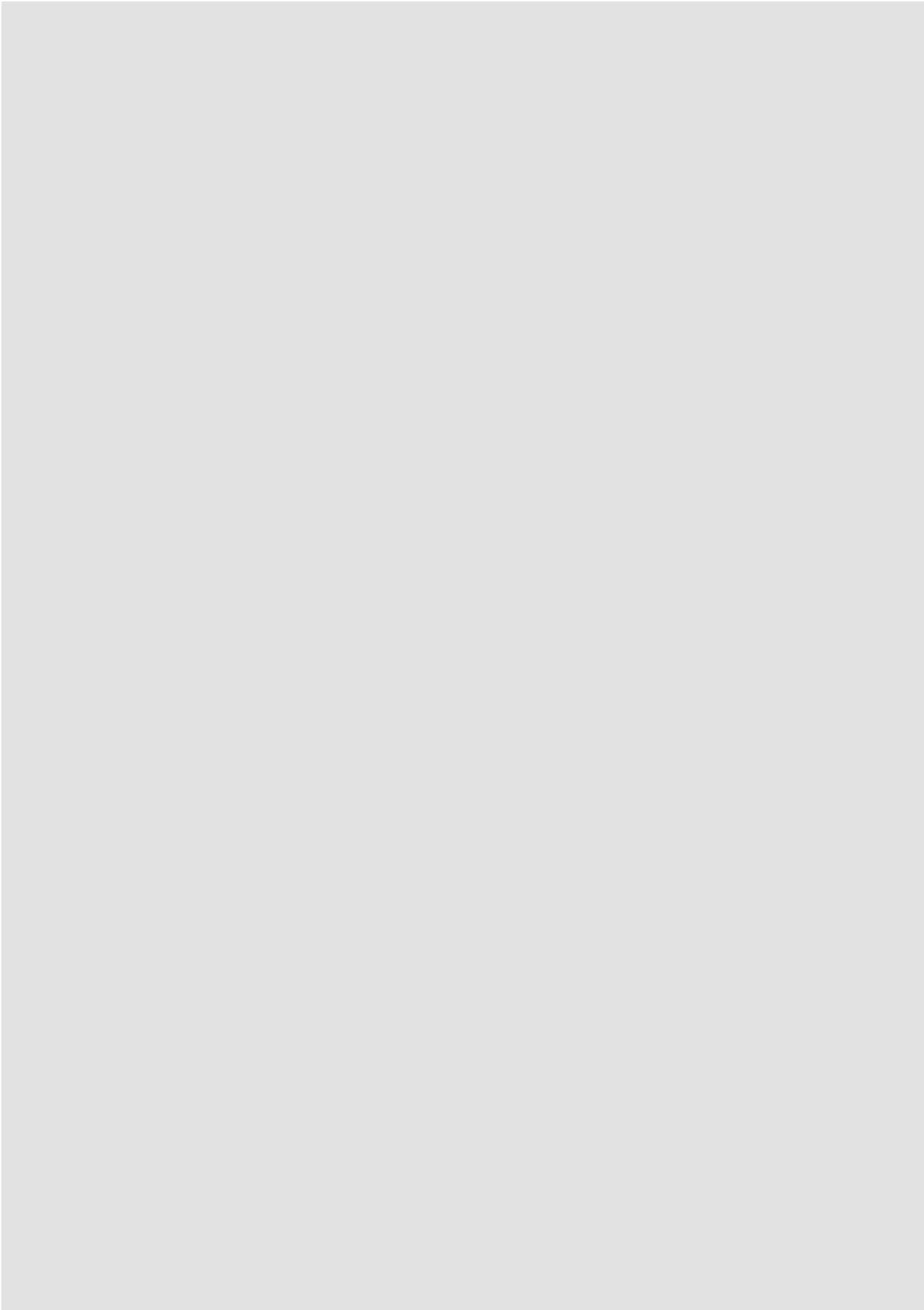
It is possible to see the influence of the strike atmosphere in the considerable spread of the strike movement. A frequent cause mentioned by miners in official inquiries was solidarity and support of the strikers. A certain role might have been played by fear of accusation or even physical assault by the striking miners in the case that they might be considered as strike-breakers.

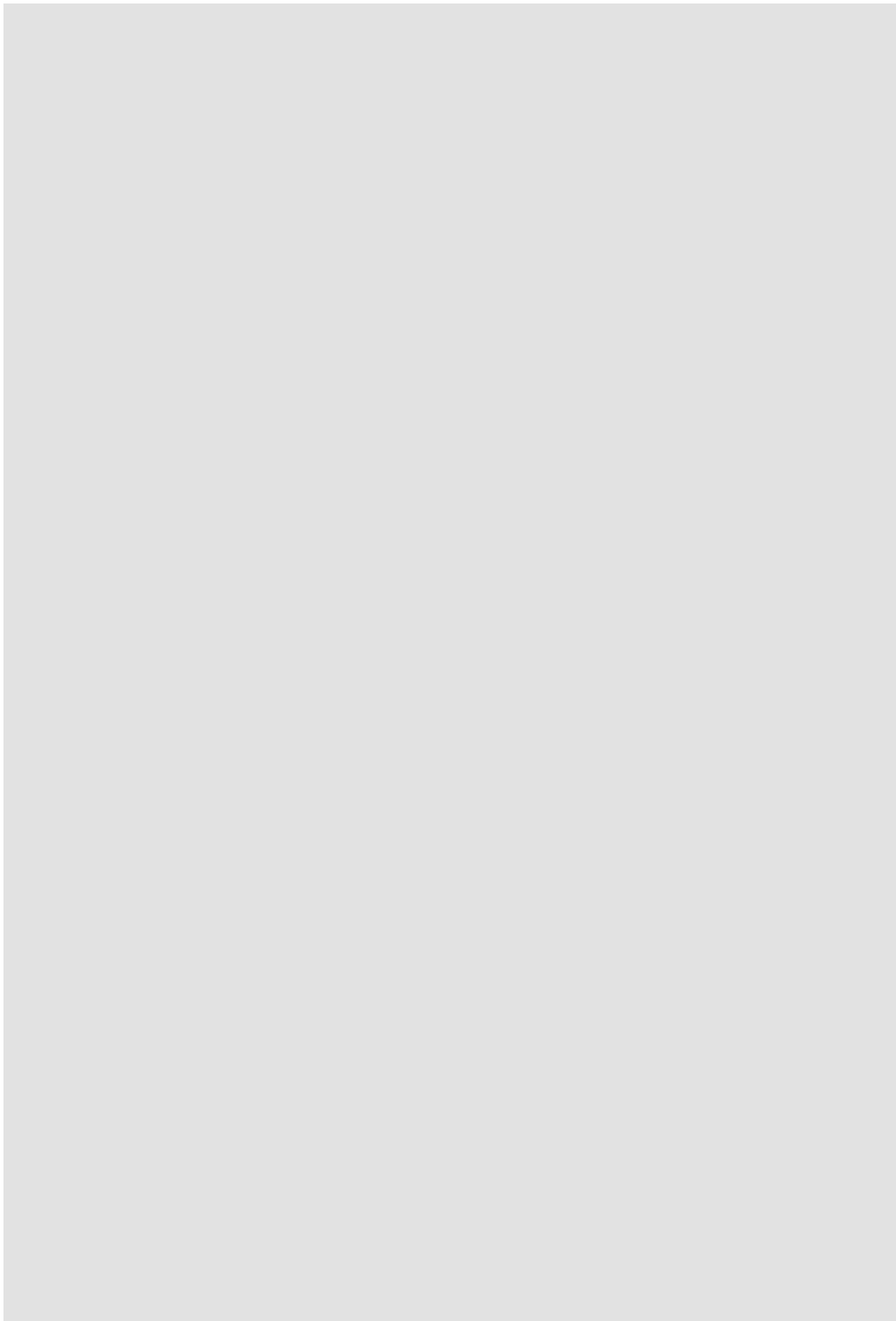


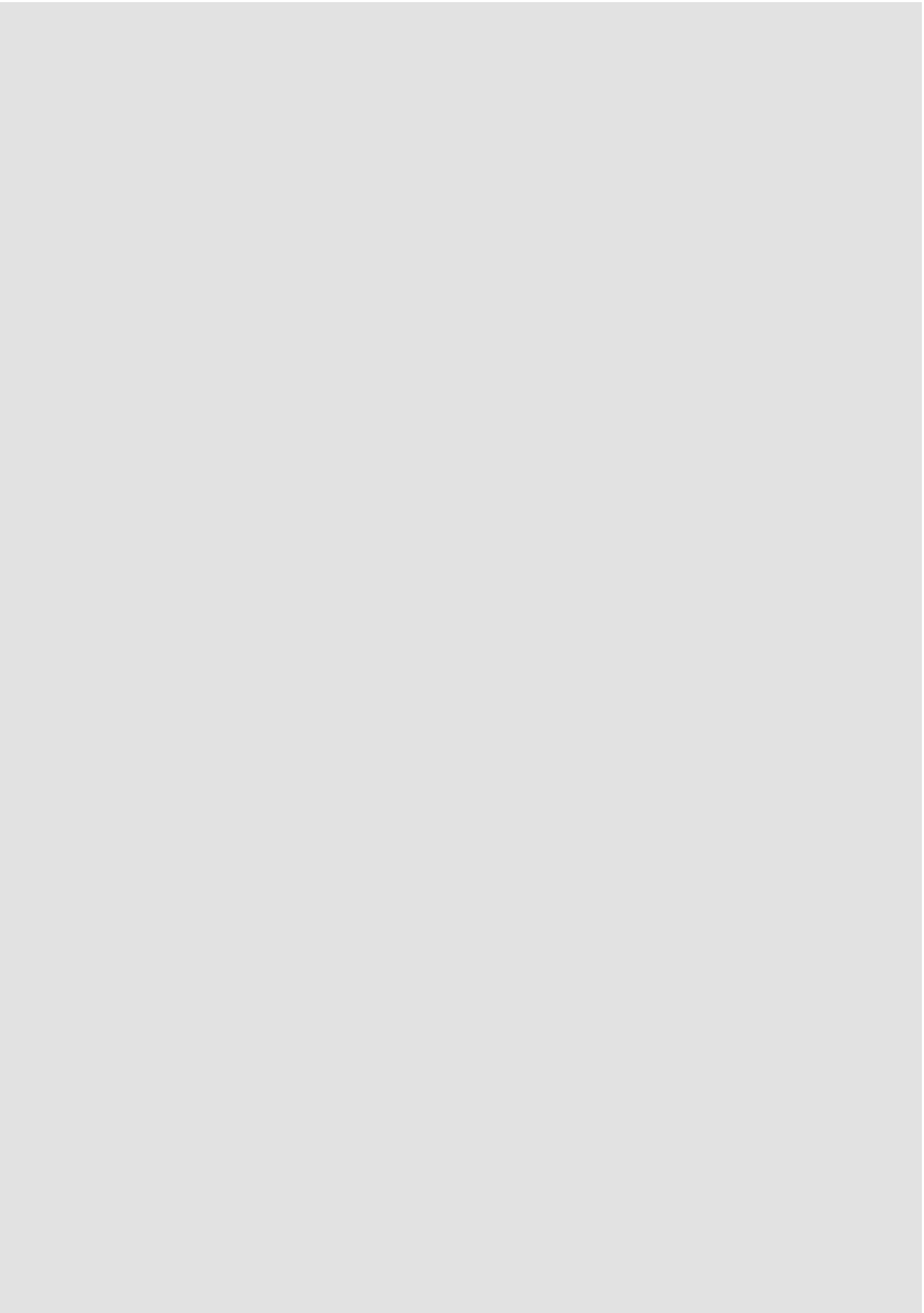


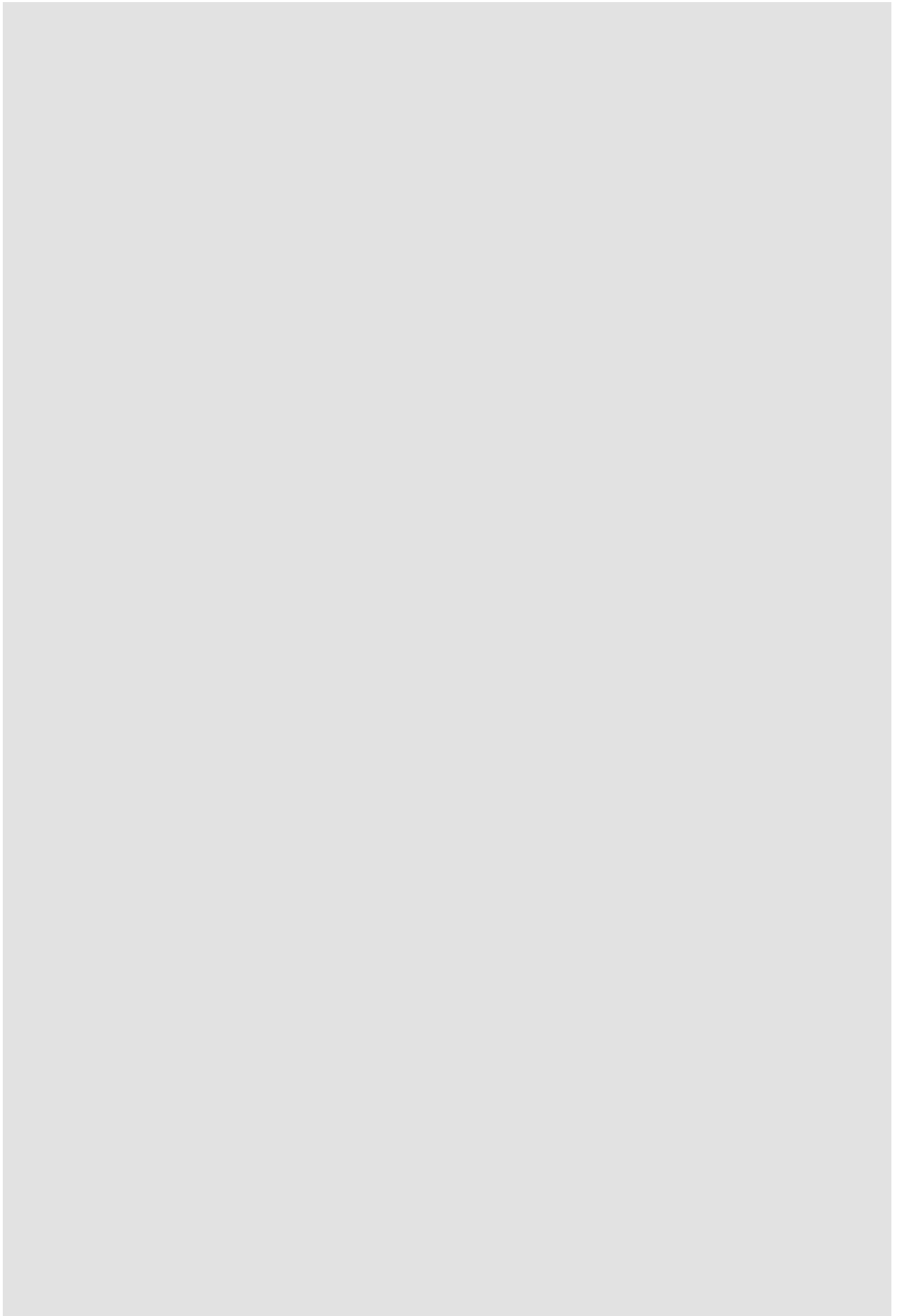


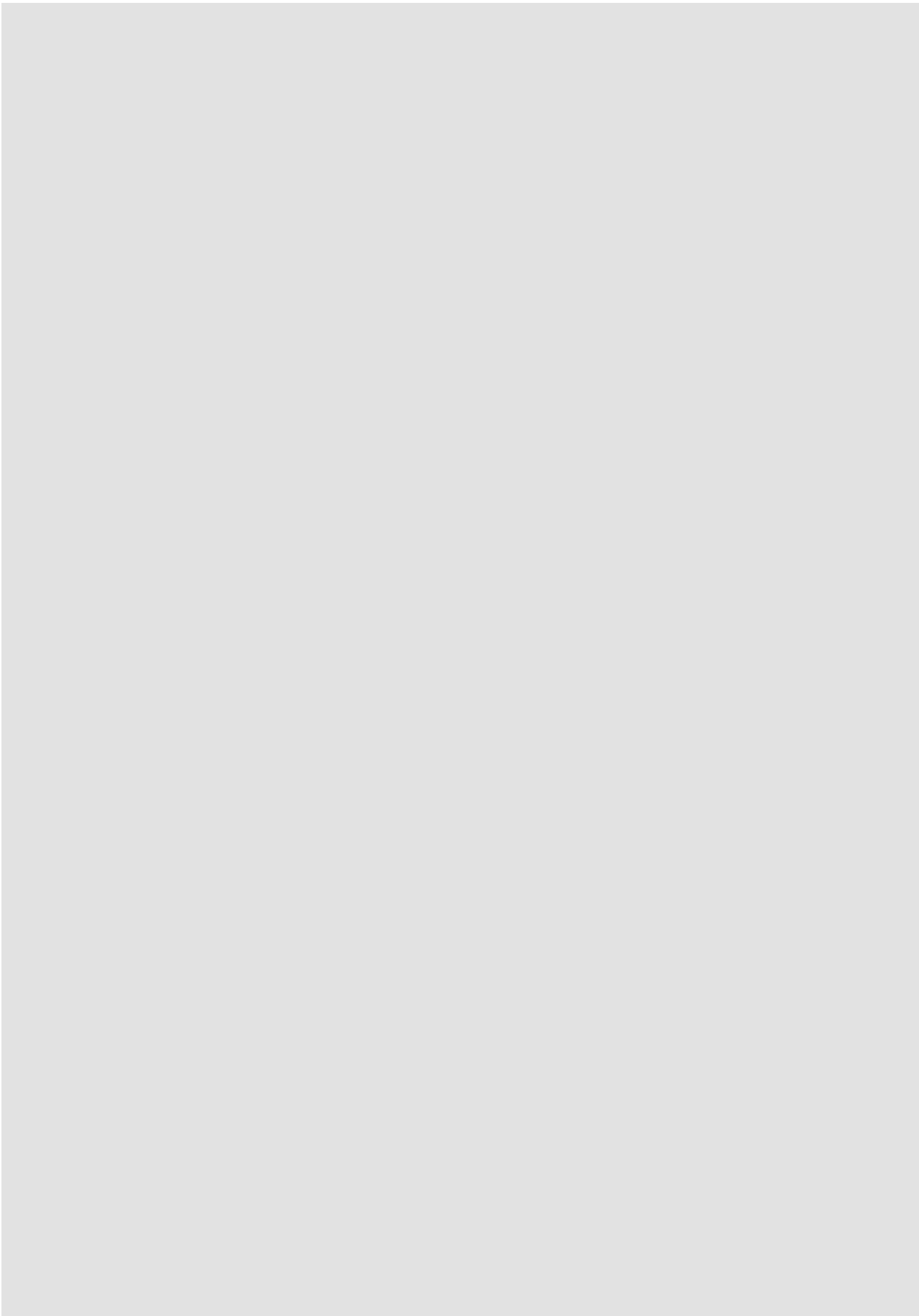


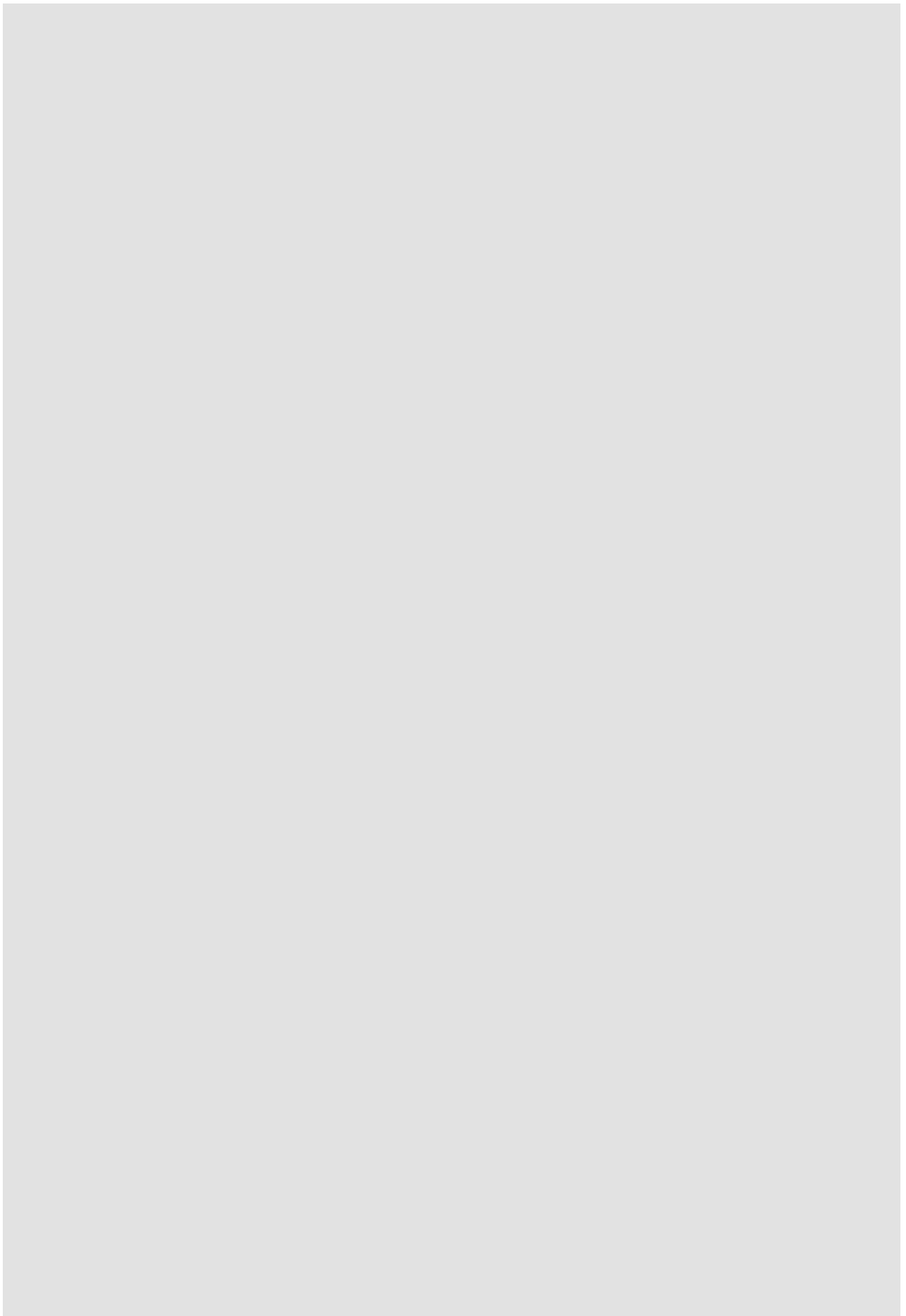


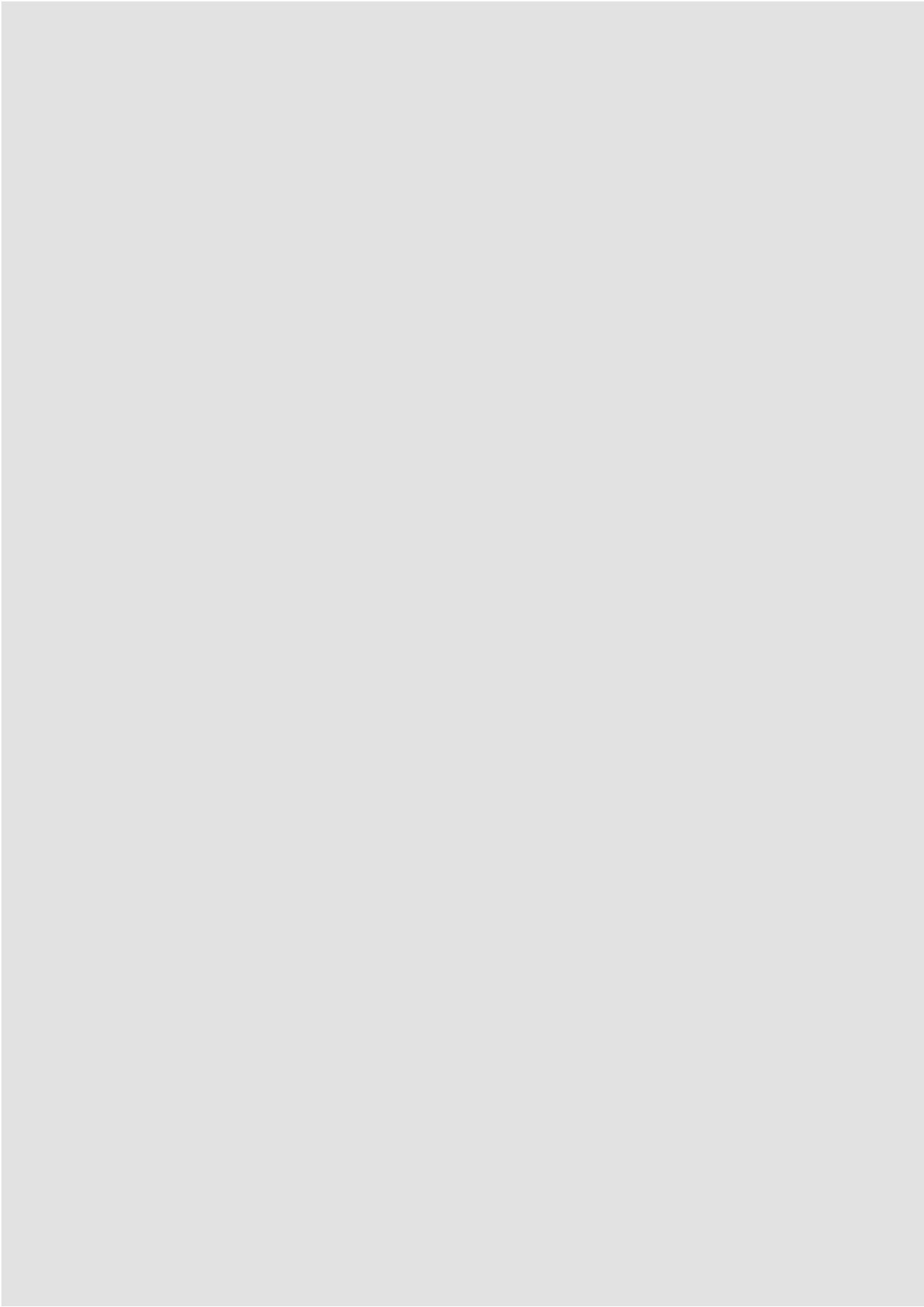


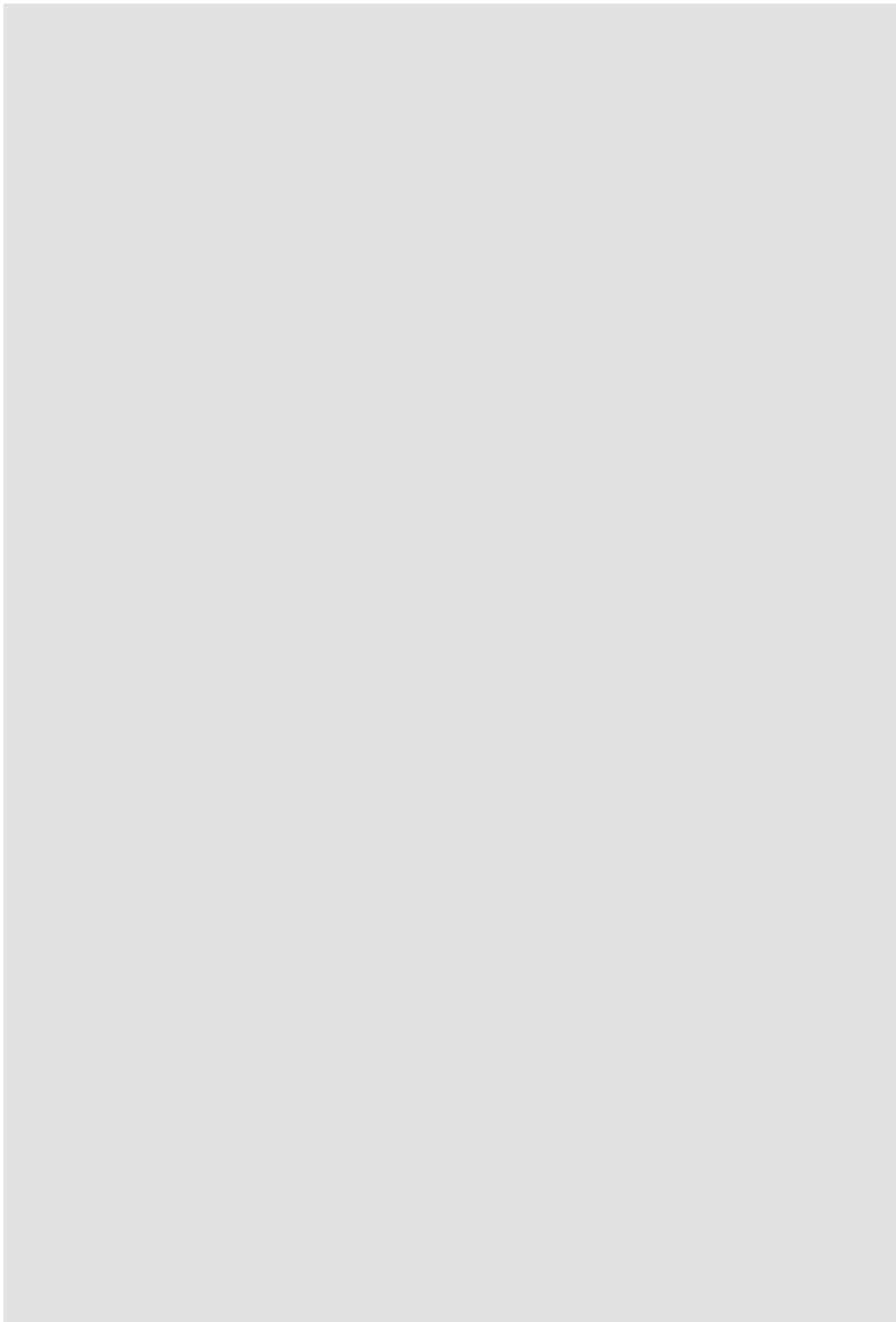




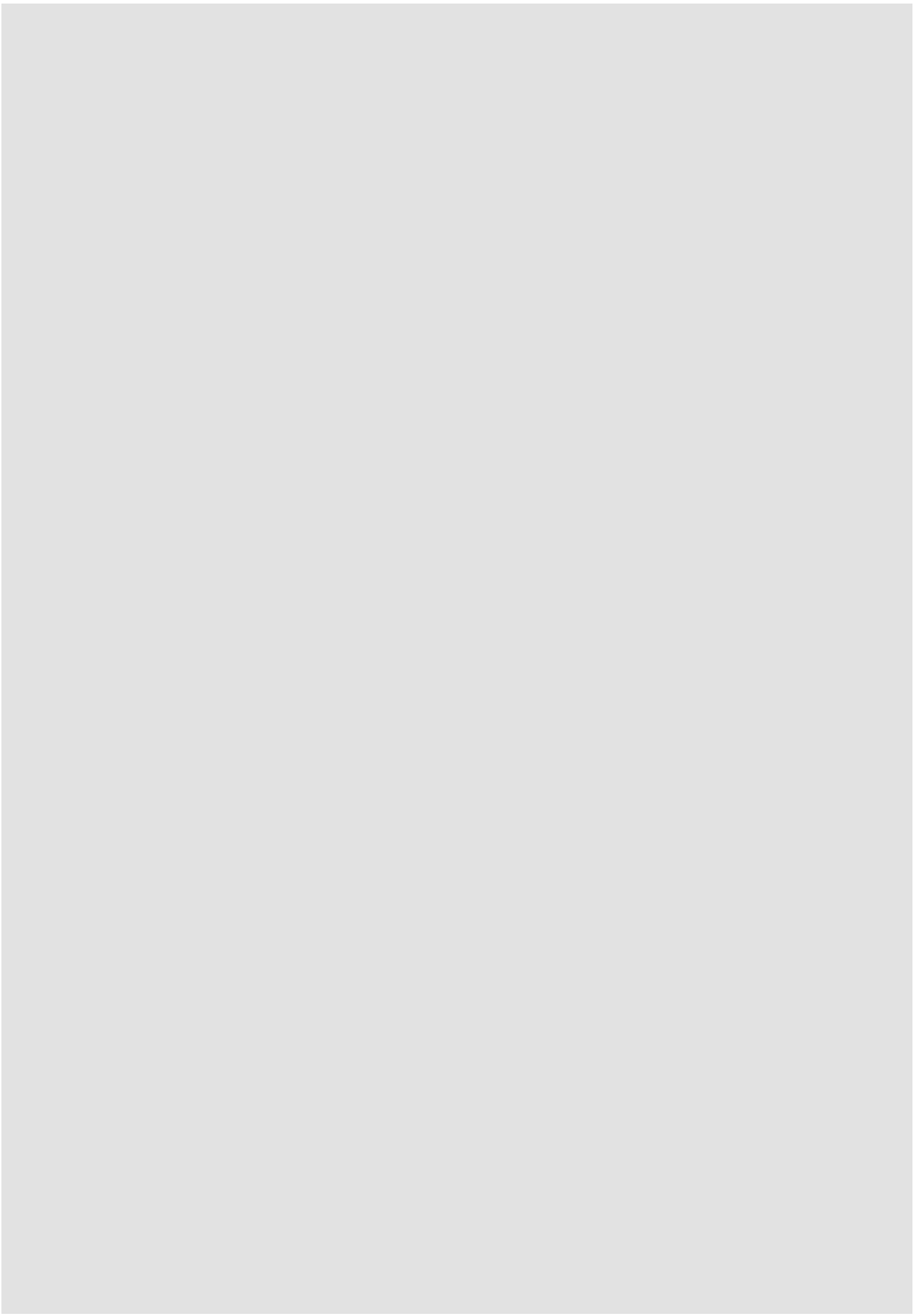


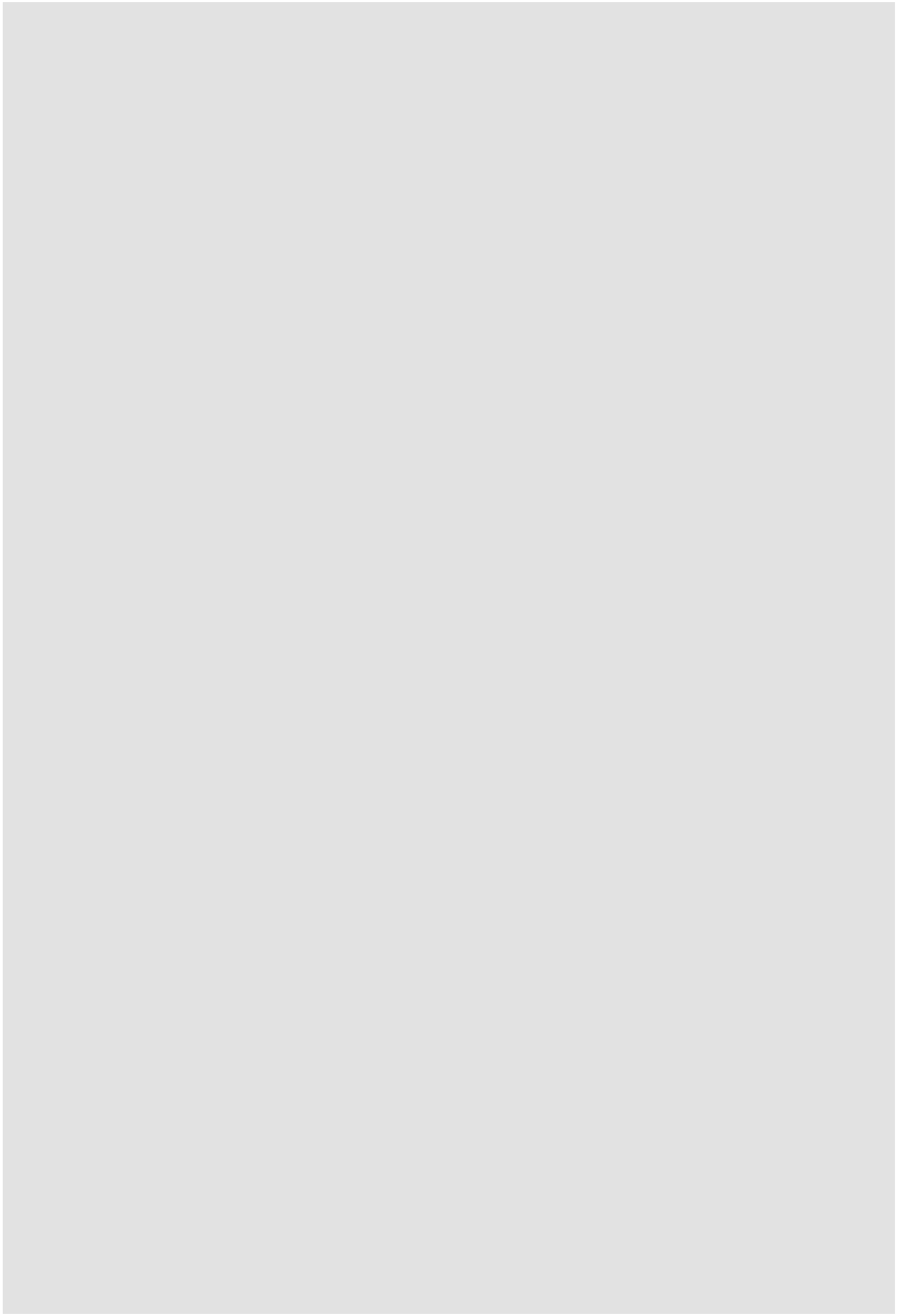


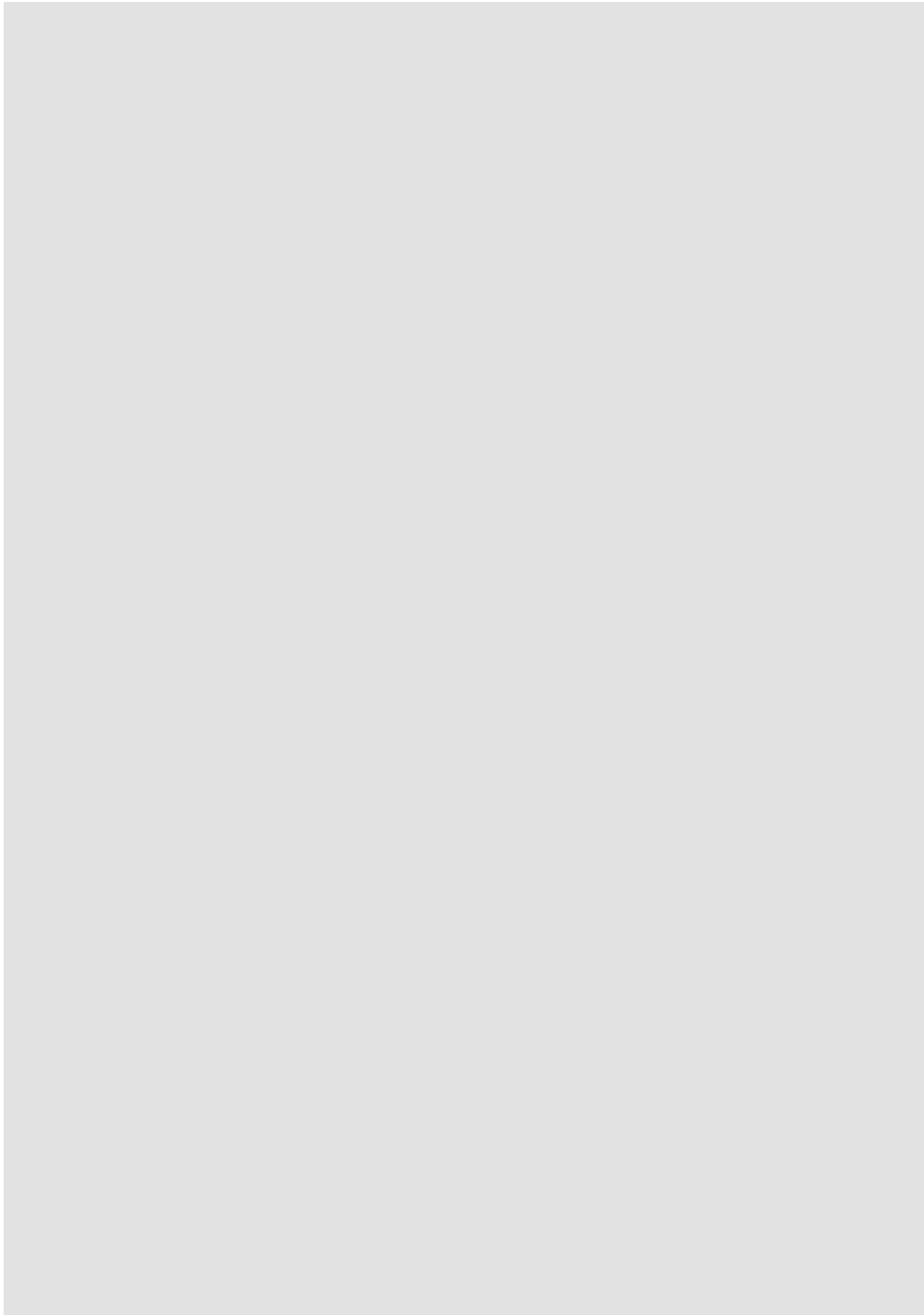


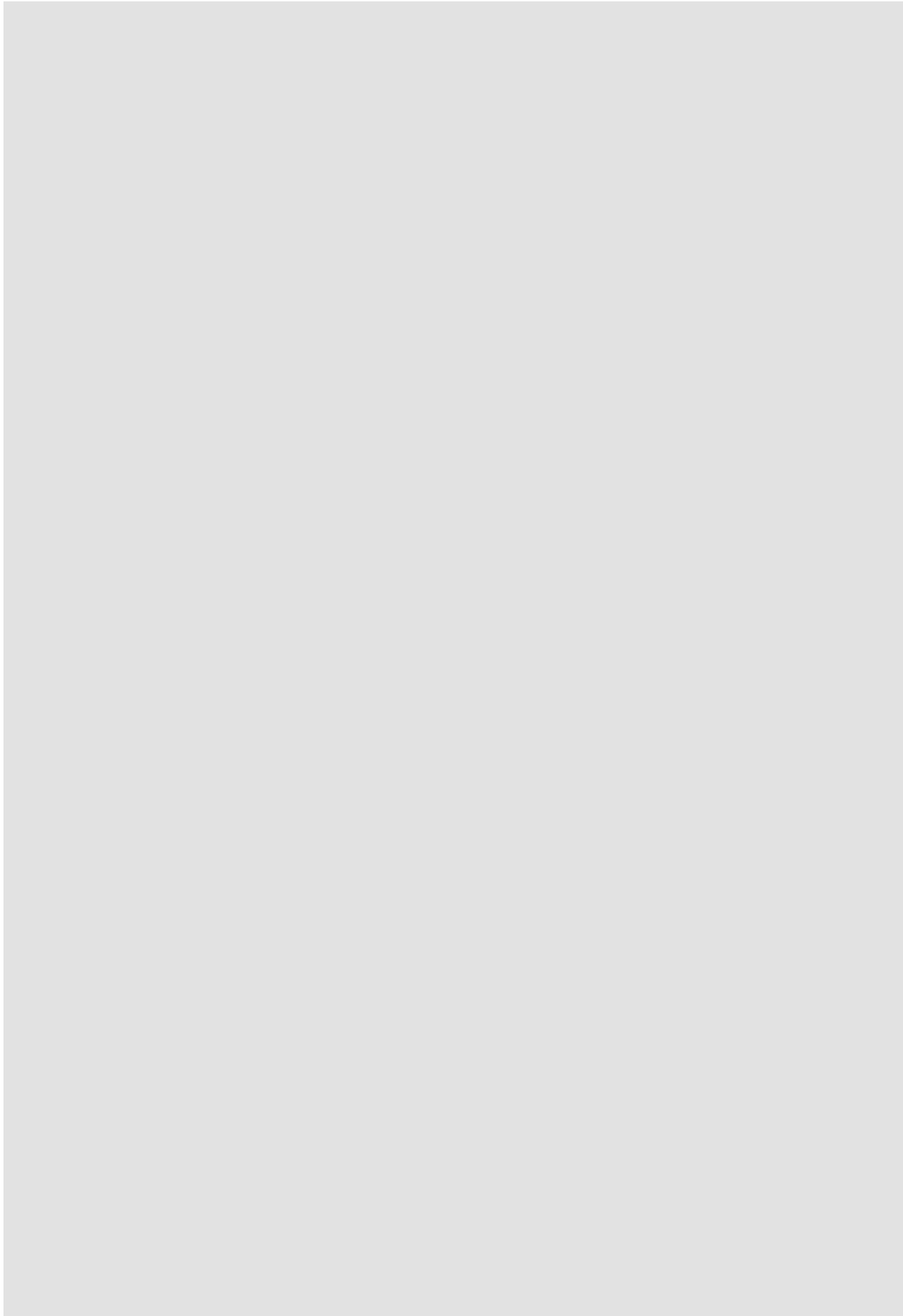


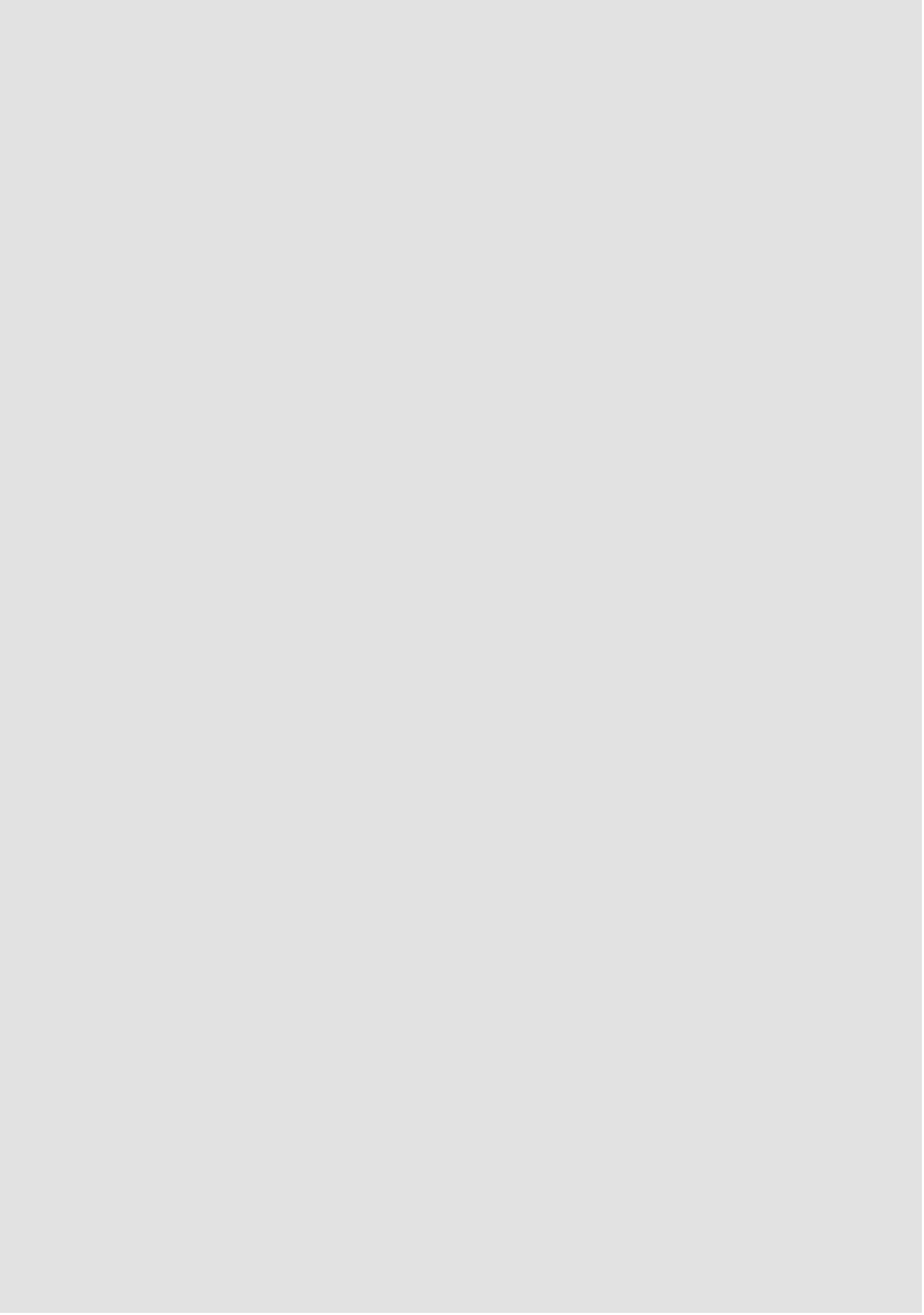


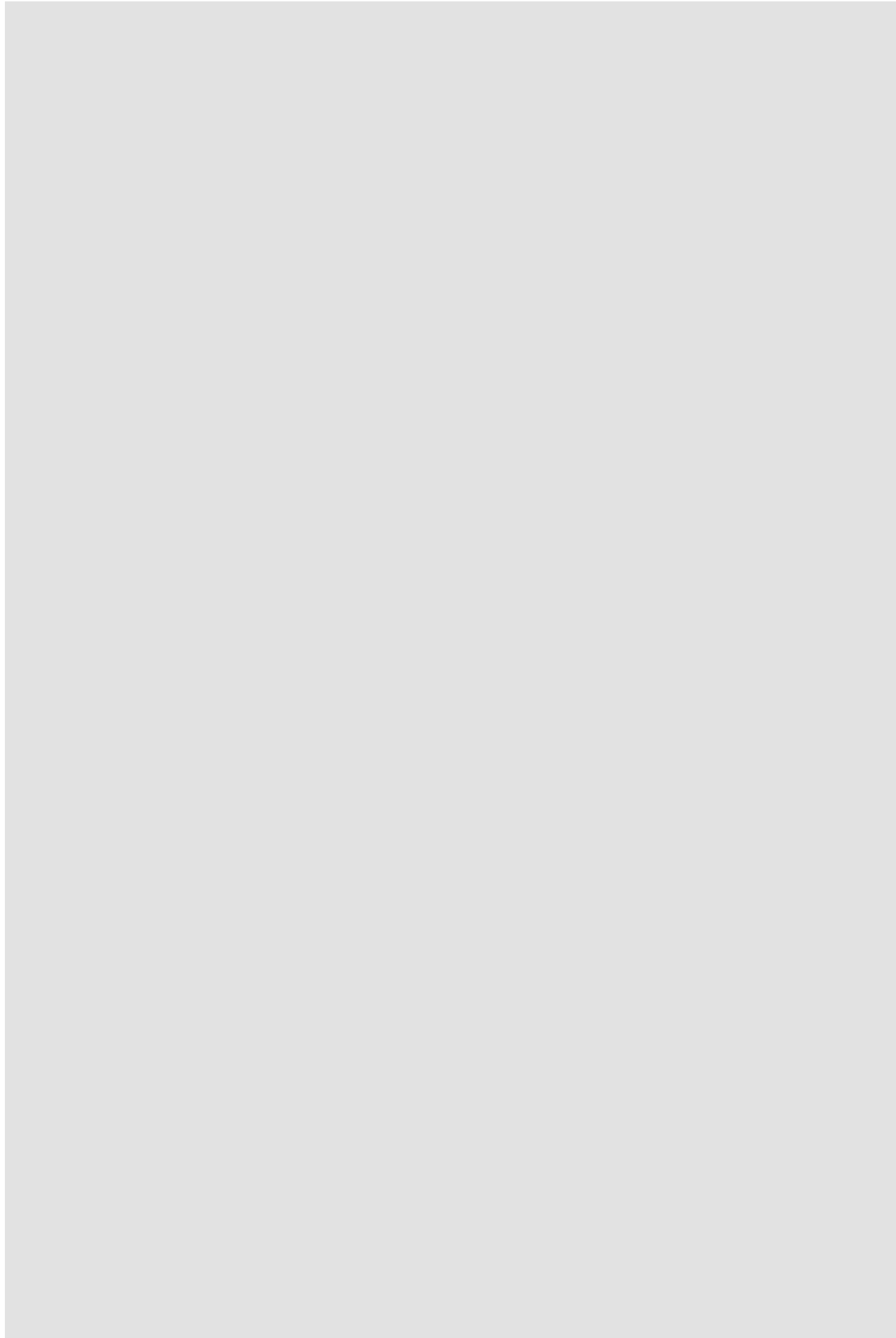


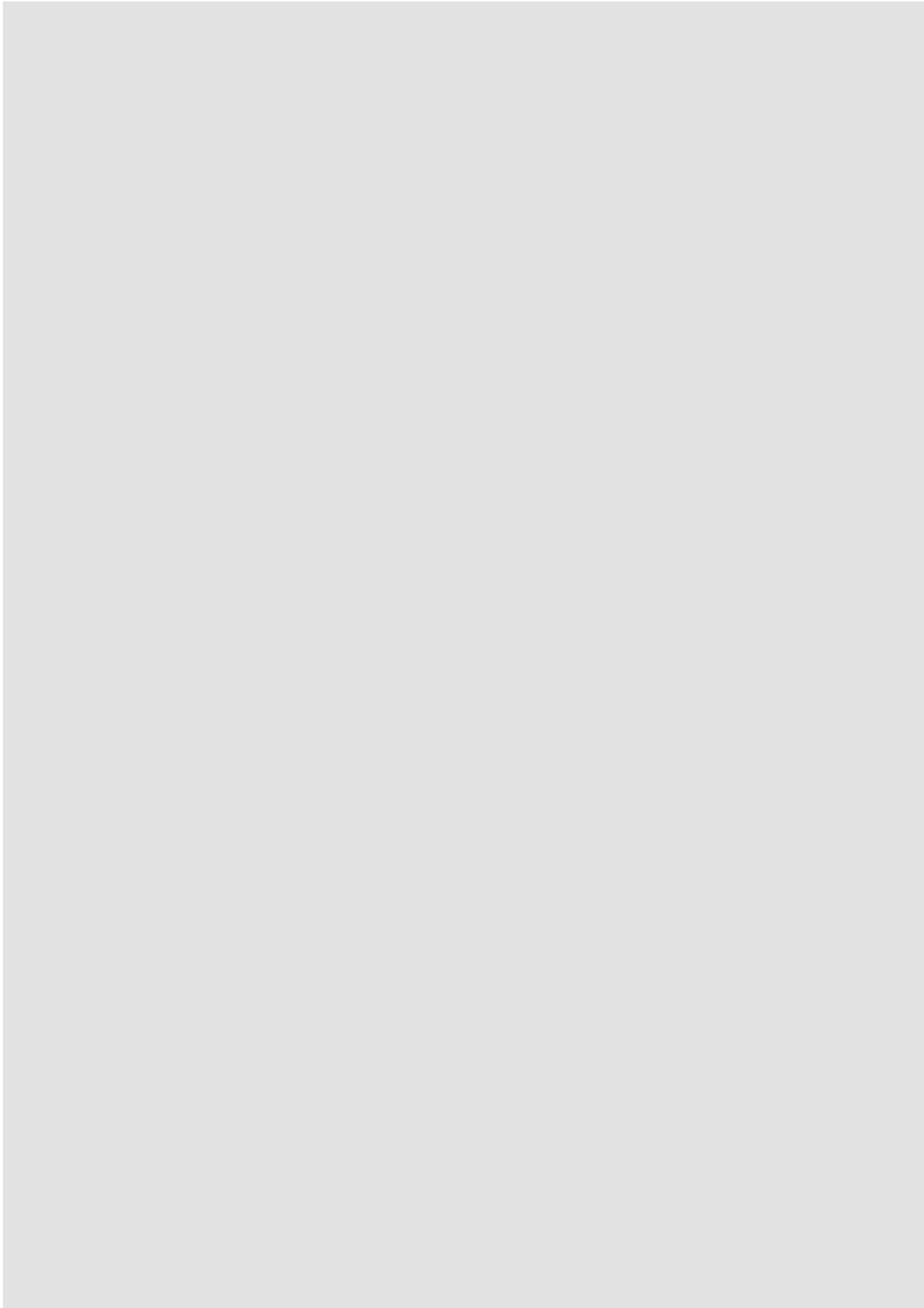


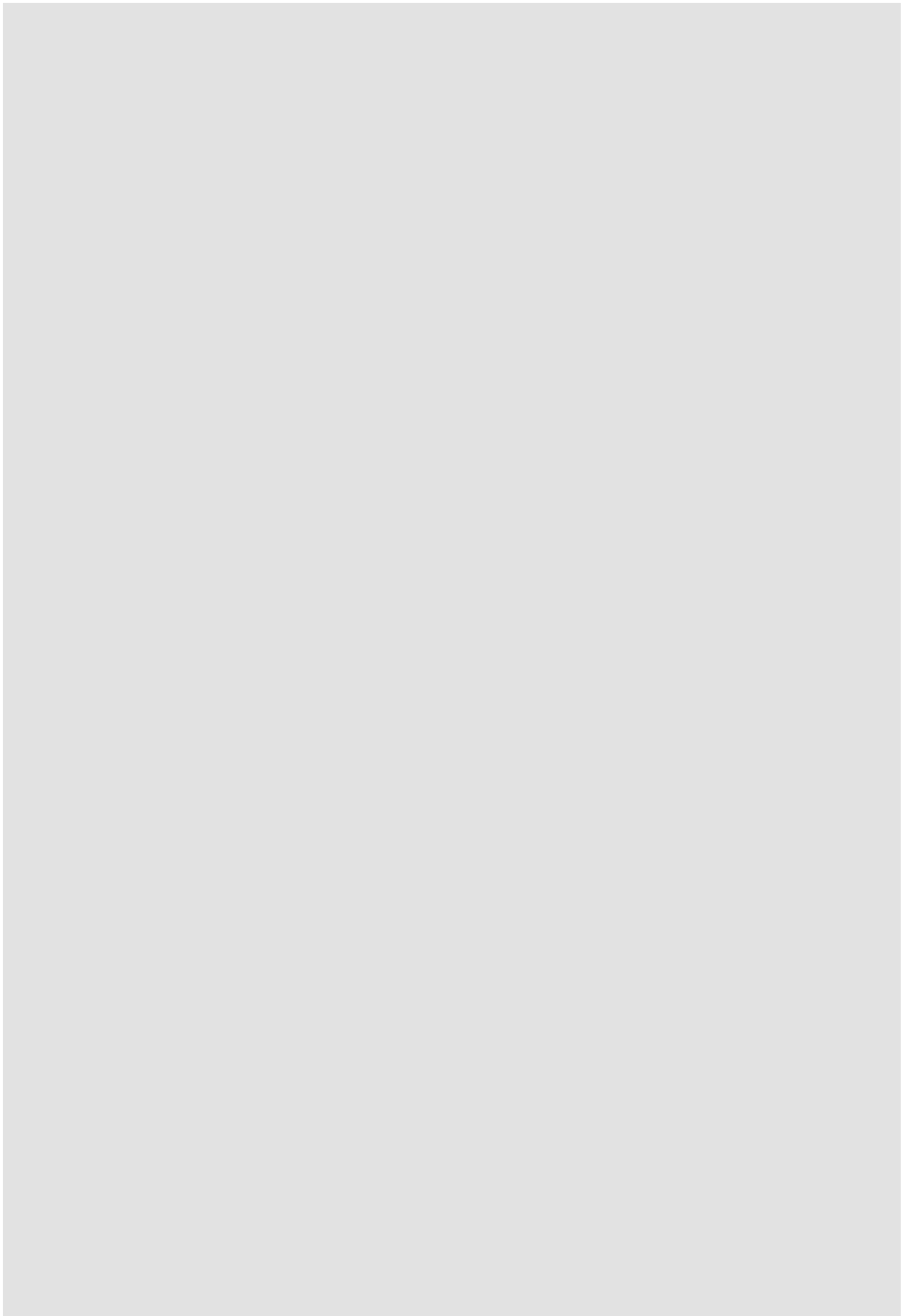




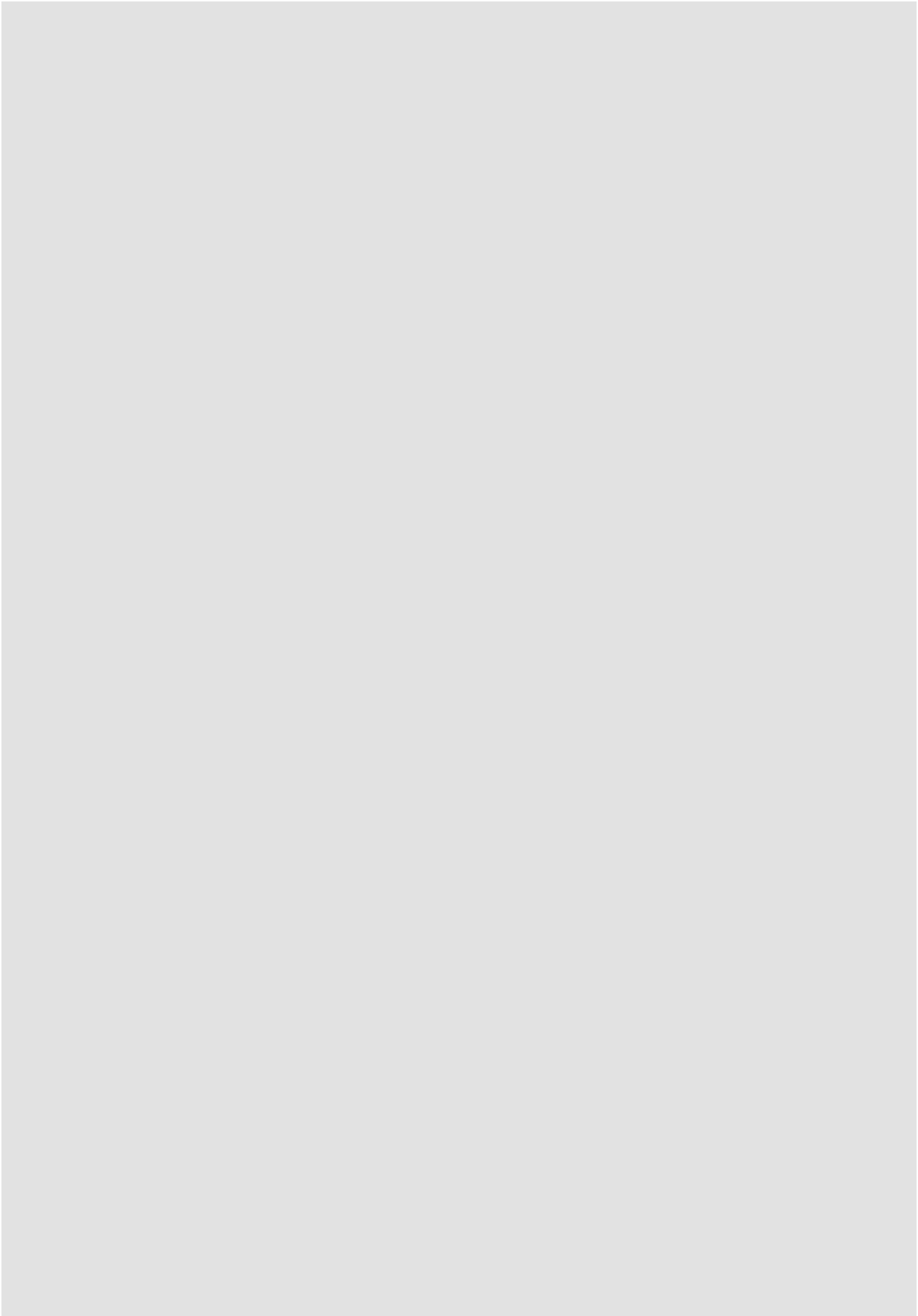


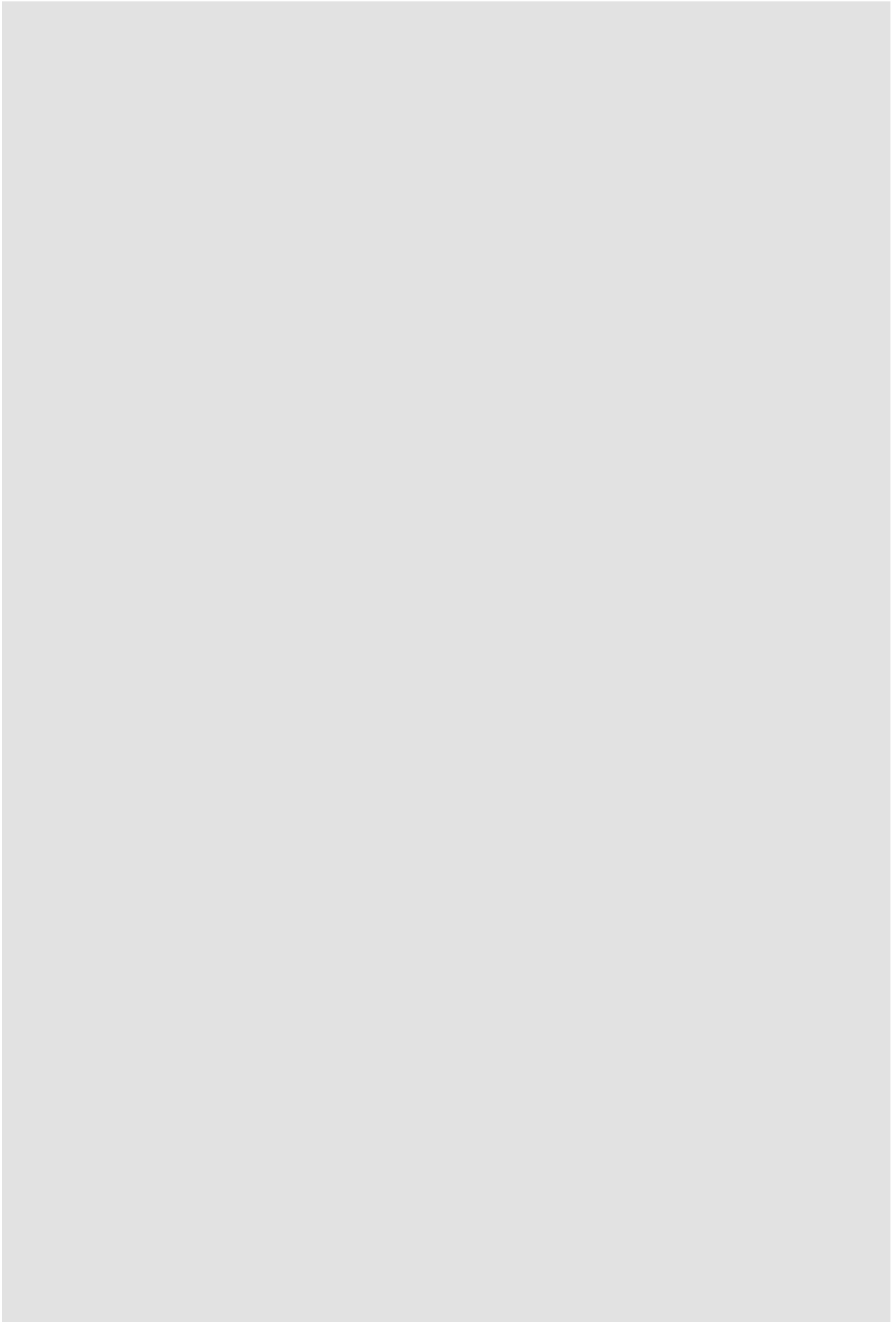


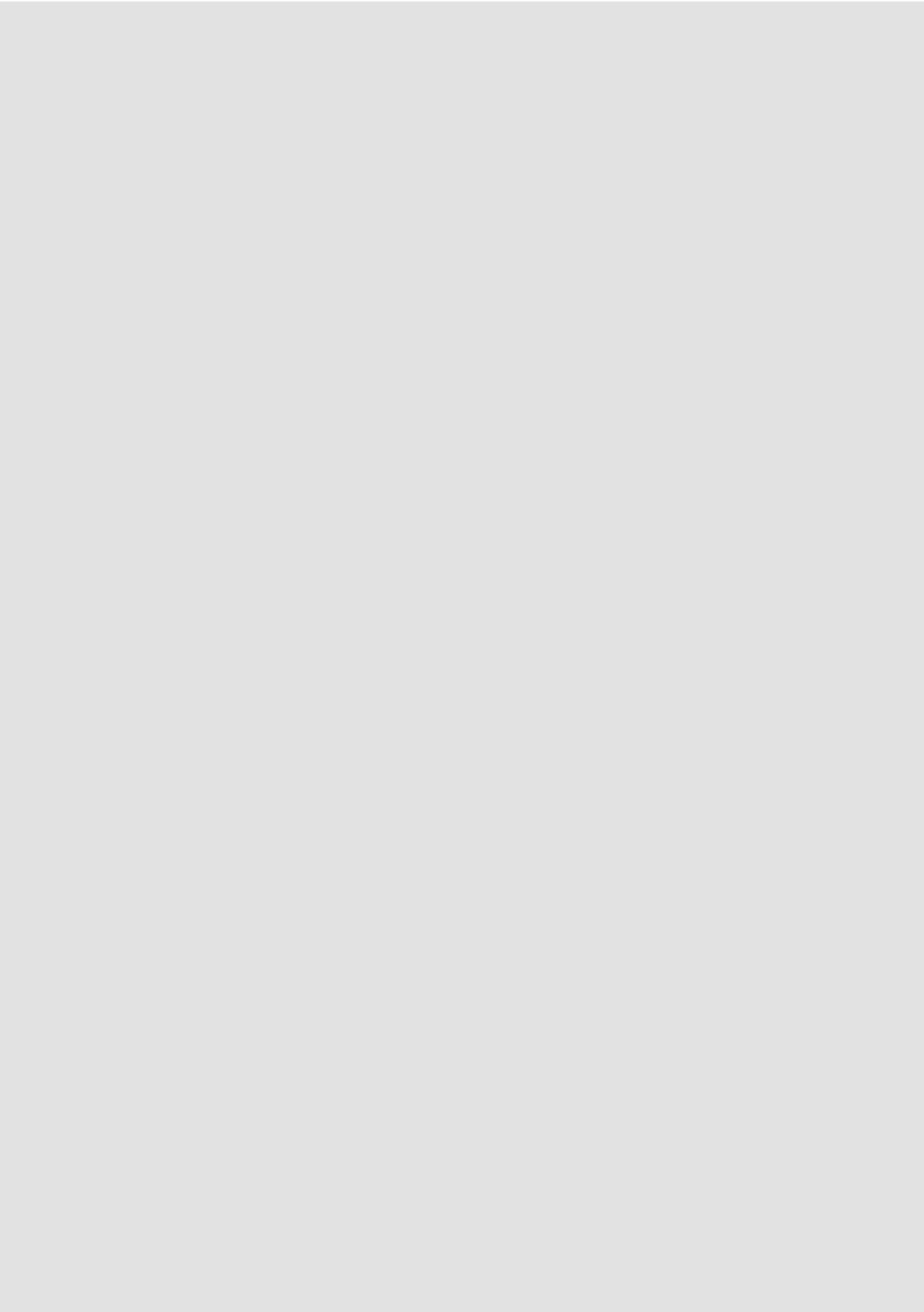












Hana ŠÚSTKOVÁ

**THE VMIC SOCIAL SYSTEM. THE VIEW OF HISTORIANS OVER  
THE PAST 100 YEARS**

ABSTRACT

This study analyses czech historians' point of view on problems of social history of workers in Vítkovice ironworks. It presents the most important works about history of this company and introduces economical and social historians of Moravian-Silesian region, i.e. Milan Myška, Jiří Matějček, Blanka Pitronová etc.

KEYWORDS

Ironworks; workers; social policy; historians of Moravia-Silesia; 20th century

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In 1828, in the small village of Vítkovice in the immediate vicinity of the town of Moravská Ostrava, the foundations were laid of the so-called Rudolf's Metallurgical Works (Rudolfovy hutě), later known as Vítkovice Ironworks (Vítkovické železářny). On the advice of his technical advisors (Franz Xaver Riepl, a professor at Vienna Polytechnic, and Franz Kleinpeter, director of the archbishopric's metallurgical works in Frýdlant),<sup>1</sup> Archbishop of Olomouc Archduke Rudolf Johann established, at his own expense, a pud-

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<sup>1</sup> **M. MYŠKA** et al., *Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů Čech, Moravy a Slezska do poloviny XX. století*, Ostrava 2003, pp. 380–382, 223–224.

ding plant which was to enhance efficiency and ensure higher profits at the old Frýdlant ironworks.<sup>2</sup> It became clear relatively early that this step would change the face of Vítkovice beyond recognition – the population of this originally agricultural community rose from 338 in 1843 to 23 151 in 1910, and thus Vítkovice became the fastest-growing municipality in Cislithania.<sup>3</sup> An insignificant agrarian community became the ‘steel town’ of the monarchy. It gained its town charter only in 1908, following a request by the municipal council in March 1908. The request was addressed to state authorities and cited the fact that Vítkovice already had 24 000 inhabitants and developed infrastructure (a slaughterhouse, water supply, sewer system, high-quality streets and roads, a town hall, a developed education system), and, above all, huge economic significance for the entire monarchy). The request was granted by the Emperor on December 11, 1908.

The combination of natural conditions (deposits of high-quality cokable black coal and iron ores), geographical location (Ostrava is situated on the Vienna-Krakow line),<sup>4</sup> and the development of the railway caused the Ostrava region to become the most industrialized region in Austria-Hungary during the second half of the 19th century. Despite this, its starting position was nothing special; at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, the region, which later became known as the Ostrava Industrial Area,<sup>5</sup> was among the economically retarded areas of Moravia and in part even of Silesia.

Vítkovice Ironworks changed owners several times in the early years of its existence. After the death of Archbishop Rudolf (1831), it became the property of the Archbishopric and Cannonry of Olomouc; after years of stagnation, however, it was leased to a consortium of Vienna bankers associated in the Vítkovice Mining Corporation (Witkowitzter Gewerkschaft). From 1843, the ironworks belonged to global financier Salomon Mayer

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<sup>2</sup> On the question of the origin and development of Vítkovice Ironworks, see i.e. **M. MYŠKA**, *Založení a počátky Vítkovických železáren*, Ostrava 1960; **J. MACHOTKOVÁ**, *Vítkovice in Documents 1828–2003*, Ostrava 2003, pp. 11–26.

<sup>3</sup> **P. KLADIWA – A. POKLUDOVÁ – R. KAFKOVÁ**, *Lesk a bída obecních samospráv Moravy a Slezska 1850–1914, díl II/1 Muži z radnice*, Ostrava 2008, pp. 492–498.

<sup>4</sup> Soon these were in short supply, however, and it was necessary to import iron ore from a greater distance. By the end of the 19th century, it was even necessary to purchase iron ore mines in Sweden and Hungary.

<sup>5</sup> I understand the term Ostrava Industrial Area only as ‘terminus technicus’ established in the second half of the 20th century, not as a historical term. It is merely a definition of an economic sphere within the territory where Ostrava shaped a centripetal economic and social center without regard to provincial or state borders.

Rothschild, who purchased them from the ecclesiastical owner together with iron ore and coal mines. Another change of ownership occurred in 1873; the Rothschilds and the Gutmanns, a Viennese family of wholesalers and financiers, set up a consortium called Vítkovice Mining and Iron Corporation – VMIC (Vítkovické horní a hutní těžířstvo = VHHT) and issued shares with 51 % held by the Rothschilds and 49 % held by the Gutmanns. This paper will focus mainly on the ironworks, with the Vítkovice mines remaining largely overlooked. Although the general director of VMIC headed both the ironworks and the mines, the employees of the two operations belonged to different categories; the manual work in the ironworks was considered to be more prestigious than the manual work in the mines.

The owners of the company – whoever they may have been at any particular point in time – were never its managers. Management of the ironworks and mines was left in the hands of specialists working as directors, central directors, or general directors (the titles and extent of these positions changed over time). As the ironworks was developing, the number of so-called sections headed by managers increased (blast furnaces, foundry, rolling mill, machine works, steel works, boiler shop, tube rolling mill, bridge-building works, etc.).

Machines require personnel, and so it is interesting to examine how the human factor affected the company's history, i.e. how the employees of the ironworks were treated and how they were perceived by its owners and management. Modern factory production methods had brought many changes to labor relations, of which the separation of the home and working spheres was certainly one the most important. While the traditional craftsman executed his work activity in a designated space in his dwelling or in its immediate vicinity, and apprentices and journeymen would become a part of the broader family of their master, factory workers as well as clerks and managers executed their work outside their homes, often dozens of kilometers away. They often lived separately from their families, and the system of the nuclear family began to develop slowly. In the same way, the rhythm of factory work differed diametrically from that of the work of craftsmen or peasants. It was more demanding with respect to the concentration of performance, discipline, keeping to a schedule, and maintaining the production technology. It must have been immensely difficult for the mentality of the first factory workers, coming mostly from circles of poor farmers or artisans, to adapt to the new living conditions and the new way of life which awaited them in the ironworks.

We do not have much information about the company's personnel from the metallurgical plant's early years, or that of other ironworks; we are not

able to ascertain wages levels<sup>6</sup> or even more accurate figures for employee numbers. Reliable information about wages and salaries during this period is available only for the directors and foreign metallurgists from Great Britain who had introduced puddling technology in steel production. Only from 1843 are there more reports and documents which enable us to establish at least a rough notion of the social situation in the ironworks. The first residential houses for qualified employees – who in this period came either from remote iron-producing regions or from abroad – were erected by Vítkovice Ironworks in 1831. These consisted of six houses for foremen and overseers, and one intended to house clerks. Other employees had to improvise in order to meet their housing needs. As a result, workers not from the plant's immediate vicinity sought private accommodation, which was quite expensive, or slept in the production halls, which was very unhealthy.

The dismal health conditions among the working class caused by poor housing, poor sanitation, heavy and dangerous work, and insufficient nourishment forced the ironworks' management to establish a so-called plant hospital in 1840. This was a single-story building with four rooms and a capacity of approximately 40 beds, equipped with certain medical supplies and staffed by untrained personnel. Medical care was provided by Moravská Ostrava's physician. The hospital was operated by a fraternal metallurgical sick fund founded perhaps in 1843 to support auxiliary workers unable to work, widows, and orphans. The company's charitable activities also included the construction of an elementary school in Vítkovice in 1844. Local children thus had a more convenient option than to attend the relatively distant school in Moravská Ostrava, which led to an increase in the number of children regularly attending school.

It is necessary to mention, however, that until Paul Kupelwieser became VMIC's general director in 1876 the company's social policy was carried out by individual directors without an overall concept and often driven by the immediate need to resolve the most acute problems (housing) or by sudden fits of philanthropy. Kupelwieser was a new type of manager who understood well the complicated interrelationship between quality social policy and the company's economic growth. He abandoned the tactic of haphazardly issuing benefits and building employee housing capacities, and instead created an ingenious social system for VMIC which, variously modi-

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<sup>6</sup> Both Myška and Matějček have attempted to do so, however, by making comparisons with wages at other plants. See **M. MYŠKA**, *Založení a počátky*, pp. 86–93; **J. MATĚJČEK**, *Sociální postavení dělnictva Vítkovických železáren 1828–1918*, Manuscript, Slezský ústav, Opava 1974.

fied, survived almost until the middle of the 20th century.<sup>7</sup> In order to contemplate how historians perceived the VMIC social system, it is useful to introduce and categorize its elements at least in brief. The range of social benefits provided by VMIC to employees may perhaps be defined as follows:

1. Health care. The unsuitable 1840 hospital was replaced in 1853 by a new hospital building. Health care was provided by three new physicians, and a pavilion for infectious illnesses was built in 1860. The equipment was unsatisfactory, and there was no qualified nursing staff or a permanent physician.<sup>8</sup> The first permanent plant physician – MUDr. Maxmilian Munk – was hired at VMIC by general director Paul Kupelwieser in 1878. In 1890, a new pavilion-type plant hospital opened, and the number of physicians and trained nursing staff (Sisters of Mercy of St. Borromeo) grew. The hospital expanded to other buildings, where health care was provided at a high level (internal medicine, surgery, x-ray facility, maternity ward, children's unit, counseling department for mothers, rehabilitation, dental clinic, gynecology, ENT, optometry). Starting with the outbreak of World War I, medical clinics for less severe cases of illness or injury were established at individual plants. All employees and their family members could receive care at the hospital and the clinics. In 1900, a sanatorium for mildly ill and post-injury workers was established in Stará Bělá.
2. Welfare and health insurance providing for illness, injury, and retirement of Vítkovice Ironworks employees. The first mention of a common fraternal sick fund for metallurgists and miners dates from 1843, although the information is very incomplete. In 1858, a fraternal sick fund was established under Mining Act No. 146 from 1854. All permanent workers and subordinate clerks at Baron Rothschild's mining and metallurgical facilities became members, and were entitled to free medical assistance, medicaments, treatment in the hospital, and support in the event of illness (the right to free medical care applied to wives and children as well). In 1883, an independent metallurgical fraternal sick fund was established, consisting of a sick fund and a provident institute. While all workers were members of the sick fund, only

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<sup>7</sup> **M. MYŠKA**, *Rytíři průmyslové revoluce. Šest studií k dějinám podnikatelů v českých zemích*, Ostrava 1997, pp. 211–253; **P. KUPELWIESER**, *Aus den Erinnerungen eines alten Österreichers*, Wien 1918.

<sup>8</sup> An interesting account of old Vítkovice is offered by an edition of the memoirs of Jan Vycpálek, an overseer in a Vítkovice machine works. See **J. ROHEL**, *Vycpálkovy zapomenuté pohledy*, Ostrava 1969.



## I. ARTICLES (HD-EH 27/1, 2012)

- permanent workers were also members of the provident institute. In 1895, the fraternal sick fund was disbanded in this form, and transformed into *Závodní nemocenská pokladna* (the Works Sick Fund), and the provident institute was transformed into *Všeobecný zaopatřovací ústav* (the General Provident Institute). All definitively admitted overseers, foremen, and workers were members. In 1926, a law on social insurance went into effect in Czechoslovakia, which stabilized the membership of the provident institute; new members were no longer admitted, and neither current members nor the mining association paid contributions anymore. Members' funds remained deposited in the institute and earned interest. Assistance was paid out from it, which went to widows and orphans in the event of death. The institute administered several social funds; in addition to a fund of reserves and fund for dearth benefits, these were: a jubilee fund (1928) which provided supplements to the pensions of former ironworks employees as well as to widows and orphans; a fund for the care of workers with tuberculosis and their family members (1924); a fund for disabled workers; a fund for workers' widows unable to work; the beneficent Baron Albert von Rothschild Fund; a fund supporting workers unable to work, especially the war-disabled; and a fund supporting the families of workers recruited for military training. Membership in the plant's health insurance company was compulsory for all VMIC employees. The fund provided members with free medical examinations, medicines and medical aids, support during periods of illness, and funeral coverage. At the beginning of the 1840s, pension insurance was introduced for Vítkovice clerks. In 1878, *Úřednický fond VHHT* (the VMIC Clerks' Fund) was established, and was renamed in 1897 to *Penzijní ústav úředníků VHHT I* (the Pension Institute I of Clerks of VMIC). Upon leaving employment, the fund provided its members with severance pay, pensions, widow's pensions, and support for orphans. Clerks could retire after 20 years of employment with a pension of 35–75 % of their salary (depending on the duration of their membership in the fund). In 1899, a pension fund was established for employees who had not belonged to the *Pension Institute*, made up of members of the so-called master fund. In 1904, this fund was reformed and renamed *Penzijní ústav II úředníků a zřízenců VHHT* (the Pension Institute II of Clerks and Employees of VMIC).
3. Social institutes and foundations. In 1898, VMIC built an orphanage with a capacity of 100 children at a cost of 140 000 K; the facility was sustained by the foundations of VMIC's owners. In 1908, a VMIC retirement home was established which consisted of several four-family

homes with gardens and one larger house for widowed men and women. The funds for construction were provided by the foundations of Rudolf von Gutmann and Wilhelm von Gutmann. Other patrons such as Albert von Rothschild, Max and Emilia von Gutmann, and Dr. Ludwig von Gutmann had foundations as well, which were intended for the maintenance of social institutions. We must also mention the foundations of general directors Friedrich Schuster and Adolf Sonnenschein. In 1922, construction began on so-called pensioner colonies in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm (the houses were intended for clerks) and in Zubří (for workers). They were built as semidetached family houses and small villas.

4. Company housing. In the early years of Vítkovice Ironworks, construction of company flats and hostels for workers, foremen, and clerks was minimal and haphazard (they were built in the immediate vicinity of the plant, which was continually growing, so the buildings soon had to be torn down and re-built a bit farther off). New worker colonies with a low housing standard were hurriedly built; the situation was better in flats constructed for higher-ranking employees.<sup>9</sup> Due to the limited number of flats, these categories were not always separated consistently, however – so that workers' families and clerks' families could live side by side. From the 1870s, construction met basic sanitation requirements for healthy living-houses had a water conduit with clean potable water, and sewerage. A new method for planning construction of company housing was introduced by general director Kupelwieser, on whose initiative a massive redevelopment of Vítkovice into a modern company town was launched, based on an urban plan elaborated by Viennese academicians A. Kirsten, V. Ferstel, and others. In 1908, there were 55 houses available for clerks and 48 combined houses (for clerks, masters, and workers) with 398 flats. In the same year, VMIC owned 113 workers tenements with 1 189 flats. So-called barracks were built for workers from distant villages living in Vítkovice without their families. In 1908, there were 5 300 beds in them. These were not too popular, however, due to the lack of privacy and poorer living conditions. Company flats offered subsidized heating (coal), lighting (coal-gas, later electrical), low rents, and a high standard of living compared to private housing, and thus was highly sought-after among employees. Supply did not meet demand, however, and as

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<sup>9</sup> J. NOUŠOVÁ, *Stavební vývoj hornické kolonie Dolu hlubina v Ostravě v letech 1868–1975*, in: A. SULDOVSKÝ (ed.), *Ostrava 9. Sborník příspěvků k dějinám a výstavbě města*, Ostrava 1977, pp. 218–235.

a result company housing became a favorite tool of management to pressure employees.

5. Company market hall, restaurants, hotel, shop, dining facilities. Already in 1876, the first company store was established, and in 1885 it was moved to special premises. It was intended primarily for VMIC employees, but it was used abundantly by local residents as well. This resulted in frequent complaints addressed to both the municipal council and the district governor by local tradesmen who were losing their customers because they could not compete with the company store's prices. In 1889, the first two company cafeterias were established offering food and beverages for workers (even low-alcohol beer and wine were offered as a substitute for widespread consumption of hard alcohol among workers). Dinners were available in five company cafeterias. It is impossible to ascertain more precisely the quality of the meals offered, as the few surviving accounts are often contradictory. Some of the workers considered the meals too expensive compared to eating at home. On the other hand, the main course always contained meat, which was not the case at home. Clerks could dine at the company hotel established in 1887. In 1899, VMIC built a covered market hall near Vítkovice's central square and entrusted its administration to the municipality, which rented out sales spaces to individual merchants offering foodstuffs (butter, milk, eggs, vegetables, fruit). In 1896, VMIC built a central slaughterhouse.
6. Children's facilities and educational institutions. Vítkovice Ironworks established the first elementary school already in 1844. It was mixed until 1881, when it was divided into a three-class school for boys (in 1892 it already had 14 classes) and a three-class school for girls (in 1892 it already had 11 classes). In 1894, VMIC established a second elementary school for boys and opened a private elementary school for girls; in 1899, it established a secondary school for girls (one for boys had been established in 1893 by the municipality); in 1902, a third elementary school for boys was established and yet another in 1907. All offered instruction in German. In 1897, a five-class Czech elementary school was established (in 1907 it already had 11 classes). In 1909, VMIC maintained 10 preschools (the first was established in 1881), and in 1893 – on the initiative of general director Kupelwieser – a company nursery school was established, with care provided by St. Borromeo nuns. From 1903, VMIC operated a summer vacation colony for children in the Beskydy municipality of Čeladná. The three-week stays were intended for workers' children and were paid for by the VMIC directorate; some 400 children participated each year. The

plant also established several children's playgrounds in the municipality. VMIC had a developed system of apprentice education, in which it trained its own younger generation of highly qualified workers. In 1883, the VMIC directorate established a two-year continuation school intended for the education of future workers, foremen, and technical clerks for the iron industry. There was an obvious tendency to prefer German education over Czech education.

7. VMIC facilities of for leisure time: covered pool, summer swimming pool, cycling track, tennis courts, gymnasiums, rink, parks.

Vítkovice Ironworks' employee social policy was determined first and foremost by the company's management, who relied on the strong capital resources of the owners. The Gutmanns participated actively in developing employee policy, and listened carefully to the propositions of VMIC's central directors; the Rothschilds left these matters to their proxies. As we have seen, there were many benefits offered to the employees from among the ranks of the technical intelligentsia and clerks, but also to workers; a cursory examination can thus create the false impression that VMIC executed a project of 1950s social capitalism long before the rise of this phenomenon in Western Europe. A more thorough analysis, however, quickly reveals that the reality presented in celebratory publications differed considerably from real life. The opportunity to make use of employee benefits was entirely denied (apart from statutory injury and pension insurance, as well as health care) to a range of employees – mainly unqualified workers, who were relatively abundant on the labor market and among whom there was a high fluctuation rate. Access to benefits was allocated according to an employee's qualifications, merits vis-à-vis the plant, obedience to superiors, nationality (Germanization was pursued with special intensity and aggression from the 1890s until 1918, in particular during the tenures of general directors Holz and Schuster), etc. The system of employee remuneration was deliberately complicated, and the decision to award or not to award a benefit was completely in the hands of management at various levels. Over the course of time, the circle of benefit recipients expanded, as did the range of opportunities to make use of them. The above-standard level of social benefits provided by VMIC created among its permanent employees a sense of exceptionality and pride in their involvement with the company, despite the fact that the atmosphere there was far from idyllic. In Vítkovice, unconditional obedience to superiors was required, deliberately differential salaries between workers in different sections as well as within the same section created animosity, which management exploited to combat socialist ideas, social democracy, and the strike movement. The plant and the municipality

were essentially one and the same, as management supervised the course of municipal elections and pressured employees to vote for their candidates. Pressure was applied on employees through promises to grant benefits or threats to revoke them. An analogous situation arose during the collection of census data, where the company's goal – until the end of the monarchy – was to maintain an artificial German majority. Despite this, the organized workers movement long remained unsuccessful in establishing itself among Vítkovice Ironworks' workers, as was demonstrated by the non-participation of the majority of the plant's workforce in the strike movement of the 1890s and the beginning of the 20th century.

Now we have come to another issue addressed this paper, namely the optics through which historians – trained and untrained – viewed the VMIC management's social in the 20th century. In view of the number of articles, monographs, and other works on Vítkovice, we supposed that in approaching this issue we would have to create criteria for determining what was worth examining and what could be omitted. What a surprise it was to learn from a survey of the literature that – with one exception – none of the authors writing about Vítkovice addressed social issues, and in particular VMIC's social policy, in a more detailed and comprehensive manner. Among the early authors, there are two reasons which may explain this: The first is that they did not consider this kind of history to be worth recording, preferring instead the 'history of events'. Nor can be overlook the fact that the beginning of social history in the Czech lands can be placed as late as the 1930s, so we came to the view that such issues were not of interest to them as a topic of historical investigation. The period after 1945, or 1948, was seemingly favorable for social history, but in reality this was social history with twisted optics, and the choice of topics was influenced by ideology. Moreover, there were not many historians upon whose work Czech and Slovak historians could build, and the road to the countries with the greatest socio-historical traditions (Germany and France) was closed. Rigid Marxism in a specific Czech combination with enduring positivism and a restricted selection of topics contributed to the fact that issues of social policy both at VMIC and generally were devoted almost no attention. The authors mostly restricted themselves to very vague assertions that the capitalists executed their social policy for mercantile reasons or for fear of the wrath of the miserable masses. This only partially explains the sociopolitical measures implemented by entrepreneurs, however; other reasons for their socially motivated behavior can be found in personal philosophical and ideological attitudes toward life as well as in personal altruism, among other areas. Not even after 1989 did this topic become particularly popular. It can be stated that the decline in scholarly interest in the economic history of enterprises

was accompanied by a decline in interest in the social processes taking place within them.

Now, we would like to present a sort of informative survey of the bibliography of the history of Vítkovice Ironworks in the second half of the 19th century, and later we will address individual works related to our topic which originated mostly in the 1960s and 1970s.

The first descriptive work of broader scope relating to the formation and development of Vítkovice Ironworks dates from the 1880s and is by German-language author Franz Wattolik, who was the owner of printing shop in Moravská Ostrava, a journalist, an author of city directories, and for some time also a clerk in Vítkovice.<sup>10</sup> The handwritten *Kronika VŽ* (Chronicle of Vítkovice Ironworks) runs to 1870, but captures only the emergence and development of the iron industry in the region around Moravská Ostrava and property-law matters. Then there is no written publication on Vítkovice Ironworks for a long time, except for occasional historical sketches in the newspapers about the Rothschilds, F. X. Riepl, and other personalities linked to the emergence of the iron industry.

The first comprehensive records of social benefits provided to VMIC employees date from the beginning of the 20th century, and are from annual VMIC promotional brochures which, in addition to information about the company's production and offerings, also contain reports about social provisions for all categories of employees. In 1908, the VMIC directorate issued a three-volume publication at its own expense called *Wohlfahrts-Einrichtungen des Eisenwerkes Witkowitz*. Here, an unknown author or authors – probably from VMIC administrative circles – provide comprehensive information in individual chapters on all the social facilities operated by the company for its employees. The other volumes consist of pictorial annexes. Even today, this publication is a sought-after resource for historians, art historians, and architects. However, neither the brochures nor the magnificent *Wohlfahrts-Einrichtungen* book meet the criteria of historical works; rather, they are sources for historical research.

The one-hundred-year anniversary of Vítkovice Ironworks' founding in 1928 provided an opportunity to write down the history of the enterprise. Unfortunately, a publication printed in both in Czech and German, rather unoriginally entitled *100 let Vítkovických železáren 1828–1928* (100 Years of Vítkovice Ironworks 1828–1928) is merely a photographic survey with graphs tracing the growth of production volumes. A work by an Ostrava German historian, Richard Drapala, entitled *Dějiny Vítkovických železáren*

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<sup>10</sup> A. BARCUCH, *Wattolik Franz Seraphin*, in: L. DOKOUPIL (ed.), *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy* 11, Ostrava 1998, pp. 142–143.

(History of Vítkovice Ironworks) remained only in manuscript form.<sup>11</sup> This memorial publication celebrating the company's one-hundredth anniversary is available in the archive of VÍTKOVICE, a. s., along with its Czech translation by Parma. It is the first-ever 'large' history of the Vítkovice plant. In addition to the chapters on the emergence of the coal and iron industries, also the issue of employee social benefits is mentioned for the first time. The author, who later became the founder of the Ostrava Industrial Museum, restricted his work to merely a not-too-systematic enumeration of the social measures provided by the company's management. Even in the section devoted to Paul Kupelwieser – undoubtedly the most important of VMIC's general directors – Drapala avoids any detailed consideration of Kupelwieser's actions with respect to the company's social policies toward employees implemented during that period. Kupelwieser was the creator of the concept of New Vítkovice, a conglomerate of architectonic, managerial, technical, and sociopolitical work. Drapala's work thus does not go beyond the phase of unsystematic description of the events and personalities influencing the company's existence. Of more interest are his later historical articles on Vítkovice topics, which appear on the pages of the German Henlein newspaper in the 1930s, culminating in 1939 in the publication of a book entitled *Juden in Mährisch Ostrau*. This is an anti-semitic publication about the activities of Jewish entrepreneurs in Ostrava; it provides some interesting facts, but its conclusions are motivated the Nazi racial hatred of the period and are therefore unacceptable and not objective.

A contemporary German sociologist, Rudolf Schwenger, who conducted research in the psycho-technics of work and specialized in labor and social policy primarily in metallurgical industrial complexes in the Rhineland, wrote an interesting work in 1937 on the issues mentioned above based on a research visit to Vítkovice Ironworks.<sup>12</sup> In his two-volume study, Schwenger addresses the plant's labor policy, and thus provides interesting information about the activities of the company's psycho-technical laboratory, the organization of apprentice education, VMIC's wage policy, injury prevention, and care for the disabled. The second part – which is of more interest to us – addresses the plant's social policy in the late 1930s. Here, he also covers issues of indirect pay, various measures serving to increase employees' purchasing power, the plant's market hall, and shops, among oth-

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<sup>11</sup> J. ŠERKA, *Drapala Richard*, in: L. DOKOUPIL, *Biografický slovník Slezska a severní Moravy 7*, Ostrava 1996, pp. 23–25.

<sup>12</sup> R. SCHWENGER, *Die Arbeits- und Sozialpolitik des Eisewerkes Witkowitz*, unpublished manuscript deposited in the archive of VÍTKOVICE, a. s., collection 'VHHT', inv. No. 6099, box No. 1405.

ers. Also included are the plant hospital, plant medical service, work sanitation, medical facilities for the children of company employees, issues of housing, social insurance, social institutions (almshouses, orphanages), etc. This work was not intended to be a historical treatise, as at the time it had been completely contemporary. Today, however, it serves as an excellent source of comprehensive information about social and labor policy as it was executed in Vítkovice after 1935. It is very beneficial that the author – an expert on the situation in Germany – performed a comparison of conditions in various German enterprises with those in Vítkovice and in Czechoslovakia generally.<sup>13</sup> We mention Schwenger's work primarily as an excellent source for studying VMIC's social policy, while keeping in mind the fact that it cannot be considered a historical work.

Works of German provenience on VMIC must be considered in the context of the period; they are a source of information but we must take great care interpreting them. The first ones are of practically no significance for our topic. If they touch on social issues at all, they do so only marginally; moreover, the authors were writing under contract with the management and not out of their own investigative interest, although this is in evidence as well. Drapala's later German works, which were not written under contract with VMIC but ensued from his own exploratory activities, carry such an ideological ballast of Nazism that we have to consider them only minimally objective; they are rather a source for research in the history of mentality or ideology. No Czech historians addressed the phenomenon of Vítkovice in the prewar era. There are obviously several reasons for this. Apart from insufficiently developed socioeconomic historical research among the period's Czech historians, Vítkovice was ignored because it was largely and justly considered a German company, and in the period's marked nationalistic attitude toward society it simply dropped out view for Czech researchers. Nor was any attempt made on the part of VMIC to 'establish contacts'.

The assessment of 'historical' production on the history of Vítkovice from the period before World War II is not at all positive, and, as we have already mentioned, economic and social history in the Czech lands was in its infancy at the time. The postwar era was rather more fertile in this respect, but while many historians touched on Vítkovice, few addressed the selected issues in detail.

In 1960, then-27-year-old historian Milan Myška published *Založení a počátky Vítkovických železáren 1828–1880* (Formation and Beginnings of Vítkovice Ironworks 1828–1880). This still-unsurpassed scholarly work on the early phase of Vítkovice Ironworks' existence – despite its undisputed ad-

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<sup>13</sup> R. SCHWENGER, *Die betriebliche Sozialpolitik im Ruhrkohlenbergbau*, Leipzig 1932.



vantages – bears traces of the era during which it was written, especially in the chapters devoted to social development. The author, who at the time was definitely stronger in the sections addressing the economic past, does not refrain from using certain dominant clichés of the period to describe the entrepreneur-worker relationship. Moreover, rather than the company's social policy, he pursues other socio-historical realities such as social stratification and worker mobility, issues of wages, and living expenses.<sup>14</sup> Due to the fact that he traces the company's history only to the year 1880, there is not sufficient space to assess the basic transformation of the company's employee policy under Kupelwieser. Therefore, while his view of workers' housing conditions as appalling is justified, he does not compare them with the usual conditions of the times, i.e. with housing in other strata of the population in the Ostrava region, or in other regions from which many rural workers came. The difference may not have been so great, and in some cases even a damp brick flat may have been an improvement. By comparing worker housing in Vítkovice with that of tradesmen and artisans in nearby Moravská Ostrava, we come to the conclusion that these represented the standard at the time – however unimaginable the damp, cold flats without toilets or bathrooms may be from today's standpoint. Bathrooms in particular were not standard furnishings long into the second half of the 19th century, even in the flats of the upper middle class. Overall, the sections addressing social conditions seem to be incomplete and relatively uninformative. This is not the fault of the author, however, as only fragmentary information is available in archival and other sources (fiction, memoirs). Nor are the memoirs of contemporaries Paul Kupelwieser and Wilhelm von Gutmann particularly helpful, as these contain little useful information on the present topic.<sup>15</sup>

Myška addresses the personality of Paul Kupelwieser in his later more mature investigative efforts. In his 1997 book *Rytíři průmyslové revoluce* (Knights of the Industrial Revolution), he devotes one chapter entirely to Kupelwieser, and within it briefly addresses his social program. In addition to a sort of enumeration of activities undertaken by Kupelwieser as part of

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<sup>14</sup> Specifically, Chapter III on the origin and position of the Vítkovice Ironworks workforce before 1848, where he analyzes the extent and capacity of the internal labor market, including an analysis of wages and living costs reconstructed from a comparison with wages in mining; and Chapter V on the initial struggles of the company's workers, focusing on the rise of workers in the iron industry during the second half of the 19th century, wages, living costs, housing conditions, health care, fraternal sick funds, and the origins of the workers' movement, or rather the penetration of socialist ideology into the work environment.

<sup>15</sup> W. von GUTMANN, *Aus meinem Leben*, Wien 1911.

his social program, the author also pursues the psycho-social impulses which led him to these plans. Myška seeks to capture the inducements which drove Kupelwieser to undertake such a massive change to the existing system in Vítkovice affecting the production and social sphere alike. The author also points to the motives of Kupelwieser's activities, which he sees in an endeavor to improve workers' attitudes toward work through increased motivation (the task wage, retirement and health insurance, quality inexpensive housing), as well as in Kupelwieser's attitude toward life. The author perceives Kupelwieser as a modern manager with a developed social sense – not as a result of some religious or representative efforts, but from his coherent approach toward the course of events in society. In order for the company to prosper – and thus for everyone to prosper – it was essential to have contented, high-quality employees, which in turn requires providing for their needs at an appropriate modern level. Kupelwieser's benevolence is thus partly influenced by a business calculation and partly by his life philosophy of progress, as is also evidenced by his later private activity in the Brijuni Islands.

Howerer, Myška was not the only author deeply interested in Vítkovice Ironworks. Names such as Blanka Pitronová, Karel Jiřík, Ctibor Nečas, Josef Vytiska and Jiří Matějček are the most important and deserve mention. The last named contributed significantly to research on the social conditions of VMIC's employees. In 1974, Matějček, then working at the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, elaborated the manuscript *Sociální postavení dělnictva Vítkovických železáren 1828–1918* (The Social Position of the Working Class at Vítkovice Ironworks 1828–1918). This work remained in manuscript form at the Vítkovice company archive, and large parts of it were published on the pages of *Sborník Ostrava* in 1977.<sup>16</sup> The manuscript originated as part of the Working Committee of Czechoslovak Metallurgy of Iron (pracovní výbor Dějin československého hutnictví železa). The topic was divided into four areas:

1. the number, formation, and structure of the plant's personnel;
2. wage conditions as the most important factor influencing the position of the workers;
3. the social position of the workers, particularly employment, working hours, housing, insurance, etc.  
and
4. the fraternal sick fund as a factor in social insurance and a tool in business policy.

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<sup>16</sup> J. MATĚJČEK, *Sociální politika*, pp. 236–249.

Most important for the purposes of this paper are the third and fourth thematic areas. Matějček focuses his attention mainly on the material situation of workers and others as a factor determining social position. Due to the varying degrees of preservation of archival sources available for his research, the work is divided into two parts of unequal length: 1) the period prior to VMIC's creation in 1873, and 2) the period from 1873 until 1918. The work has the character of a survey of materials related to the issues, with only a few theoretical conclusions drawn. The first part combines thematic and chronological ordering, while the second part is arranged thematically.

In his introduction, Matějček notes that there is very little literature addressing the selected topics in detail. This still applies today, as the situation has not changed significantly in the thirty-seven years since the work was written. Only a few works on the history of the workers' movement in the Ostrava region are of any use (from today's perspective, apart from the small amount of undisputable factual data which they contain, such works are generally of no use due to the fact that their theoretical assumptions and conclusions are based on one-sided and ideologically driven interpretations of sources).<sup>17</sup> For this reason, Matějček makes use of various statistical and descriptive materials of the plant as his initial information source, although being an experienced historian he is well aware of the limits of such documents. He also makes use of Vítkovice promotional brochures and jubilee papers, although he is aware of the one-sidedness of the information they contain; these were published according to the wishes of the VMIC management and also financed by the company, so their subjective hue must be taken into account. For his study, Matějček is forced to use a combination of many sources and literature, from which he compiles a sort of mosaic with a substantial part missing. Nevertheless, he succeeds in producing the most comprehensive picture to date of the social conditions which prevailed at Vítkovice Ironworks from its inception until 1918. The question outlined in the title of this paper was not explored, however.

In assessing Matějček's principal work on Vítkovice, we have touched on the issue of available sources. We have already mentioned the particularly unsatisfactory state of the sources, especially for the initial period of the ironworks' existence. We had hoped that oral history sources would be more useful: rewritten memories of VMIC employees from the beginning of the 20th century until approximately the end of World War II, deposited in

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<sup>17</sup> S. ŠTEINER, *Bibliografie dějin československého hutnictví a slévárenství*, Praha 1962, an unpublished bibliography on the history of Vítkovice Ironworks assembled by employees of the company archive at Vítkovice in 1972.

the Memories and Remembrances fund at the archive of VÍTKOVICE, a. s., Here too, however, their quality – or rather the selection of respondents – reflects the period of their origin (the 1950s and 1960s). The respondents were either themselves from among the communists' ranks or they sought more or less to fulfill the authorities' expectations, i.e. essentially the polar opposite of the celebratory VMIC publications. Moreover, only the responses of people from the manual professions were solicited, while clerks – regardless of rank – and the technical intelligentsia were omitted. Finally, only ethnic Czech employees were solicited, which is understandable in view of the period; ethnic Germans had already been deported and the Polish roots of many respondents had already been forgotten. Using suitable methods, the researcher can uncover much by reading between the lines, but the resulting interpretation requires great care.

We have reached the end of this essay, in which I have attempted to provide a summary or survey of historical works concerning the employee social policies implemented by the Vítkovice Ironworks management, as well as how this issue has been analyzed by Czech and German historians during the past hundred years. The conclusion is unequivocal – the issue of social conditions and relations between management and employees of various categories is still waiting to be analyzed.

**NEW CZECH ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ENTREPRENEURS**

**GERŠLOVÁ, Jana: *Co se skrývá za značkou? Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů,*<sup>1</sup> Praha: Professional Publishing, 2011, 376 pp. ISBN 978-80-7431-041-6.**

As the subtitle of the book indicates, this book is a collection of cameos of selected worldwide known companies – in all, this interesting publication contains 111 of these. Each of them is aptly characterised from the perspectives of the field of business, circumstances of founding, historical development, business (and other) links with the environment and eventual transformations of the companies. Each company is presented in the course of its existence, most of them almost up to the present day. A valuable feature in the company characteristics is how ‘populated’ they are. In a very catching way, often even with the glimpse of a dramatic story, the entrepreneur is introduced as a human being into the commentary on the economic aspects of the particular type of business. After all, it is a well-known fact that names of many famous world brands are surnames or composites of names of the company founders (e.g. Addidas, Bahlsen, Bacardi, Baedeker, Dr. Oetker, Ferrari, Hilton, Chanel, Knorr, Schwarzkopf, Suchard, Rolls-Royce and many others). Names of other companies were derived from other sources.

The author of the book, prof. PhDr. Jana Geršlová, CSc. (graduate of History and Germanics, currently active at the Faculty of Economy, VSB-Technical University of Ostrava and at Faculty of Arts, Palacky University in Olomouc, who also lectured at a number of universities in Germany), deals in her research as well as in her educational activities with the economic history for a long time. In the recent years, she focused in particular on the entrepreneurial history.

The presented book is the most recent result of her work on the research project titled *Modern Entrepreneurial History and Entrepreneurs in Europe in the Second Half of the 19th and First Half of the 20th Century*, which was supported by the Czech Science Foundation. The author drew for her encyclopaedia in the major part from the foreign sources, especially those from German speaking environment (the index of the sources used can be found

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<sup>1</sup> The Name of the book in English: *What's hidden beneath the brand? A Historical Encyclopaedia of Entrepreneurs.*

after characteristics of each company as well as comprehensively at the end of the book).

What was the author's method for selection of companies and their brands? Accessibility of the information sources played a role as well as the presence of the considered companies on the market in Czech Republic – the author tried to choose companies and brands represented on the Czech market and therefore well-known to a wide general public.

Jana Geršlová considers publishing more volumes of the encyclopaedia as she managed to collect materials about many other successful and well-known companies, which it was impossible to include all into one book. She would also like to publish characteristics of historically successful Czech companies and entrepreneurs.

The business history has recently become one of the pivotal research topics in the field of economic history. The centre point of research interest is the entrepreneur as a personality, the bearer of decisions and motivations. His function and role in the enterprise development and expansion, his characteristics and capabilities are very important, emphasis is being placed on the research of the social aspects, position of the entrepreneur in the company and in the outer relationships.

In the introduction, the author mentions the general reasons and context behind origin of brand names as an attempt to distinguish own products from those of competitors. She denotes the efforts of entrepreneurs to create brands that are easy to remember, outlines the evolutionary process during which the brand became an expression of tradition and guarantee of product quality. The birth of brands is connected with the industrialization process in the second half of the 19th century. Since the end of the 19th century, the new era of brands can be observed. The modern brand legally warrants the producers' exclusive rights to use it for their products. In the majority of industrially developed countries of Europe, the brand protecting laws were ratified around 1870. The author also denotes the other function of the brand – building confidence in product quality and respectability. She also mentions the process of a certain identification of the customers and consumers with brands reflecting their own image.

The book is supplemented with a nominal index and English summary. In the text, illustrative photographs of products and brands can be found in every chapter. The book is representative from the formal point of view as well.

The presented encyclopaedia is useful in several aspects. For the historical science, it fills in still relatively 'white places' in the field of research; for the economic science, it brings lessons from the past. For managers, it can be a source of information about the birth of major companies and their personalities that we have still relatively limited access to in Czech envi-

ronment and it can also be a complementary reading for students from multiple specializations within the fields of economy and history. The insight into entrepreneurial history can be inspiring also for the entrepreneurs of the present day.

*Jana Burešová*

## ILLUSTRATIVE OUTLINE OF MODERN EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**GERŠLOVÁ, JANA: *Dějiny moderního podnikání*,<sup>1</sup> Praha: Professional Publishing 2012, 224 pp. ISBN 978-80-7431-08-05.**

The entrepreneurial history has in recent years become a common centre point of attention for both historical and economic communities. As a part of economic history, it is a topic without which the presence cannot do without. Historical reflections – to historical as well as economic science – are, in particular in the current unstable world, a source of answers to the question Where do we come from?<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that it is obvious even in the wider scope that the companies and enterprises significantly contribute to forming the modern society, the topic of business history used to attract little attention. The discipline ‘opened to the world’ only in the recent years and a discussion about theoretical attitudes, questions of methodology and contentual aims began to appear as topics in a number of conferences as well as in both historical and economic scientific publishing.<sup>3</sup>

The attractiveness of this topic fascinates the author from as early as 1990s, which was also helped by the fact that present historiography of the German speaking world (which laid grounds for the author’s research to a great degree) draws from the research in the field of entrepreneurial his-

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<sup>1</sup> The Name of the book in English is *The Modern Entrepreneurial History*.

<sup>2</sup> The topicality is for us accentuated by the fact that this subject was in Czech historiography – including the works of economists – almost ignored so far. One of the reasons was the fact that the topics such as ‘entrepreneur, business’ were not included in the vocabulary of representatives of the past regime, another reason is the simple fact that the social sciences – including economic history – dealt with other topics.

<sup>3</sup> The first of those in the Czech environment were the colloquia held on 2nd–3rd December, 1992 and 9th–10th December, 1993, at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava (published as **M. MYŠKA** (ed.), *Entrepreneurs as a subject of historical research*. Ostrava 1994, 188 pp.). At present, the research of entrepreneurs as a social group is undertaken particularly by the Centre for Economic and Social History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava: see [ff.osu.cz/chsd/index.php?kategorie=35107](http://ff.osu.cz/chsd/index.php?kategorie=35107).

tory which started in Germany from late 1950s / early 1960s, followed by about a decade later in Austria and Switzerland. Although we still frequently encounter the opinion that the current situation is the same as in 1958 when an American economic historian Herman E. Kross characterized the situation in the field of business history by words “no bible, no handbook, no textbook”,<sup>4</sup> a second glance reveals a significant improvement of the situation. In particular, German historiography made in recent years a major leap forward not just in the area of history of numerous companies and entrepreneurs but also in founding periodicals focused solely on the entrepreneurial history, particularly the *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* and active steps forward (chiefly conferences, supplemented with discussion platforms and publishing collections) organized by the *Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte* (the Society for Entrepreneurial History). A major impulse for German, Austrian and Swiss literature was the American *Business History* whose roots can be dated back to late nineteenth century. It was the very interest in the business history of the Anglo-Saxon world that could be seen behind the increased focus on the field and behind the accentuation of the entrepreneurial history as a ‘subset’ of historical sciences and as a discrete scientific discipline that has become an integral part of the international research context in recent years. Last but not least, the entrepreneurial history is getting more media exposure lately, especially to the west of our borders, which was caused by publication of a number of well-founded scientific works aimed at the history of major German syndicates from the World War II period that has very openly revealed numerous topics that were tabooed so far.

The author of the book crowned her research in the field of entrepreneurial history in the GAČR (= Czech Science Foundation) project 409/08/1139 *Modern Entrepreneurial History and Businessmen in Europe in the Second Half of 19th and First Half of 20th Century*, which the reviewed publication was part of. It draws in general from a number of author’s papers on the topic of business history – in the temporal as well as factual context. More specifically, it builds on a previous publication titled *Co se skrývá za značkou? Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů*<sup>5</sup> that also formed an integral part of the project.

The reviewed publication *Dějiny moderního podnikání* begins with the presentation of the place of the business history within the context of the

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<sup>4</sup> T. PIERENKEMPER, *Unternehmensgeschichte. Eine Einführung in ihre Methoden und Ergebnisse*. Stuttgart. ISBN 3-515-07674-3, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> J. GERŠLOVÁ, *Co se skrývá za značkou? Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů*, Praha 2011, 376 pp. ISBN 978-80-7431-041-6.



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historical disciplines – namely economic and social history – as well as of economic disciplines. The author she analyses companies' adherence to traditions, legacies of the entrepreneurs for generations of successors, development of awareness of the company's identity, etc. The business history and historical examples are, that's to say, for the present business sphere a proof of quality of the business, of the quality and creativity of the company and its employees. This trend evolves lately and history is becoming an important marketing tool as well. For the historical sciences, the book reveals then individual entrepreneurial activities in the economic, social and cultural context; political sphere is mentioned as well, although the references to it are only marginal. In the Chapter II, the author deals with the theoretical background of the field, particularly with the function of the entrepreneur and of the business. Chapter III and IV are closely interconnected and deal with advantages and risks of small and medium enterprises in relation to large businesses, in relation to quality, etc., as well as with the place of family businesses and entrepreneurship in the history. Family businesses constitute a very current topic, the roots of which however reach deep into the past. The connections between life of the entrepreneurial families and their companies as well as relationships and changes in the entrepreneurial families brought about by the developments are discussed. Hazards and chances of family enterprises are as current today as they were in the past – although the times were qualitatively different then. The questions of globalisation and supranational corporations had their own complicated evolution and the processes connected with individual stages were linked to other societal factors which are discussed in Chapter V. Chapter VI takes the reader into the world of engineering and progress in the business history. It deals with innovations in technology, their development, with penetration of new discoveries, technologies and control systems and with symbols of new, mass production in the general context of business. Marketing development, from its original task in improving sales up to becoming a strategic tool of company management, is the topic of Chapter VII. The chapter describes the evolution of marketing in individual stages from the late 19th century till almost the present day and it does not forget about the development of the brand and advertisements in connection with marketing. The next to last chapter is devoted to 'soft factors' of business and economic development – the business culture and business ethics. The author presents the links between business culture inside the company and its 'emanation' outside including different attitudes to it and examples of these as well as of sometimes complicated questions of business ethics.

In the book, the author managed to collect and present a large quantity of sources and materials that are from the greatest part not generally accessible here, and to organize the most important areas in a fashion allowing a global view at which she aimed in this collective and embracing publication. An objection can be raised that the modern entrepreneurial history presents a number of questions for which we do not have answers yet. However, in the case of the entrepreneurial history, it is the revealing the very questions which is the aim – revealing questions that should be subject to further research, indicating the way which the further development should take. *Dějiny moderního podnikání* is a book intended to help this aim. Similarly as for the *Historická encyklopedie podnikatelů*, we can say about this project that its outputs are filling the white places in history or – if you wish – a source of enlightenment from the past and of application of these findings to present conditions of our market economy. To managerial circles, the publication brings a great deal of information regarding the roots of the present state, to students an option for acquiring knowledge from other disciplines of economic science. The general public can learn of a number of connections between general socio-economic developments and particular fates of individual companies. *Dějiny moderního podnikání* is without any doubt topical for the present day and presents a bottomless source of inspiration – this pebble of inspiration asks for being picked up, which has unfortunately not happened yet to a great extent.

Aleš Zářický

## **THE BIRTH OF MODERN ENTREPRENEURS – AN EXCELLENT ANALYSIS OF MODERN EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**Popelka, Petr: *Zrod moderního podnikatelstva: bratři Kleinové a podnikatelé v českých zemích a rakouském císařství v éře kapitalistické industrializace*,<sup>1</sup> Ostrava: Faculty of Arts 2011, 333 PP; ISBN 978-80-7368-84-17.**

The monography by Petr Popelka, an Ostravian historian of social and economic history, is focused on problems, which can prove interesting not only for his peers dealing with topics related to this specialization, but for

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<sup>1</sup> The Name of this book in English is *The Birth of Modern Entrepreneurs. Klein Brothers and Entrepreneurs in Czech Lands and Austrian Empire in the Era of Capitalistic Industrialization*.

a wider audience as well. Its broad focus makes the text enlightening while at the same time intriguing and inspirational for anyone intent on better understanding of the 'long' nineteenth century, no matter if from scholarly or layman point of view. The subtitle *Bratři Kleinové a podnikatelé v českých zemích a Rakouském císařství v éře kapitalistické industrializace* (Klein Brothers and Entrepreneurs in Czech Lands and Austrian Empire in the Era of Capitalistic Industrialization) only partially reveals the author's intentions. The text is divided into two parts. In the first one, the author deals with the principal social structure of entrepreneurs in Czech Lands from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution till 1914, the second part then details it more closely on the fates of representatives of a prominent entrepreneurial Klein family. Such a combination allows supplementing the scholarly commentary of the period of Cisleithanian industrialization with a series of individual interesting real-life fates of three generations of Sobotín entrepreneurs. Of particular value for a historian is the last chapter reaching deep into the twentieth century, which was from the point of view of entrepreneurial elites (as well as from many other points of view, of course) a much less happy period.

The author's decision to precede the history of Klein Brothers' company by a more general introduction stems from his awareness of the fact that little attention was paid in Czech historiography to entrepreneurs as a social group so far. He attempts to convey unpublished or little known results of both domestic and foreign provenience. The intent itself is however preceded by a relatively extensive methodical and general introduction presenting opinions and reflections of leading foreign researchers who focused on theoretical problems of creating so-called 'Wirtschaftsbürgertum' and on the role and development of entrepreneurial elites (Jürgen Kocka, Youssef Cassis, Otto Brunner, Reinhard Koselleck, Michael Schäfer, etc.). The Czech historiography of economic and social history deals with the issue of the entrepreneurs as a social group for just a short period of time, however it managed to demonstrate a number of remarkable methodical observations and scientific publications due to works of Milan Myška, Zdeněk Jindra, the Prague center around Jiří Štaif and Eduard Kubů or Lukáš Fasora, Pave Kladiwa and others. Both the domestic and foreign production is unfortunately still flawed by an ambiguity of basic terms, methodical problems associated with the character of information sources, etc.

As a basis of his original contribution to the characterization of the birth of entrepreneurs as a social group, P. Popelka chose a so-called collective biography method in conjunction with a standardized database allowing a mutual compatibility of data. Exploitation of a number of comparable databases enabled him an interesting comparison of primary findings obtained

from the Czech attempts at collective biography with results of foreign, particularly Austrian, regional researches (Pichler – Voralberg, Ramnek – Upper Austria, Maixner – Cisleithania as a whole, etc.). Besides, he takes into account data from other neighboring areas, especially German (e.g. Bavaria, Westfalia). As primary grounds for understanding the general characteristics of the entrepreneurs in Czech Lands, he used two unpublished collective biographies. The author of the first one, Alena Česáková, created a very thorough overview of origins and social structures of altogether 417 entrepreneurs active in 1800–1914 in the area of Moravia and Silesia. Dana Řezníková collected data on 525 entrepreneurs and 26 managers in her Master Thesis titled *Formation of industrial entrepreneurial class in Bohemia in the period of 1800–1918*. By comparing these two databases, the author acquired information about regional, social and professional origin (or, in other words, the starting line) and educational background of entrepreneurs in the Czech Lands and Austrian Empire. Analyses and comparisons are always accompanied by a well-arranged comparison table and a summary of basic characteristics, which are however at that point of research introduced more or less just as preliminary theses. From the point of view of the startlines, entrepreneurs in the Czech Lands originated (more than in the other Cisleithania regions) from the domestic entrepreneurial spheres, which probably correlated with the prevalence of family businesses. A rapid social advancement was rare. The significance of the family and marriage strategies were probably among the factors reinforcing the formation of entrepreneurs as a narrow interconnected social group. Interesting findings are presented in the overview of acquired education revealing an increase in numbers of university graduates among the managers in the second half of nineteenth century.

In the other subchapters of the first part of the monograph, the author observes the public activities of the industrial entrepreneurs and the extent of their social recognition. Various societies and political activities were on the increase from the mid-nineteenth century and the entrepreneurs became of course engaged particularly in those associations representing their business interests. These associations were first and foremost the business and trade chambers that were established as compulsory professional organizations. From 1870s, formation of trade-specific individual professional organizations could have been observed; participation of the entrepreneurs in the other public associations is shown particularly in the studies of Lukáš Fasora and Pavel Kladiwa.

Very interesting results were also revealed while studying the participation of the entrepreneurs in the political life, especially their role in the local councils. The issue of development of municipal politics is studied by a num-

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ber of authors whose research results indicate that the entrepreneurs together with local intelligentsia represented a significant progressive component in the councils. Both principal databases used by Popelka however indicate that representatives of entrepreneurs in Czech Lands also participated in the activities of the provincial political councils and some of them were even active on the level of imperial political representation.

The various ways of rewarding the business and public activities of the entrepreneurs by the state (or by the ruler) are classified by the author into three groups: conferring medals, honors, or nobilitation. Progress in research of the so-called 'new nobility' at several Czech historian institutions allows quite an extensive knowledge of the process of acquiring minor noble ranks through nobilitation. Granting municipal honorary citizenship or membership in local clubs became another common way of acknowledgement of the local entrepreneurs in nineteenth century. The first part of the monograph is concluded by an excursion into gender history – by an essay focused on the opportunities and limitations in women's entrepreneurial activities. The general conclusion is that women significantly helped their husbands (among other things on the basis of their own family experience), however performing independent entrepreneurial activities was almost exclusively restricted to widows. Other aspects related to the formation of the entrepreneurial social class could have been of course studied (e.g. the role of the faith or of the nationalization processes, so typical for the nineteenth century), however the author himself on the one hand acknowledges the fact that some of these issues are not sufficiently explored, on the other hand references to the present research concerning formation of the Czech (by nationality) business elites, which is being conducted on the above mentioned group of the Institute of Economic and Social History at the Charles University in Prague.

The second part of the book, pointedly called *Hrdinové století páry* (Heroes of the Steam Century), is dedicated to the history of several generations of the Klein Family. In the introduction to the second part, the author observes at first the genealogical connections that classify the heroes of his work as a non-typical group originating from residents of a rural area. Another non-typical feature is the fact that they have been in fact self-made men, although this is only partially true as individual attempts of their predecessors for petty enterprises and motivation of their offsprings to start a business themselves probably played a role even in the first studied generation. Still, the author considers them to be prominent pioneers of the Industrial Revolution who manifested a great degree of integration into the forming civil society. Following the introduction is a series of loosely connected chapters related to the general problems discussed in the first part

of the monograph, The most extensive part is dedicated to the beginnings and early development of the family business. The generation of the founders in the first half of the nineteenth century is represented particularly by brothers Franz, predeceased Engelbert, Libor, Albert, and Hubert. Their enterprise aimed on the particularly progressive activities such as building major roads and railways. They participated e.g. in building Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway, in which their company built in 1837–1856 about 340 km of railroads including a number of station- and other buildings. The acquired capital enabled them to buy out the ironworks in Sobotín, which soon thereafter became one of the leading factories of the metallurgical industry. With help of the older brothers, Albert and Hubert were able to acquire decent secondary education, Albert reached after Franz's death even nobilitation. In 1847, four of the brothers concluded a family contract about property administration and further entrepreneurial activities, 1853 is then perceived as the official foundation year of the Gebrüder Klein company. The greatest boom of the company is dated until late 1870s thanks to cooperation of Albert with members of the second generation – at first Franz jr., who then signed a contract in 1878 with Albert's sons Hubert and Friedrich. In the same year, Kleins won one of the greatest contracts for building melioration systems and channels in northern Italy. However, a deep economic crisis was under way at that time, which had a bearing on damping the railroad business. Besides, a gradual transformation of legal forms of business was in progress, which resulted in decline of a great number of family businesses. The third generation of Kleins, despite having top education and exceptional social standing, gradually lost interest in new entrepreneurial opportunities, which initiated a syndrome of a gradual decline of the company. From 1880s, decrease in activities, stagnation and selling assets could have been observed, which ended up in 1908 by dissolution of the company.

The monograph of Petr Popelka however continues for more than 50 pages by chapters that are in my opinion the key from the point of view of general understanding the industrialization era and its representatives. These chapters bring testimonial about the principal values of evolution (as well as of decline) of the civil society of the second half of nineteenth century. To study the entrepreneurial activities and lifestyle of individual family members, the author used to a large extent inheritance files; regardless of a relatively steep increase in wealth, lifestyle of most of the first and second generation members was not characterized by luxury. According to the author, the only areas of greater expenditure were healthcare and funeral ceremonies, which reflected the efforts to declare the social prestige of the entire family. The greatest part of liquid assets was reinvested. For invest-

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ments, they used their own sources, strategic marriages, contacts and friendly relationships with other business elites. They looked for entrepreneurial opportunities in the promising fields such as transport, heavy industry as well as food processing.

Amassing wealth by itself however did not bring any social recognition in the second half of the nineteenth century. To achieve that, it was necessary to participate in public service, societal activities and charity – the values that were always emphasized during granting any awards – from honorary citizenship through various distinction up to nobilitation. For this reason, Petr Popelka describes in a separate chapter the extensive charitable activities of the Kleins (of course within the context of the contemporary understanding of the social service as well as of pragmatic attempts to calm down socially acute situations), which have been closely connected to increase in prestige of the individual family members.

The last chapter of the book observes the Klein family mausoleum in Sobotín as a symbol of German entrepreneurship in Czech lands in the 20th century. The building intended to symbolize the prestige and significance of the family for the home region became over the years a memento ana a sad epilogue of its history. At the beginnings of the twentieth century, the third generation acquired due to marriages the top social status, which however soon got lost, particularly after the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic. The remains of the family estates were dragged into the scramble of the agrarian reform, the frustration of the 1930s development lead the next generation of the Kleins to a relatively open support of the Henlein movement. After 1945 followed full confiscation of estates as well as a complete transformation of the region and its inhabitants connected with the loss of the collective memory. The mausoleum experienced raids by Greek children assigned to the local childrens' home, other repeated occurrences of vandalism and lack of concern from the authorities. After the 'Velvet Revolution', the (particularly scholarly) interest in Klein family business grew and the remains of the family members were respectfully placed in the Sobotín cemetery. The mausoleum remained in possession of the council, however the current state is not satisfactory, the plans to found a Klein museum remain on the paper. For the majority of the local public, the family whose fate could be in many aspects inspirative to the new generation of 21st century entrepreneurs is still stereotypically perceived as the 'outlandish exploiters'. Petr Popelka certainly deserves acknowledgement for helping to pull down such stereotypes by his well-founded expert work. A question whether or not a wider non-expert public could be in some reasonable way given this information might be worth consideration. The author's references as well as the concluding abundant overview of the information sources (literature,

unpublished manuscripts and archival sources) give evidence to an exceptional professional work, the stylistic quality of the monograph as well as its formal layout deserve appreciation as well.

*Nina Pavelčíková*

## “GREAT DEPRESSION” IN EUROPE

**Rákosník, Jakub – Noha, Jiří: *Kapitalismus na kolenou. Dopad velké hospodářské krize na evropskou společnost v letech 1929–1934*,<sup>1</sup> Praha, Auditorium, s.r.o., 2012, 333 pp. ISBN 978-80-87284-29-2.**

Books about economic problems have become very popular in the last few years. These publications primarily emphasize two crises – the Great Depression of the 1930s and the current economic crisis, in which Europe and the USA have been mired for several years. The current crisis has generated many books examining the decline of the financial system – both popular works and expert studies (*The End of Progress, How Modern Economics Has Failed Us*;<sup>2</sup> *End This Depression Now!*;<sup>3</sup> *The Black Swan*). The upsurge of interest in this issue shows no signs of abating, judging from the healthy sales of several titles (particular success on the Czech market has been achieved by the above-mentioned *The Black Swan*, written by the American Academic and investment advisor Nassim Nicholas Taleb,<sup>4</sup> as well as by the ever-popular *Ekonomie dobra a zla = Economics of Good and Evil* by the Czech economist Tomáš Sedláček<sup>5</sup>). There has also been increased interest in older works (including strong sales of Friedrich

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<sup>1</sup> The Name of this book in English is *Capitalism on its Knees. The impact of the Great Depression on European society in 1929-1934*),

<sup>2</sup> **M. GRAEME**, *The End of Progress, How Modern Economics Has Failed Us*, New York 2011.

<sup>3</sup> **P. KRUGMAN**, *End This Depression Now!*, New York 2012.

<sup>4</sup> **N. N. TALEB**, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, New York 2007. The book was completed in 2010 with the second edition including a long essay *On Robustness and Fragility*.

<sup>5</sup> **T. SEDLÁČEK**, *Ekonomie dobra a zla. Po stopách lidského tázání od Gilgameše po finanční krizi*, Praha 2009.



Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*<sup>6</sup>). Of course, historians have also contributed to the debate, as a re-examination of the earlier crisis can help to explain the roots of the current one.

Among Czech works of recent years, the Great Depression has been one of the subjects of the book by the economist and economic historian Antonie Doležalová *Rašín, Engliš a ti druzí* (Rašín, Engliš and the Others),<sup>7</sup> and to a lesser extent of the jointly authored monograph *Karel Engliš 1881–1961*, edited by Jana Geršlová and Milan Sekanina.<sup>8</sup> Monographs directly examining the Great Depression have included *Den, kdy došly prachy* (The Day When the Money Ran Out)<sup>9</sup> (which, though it deals with a historical topic, was written by Milan Vodička, a journalist and foreign correspondent for the newspaper *Mladá fronta Dnes*), and the book *Kapitalismus na kolech* (Capitalism on its Knees) by Jakub Rákosník and Jiří Noha, published by Auditorium in 2012.

First of all it should be acknowledged that Rákosník and Noha took on a very difficult task. Any major crisis – whether political, economic or social – presents a considerable challenge to our understanding, and may appear unbelievable; for this reason, it is likely to become a focus of attention for researchers from many disciplines. And if the crisis is a (more or less) global phenomenon, as was the Great Depression of the 1930s, it provokes even greater interest. Studying and understanding a cataclysm which engulfed a large part of the world necessitates a certain degree of expert erudition, the skill to select information from various sources which differ considerably in both quality and quantity, and the ability to then create a strong conceptual structure with comprehensible and coherent content.

One positive feature of this book is that it has only two authors. A larger authorial team would have brought the risk of fragmenting the work – which is far from beneficial when dealing with such a complex problem, in which one phenomenon is connected with many more contrasting and contradictory phenomena. The dual authorship of this book enables it to maintain a strong narrative line without being burdened by unnecessary or illogical digressions or repetitions of previous content.

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<sup>6</sup> **F. A von HAYEK**, *The Road to Serfdom*, London 1944.

<sup>7</sup> **A. DOLEŽALOVÁ**, *Rašín, Engliš a ti druzí: československé rozpočty v letech 1918–1938*, Praha 2007.

<sup>8</sup> **J. GERŠLOVÁ – M. SEKANINA**, *Karel Engliš 1881–1961*, Ostrava 2011.

<sup>9</sup> **M. VODIČKA**, *Den, kdy došly prachy. Jak velká krize ve 30. letech změnila životy lidí a na co se máme připravit my*, Praha 2009.

At first sight it is clear that the authors drew mainly on Anglo-American economic studies in their work. However, these are not their only sources; the bibliography also includes German works and translations into English and German of studies by experts from other countries (Belgium, Sweden, Portugal). The authors draw on key works of economic theory in the individual chapters; none of the major works is left uncited. They also strike a balance between the use of respected periodical and non-periodical sources, as well as including archive research (e.g. stenographic records from parliamentary sessions of the first Czechoslovak republic).

The book is divided into five chapters of roughly equal length. In the Foreword, the authors declare that the Czech literature currently lacks a comprehensive discussion of the Great Depression which would place the events in their international context. The authors also point out the multi-layered nature of their subject, thus pre-emptively defending themselves against the possible objection that their publication is a mere description of changes in global and national structures and systems.

In the opening sentences of the first chapter, entitled *Velká deprese jako krize procesu modernizace* (The Great Depression as a crisis of the modernization process), the authors declare their ambitious intention to combine a cultural-interpretative approach with a structural-analytical approach. It should be acknowledged that the book is dominated by the second of these approaches. The authors then explain the process of modernization and characterize the features of modernity, drawing on generally known theories; this chapter contains no new opinions or interpretations.

The next chapter, entitled *Kořeny krize* (The roots of the crisis), is highly complex. Capturing the causal relationships which led to the crisis is an extremely complicated task. The introduction to the chapter describes the course of the Great Depression. Though these facts are well known from other sources, interesting facets of the narrative include the authors' description of the reciprocal relations between the USA and Czechoslovakia and their characterization of how Czech journalists responded to the initial stages of the crisis. The authors then move on to examine the initial phase of the crisis in various European countries. They are able to orient themselves within the complex patchwork of European nations, each with differing levels of technical and economic development as well as different political cultures. They also display an excellent understanding of the various arguments that were current at the time, and are able to offer insights into the highly complex situations which arose during the course of the Depression. Despite its wide scope, this chapter – without doubt the most challenging from the writer's point of view – functions as a relatively harmonious entity.

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The chapter *Dopad krize* (The impacts of the crisis) is based on a comparison of the effects of the Great Depression in different countries. It includes an interesting discussion of the impacts on the agrarian sector; the problems experienced by this sector often generated subsequent problems in entirely different sectors.

The chapter *Řešení krize* (The solution of the crisis) is the most interesting part of the entire publication. It clearly demonstrates the frequent impotence of the ruling elites in the face of the economic crisis. The examples are selected to demonstrate that a certain type of 'rescue package' could prove to be successful in one country but unsuccessful in another. The examples also show that none of the measures taken were systemic enough to allow them to be implemented in a comprehensive manner; it is also clear that it was not possible to transfer economic theories from academia into the far more complex sphere of reality without significant problems. It is also interesting to trace the development and role of liberal economic thought, as well as the strengthening position of social democrats and other left-wing parties.

The final chapter examines the approach of the USSR to the crisis and its relations with countries affected by the crisis, as well as evaluating the approaches taken by individual countries.

In conclusion, the authors declare that there exists a plurality of historical interpretations of the causes of the Depression, just as there is a varied plurality of potential solutions. They emphasize the changing nature of national economies, which in most countries became increasingly subject to state interventionism and protectionism. They offer a persuasive explanation of the economic success of Hitler's Germany without offering either a negative or positive evaluation of the system applied there.

*Pavλίna Nováčková*

**Quo vadis, capitalism? Some remarks on a conference in Vancouver**

In year 2012, the Canadian city of Vancouver hosted the 37th conference of the American Social Science History Association. The theme of the conference was expressed in its subtitle: *Histories of Capitalism*.

The event provided a forum for discussion on the nature, history, development and future of capitalism, featuring hundreds of social and economic historians, cultural anthropologists, sociologists, economists and other representatives of the social sciences and their subdisciplines from all around the world. Understandably most participants were from North America, though many had come from Europe and Asia too.

The programme was divided into a number of sessions and panel discussions, which explored issues from the perspective of inter-, trans- and multi-disciplinary research. Face to face with the current global economic situation, it was fascinating to hear the participants' opinions on and approaches to capitalism – ranging between a conception of capitalism as an objectively existing reality, expressed via various temporally and spatially restricted histories, to a view of it as an abstract, globally applicable theoretical construct of historical or economic sciences.

The most interesting discussions from the perspective of the question outlined in the title of this piece were those which took place within the presidential sessions: Histories of Capitalism and Anti-Capitalism, Political and Cultural History of Finance, Political Ordering across the Histories of Capitalism, Histories of Capitalism: Alternative Paradigms, Histories of Capitalism as Global Histories.

The events which shook economies after the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 forced many experts exploring the phenomenon of economic and political capitalism to think deeply about the future of this system. The defenders of capitalism are now returning to history, going back to the roots of the concept and seeking answers to the questions posed by the crisis. Particularly among liberal American economists and economic historians, it was evident that their model of a perfect society, cultivated for decades and epitomized in W. W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth*, has to some degree been undermined. This is not because a crisis has occurred, but because all attempts to solve the problem based on economic theories are failing; politicians and economists are just as helpless as they were eighty years ago when they faced a similar challenge. Although the current

economic situation in the USA is somewhat better than in Europe, American liberals – or rather neo-liberals – are noticeably more shocked by events than their European counterparts. Perhaps this is a result of European scepticism, born out of long historical experience, or perhaps it stems from the unwillingness of American experts and politicians to admit that this crisis is more than a ‘mere’ economic problem – it has also brought a crisis of the values in which the West had faith, and upon which the Western world was (and still is) based. In view of this, the conference featured constant critiques of capitalism from positions of Marxism and neo-Marxism. The two most frequently cited thinkers, whose names were mentioned in perhaps all of the presidential sessions, were Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi. It is therefore no wonder that the congress also featured a number of Marxist-oriented social scientists; as has been pointed out by Moishe Postone of the University of Chicago, a critic of the theory of modernization, Marxism (or social theories drawing on Marx’s criticism of capitalism) has now become an acceptable topic of discussion even at conferences organized by neo-liberal think tanks.

While the proponents of various economic schools and economic historians (or historical economists) from the most developed countries are addressing the question of what will become of capitalism – how to modify it, modernize it, or whether to abandon attempts to produce theories, which generally serve merely to inspire a false sense of security – representatives of broad-based social history from south-east Asia and Latin America (whose countries have been affected much less strongly by the current economic crisis) hardly touched on these issues at all. Their papers were not theoretical in focus; they addressed questions of labour migration, economic refugees, development and economic growth in countries which until relatively recently were ranked among the developing countries, and educational or social programmes.

The differences between the European and American (or Asian) approaches were also reflected in the selection and presentation of topics. The sessions made up primarily of Europeans presented capitalism in connection with the process of industrialization and as part of established topics (demographic transition, gender, the genesis of civic society, etc., though without touching on transport-related issues). However, American and Asian experts took an entirely different approach. American presentations focused mainly on issues from the second half of the 20th century which are currently of key importance for American society (in addition to the economic crisis, above all the issue of social, spatial and racial segregation). Asian researchers focused mainly on topics from the early history of current Asian states.

The highly restricted topics of the individual sessions, and their parallel organization, brought two negatives. The first was the highly restricted space (or complete lack of space) for broader-based theoretical discussions exploring the social and societal dimension of capitalism, which would have enabled a synthesis of current knowledge, a more theoretically precise definition of issues of capitalism, and the creation of an alternative to the current economic-historical conception of this phenomenon presented in the presidential sessions. These sessions represented attempts at the theoretical reinterpretation of Marxist historians, yet – and this is the second negative – they failed to formulate the key problem areas for future interdisciplinary research.

Capitalism still belongs among the ‘grandes thèmes’ for economic historians and economists; it represents a complex, dynamic and multi-layered process which requires further research – as was emphasized by SSHA President William H. Sewell, Jr. in the final session. However, during the course of the conference it became increasingly clear that the phenomenon of capitalism is ambivalent in terms of social-historical or societal issues. It remains to be seen to what extent capitalism is applicable in this area of research. Only time will reveal the possibilities and directions for future studies.

*Hana Šústková – Michaela Závodná*

### **Polish-German Historical Conference about Industrialization of Upper Silesia**

***PRZEDSIĘBIORCY W PROCESACH INDUSTRIALIZACYJNYCH I MODERNIZACYJNYCH NA GÓRNYM ŚLĄSKU I W ZAGŁĘBIU RUHRY W XIX I XX WIEKU (DO 1945 ROKU) / UNTERNEHMER IM INDUSTRIALISIERUNGS- UND MODERNISIERUNGSPROZESS IN OBERSCHLESIEN UND IM RUHRGEBIET IM 19. UND 20. JAHRHUNDERT (BIS 1945)<sup>1</sup>***

On 12–13 April 2012 an international conference was organized by the Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach (APK – State Archives in Katowice); the Institut für Geschichtswissenschaft, Philosophische Fakultät, Rhei-

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<sup>1</sup> The Name of the conference in English is *Entrepreneurs in the Processes of Industrialization and Modernization in Upper Silesia and the Ruhr Region in the 19th and 20th Centuries (up to 1945)*.

nische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn (RFWU); the Instytut Historii, Wydział Nauk Społecznych, Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach (Institute of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia); and the Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach (Silesian Museum). The conference focused on entrepreneurs in Upper Silesia and the Ruhr region during the processes of industrialization and modernization which took place in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The main organizer and coordinator of the event was prof. zw. dr hab. Ryszard Kaczmarek, the Head of the Institute of History at the University of Silesia in Katowice.

Proceedings began with greetings from representatives of the organizing institutions – the Rector of the University of Silesia, prof. zw. dr hab. Wiesława Banyśa, the Director of the APK Dr Piotr Greiner, and the Head of the Abteilung für Osteuropäische Geschichte, Institut für Geschichtswissenschaft RFWU Prof. Dr. Dittmar Dahlmann. The conference programme was divided into four main sessions. The first, entitled *The influence of entrepreneurs on the pace and character of development of technology and civilization (inventions, technologies, urban planning, social policy etc.)*, opened with a paper given by Dr Piotr Greiner, who presented an analysis of various concepts of ‘development’ and ‘progress’ that were current in Western and Central-Eastern Europe before the First World War. In the following paper, entitled *Silesia – Two speeds of development: the nobility in industry / the nobility in agriculture*, Dr Stephan Kaiser (Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum, Ratingen) examined the influence of the nobility on the development of the primary and secondary sectors in Prussian Upper Silesia before the First World War. He pointed out that while the level of investments in industry corresponded with European trends, interest in agriculture remained low, which led to a divergent development of the two sectors. Dr Sylvia Haida (RFWU), in her paper *Everyday life in the Ruhr region and Upper Silesia*, compared living conditions, standards of living and other aspects of everyday life in miners’ housing schemes, focusing on the period before the First World War. An interesting aspect of her presentation was the story of Silesians who went to the Ruhr to seek a better life, resulting in a blending of the cultures and traditions of both regions and the assimilation of Silesian migrants into the Westphalian host community. The influence of entrepreneurs and company management on the everyday lives of miners, iron and steel workers and their families was the subject of a paper by Mgr. Katarzyna Głowania (University of Silesia), who analyzed the activities of the high-ranking mine managers connected to the Oberschlesische Knappschaftsverein (a health insurance company) at the turn of the 20th century, focusing particularly on the company’s administration. Of particular interest was her list of the company’s assets – including hospitals, hospices, health

care centres and other facilities; in many cases, the company's property is still in use today.

The second session was titled *The role of entrepreneurs in the modernization of society in Upper Silesia and the Ruhr region: social changes, the beginnings of mass culture, democratization, acculturation, secularization – German and Polish entrepreneurs in the political life of Prussia, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia*. This session was opened by Prof. Ryszard Kaczmarek with his paper *The role of the national economy in the political and social life of Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia between the wars*. Prof. Kaczmarek briefly described the differences between the economic situations of the individual countries which inherited the economic potential of Upper Silesia following the First World War. He offered a precise characterization of the 'expectations' of each of the successor states – each of which occupied a different place on the economic map of Europe in the post-war years. The next paper, presented by Barbara Kalinowska-Wójcik (University of Silesia) and entitled *Between the Duke, the Landrat and the Schultheiss*, focused on the changing status of the population of the Duchy of Pszczyzna with regard to the ruler of the territory. Mgr. Britta Lenz (RFWU) chose an intriguing title for her paper – *Football in the shadow of the winding towers – Ruhr industry and football, 1919–1958*. Of particular interest were her observations on the development of company football clubs in the period from 1933 to 1945, a period associated with the centralized organization of sporting activities.

On the second day of the conference, participants moved from university premises to the Silesian Museum in Katowice city centre for the third session, entitled *The careers of Upper Silesian and Ruhr entrepreneurs in the 19th and 20th centuries*. The opening presentation was given by a representative of one of the organizing institutions – Prof. Dittmar Dahlmann, who outlined issues connected with the emergence of entrepreneurs as a distinct social grouping in the 18th and 19th centuries. One of the wealthiest German aristocrats, and also a major European entrepreneur, was Count Guido Henckel von Donnersmarck, who was the subject of the next paper, given by Prof. Manfred Rasch (Thyssen Krupp Konzernarchiv). Professor Rasch focused particularly on Donnersmarck's investments in ironworks and steelworks in the Ruhr region before the First World War. Prof. PhDr. Aleš Zářický, Ph.D. (University of Ostrava) then presented a paper on the situation in Austrian Silesia, focusing on the beginnings and the first three decades (1865–1895) of cooperation between the Rothschilds and the Gutmanns in the Ostrava-Karviná mining district. Mgr. Jakub Grudniewski (University of Silesia) outlined several different types of career path followed by top-ranking Upper Silesian managers at the turn of the 20th century.



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The fourth session of the conference, entitled *Entrepreneurs and the world of culture – from businessmen to patrons of the arts*, focused on two levels. The first level concerned the presentation of entrepreneurs as an important driving force behind the development of cultural and artistic life in Upper Silesia and the Ruhr region. The second level of the discussion examined entrepreneurs' role as characters in literature or other works of art, as creators of places of memory, and so on. This session was opened by Dr hab. Irma Kozina (Jagiellonian University, Krakow), who gave a paper entitled *State and private patronage in the epoch of the triumphant idea of the nation state*, outlining in some detail the influence of industrialists on the development of art and architecture in Silesia during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. This was followed by a thematically similar paper by Mgr. Gregor Feindt (RFWU) discussing issues of terminology, places of memory and the policy of memory in Poland (Silesia) and Germany (Ruhr). The discussion on this topic benefited from an interesting contribution by Dr Susanne Peters-Schildgen, who compared the remnants of industrial culture in the Ruhr and in Silesia, pointing out European trends in the conservation, revitalization and new use of these sites (as multifunctional complexes and tourist destinations etc.). She also emphasized their role in forming local communities and reinforcing their identification with the region. A somewhat different perspective on the mutual interaction of the worlds of industry and culture was offered by Mgr. Joanna Beszczyńska (University of Silesia), who attempted to uncover the myths surrounding the image of Silesian industrialists and their families as presented in the literature of the era. She based her analysis on the unfinished work *Roman und Leben: Marquise de Païva* by August Scholtis, showing the specific differences between literary fiction and historical reality.

How, then, can the conference be summed up? It was certainly not the first event to deal with this particular topic. We can mention, for example, the *Konferenz zur Problematik der Industrialisierung Regionen von Mitteleuropa*, held in Pławniowice (Silesia) in 2005, or Session 70 – *Industrialization in Middle Eastern European Regions during the XVIII and XIX Century* at the Helsinki XIVth International Economic History Congress in 2006. However, there is one major difference. While the two above-mentioned events were organized by a German institution (the Seminar für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte an der Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät der Universität zu Köln, headed by Prof. Dr. Toni Pierenkemper), this conference was organized by a Polish institution. This observation is not without relevance. In the post-revolutionary period, (1990–2010) Polish historiography shifted its focus away from economic and social history and towards previously marginalized aspects of Polish political history; this has

caused Polish economic history (especially concerning the 18th to the 20th centuries) to remain largely on the margins of (Central) European comparative research. Research of this nature has therefore had to rely on studies from the 1960s / 1970s and (to some extent) the 1980s. We are confident that the efforts of the Katowice team, coordinated by Professor Ryszard Kaczmarek, will be continued by future generations of Polish historians.

*Aleš Zářický*

### **Czech Historians evaluated their Work.**

#### **10th Convention of Czech Historians, Ostrava 14th–16th September 2011**

The tenth Convention of Czech Historians took place in Ostrava on 14–16 September 2011. Thanks to financial support from the municipal district of Moravská Ostrava and Přívoz and from the Moravian-Silesian Region, it was possible to hold this national event at the City of Ostrava Cultural Centre, and thus to provide over four hundred colleagues (of which 163 gave presentations) with a high-quality venue offering all necessary facilities for expert discussion.

The programme for the 2011 Convention had been crystallizing since 2009 in discussions between Petr Vorel and Jiří Kocian from the Association of Historians of the Czech Republic (Historical Club 1873) and representatives of the host organizations – especially Aleš Zářický, Tomáš Krejčík and Radek Lipovski from the Centre for Economic and Social History at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava.<sup>1</sup> The definitive programme eventually consisted of seven main sessions:

- A. *The use of modern technologies in historical research and documentation* (session chairs: Petr Sommer, Václav Ledvinka);
- B. *Modern and contemporary history as interpreted by experts and the media* (session chairs: Jiří Kocian, Jaroslav Šebek);
- C. *Current and future directions of social and economic history – What happened to the history of labour?* (session chairs: Milan Hlavačka, Aleš Zářický);
- D. *New trends in approaches to Czech medieval history* (session chairs: Lenka Bobková, Libor Jan, Jan Stejskal);

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<sup>1</sup> The Ostrava Convention (including the preparatory phase) is mapped in detailed by Petr Vorel in **P. VOREL**, *Česká historiografie ve světle sjezdů historiků v letech 1993–2011*, Český časopis historický, 110/2012, No. 3–4, pp. 403–430.

E. *Historical culture and historical education in contemporary Czech society* (session chairs: Blažena Gracová, Pavel Martinovský)

For the first time, the main sessions also included a forum for young historians, mainly doctoral students from Czech universities and research institutes: F) – *Selected issues of economic and social history through the eyes of young historians* – was chaired by representatives of Ostrava's Centre for Economic and Social History and two doctoral students at the Ostrava Department of History, Michaela Závodná and Stanislav Knob. Another new development at the 2011 Convention was the inclusion of a poster session: G) *Historical landscape – historical space* (chair: Eva Semotanová).

In addition to these main themed sessions, participants also had the opportunity to devise and include in the programme their own 'free sessions' – a tradition dating back to 1999. The 2011 Convention eventually featured six of these free sessions:

1. *Social aspects of demographic change* (chairs: Lumír Dokoupil, Eduard Maur);
2. *Limits and fields of interdisciplinary collaboration – Czech philology and history* (chair: Jaroslav David);
3. *Contemporary student life and activism* (chair: Vít Strobach);
4. *Borders and identity* (chairs: Miloš Řezník, Lenka Řezníková);
5. *History of the body: sources, concepts, historiography* (chair: Milena Lenderová);
6. *Auxiliary historical sciences in contemporary historiography* (chairs: Lenka Bláhová, Tomáš Krejčík).

Apart from the sessions, the Convention also featured an introductory plenary session, with presentations by the doyens of Czech history (Milan Myška, Jaroslav Pánek, Bohumil Jiroušek, Jan Horský, Václav Bůžek, Zdeněk Beneš). Their talks focused primarily on the question of historical sciences as a respected and integral part of modern academic knowledge at the outset of the 21st century and the perception of historical sciences by the historical community and the general public. The most lively reaction from the auditorium was in response to the paper given by Zdeněk Beneš on the current state of history teaching at Czech secondary schools. He built largely on the paper he gave at the 2006 Convention; however, his conclusions are now somewhat less optimistic. In the ensuing discussion, the historians in the hall affirmed the utter inadequacy of historical education in secondary schools and warned that such a state of affairs could ultimately lead to grave society-wide consequences. On the second day, the

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Convention continued with the individual sessions, taking place in various rooms according to the programme.

Session A presented two main issues. The first concerned professional training for academic staff and employees of research institutes enabling them to work with modern technologies and apply them in archeology and archive work. The discussion also touched on methodological issues of modern technologies, and examined methods of evaluating and archiving current findings and correlating potential inadequacies. The second main area of discussion was purely practical, responding to presentations of the results achieved with the use of modern technologies in the conservation of historical monuments or working with archeological sources, archives and other sources.

Session B focused on issues of contemporary and modern history. Addressing the question of possible international collaboration, the participants acknowledged the lack of coordination in setting up contacts with partners abroad. Currently contacts are forged on the basis of personal acquaintance rather than a conceptual approach; this stems from a sceptical view of conceptual approaches originating in the former Soviet Union. Some participants expressed the opinion that one of the main deficits of Czech historiography is its focus on national themes at the expense of the transnational approach, which is of key importance in setting up international co-operation. The session also dealt with a number of other problem areas, e.g. issues of ethnic history, the methodology of oral history, and others.

Session D focused primarily on medieval history and included both empirical and methodological contributions re-examining issues of the early Přemysl dynasty, medieval economic, ecclesiastical and legal history, and the status of Moravia and the Czech lands in medieval Europe.

Session E was devoted to the didactics and teaching of history, including theoretical papers (emphasizing the necessity to view didactics as an independent, institutional branch of academic inquiry) and also practical demonstrations of innovative methods of history teaching applied at secondary schools and universities. The Czech historians present responded with enthusiasm to a paper presented by Polish historians and describing the principles of state school-leaving examinations at Polish schools, demonstrating one way of improving the quality of history teaching.<sup>2</sup>

The Convention devoted particular attention to issues of economic and social history, which were discussed at two separate sessions.

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<sup>2</sup> The content of the individual sessions is described in more detail in the Chronicle. See *Historica. Revue pro historii a příbuzné vědy*, 3/2012, No. 1, pp. 115–120.

The subtitle of Session C – What happened to the history of labour? – had a dual symbolic significance.<sup>3</sup> Primarily it referred to a conference held in Ostrava in the spring of 2011, which focused mainly on the issue of the lower social classes. However, the subtitle also highlighted a more general tendency in economic and social history: during the 1990s historians' attention shifted away from the history of labour (and the research of the lower social classes) and towards a focus on the middle classes and the formation of social elites. This turn in the discipline was entirely logical, as the era prior to 1989 had been marked by an ideologically charged emphasis on the history of labour and the proletariat. However, by the turn of the 21st century it became acceptable to ask what had happened to the history of labour, and to wonder if we were in fact witnessing the much-discussed discontinuity of Czech historiography.<sup>4</sup> Session C attempted to re-define and conceptualize these issues, and it was divided into three sections each dealing with a specific area of inquiry.

The first section focused on theoretical and conceptual contributions which attempted to characterize the current state of economic and social history. The participants acknowledged a clear trend to a shift away from social history and towards the history of everyday life, mentalities, gender and cultural anthropology. However, it was also noted that – in connection with the current financial crisis – there has been an upsurge of interest in supra-national approaches to economic and social history and the comparison of economic and social phenomena as one way of making sense of the changes that are underway.

The second section focused on the relationship between economic and social history and other disciplines (e.g. historical sociology, psychology, ethnography etc.). Discussions highlighted one potential direction of future research as the study of the economic and social prerequisites for complex differentiation within social classes; this met with a positive response from participants.

The third section included papers presenting various projects or research programmes at individual institutions or detailing plans for the future

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<sup>3</sup> **M. HLAVAČKA – M. ŘEPA**, *Úvodní slovo*, in: A. ZÁŘICKÝ – P. KADLEC – M. ZÁVODNÁ, (edd). *X. sjezd českých historiků 14.–16. 9. 2011, Ostrava. Sekce C, svazek II*, in press. This volume will include all the papers presented at this session.

<sup>4</sup> **M. MYŠKA**, *Problém diskontinuity v soudobém českém dějepisectví* – papers presented on Xth Convention.

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development of professional associations, particularly the Society for Economic and Social History of Czech Republic (Společnost pro hospodářské a sociální dějiny) In conclusion, it can be stated that economic and social history remains an area with considerable potential for future research; however, its practitioners must not lose contact with developments in progressive historical disciplines, especially (as already mentioned) historical sociology, psychology or cultural anthropology.

Whereas Session C featured highly experienced economic and social historians, Session F provided a forum for their younger colleagues whose academic careers have just been launched. The title and topic of this session – aimed primarily at doctoral students – was chosen to reflect the long-term focus of the doctoral programme at the Ostrava Department of History. The session featured presentations by 19 students focusing on economic history from the Middle Ages to contemporary society and ranging from issues of the old tradesmen's classes and their specific means of existence (including association via guilds) to the process of industrial mechanization in the textile industry and its impact on the transformation of the urban environment and transport infrastructure. The session also included papers on the social consequences of the modernization process, e.g. the spread of literacy and the growth of education. Papers on social history included contributions dealing with gender (prostitution among women), Jewish youth associations, criminality, historical semantics (an analysis of the proletarian press) and other topics. The final block of the session programme was devoted to the economic development of Scandinavian and Balkan countries and the influence of advertising on creating a consumer lifestyle.

All of the participants in this doctoral session presented the results of their own research, outlined the current state of the discipline and offered an insight into their topic via small-scale research studies. However, the discussions revealed the limits inherent in meetings of this type – especially the insufficiently critical approach to ego-documents and the inadequate awareness of the subjectivity and ideological bias of newspapers as a source. The session clearly lacked an experienced doyen-historian who could have reined in the discussion and directed it towards a deeper level of understanding and more stimulating areas of focus; the participants' level of knowledge was excellent, but primarily in their own particular area of research. Despite these reservations, however, the young generation of historians is clearly not afraid of taking on new topics, is able to work with literature in foreign languages, and is capable of devising and formulating new research methods.

*Michaela Závodná*