

## Summaries

### **Birgit Meyer, Learning from their mothers – female politicians after the War and today**

The author stresses the often forgotten important role of the first female politicians after World War II for German politics. The so called "Mothers of the German Constitution" were courageous and worked for human rights and social improvement in the situation of women. But they did not see themselves as feminists, they demanded the universal rights of equality and justice. Fifty years later female politicians are not longer an exception in politics – the political profession has become a fascinating business for women too, one third of the members of the fourteenth German Bundestag are female. The author compares the attitudes and the ways female politicians saw themselves fifty years ago and see themselves now. After World War II many women were involved in social and political fields in society – mainly with a feeling for the female role of social responsibility. Today the attitude of female politicians is still formed by the same sense of responsibility to help people. But female politicians today also want to have political power to influence and decide about laws and ways of living. They do not want to be identified only with female subjects and feminist positions although they mainly concentrate on problems of female's everyday life in family and profession. Even today political power is still predominantly male and specific gender roles do exist.

### **Beate Hofmann, From reserve to engagement: Protestant women and politics in 20th century**

This article discusses the changes in the attitude of protestant women and women's organizations concerning politics in Germany. It looks at their relationship to political structures and the changes this went throughout the history of the Protestant church in Germany of this century. Over the Nazi period the women's organizations were practising political "abstinence" although the tension and the pressures from the Church, protestant grass-roots and the political structures were substantial. The women's work in the Protestant Church changed its position from abstinence to wider participation and engagement in political issues, especially for peace and justice in the whole world within the last three decades. This change of attitude and the relationship of protestant women to politics have always been accompanied by and interacted with the contemporary notions on gender, especially the conceptualisation of women as "peace-makers" and "harmony inducers" rather than the "aggressive" character of men.

### **Rosanna Vitale, Women in Italy and politics**

Even after the latest elections there are remarkably few women found in Italian politics. In no parliament, not even in municipal parliaments, more than 12 percent of the representatives are women. The origin of this situation has been put to the history of the political parties after World War II. Many women fought against fascism, with the Communist Party as their political basis. But after the war, even after women were given the right to vote, the party did not give women a chance of carrying on their active, self-ensured role. Other political issues and interests dominated, the repre-

sentation of women in politics was no issue of importance, neither in the parties nor in society in general. Women sought to improve their situation and further their autonomy at least in their private lives (viz. the issues of women employment, divorce and abortion), the low birth rate is one of the most significant examples of this. Equality of women in politics is not accepted, even if women want to let their voices be heard in public.

#### **Pernille Lønne Mørkhagen, The Position of Women in Norway**

Compared to other European countries, Norway would win a competition on equality between the sexes: Since 1980, Norway's changing governments have almost been 50 per cent women and more than 70 per cent of Norwegian women today have paid employment outside the home. But only 3.5 per cent of the top executives of Norwegian corporations are women and the balance is uneven in local government, too, when you leave out political representation and look only at employment statistics. Why is it so? There are especially invisible barriers: The problem is that many of the well-educated women feel torn between working as men do and giving enough of themselves to the caring role they have outside their jobs. Still Norwegian women retain the bulk of the responsibility for the home and children. In recent years we have seen two different reactions to the government's active promotion of gender equality. One is that equal rights should focus on the rights of men from now on while the other is a campaign by the Christian Right to persuade parents (i.e. mothers) to stay at home with their youngest children to a greater extent.

#### **Brigitte Geißel, Motives of women for becoming involved in politics - the importances of quotas**

The literature on women and political participation mostly focuses on the lack of representation of women in parliament ("Why so few?"). In contrast, this paper illuminates the paths of women to politics and asks for their process of politicalization. The paper is based on interviews with local women politicians in Germany. This research shows that quota regulations, common in German political parties, are very effective in activating women, and thus increase their parliamentary participation. In political parties with quota regulations female members are more likely to become politically involved and stand as candidates for political positions. In addition, political parties with quota regulations often support "normal" women, whereas parties without these rules recruit primarily highly privileged women, for instance daughters of politicians. Thus equal opportunity parties fulfil the democratic idea that political decision-making should not be a privilege of a particular elitist group.

#### **Inge Wettig-Danielmeier, The "Quota" in the German Social Democratic Party - a way to improved representation of women in politics**

Changes within the SPD were an efficient incentive on the way to equality of rights and opportunities for women in Germany, although on the way to it there were errors and mistakes. For example, the party subcommittee of Social Democratic Women (ASF) - for a long time - fought against a quota valid for inner-party elections, holding the view that the party would grant equal opportunities for women voluntarily as a result of its own convictions.

Only when - alongside success in party elections - considerable setbacks came to be felt, the ASF changed its opinion and started to advocate a quota of at least 40% women in party and political offices. The quota was accepted in the course of the review of the party programme, where it was supported by arguments of public law scholars. As to offices within the party the quota has successfully become reality, in state elections this has not been possible so far due to specific aspects of the respective election laws. It can be said that - by many women in the party - the quota is not liked, but it is seen as an important instrument to achieve equal opportunities for women in politics.

#### **Elke Plöger, Professionalising Women for Politics**

Eighty years ago women fought successfully for the active and passive right to vote. But still, politics is very much a male world. Outside parliament where social and political work is mostly done voluntarily, predominantly more women can be found. In the process of the "privatisation" of social responsibility it is mostly women who bear the burden of unpaid reproductive work. In this context it becomes more important that women take part in political decision making. The author points out different ways of how women can join political committees and reach political positions eg. in municipal parliaments, where women can run for elections by themselves, or in the state or central parliaments as a member of a political party. Outside parliament, the author argues, women should try through women's unions and networking to put public pressure on political leaders. The author points to an example in Saxony-Anhalt where a women's union has started a qualification programme for women ("Frauenpolitische Bildung für Chancengleichheit"), which since 1997 has trained 60 women for work in a political office. At least twelve of these women decided to run for elections in the last years.

#### **Aksu Bora, Women in Turkish Politics: Symbol or acting force?**

77 years lie between the end of the theocratic Ottoman Empire and today's laicist Turkish Republic. In every respect the new republic wanted to be different from the old empire. While the Ottoman Sultan claimed for himself the leading role in the Islamic world, the new republic should - irrevocably - turn to the west. Aksu Bora tries to show which roles women have played and are playing in Turkish politics and which roles were assigned to them in the past 77 years, using as examples women of various social contexts. At the beginning women were used as the symbol of the modern character of the new state. In this period of "state feminism" there was no dialogue between feminists and the young Turkish Republic, which tried to silence the feminists' demands. At the same time women were officially encouraged and supported to take part in all spheres of social life. After the liberal-conservative Democratic Party came to power in the fifties this policy of encouragement and support came to an abrupt end. Today, the daughters of the generation of women who profited from the early state feminism, want to be active again and gain influence. However, there is a wide gap between these women and the feminists of the eighties. The gap is marked by the respective concept of enemy. While feminists mainly address topics of patriarchal society, such as violence in families or discrimination against women,



for the other group the present religious reaction is the main topic. They, therefore, see defending the laicist republic as their primary task. The aim of the Association for the Support and Qualification of Women Candidates (Ka-Der), founded by prominent representatives of this group, is to encourage (and enable) women to actively participate in politics.

In the final part of her article the author analyses the aims and work of Ka-Der and comes to the conclusion that the association has very much internalised the official position of the republic. Nevertheless she claims that Ka-Der, which operates in 19 provinces, could possibly - even if unintentionally - provide a link between women in politics and feminist demands. The reason is that candidates supported by Ka-Der are encouraged and trained to address women voters at the basis. This, Aksu Boran assumes, may lead to bridging the gap between feminist politics and the feminist movement on the one hand and the women in Turkish politics on the other.

#### **Eva Rossmann, Among Men – Women in the Parliament of Austria**

The author examines the chances of female parliament members in the Austrian parliament to speak out in important debates. It can be noticed that only very few female parliament members are given the opportunity of speaking before parliament in important public debates. Even if women have such an opportunity, they end up speaking at a very late hour, when media interest has already almost vanished. Moreover, the more important the subject of a debate is, the more likely it is that the first speakers or even the only speakers are male. This is especially conspicuous in the conservative, socialist and liberal parties (ÖVP, SPÖ and FPÖ). The author shows that in some cases female members can make their speech only 5 hours after the beginning of the debate. Only in the "Green" Party women have a greater chance of speaking in general and enter a debate at an earlier point.

#### **Evelyn Gillmeister-Geisenhof, Women-politicians outside urban centres – experiences from central Franconia**

In rural areas and small towns women are under-represented in local politics. In E. Gillmeister-Geisenhof's contribution the interviews with women politicians active on the local level in central Franconia show the range of reasons why women are absent from local politics. According to their words people still put very little trust in women: *"In villages women have simply nothing to say."* A young woman from the same region talking about women in politics shares the opinion of many young people in Germany today: *"Politics is dry stuff. Women who are interested in politics are mainly from urban centres, and women in politics are generally an exception."* This woman feels her utterances confirmed, when she looks at how women are represented in her local town council: There is one woman to 20 men. Gillmeister also notes that especially in small towns - for men as well as for women - social position is an important precondition for gaining the support of the majority. Women very rarely have a social position which is important enough to profit from it, when they get involved in politics. Apart from that there are still duties which are considered as specifically female. If these

duties are not fulfilled, this may result in a strain on family life or partnership: *"O.k., you can do that, as long as meals are prepared on time."*

In her paper Gillmeister shows under which condition and with which strategies women become active in local politics. Regardless of the party they belong to women politicians claim that especially in local politics female topics are not taken seriously by men, and very often they are ridiculed. Friends very often react with surprise to the ambitions of female politicians: *"What in the world are you aiming at? Why do you do all that?"* As for strategies there is a wide range of positions from *"'Female politics' is not my business."* to *"As a female town councillor I'm here to serve the women in my town!"* In spite of different focuses in their work women involved in local politics hope to increase the number of women in town and other local councils for example by founding all-party associations of women politicians.

#### **Result of a political biography**

##### **A conversation with Renate Schmidt**

In this interview the leader of the Bavarian SPD Renate Schmidt speaks about her way from being a systems analyst and workers representative in a private enterprise to becoming a professional politician. She tells us how she became a member of Parliament and why she refused a higher position in the government in Bonn, but instead chose to stay in Bavaria as the chairwoman of the Bavarian SPD. She also points out how difficult it still is for a woman to combine having a family and children and pursuing one's own career. She advises younger women who want to become politicians not to think of a career at first but to get involved in political activities they think important. It is better to concentrate on areas where they think they can change things for the better. Another piece of advice she passes on is to learn a profession before going into politics. Because the job of a politician is usually a job for a limited period.

Meral Akkent