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**Hugo Boss, 1924-1945**

The History of a Clothing Factory Between Weimar Republic and Third Reich

Translated from the German by

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## **Author's preface**

The present study was commissioned by the Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte. The associated research and production costs have been funded by Hugo Boss AG of Metzingen. It is important to point out, however, that no influence whatsoever was exerted on the content of my account.

I should particularly like to thank Stephan Lindner, who provided academic advice on my work and with whom I was able to discuss numerous problems in detail. I am also indebted to Michael Bermejo-Wenzel for his extensive assistance in procuring source material, as I am to Ralf Banken for suggestions that took me further, particularly as regards evaluating that source material. My thanks to Andrea Schneider for her commitment, notably in revising the final manuscript. I enjoyed excellent cooperation from Hjördis Kettenbach and her team at Hugo Boss, to whom I am grateful not least for their willingness to talk openly about all matters, including the less positive aspects of the company's past.

I was given the opportunity to present this material for the first time at the Colloquium of the Chair for Economic and Social History at the University of Frankfurt am Main, and from the suggestions I received there I also derived much further assistance. Any mistakes that may nevertheless mar the following account are of course my own responsibility entirely.

## Introduction

### Object of investigation

With increasing frequency in recent years public attention has focused on the history of the garment and fashion company Hugo Boss. Most recently, an article in the respected Danish daily newspaper *Politiken* took up the subject of the company's Nazi past in a provocative and unfortunately erroneous manner.<sup>1</sup> That article was only one of many to have appeared in publications the world over in 2008. There have also been various art projects that took the firm's past as their subject.<sup>2</sup> It is probably not an exaggeration to say that no small business (as it was then, the maximum number of employees having stood at 330 in 1944) in Germany has had its history tackled so repeatedly in the media.

There are two main reasons for this. The first is that, although at the time Hugo Boss was only a small business, today it is a global operation. All too often the present Hugo Boss Group is "projected back", so to speak, into the NS period. This is manifest in such statements as that Boss was general outfitter to the organizations of National Socialism (with a workforce that, back in 1933, numbered some 30 persons), despite the fact that countless enterprises in Germany were involved in the highly decentralized business of manufacturing uniforms. Another example is the suggestion recently put to the firm's publicity department that Hugo Boss supplied the ceremonial outfits for the German team at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. No evidence for this has been found in the sources hitherto, and if the company really did work for the Olympic authorities it was probably no more than one supplier among many.<sup>3</sup> In other words, only the expansion of the Hugo Boss company since the 1970s can explain why its history during the Third Reich should have received such enormous media attention.

The second reason is rather difficult to grasp, but it probably has something to do with the fact that, during the Third Reich, the company Hugo Boss largely (and from 1938 almost exclusively) produced uniforms, not only for the NSDAP [see *List of abbreviations*] and the armed forces, but also mainly for the Hitler Youth, the SA [*Sturmabteilung* or "Storm Detachment", usually referred to in English as the "Storm Troopers"], and the SS

[*Schutzstaffel* or “Shield Squadron”; contributions in square brackets supplied by the translator]. Subconsciously, people’s thinking may be influenced by a view that the present-day wearers of such “standardized clothing” operate with the same cold, technical rationality as the SS once used in planning its atrocities. There is a feeling, perhaps, that what Peter Reichel called the “splendid display staged by the Third Reich”<sup>4</sup> is reflected in the suits worn by today’s businessmen. Disproportionate though it is to draw such analogies, they do seem to hold a certain attraction for some observers.

The articles that take up this analogy can move in a grey area because not enough work has been done on the history of the Hugo Boss company in the NS period. Furthermore, the company itself has not always acted very cleverly, exhibiting particular clumsiness in the wake of an international public debate about the forced-labor question. There is, in fact, already one study by Elisabeth Timm on what happened to the firm in the Third Reich.<sup>5</sup> The author of that study performs the valuable service of reviewing the (unfortunately scarce) available sources. In particular, she reconstructs the history of forced labor at Hugo Boss in impressive detail. However, what Timm also does is to focus on this aspect almost exclusively, failing on the whole, to set it adequately in its historical context. Corporate-history aspects tend to get sidelined. As a result, the firm’s scope remains unclear and, ultimately, the question of its historical responsibility is not properly addressed. The fact is, precisely because forced labor also throws up historical, ethical, and legal questions, it is important to be aware of the corporate-history background if we are to reach a proper assessment.<sup>6</sup> In Timm’s study, the history of forced labor at Boss appears to be an exclusively ethical problem, which from the standpoint of corporate history represents an inadmissible foreshortening, making it too easy for any such assessment to serve as an explanation of why the firm used forced labor, how the forced laborers were treated, and so on. Moreover, one consequence of the huge research effort of recent years, prompted not least by the problems associated with forced labor, has been that we now know much more about the history of German companies during the Third Reich. The present study intends to use those findings to produce a historically appropriate account of one uniforms manufacturer under National Socialism.

Avoiding the problem of “projecting back” the present-day Hugo Boss company into the time of the Third Reich means, above all, bearing in mind that in the 1930s and 1940s the firm was a clothing and uniforms manufacturer rather than a fashion group in the modern sense. It was a finishing operation that owed, first, its economic survival and, subsequently, its consolidation as a small, independent enterprise, to the manufacture of uniforms, primarily

for NS organizations, but later increasingly for the armed forces. In that respect, the company did indeed demonstrably benefit from National Socialism. Whereas in 1933, it was not even one of the largest firms in Metzingen, by the end of the Second World War it had grown, in terms of jobs, into the biggest business in what was a relatively small town. Rising staff numbers (and in the case of Hugo Boss they continued to rise until 1944) were very much the exception for a company in the clothing industry. But then, as a manufacturer of uniforms, the Hugo Boss operation had gained a foothold in terms of production technology, an area where the restrictions that the economic policy of National Socialism had imposed on the clothing industry did not apply to the same extent as for the rest of the industry.

## **Approach**

The biggest problem facing a historical study of the Hugo Boss company (and one with which Elisabeth Timm herself had to struggle) is the striking lack of primary source material. Obviously the firm's files only go back to the late 1960s. So any investigation has to draw on secondary traditions and retrospective "oral history interviews" [*Zeitzeugeninterviews*]<sup>7</sup> while trying, in other ways, against the background of the very well-researched history of Württemberg in the National Socialist period, to make a plausible reconstruction of corporate history, even though the documentation available often precludes statements of unqualified clarity.

The history of the Hugo Boss clothing factory from its foundation in 1924 to the start of the post-war period will be analyzed at three levels, the first being that of the wider *context of business history*. I intend to portray the history of Hugo Boss against the background of the history of the clothing industry under the Weimar Republic and National Socialism and to talk about the influence of government on the economic development of the branch. It is important to bear in mind in this connection that the clothing industry as a whole suffered under the economic policy of National Socialism. The Second World War in particular led to production curbs and mergers of businesses. However, the production of uniforms was a special case. While the popular supply situation with regard to textiles in general deteriorated over the course of the Third Reich (partly as a result of substitute materials of inferior quality being used), uniforms manufacture was able to expand until well into the war – a development that was of enormous economic benefit, not least to the company, Hugo Boss.

The second level of analysis is the *context of local history*. I further intend to look at the Hugo Boss company against the background of how the small town of Metzingen developed in the National Socialist era – that is to say, of its overall economic and social structure, which was mainly middle-class and dominated by the small and medium-sized business sector. After all, many matters (in connection with the question of providing board and lodging for forced laborers, for instance; see chapter 3) had to be discussed and decided jointly with other Metzingen firms. Without taking such local circumstances into account, it is not possible to reach a full and proper understanding of the history of Hugo Boss.

The third level of analysis is the *history of forced labor* at Hugo Boss. As a result of extensive academic effort, particularly over the past 15 years, the history of forced labor in Germany during the Second World War can now be called well-researched. Much is known about the different ways in which forced laborers were treated, depending on their nationality and ethnicity, as well as how they tended to receive better treatment in rural areas than in urban industry, and so on. It is against this backdrop that the use of forced labor at Boss will be set out and assigned its place in history.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of method, the study is guided by the concept of “corporate history as history of society”, which economic historian Hartmut Berghoff developed in his comprehensive history of the musical-instrument manufacturer Hohner (like Boss, another business in a small Württemberg town).<sup>9</sup> It seems particularly well suited to adequately describe the history of companies in a manageable, rural area and to clearly separate the various dimensions that determine their actions. The tension between “small town and world market”, which Berghoff identifies as characteristic of Hohner, hardly existed or did not exist at all in the case of Hugo Boss. However, the divergence between a supra-regional demand on the one hand, and a regional labor market (this was to change, of course, with the introduction of forced labor!) and local power constellations, on the other hand, was of central importance.

The study opens with an account of the early days of the company Hugo Boss. The biography of its founder is briefly recounted, and the beginnings of the company’s establishment as a manufacturing operation in the Weimar Republic are also portrayed. This is then followed (in chapter 2) by an account of the development of the company during the years 1933-45. This is set, as I have explained, in the general context of how paramilitary and military uniforms were produced in the Third Reich. The third chapter is devoted to the history of forced labor at Hugo Boss, and in it I attempt a historical reconstruction of the recruitment and provision of board and lodging for the forced laborers involved, as well as a description of their living conditions against the backdrop of the research findings of the history of *Zwangsarbeit*. The fourth and final chapter

focuses on the development of the firm in the early post-war period and describes the “denazification” process that its founder was obliged to undergo. Finally, the results of the study are summed up and evaluated.

### **Sources and state of research**

As already indicated, the situation regarding the sources for the history of the Hugo Boss company is far from ideal. Sources within the firm seem to no longer exist,<sup>10</sup> and in the inventory lists of the federal archives [*Bundesarchiv*] the name “Hugo Boss” does not feature. The author of the present study, therefore, faced the laborious task of reconstructing the history of the company from secondary evidence alone. The denazification file of Hugo Ferdinand Boss, which is kept in the Württemberg state archives [*Staatsarchiv*] in Sigmaringen, was particularly helpful in this context. The file contained statements about the company’s development and operating figures during the Third Reich period. However, it is important to note that these documents were, of course, evaluated with the knowledge that denazification files are a deeply problematic type of source that need to be treated with utmost caution.

The second major collection of source material was in the Metzingen municipal archives [*Stadtarchiv*]. Kept here were not only business entries, but also minutes of meetings relating to the so-called “Ostarbeiter” [these were forced laborers brought from the occupied countries of eastern Europe] camp that was set up in Metzingen at the beginning of 1943, which also housed the forced laborers who worked at Boss. The same office holds some highly revealing oral history interviews (including some conducted as part of a local-history project) with former forced laborers.

Searches in other archives produced results of varying quality that, nevertheless, proved extremely useful in rounding out the picture. To take two examples, the Baden-Württemberg business archive in Stuttgart-Hohenheim and the “Archives de l’Occupation française en Allemagne et Autriche” in Colmar yielded important information about production at Hugo Boss in the years following the Second World War. The *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin and the Military History Research Office [*Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsstelle*] in Potsdam furnished glimpses of the way the manufacture of uniforms was organized during the Second World War. These came in very handy to assess the significance and circumstances of production at Hugo Boss. Also consulted were the contents of the municipal archives in

Munich and Reutlingen, the main *Staatsarchiv* in Stuttgart, and the Federal Armed Forces Archives [*Bundes-Militärarchiv*] in Freiburg im Breisgau. The results did not make up for the lack of sources within the company itself, but they did offer important assistance in the historiographical classification process of the company's history.

Given this lack of source material, I have been obliged, as previously pointed out, to place the emphasis on setting the history of the Hugo Boss company in context. Here I faced another problem, which is that, when taken as a whole, the state of research into the history of the clothing industry in Germany, notably in regards to the production of uniforms in the Third Reich, is unsatisfactory. What makes this particularly surprising is that this was, by no means, an unimportant branch of the economy. Granted, with the work of Gerd Höschle, we now have an account of the history of the textile industry in the years 1933-39, not the least merit of which is to guide the reader through the maze of ordinances, export regulations, and so on.<sup>11</sup> However, the clothing industry is an area that Höschle touches only incidentally. The history of the textile business as a whole during the Second World War remains, to a great extent, a void waiting to be filled from the research viewpoint. Certainly, individual contributions from the research project headed by Dieter Langewiesche into the history of the Württemberg economy under National Socialism turned out to be extremely useful for the present study. In particular, the work of Petra Bräutigam<sup>12</sup> and Astrid Gehrig<sup>13</sup> was of enormous assistance in classifying the sources findings. It is my hope that, in this way, I have managed to present a concise and conclusive picture of the business history of the Hugo Boss company during the Third Reich.

## Chapter 1      The Hugo Boss company in the Weimar Republic

### 1.1      Development of the clothing industry before 1933

According to a theory advanced by Werner Sombart, the origins of ready-to-wear clothing or the clothing industry (certainly as this looks forward to the twentieth century) are possibly to be found in the large-scale demand for uniforms that arose back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, however, the emergence of the clothing industry is inseparably connected with the population growth that accompanied the rise of industrialization through the nineteenth century and beyond. In 1816 some 23.5 million people lived in the territory covered by the German *Reich* [the “Holy Roman Empire”]; in 1900 the population was already some 56 million, and by 1930 it numbered approximately 64 million.<sup>15</sup> The same phenomenon occurred throughout Europe, and all those people needed clothing. That was one reason why in the UK, the textile industry was able to become the “lead sector” in the process of industrialization. In Germany, too, it became an important branch of the economy, although there it was above all heavy industries such as iron and steel and mechanical engineering that bore the brunt of the process.<sup>16</sup>

Since most of the raw materials required for the textile trade were sourced abroad, the sites of textile and clothing operations were not often predetermined by where such materials were grown or mined.<sup>17</sup> Centers of the textile industry were established in Saxony (where it was not long before textile machinery came to be produced alongside) and the Rhineland. But Württemberg too had a long tradition of textile and clothing manufacture, though without the area ever becoming one of the leading centers. In the 1920s as much as ten percent of German textile production came from Württemberg-Hohenzollern [part of the present-day federal state of Baden-Württemberg; *Tr.*].<sup>18</sup> Particularly well represented in that figure were cotton production and the knitwear industry.<sup>19</sup> This was, in part, a long-term result of a government policy that had promoted the region’s textile industry since the early nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

The fabrics produced in this way subsequently needed to be processed by the ready-to-wear branch of the clothing industry.<sup>21</sup> The textile industry as a whole had, of course, achieved mechanization of the spinning and weaving processes early on, but in the ready-to-

wear sector this development was in some respects rather slow in coming. A separate ready-to-wear business did eventually emerge from the tailoring trade in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, before mechanized sewing gradually imposed itself in the second half of the century, clothes still needed to be laboriously sewn by hand. As a result, the organization of this trade was also, during the nineteenth century, characterized mainly by a cottage-industry (that is to say, decentralized) mode of production. So-called *Zwischenmeister* distributed orders and fabric to the workers involved, who then stitched the garments in their own homes. While such outwork was occasionally performed by older women on a part-time basis, most full-time outworkers were unmarried women under 25 years of age.<sup>22</sup> Note, though, that many more male workers were employed in the ready-to-wear trade in men's clothing than were involved in producing womenswear.<sup>23</sup>

Mechanization of the clothing industry was significantly accelerated by a small-scale technological innovation in the shape of the sewing machine. This appliance, which had been crucially improved in the 1840s by the Americans Elias Howe and Isaac Merritt Singer, produced many times the work of a seamstress working by hand. One by one, further improvements were made to sewing-machine technology in subsequent decades. Thus, it made more and more sense for companies to set up centralized production facilities, although this did not result in any serious reduction in outwork production. Prior to the Second World War, it was highly unusual for big concerns to emerge in the clothing sector; in fact, they remained very much the exception right across the textile industry. Out of a total of 683,543 textile firms recorded in 1907, only 1,390 had more than 50 employees. These larger operations employed a total of 168,099 individuals, which in turn comprised a mere 13 percent of those working in the sector.<sup>24</sup> How small the average operation was in the clothing industry can be seen from the following survey:

**Table 1 Firms in the clothing industry<sup>25</sup>**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Firms</i>	<i>Persons employed</i>	<i>Average no. of employees per firm</i>
1882	766,587	1,119,605	1.46
1895	742,564	1,224,621	1.65
1907	683,543	1,303,853	1.91
1925	599,769	1,427,657	2.38

As the figures make clear, average business size started out very small and increased slowly. In fact, relative numbers employed in the clothing industry declined from the 1870s onwards in favor of faster-growing sectors such as mechanical engineering or chemistry.<sup>26</sup>

Berlin was the undisputed center of the ready-to-wear clothing business (particularly so far as female outer clothing was concerned).<sup>27</sup> To this extent, the location-related requirements for fairly advanced mechanization and concentration in the sector were thoroughly met. However, there were serious obstacles in the way of a proper “industrialization process”. One of these was that for a long time there were no standard sizes. Most clothing was made-to-measure. Only gradually, over the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, did standard sizes come in. Still, the luxury market remained largely bespoke.<sup>28</sup> Not until the turn of the century did ready-to-wear goods exceed made-to-measure in terms of sales,<sup>29</sup> and that was associated with a change of generation: wearing garments made to measure increasingly became the domain of gentlemen over fifty.<sup>30</sup> A further obstacle was that fashion at the time was against any standardization of garment production. This was particularly true with regard to female outer clothing. There were, of course, counter-examples. For instance, in the likewise important area of linen garments (particularly underwear), centralized workshop production came in comparatively early. In fact, the journalism of the time liked to hold up this sub-branch as a glowing example of rationalization in garment manufacture.<sup>31</sup>

During the First World War (as in the Second World War), the conversion to a wartime economy was to impose heavy burdens on the clothing industry on the one hand, while on the other hand opening up new economic opportunities through the expansion of uniform production. In autumn 1914, for instance, universal mobilization resulted in a veritable upswing; uniforms were in such short supply that some urban regiments took to the parade ground in suits.<sup>32</sup> In the longer term, however, the repercussions of the war proved negative for clothing industry, mainly because of the mounting dearth of raw materials coupled with the labor shortage.

Throughout the Weimar Republic era, the development of this highly cyclical branch of the economy was, too, anything but satisfactory. Inflation led initially to a boom in company start-ups, but this was swiftly corrected by the market. Following the stabilization of the currency in late 1923, production rose significantly, although in the opinion of Heinrich Redlich [see note 30 below] this was more apparent than real: in fact, production declined again even before the economic crash came in autumn 1929.

As it did for the German economy as a whole, the world economic crisis also meant a serious stress test for the clothing industry. In the years 1929-32 the net social product of the German economy declined by more than 30 percent. The jobless total shot up (according to official figures) to 7 million (some 30 percent of the workforce), and it is estimated that, overall, half of the working population was affected by unemployment in one way or another. Even though real wages suffered only a relatively moderate fall, consumption collapsed dramatically. This showed

itself in the clothing industry too, where production fell by almost 30 percent between 1929 and 1932.<sup>33</sup> Equally grave was the drop in sales over the same period. Overall turnover in the sector fell from RM 3,365,000 in 1928 to RM 2,261,000 in 1935 – at a time when it had actually already recovered slightly.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, the clothing industry experienced a huge wave of layoffs, as the following table shows:

**Table 2** No. of companies and persons employed in the clothing industry 1925-1933<sup>35</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Corporate units</i>	<i>Persons employed</i>
1925	580,740	1,375,355
1933	540,505	1,054,811

The clothing industry in Württemberg was also very badly affected. It had already had to struggle during the 1920s with a highly unstable period of business development, but it had survived. However, it then suffered a serious setback, as did the industry as a whole, with the world economic crisis. One of the companies affected, as chapter 3 will show, was the young Hugo Boss enterprise.

## 1.2 Hugo Ferdinand Boss: Origins and social profile

When the name “Hugo Boss” is mentioned today, one inevitably thinks of the fashion label – and it may well be that, in large part, the sound and associations of the name have played a key role in the label’s success. It is important, however, that we start by putting this out of our minds, because the man Hugo Ferdinand Boss was far more firmly rooted in the social environment of a small town in the vicinity of the Swabian Alb. Metzingen, which in 1905 had precisely 5,856 inhabitants,<sup>36</sup> had been the home of his family for generations. He spent virtually his whole life there and in his free time went hunting with friends. That in itself suggests that we need to initially disregard the connotations of the “Hugo Boss” brand if we are to gain a true picture of the entrepreneur of the same name.



Hugo Ferdinand Boss in 1932: Photograph from NSDAP membership card<sup>37</sup>

Hugo Ferdinand Boss was born in Metzingen [a small town to the south of Stuttgart] on July 8, 1885. He was the fifth and last child of Heinrich Boss and his wife Luise, who together ran a lingerie and trousseau shop in the town. He had two elder brothers and two elder sisters, of whom only one sister survived infancy.<sup>38</sup> Leaving the secondary-modern school [*Realschule*] in Metzingen without a final diploma, he began a three-year commercial apprenticeship with a manufactured-goods wholesaler in neighboring Urach. He also failed to complete this apprenticeship. He then spent two years working for a weaving firm by the name of Wendler in Metzingen. In the period 1905-07 he performed his military service, after which he entered employment for a further year with a fabric wholesaler in Konstanz, where large quantities of fabric were sold. In 1908 he eventually took over the family business, managing this until in 1914, aged 29, he was called up to fight in the First World War.<sup>39</sup> Hugo F. Boss began his army career in the rank of lance corporal and ended the war in the same rank, which he later, at his denazification hearing, cited as evidence that he was manifestly no “militarist”. It was certainly clear that he was not a particularly committed soldier.<sup>40</sup> Overall, his work career appears to have been characterized by a distinct lack of ambition, which may have been due to his knowing for sure that eventually he would be able to fall back on his parents’ shop.

In the year that he took over his mother and father's business, thereby presumably attaining a secure economic livelihood, Hugo F. Boss married a Metzingen girl named Anna Katherina Freysinger, who was two years younger than him. With her he had four children: Gertrud, born in 1910; Hildegard, born a year later; Siegfried, born in 1915; and a straggler, the youngest daughter Doris, who came along in 1924.<sup>41</sup> Incidentally, the matrimonial behavior of the three daughters is highly informative as regards the socio-cultural structure of Metzingen. The eldest daughter Gertrud married master tailor Eugen Holy in 1939. We shall be coming back to him later, for it was he and the two sons of the marriage to Gertrud who were responsible for the rise of the Boss company after the Second World War. Holy, whose father was also a master tailor (and had in fact gone into business for himself), did not come from an entrepreneurial family and was obliged, apparently, to demonstrate his merits before being permitted to wed Boss's eldest daughter and enter the business. According to the standards of the day, at 29 years of age, Gertrud was already quite old by the time of her wedding. By contrast, the second daughter, Hildegard, married in 1934, when she was 23; her husband was Georg Bazlen, a Metzingen silk manufacturer. And Doris, the youngest daughter, wed Heinz Braunwarth in 1944, Braunwarth was also a merchant and entrepreneur living in Metzingen. It looked as if there existed in Metzingen a small, but identifiable, business elite exhibiting largely status-endogenous matrimonial behavior – to the social historian, a by no means surprising discovery.

Like most people in the region, the Boss family was Protestant. However, in 1939 Hugo F. Boss left the church (his wife followed in 1941), describing himself henceforth as *gottgläubig* ["believing in God"], which was a National Socialist substitute creed making possible Christian belief without any ecclesiastical adherence. Even under National Socialist rule, in Protestant-dominated Swabia (many parts of which possessed a strongly Pietist tradition), this was a serious step to take, suggesting if nothing else that Hugo F. Boss's joining the NSDAP in 1931 was not, by any means, a pure and simple a case of economic opportunism. Some inner affinity to the party's views must, in fact, have been very much present, as Boss later did not deny – or did so only half-heartedly. After the war, both spouses rejoined the Protestant church.

How are we to characterize the entrepreneur Hugo Ferdinand Boss? Elisabeth Timm attempts to draw up a social profile of the man, assigning him to the disadvantaged bourgeois middle class that constituted an important part of the NSDAP membership.<sup>42</sup> That is certainly not a false categorization, but, at the same time, it is an extremely vague one. The facts are these: In the first place, at the end of the First World War Boss did not have a particularly successful career behind him. Neither his schooling nor his commercial apprenticeship had resulted in a proper qualification. Even his army career had hardly constituted a meteoric rise. However, in

Metzingen, he clearly enjoyed a social network that provided him with support and enabled him to gain an economic foothold. Hugo F. Boss never strayed far from his home town, the farthest being a one-year stint in Konstanz [down on Germany's southern border]. Otherwise, he remained very much a prisoner of his environment, pursuing in hunting a typically business-bourgeois hobby and socializing with friends over a drink. All in all a complete contrast to the cosmopolitan image of the brand that nowadays bears his name. Far more typical, in fact, of the narrow economic elite of a small industrial town in south-west Germany.

### **1.3 Early years of the Hugo Boss company**

After the end of the First World War, Hugo F. Boss returned to Metzingen and once again took over his parents' shop. Later, he stated that the reason why he had founded the clothing factory was that the shop had ceased to do well in the post-war years.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, during the hyper-inflation of 1923, the clothing retail trade experienced major problems, partly because any business that involved carrying stock suffered terribly when currency devaluation meant that income no longer sufficed to cover re-acquisition costs. It looks very much as if the great feeling of insecurity that came over the clothing retail trade at this time also hit Hugo Boss.<sup>44</sup> However, the company may also have been able to derive advantage from the devaluation of the currency because, even though the situation of the clothing industry deteriorated in the hyper-inflationary period, a perceptible start-up boom in clothing production followed the First World War. Capital was so inexpensive to obtain, as a result of the continuing devaluation that had begun during the war, that in 1934 Heinrich Ehrlich was able to write of the early 1920s that "every representative, every little middleman who had contrived to put together a little capital, however acquired, [felt] he should go 'independent' ".<sup>45</sup> This may explain why Hugo F. Boss registered his shop as an industrial operation as early as 1922, but the actual founding of the Hugo Boss clothing factory did not take place until 1924. It would mean that Boss had been toying with the idea of founding a business for some time but had put it off because of the difficulties of the hyper-inflationary years. He was able to proceed only when he found two more partners, the Bräuchle brothers (Albert and Theodor), who were prepared to put money into the firm.<sup>46</sup> The brothers belonged to a leather-making and brewing family that was likewise based in Metzingen. The family owned two businesses there that, in 1927, when measured in terms of trade tax paid, they were the second- and third-largest enterprises in town.<sup>47</sup> What subsequently became of their involvement in the Boss company is not in fact known. In the sources for the history of Hugo Boss, the Bräuchle

brothers do not feature again. It looks very much as if, having helped to give Hugo F. Boss a financial start, they subsequently withdrew from the operation.

At his denazification hearing after the Second World War, Hugo F. Boss tried to give the impression that the founding of the clothing factory in January 1924, rather than stemming from his own active entrepreneurial drive, simply constituted an attempt to create a fresh economic livelihood for himself, given that his parents' shop had ceased to be profitable. But that may have been somewhat misleading.<sup>48</sup> The same conclusion is suggested by something Hugo F. Boss's daughter Hildegard Bazlen said in an "oral history interview" to the effect that, prior to the world economic crisis, her father's economic situation had always been perfectly all right. Only after 1929, she said, had things "turned bad".<sup>49</sup>

When the Hugo Boss clothes factory was established in Metzingen in January 1924<sup>50</sup> it continued an already lengthy tradition of textile and garment production in the town and in the surrounding Erms valley.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the whole area covered by the Reutlingen Chamber of Commerce was seen as a center of the ready-to-wear clothing industry.<sup>52</sup> Ever since the 1870s, numerous textile businesses had been started up there. In 1910, with a population of 6,337, Metzingen had as many as ten textile and clothing firms.<sup>53</sup> By 1925 this figure had already risen to 18 (mostly quite small) operations in the sector, employing 1,317 workers out of a total labor pool of 2,597. In other words, by the mid-1920s more than one in two employed persons in Metzingen was working in the textile industry.<sup>54</sup> The biggest firm in 1925 in terms of numbers employed was Gaenslen & Völter, a cloth-weaving operation with 212 workers on the payroll. At the time, Hugo Boss did not yet figure as one of Metzingen's larger textile operations.<sup>55</sup> The fact that both the population and the number of workers employed in industry there rose steadily from the turn of the century onwards shows, moreover, that Metzingen was becoming increasingly attractive as an industrial small town, while surrounding locations such as Urach or Dettingen tended to stagnate.<sup>56</sup> This industrial "cluster formation" (to exaggerate slightly) may even have seemed like another good reason for setting up a clothing factory there.

**Table 3 Population growth in Metzingen<sup>57</sup>**

1890	1905	1933	1939
5,311	5,856	7,040	7,752

So with 10 sewing machines as his "starting capital", Hugo F. Boss sought to create a manufacturing operation, apparently retaining his parents' shop as a sales outlet. In the early days, the new firm produced wind-jackets, shirts, and underwear.<sup>58</sup> One of the things it did

was to work on a contract basis for a Munich distributor by the name of Rudolf Born. As Hugo F. Boss said later in a statement to the denazification court, “In the ensuing years I received orders for the production of colored shirts, specifically red shirts, black shirts, blue shirts, and brown shirts. They were ordinary civilian orders, in connection with which it was not until much later that I learned that these were party shirts for various political tendencies as well as Catholic youth associations.”<sup>59</sup> Whether Hugo F. Boss was really so unaware of what the shirts were being used for, as he later claimed, cannot be resolved. He may, however, have been telling the truth – for the reason that it was not until the late 1920s that the brown shirt became part of the official uniform of the NSDAP and the SA.<sup>60</sup> However, it was used in public for the first time in the autumn of 1924, and it served as official dress of the “Frontbann” [the re-named organization into which the SA was incorporated after its ban in the wake of the 1923 Munich Putsch].<sup>61</sup> Actually, the spread of contracts tends to suggest a marked political indifference on the part of Hugo F. Boss at this time. There is some question as to whether, in this early period, he could even afford a political preference from the business point of view. However, during the Third Reich, Boss did exploit his having produced brown shirts as early as he had in order to talk his firm up in advertisements as a supplier to the party “since 1924”.<sup>62</sup> Even if (as we have seen) this was an exaggeration, it does not alter the fact that he boasted of the connection.

No meaningful business figures have come down to us from the years preceding 1932.<sup>63</sup> However, business in the 1920s already seems to have been anything but brisk – in line with the generally unfavorable development of the clothing industry throughout Germany. In 1925 and 1926 Hugo Boss was obliged to put its workforce on notice of short-time working.<sup>64</sup> Having received a number of orders from the Munich textile distributor Rudolf Born in 1924 (as we have seen), the firm lost touch with Born from 1925 to 1927, when contact between them resumed. But by Boss’s own account, subsequent business relations with the Munich firm were problematic. Rudolf Born was, by this time, encountering solvency difficulties<sup>65</sup> and failed to honor various bills; as a result, the Boss business sustained a loss of RM 18,000.

In other words, at the time when the German economy became caught up in the world economic crisis, the Hugo Boss company was little more than a small manufacturer organized on a craft-trade basis, employing a mere 30 or so persons and performing outwork for a fixed return. Clearly, these were not good conditions for dealing with the deepest crisis that the industrial age had ever faced.

As a result of economic developments from 1929 onwards, things went badly for the Hugo Boss company, as they did for the Metzinger economy as whole in the early 1930s. For

instance, one of the largest firms in town, the Henning Engineering Works, was “on a knife’s edge”.<sup>66</sup> Hugo F. Boss was also obliged to cut his workforce by almost a quarter:

**Table 4 Workforce at Hugo Boss 1927-1930<sup>67</sup>**

Year	Workers			Salaried staff			Total
	male	female	both	male	female	both	
1927	1	22	23	3	2	5	<b>28</b>
1928	2	23	25	2	2	4	<b>29</b>
1929	2	20	22	1	3	4	<b>26</b>
1930	2	17	19	2	1	3	<b>22</b>

Boss later stated that his firm had been hugely affected by the world economic crisis. They had only, he said, been able to produce inadequate quantities of hunting suits, national-costume jackets, leather jackets, raincoats, blue work clothes, and the like.<sup>68</sup> By 1931 the company could no longer avoid bankruptcy. However, after some tough negotiations, it was able to reach an accommodation with its creditors, whereby the latter had a third of its assets transferred to them. And since those same creditors had the goodness to lease six impounded sewing machines back to the company, Hugo Boss was able to continue production.<sup>69</sup>

Another reason why these events were important, as regards the history of the firm, is that in the same year as his business was forced to conclude a settlement with its creditors, Hugo F. Boss joined the NSDAP. Almost simultaneously he received orders for the production of brown shirts for the party and its organizations (at the time, no doubt mainly the Hitler Youth and the SA). Later, Hugo F. Boss gave two versions of his motivation for joining the party. At the first denazification hearing, he explained that he had become a member of the party because he hoped that the National Socialists would do something about the rampant unemployment. In a later version, dating from 1947, he added that without taking out party membership he would not have received the orders. In other words, the step was prompted not least by economic calculation, given the desperate plight of his firm.<sup>70</sup>

The first thing to bear in mind in connection with such statements, made in the context of denazification proceedings, is that in most cases they were made with the help of lawyers. So they tend to reflect what the denazification authorities wanted to hear and, therefore, what would improve the defendant’s chances in court. This resulted in certain stereotypical denazification templates. The issue in question here is whether or not it is plausible that, without being a party member, Boss might never have received the orders. That is very hard to say. Of the instances that have come down to us, some are positive and some negative. The

reason why the leather firm of Breuninger, studied by Petra Bräutigam, received contracts from the Military Procurement Department [*Heeresbeschaffungsamt*] is that it gave support to the National Socialists early on (in 1931, for instance, when there was a strike in the Württemberg leather industry, Breuninger used SA men as strike-breakers).<sup>71</sup> And there are other examples both for and against the need for party membership.<sup>72</sup> However, it should also be kept in mind that Hugo F. Boss joined the NSDAP at a time when the National Socialists were yet to achieve power. In contrast to the years after 1933, when it was overwhelmed with applications, at the time Hugo F. Boss joined the party was still campaigning for new members. So Hugo F. Boss's statement must not be taken indiscriminately as an attempt to justify his behavior.

If in this respect it is difficult to give a straightforward answer to what is ultimately a purely hypothetical question; it is also rather pointless. The fact is, there can be little dispute that Hugo F. Boss was already a supporter of the National Socialists and that being a member of the NSDAP probably gave him an advantage when it came to receiving contracts. Certainly, it would have done him no harm. We have no cause to assume that Hugo F. Boss was inwardly remote from National Socialism or even rejected it (his leaving the Church showed that much). Nor was any such claim put forward in the numerous mitigating statements in his denazification proceedings, statements in which Hugo F. Boss tended much more to be painted as the "good Nazi" who, though a "party comrade", did not discriminate against a person on the grounds that he or she was a *Nicht-Parteigenosse* [not a member of the NSDAP party], nor did he ever denounce anyone. That his pro-party attitude in no way changed subsequently seems plausible, in so far as he owed the upturn in his own company's fortune to the success of National Socialism. Yet, even in 1931, joining the party was not a hard step for him to take, particularly in view of the fact that it was the party that brought him the orders that saved his firm. His youngest daughter, Doris Braunwarth, giving her "oral history interview" at a later date, alleged that, initially, her father had been excited about things, but that subsequently he had been "very depressed".<sup>73</sup> Incidentally, while we are on the subject of Hugo F. Boss's career in the NSDAP, by his own account, he was a so-called "patron member" [*förderndes Mitglied*] of the SS for some months.<sup>74</sup> Not that this implied formal membership – simply financial support. It was a status that quite a number of businessmen possessed in the 1930s.<sup>75</sup>

As will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, the NSDAP orders helped Hugo F. Boss steer his business back into calmer waters, although they would not have been sufficient on their own to secure his livelihood during the 1930s (such was not to be the case

in comprehensive terms until the Second World War). However, Boss was able to benefit from the general economic upswing that began at the end of 1932 and was increasingly [in Germany] borne by the arms boom set in train by National Socialism.<sup>76</sup> In 1932, the Hugo Boss company employed a mere 19 people; in the following year the figure was back up to 32 employees.<sup>77</sup> And in future years, it was to multiply enormously.

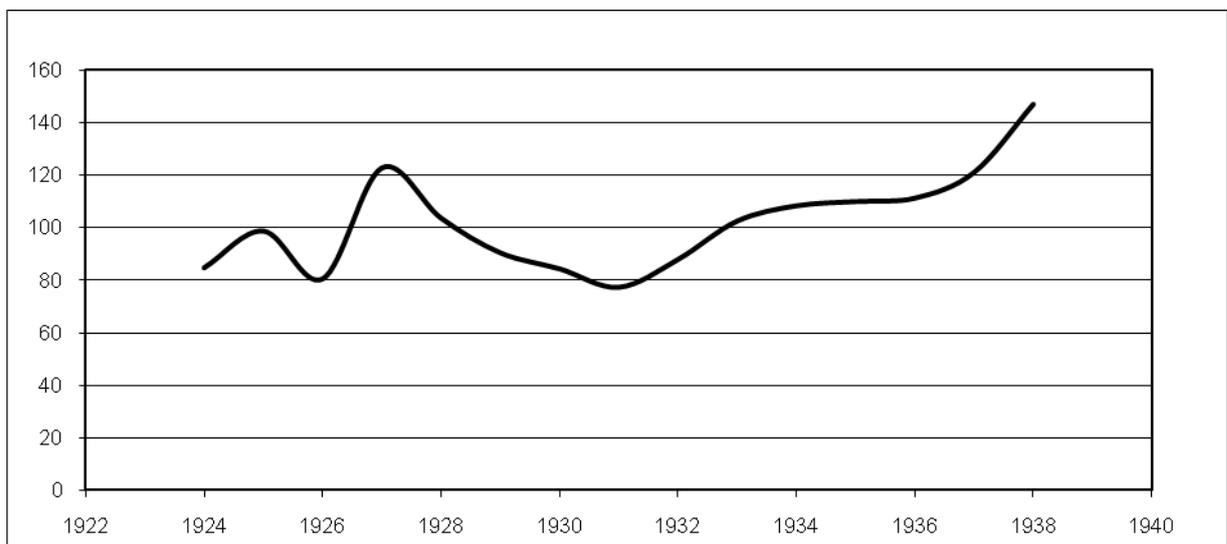
## Chapter 2      Key elements of the corporate history of Hugo Boss 1933-1945

### 2.1      General conditions of uniforms manufacture in the Third Reich

#### 2.1.1      *The uniforms and clothing industry in the 1930s*

Following the massive collapse of the clothing industry during the world economic crisis, the sector started to gradually improve during the recovery that was observed in the autumn of 1932, at first slowly, but then strengthening markedly.<sup>78</sup> According to the production index given in Walther G. Hoffmann's study, the years 1933 and 1934 showed steady growth, although 1935 and 1936 exhibited a slight stagnation. However, in the final years before the outbreak of war, production soared.

**Diagram 1      Index of garment production in Germany, excluding leather-processing, 1918-1945 (1913 = 100)<sup>79</sup>**



Nevertheless, this generally positive development of Germany's clothing industry up until 1939 is deceptive if we simply consider the bare figures; we need to look in far greater detail.

For instance, the closely allied textile industry was affected by large-scale government intervention at an early stage, with the Fibrous Material Decree [*Faserstoffverordnung*] enacted in 1934 and the Woven Fabric Law [*Spinnstoffgesetz*] that came into force in 1935, regulating business life in this sector in a comprehensive manner. Gerd Höschle takes the view that the textile industry was used as the test bed for a radical program of state interventionism that was to be rolled out gradually over the entire German economy in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> On the one hand, this imposed strict export controls, which had the effect of cutting off the country's supply of foreign exchange; in fact, a chronic shortage of foreign exchange was among the biggest economic problems to face the Third Reich.<sup>81</sup> On the other, not only did rigid price controls come into being, but there was also a general reduction of production capacities – plus compulsory replacement of such natural raw materials as cotton, silk, or wool by synthetic substitutes<sup>82</sup> (which had a very serious effect on the clothing industry in particular) was then sped up, notably from 1936 onwards as part of the National Socialist Four Year Plan.<sup>83</sup>

Even if instances of government intervention in the clothing industry at the administrative level were, initially, much less pronounced than in the textile industry, the former was, nevertheless, massively affected by the latter's being placed in leading-reins, so to speak. This is apparent not least from poor export figures during the 1930s. Contemporary journalists seldom admitted as much, but this was very largely due to a decline in competitiveness brought about by enforced admixture of synthetic fibers (although here the occasional exception might be made in respect of export goods). On the other hand, there was a possibility of making up for the collapse in export sales through an increase in domestic demand, although in this case only relatively low prices could be charged.<sup>84</sup> As a result, it was a long time before sales figures for the sector as a whole regained the levels they had known in the late 1920s.

At the same time, there was another respect in which the clothing industry was undergoing certain profound changes. Most of these had to do with the fact that Jewish-owned businesses were successively being forced out of the market or "Aryanized", as the process was termed. Until the mid-1930s, firms with Jewish proprietors had been dominant principally in the section of the industry devoted to female outer clothing – a fact that the National Socialists found particularly irritating.<sup>85</sup> A report produced by a body set up in 1934-35, the "Clothing Industry Economic Group" [*Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie*], gave alarming proof of how "successful" this piece of persecution had been. However, the important thing in this connection is that the 1942 overview, reproduced below, used the National Socialist definition

whereby a firm was deemed “Jewish” if according to racial criteria its proprietor counted as a Jew.<sup>86</sup>

**Table 5 Jewish firms in the clothing sector<sup>87</sup>**

<b>Branch</b>	<b>% of Jewish firms in 1934</b>	<b>% of Jewish firms in 1938</b>
Womenswear	79.5	0.9
Rainwear	64.3	—
Menswear and boyswear	56.2	0.7
Underwear (excluding corsetry)	53.4	0.2
Braces	47.5	0.4
Fabric hosiery	43.8	—
Ladies’ millinery	42.0	—
Hat and cap accessories	40.0	—
Leatherwear	39.1	—
Workwear and sportswear	37.0	—

As can be seen, by 1938 the ousting of Jewish entrepreneurs from the various branches of the clothing industry was virtually complete. The uniforms industry, however, was an area in which only a small number of Jewish entrepreneurs operated. In 1934 they occupied 9.2 percent of it (well below average, even at the time), while only a year later their share stood at 1.4 percent. By 1939, it was down to nil.<sup>88</sup> The lower rate of Jewish participation in the uniforms industry will have meant that, even had Hugo F. Boss entertained desires in that direction, very few favorable opportunities for carrying out “Aryanizations” would have presented themselves.

One strikingly obvious (and, so far as the clothing industry was concerned, very significant) consequence of National Socialist rule was the rapid spread of a culture of uniform-wearing among the German population. Although, in reality, this had started to become apparent in the highly politically polarizing years of the world economic crisis. Uniforms increasingly defined the “look” of German society, not only with the SA (whose uniforms were, for a while, seen as possessing a certain “chic”)<sup>89</sup> as the largest grouping in the NSDAP (until the temporary ban in the summer of 1934), but also with the Hitler Youth (in which 5.4 million children and young people were organized as early as 1936)<sup>90</sup> and the “League of German Girls” [*Bund deutsche Mädel* or BDM], right up to the Gestapo and the SS. That is what Alfred Kemper, chairman of the uniforms-industry sub-section of the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie*, meant when he described the years 1918 to 1930 as the “uniforms-despising systems time”,<sup>91</sup> whereas after the world economic crisis more and more organizations began to adopt a distinctive mode of dress. Hugo F. Boss, then, had

settled, as early as 1931, on an area of manufacture that was later (particularly from 1933) to flourish, soon developing into a promising clothing-industry niche. An important by-product of this was the creation of an expanding branch of the retail trade, the so-called “brown shops” where uniforms, NSDAP accessories, and other such things were sold.<sup>92</sup>

That is to say, the increasing demand for uniforms had its origin, firstly, in the steady expansion of the armed forces and early preparations for mobilization and, secondly, in the growth of National Socialist organizations. The customers were either army procurement offices (for instance, military clothing departments [*Heeresbekleidungsämter*], although these were sometimes producers themselves),<sup>93</sup> those of the post office, the police, and so on, or the NSDAP’s own national quartermaster office, the *Reichszeugmeisterei*, established in 1929. Most orders were farmed out: the producers of the uniforms were supplied with the appropriate fabric, which they then cut and stitched. Sometimes the fabric was supplied already cut out. Producers, incidentally, had no influence on the cutting patterns. So there is no truth in the rumor that Hugo Boss “designed” NSDAP or SS uniforms; that was something that the relevant organizations did themselves. Hitler occasionally inspected designs, passing some and vetoing others.<sup>94</sup> There were also relatively detailed manufacturing regulations. For instance, until well into the war, buttons had to be sewn on by hand, which sometimes held back any kind of effective rationalization of uniforms production.<sup>95</sup>

During the 1930s, as we have already seen, the uniforms industry experienced a pronounced upswing. At the time of its foundation in 1935 the uniforms industry sub-section of the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie* had 228 members, but by 1937 that number had already risen to 401. Between 1937 and 1938 alone the branch was able to increase its domestic sales by 20 percent.<sup>96</sup> A survey of operational structure shows that in the uniforms branch, as in the clothing industry as a whole, small and medium-sized firms predominated. Accordingly, manufacture of uniforms was a markedly decentralized affair:

**Table 6 Business sizes in the German uniforms industry in 1938<sup>97</sup>**

Type of operation	Sales (upper limit)	No. of firms
Very small	RM 20,000	37
Small	RM 50,000	85
Medium	RM 100,000	91
Medium-large	RM 500,000	158
Large	RM 1,000,000	19
Very large	over RM 1,000,000	11
		-----
		401

In 1938, with sales of RM 574,093, Hugo Boss was just inside the “large” category – a relative term, of course. But the company was not producing solely uniforms at this time; it was one of the “mixed operations” that the uniforms industry sub-section rather disapproved of.<sup>98</sup> In fact, specialist uniforms producers, some of which had been active in the branch for decades, generally found it irritating that in the years after 1933 many of the firms competing for public contracts in the field had previously wanted to have nothing to do with uniforms. However, the authorities awarding the contracts (notably the NSDAP’s *Reichszeugmeisterei*) were themselves partly to blame for this. The party’s own procurement office deliberately scattered the awards sometimes with a view to support smaller firms.<sup>99</sup> The wider aim of having all of society dressed in uniforms was, thus, closely bound up with measures to promote business.

The degree of rationalization within the branch remained relatively small. The uniforms industry sub-section of the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie* classed only 18 of the 401 firms for which it was responsible as “thoroughly rationalized”, while 242 were said to be of moderate efficiency, and 141 were described euphemistically as “technologically developing” [*technisch in der Entwicklung*]. However, the Second World War was to bring about striking changes in this area. In 1938, forms of work were as follows:

**Table 7 Working methods and worker numbers in the uniforms industry in 1938<sup>100</sup>**

Type of activity	No. of workers involved
Individual piece work	1,411
Batch work	5,735
Partial work	10,851
Assembly-line work	3,421
<i>Total no. of factory workers</i>	<i>21,418</i>
<i>Outworkers</i>	<i>3,024</i>

At this point in time, then, altogether 24,442 wageworkers were employed in the [German] uniforms industry with an additional 2,700 salaried staff.<sup>101</sup>

Even though the armament policy of the National Socialists led, on the one hand, to a clearly perceptible upswing in the uniforms industry, on the other, it must be pointed out that, during the 1930s, uniforms manufacture did not yet play a crucial role within the clothing industry. Granted, the latter was seen as a “boom branch”, but up until the outbreak of the Second World War, its economic significance was still comparatively minor. In 1938, for instance, the uniforms-production branch turned over a total of RM 79.24 million – a mere 4.2 percent of the turnover of the entire clothing industry, which in the same year amounted to RM 1.88 billion:

**Table 8 Sales in the clothing industry in 1938<sup>102</sup>**

Specialist sub-section	1938 sales (in millions of RM)	Percentage
Women’s outerwear industry	369.7	19.7
Men’s and boys’ outerwear industry	345.8	18.5
Underwear industry (excluding corsetry)	340.7	18.2
Work- and sportswear industry	245.7	13.1
<i>Uniforms industry</i>	<i>79.2</i>	<i>4.2</i>

The rise in demand for uniforms, therefore, did not initially result in the uniforms industry becoming a dominant sphere within the clothing sector, even if these statistics do not clarify whether firms specializing in men’s outerwear, for example, did not also tailor uniforms. Nevertheless, as Bruno Zopp, chief executive of the uniforms industry sub-section of the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie*, made clear at a meeting in 1938, the sub-section was aware that it would always have to oscillate between a peacetime and a war economy, and be prepared for mobilization if and when it came. Its advent was to be sooner than most people at the meeting had, perhaps, expected.<sup>103</sup>

### 2.1.2 *Clothing production and uniforms production during the Second World War*

The situation of the clothing sector, as a whole, was to deteriorate drastically during the Second World War. Rationing was brought in as early as 1940 with the “clothing card” [*Kleiderkarte*], which had the effect of abolishing the free market in civilian clothing for the foreseeable future. Clothes manufacture serving non-military purposes was reduced ever more fiercely during the war, and in the last two years of the fighting, both outerwear and underwear, were difficult to obtain (except on the black market), if you could get hold of them at all. This was demonstrated, in a somewhat subversive way, in the anecdote recounted in Irene Günter’s history of fashion under National Socialism, according to which women used to put clothes coupons into government-imposed recycling collections as scrap paper.<sup>104</sup>

The increasingly frequent cuts in capacity resulted not only in factories being shut down; but also there was the additional problem that it was becoming increasingly difficult for firms producing essential goods to the war effort to obtain or retain specialist workers. With manpower generally in short supply, most of the better-paid jobs were in the capital-goods industries.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, firms in the clothing sector were obliged to drastically reduce their range. This happened, for instance, in connection with the “specialization campaign” [*Spezialisierungsaktion*] introduced in April 1942 with the goal of getting rid of the more extensive production programs. For each specialist classification system, a number of related items were bracketed together in “goods categories” [*Warengruppen*]. From then on, each individual firm was only permitted to manufacture a limited number of goods categories, depending on the efficiency of the firm in terms of quality and production technology. Companies in the clothing sector were also divided by government edict into different productivity groups. There were the so-called “optimal operations” [*Bestbetriebe*], the general average (deemed worthy of retention), and finally the firms that, from the standpoint of technical rationalization, merited closure.<sup>106</sup> As a result, this freed up manpower and operating plants, resulting in a greater degree of rationalization imposed on production. A typical way in which this occurred was by reducing relatively unproductive manual manufacture and favoring workshop operations.<sup>107</sup>

Given such conditions, which for the clothing sector as a whole were somewhat precarious, producing uniforms became a highly attractive business, as it had been in the First World War.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, when the Second World War came along, uniforms were virtually the only bit

of the clothing industry where government-imposed restrictions were less stringent and raw materials and labor easier to come by. Capacities in the clothing industry as a whole had begun to be curtailed as early as mid-1939, and by 1943 production across the textile sector was to drop by almost half. But, in the early years of the Second World War much of production consisted of uniforms and work outfits.<sup>109</sup> Many (mostly very small) clothing firms are known to have switched entirely to making uniforms in the Second World War. For instance, for the village of Leidersbach in the Spessart Mountains of southern Bavaria, there is documentary evidence of producers of men's outerwear producing only uniforms in the First and Second World Wars, despite the fact that they had not done so beforehand and ceased doing so afterwards.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, clothing plants were occasionally leased – a phenomenon familiar from the First World War in sectors of the economy that were of minor importance to the war effort.<sup>111</sup> For instance, in the same village of Leidersbach, a Berlin company rented a uniforms-making facility.<sup>112</sup> In 1941, the well-known fashion company Peek & Cloppenburg ran advertisements in Berlin metro stations that it was now producing uniforms because of the war, but would then, after the war, go back to making fashions for exquisite tastes.<sup>113</sup>

While the clothing industry as a whole suffered heavily from the resource cuts necessitated by a war economy, uniforms production was able to expand after 1939. Unfortunately, no statistical material could be found to quantify that expansion more precisely, but according to statements from contemporary sources (and not least, the example of the Hugo Boss company) it is an undoubted fact. Certainly, there are individual cases of rapid corporate expansions in this area that, at the same time, throw light on the conditions of uniforms production. The firm of Erich Reitz in Wuppertal is a prime example. In its old location, this company experienced major difficulties because of the dominance of the arms industry in the region. With the backing of government agencies, however, it was able to develop a new production facility in Antwerp within a very short time, which by the end of 1941 was already employing more than 2,300 people. That made it the largest German uniforms producer of the day.<sup>114</sup> However, compared with the huge firms operating in heavy industry, mechanical engineering, or aircraft production, the company was still a dwarf. The chief executive of the uniforms industry sub-section of the *Wirtschaftsgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie*, Bruno Zopp, described an operation employing between 600 and 1,000 persons as ideal (including from the standpoint of rationalization technology) for manufacturing uniforms.<sup>115</sup>

Military mobilization led, not only to a rapid rise in demand for uniforms, but also to a broader range of sizes. While before the war, off-the-peg sizes for soldiers had, to some extent, been standard, uniforms had to now be manufactured for a variety of different “body

types”. One Swabian uniforms manufacturer reported that in his factory more than 58 different sizes of uniform were produced, but this was probably an extreme case.<sup>116</sup> There was also the fact that uniforms needed to be adapted to countless different climatic and geographical conditions – for the desert, as well as (after the failed “Barbarossa” campaign) for the Russian winter.<sup>117</sup>

The placing of orders in uniforms production was for a long time primarily a matter for military clothing agencies, but during the war, it underwent numerous changes, at least in regards to uniforms for the armed forces. Initially, with the outbreak of hostilities, the Military Procurement Office [*Wehrmachtsbeschaffungssamt*] was resurrected. In January 1940, responsibility for military requirements in terms of clothing and other textile items was transferred to Procurement Department V5 of the Military Administration Office [*Beschaffungsabteilung V5 des Heeresverwaltungsamtes*]. The powers of this department were successively expanded as the war went on. In the end, this department was also taking care of leather products (footwear, mainly) and catering for the army.<sup>118</sup> It constituted the receiving-point for requisitions for the individual forces (army, navy, air force, *Waffen-SS*, etc.). In the case of uniforms, the fabric requirement was then worked out and balanced against the quantities available. Subsequently, in the first period of the war, either contracts were awarded after tender or orders were filled on a “private” [*freihändig*] basis by firms that had already been supplying the military for some time. Here, incidentally, price was not the only thing that counted; so did factors such as delivery date and quality.

However, raw materials were already becoming a major problem. Firms were allotted purchasing quotas according to their production capability. A decision was, therefore, taken as early as 1941-42 that the *Wehrmacht* should meet its own raw-materials requirements – which turned out to be all the more necessary as the war continued and these raw materials became scarcer. As a result, the private system of granting contracts, very familiar in the 1930s, quickly disappeared and a comprehensive fixed-price system was introduced to cover military demand. The armed-forces procurement authority received stronger and stronger backing from the arms-inspection authority, allowing it to select firms that met its production needs and to award contracts accordingly.<sup>119</sup>

So, while organizational responsibility for uniforms production originally (at the start of the war) lay with the *Wehrmacht*, from the beginning of the 1940s onwards that power was repeatedly challenged by government agencies. In 1940, for instance, the “Clothing Distribution Agency” [*Verteilungsstelle für Bekleidung*] was established under the umbrella of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and gave itself a role in the granting of contracts for

military uniforms. While on the one hand a representative praised the fact that the new agency's work had greatly improved coordination between textile and clothing industries in the area of uniforms manufacture, on the other hand he virtually admitted in the same breath that the unfortunate problem of contracts being awarded twice over (by the new government agency and by the *Wehrmacht*) had now been largely resolved. In other words the system of dual responsibility cannot have worked all that well, particularly at the beginning of the war.<sup>120</sup>

Another prominent example is the Würzburg entrepreneur Joseph Neckermann, later to become a household name for his mail-order business. Neckermann owed his economic rise in large part to the huge demand (it ran into millions) for winter uniforms for the Russian campaign, after the *Blitzkrieg* strategy had failed to produce the expected result. At the end of December 1941, Neckermann, partly in close collaboration with Hans Kehrl and Otto Ohlendorf, had started up a business called the Central Storage Community for Clothing. Through the "Imperial Clothing Agency" [*Reichsstelle Kleidung*], a government body on which Neckermann served as the adviser responsible, government orders went to his firm. Of those winter uniforms, 2.5 million went through the books of the agency in a comparatively short time, with the awarding of the relevant contracts bypassing the Military Procurement Office.<sup>121</sup> This shows that the polycratic decision-making structures of the NS administration clearly found expression in the production of uniforms as they did in other areas.<sup>122</sup> Government agencies and the military competed for the privilege of designing and awarding contracts for winter uniforms, and, in this instance, Neckermann and his companions eventually came out on top. When it came to actually producing the uniforms, extensive recourse was had to forced labor. Unfortunately, how far the Hugo Boss company was involved in such manufacturing operations could not be determined.

Producing uniforms was attractive to clothing manufacturers not only because it provided access to manpower and raw materials; but because it also offered clear advantages so far as production technology was concerned. The big obstacle to rationalization in the clothing industry (it is mentioned repeatedly) was the wide variability of fashions and tastes, which scarcely made it a simple matter to manufacture certain garments on a mass-production basis. This was particularly true of female clothing, although the lingerie industry had come a relatively long way in this respect.<sup>123</sup> Such limitations applied to a very much lesser extent in the production of uniforms. This, after all, was an area where the very point was to produce, on a massive scale, clothing that exhibited little variation. Accordingly, an attempt was made to overcome the rationalization deficits that had hampered the clothing industry as a whole in the manufacture of uniforms – anticipating, so to speak, the way the clothing industry

developed after the Second World War.<sup>124</sup> That is why, it comes as no surprise, that journalists at the time laid frequent stress on the rationalization achievements of the uniforms-manufacturing branch. Anselm Lippisch, for instance, wrote in 1944 that the production of uniforms had always “shown the strongest tendency towards the big-business format”.<sup>125</sup> “For understandable reasons the outwork system and the intermediary master cannot be used here, as a result of which the entire production process, down to sewing on the last button, has to be performed in the firm’s own workshops.” With some pride he noted in connection with the nationalized big businesses of the Viennese clothing industry that they were “nowadays equipped with the latest automatic cutters and other machines” and could henceforth compete with the most modern companies in Greater Germany [as Germany was called after the 1938 annexation of Austria].<sup>126</sup>

However, the example of Hugo Boss (as described in greater detail in the next section), shows that this picture, which owes its existence to a rationalization rhetoric that, to some extent, even got out of hand during the Second World War, by no means reflects the whole of reality. There were, indeed, certain improvements in manufacturing methods, but the outwork system was neither supplanted entirely nor was mass-production introduced in any grand scale. Numerous simplifications were, in fact, made during the early years of the war in terms of the manufacture of uniforms for the *Wehrmacht*. The regulations governing production technology gradually permitted increased use of specialized machines. From 1942, for example, buttons no longer had to be sewn onto uniforms by hand. On the other hand, various other provisions hindered consistent mechanization of uniforms production right up until 1944.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, even in the emergency created by the harsh Russian winter, the cut and elaborate manufacture of military uniforms continued to play a role<sup>128</sup> – a fact that highlights even further the special status enjoyed by uniforms manufacture within the clothing sector. In addition, concentration of facilities and factory closures were not taken to anything like the lengths that might have conceivably been desirable from a purely production-technology point of view.<sup>129</sup>

So it remains to record that, judging by the industrial structure of the clothing sector, throughout the 1930s and subsequently in the Second World War uniforms were produced in a highly decentralized manner. There was no single market leader who dominated the field in this sense – any more than there was in the related field of the textile industry, for instance. This again is of crucial importance as regards classifying the corporate development of Hugo Boss during the Third Reich. What it shows is that, from the standpoint of production potential, Boss simply was one manufacturing operation among many. For this reason alone, a myth that was much bandied about in the press to the effect that the firm was somehow “Hitler’s tailor” seems to have been a

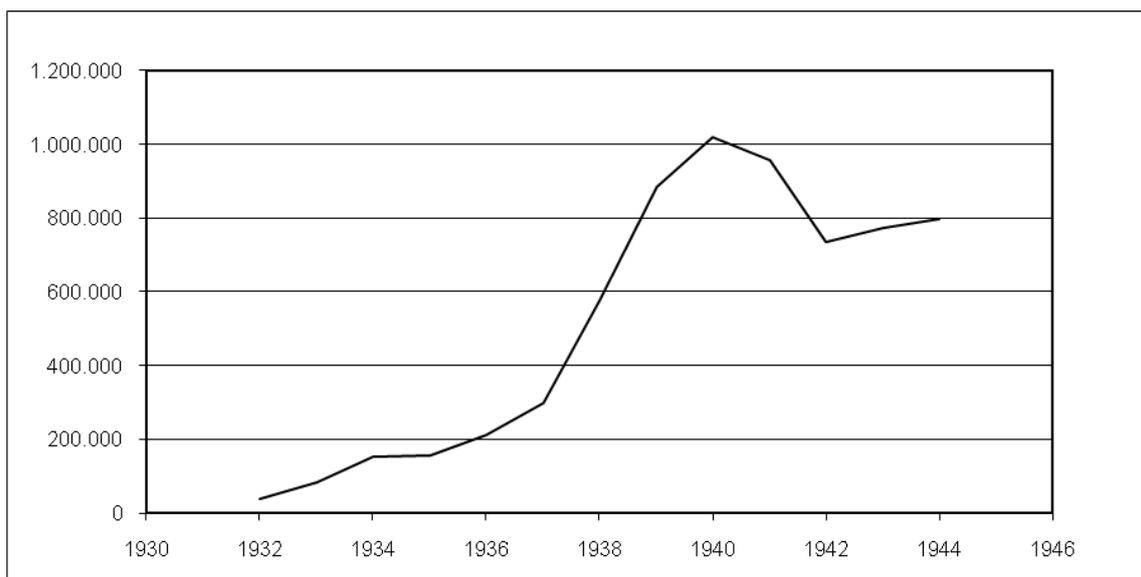
wholly unrealistic exaggeration. How the situation looked in detail, though, and what particular features Hugo Boss manifested will be described more precisely in the following section.

## 2.2 How the firm of Hugo Boss developed in the years 1933 to 1945

Among the consequences of the period of National Socialist rule was that the uniforms industry developed from being what had been an almost negligible sub-branch of the clothing industry to occupy, initially, a significant niche in an industry that, considered as a whole, went through enormous problems during the Third Reich. This applied particularly with regard to the reintroduction of compulsory military service in 1937-38. Eventually, during the Second World War, the business of manufacturing uniforms became the dominant branch within a fiercely regulated and by and large declining industry.<sup>130</sup> The following pages will set out the concrete form this development took in the case of Hugo Boss and the extent to which the firm was able to benefit from the increased demand for uniforms.

The first thing to emerge clearly from consideration of the business figures to be found in Hugo F. Boss's denazification file is that the firm experienced a significant upturn during the Third Reich.

**Diagram 2 Hugo Boss sales 1932-1944 (in RM)<sup>131</sup>**

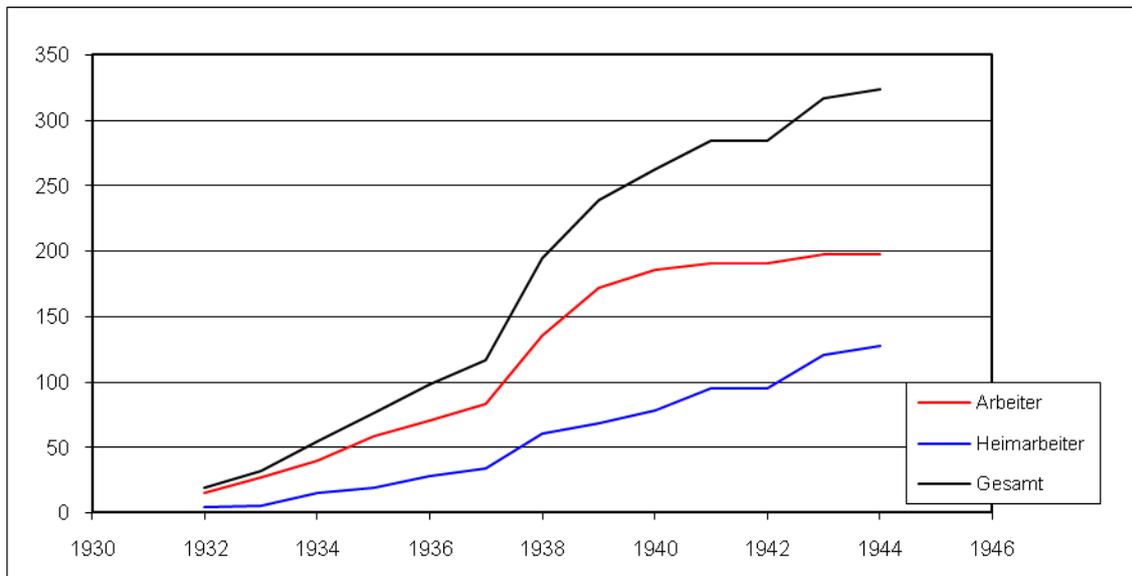


As can easily be seen, until 1936, the firm achieved slowly rising but relatively modest sales figures. Between 1939 and 1940, sales increased rapidly, peaking in the latter year at

RM 1,019,325. In 1942, though, sales fell by a hefty RM 958,039 to RM 733,474, recovering slightly in the two following years (1943 and 1944).

However, the movement reflected in the above diagram does not appear to align with the way the size of the Hugo Boss workforce developed over the same period.

**Diagram 3 Numbers employed at Hugo Boss 1932-1944**<sup>132</sup>



*Arbeiter* = workers

*Heimarbeiter* = outworkers

*Gesamt* = total

From 1938, the in-house workforce rose in approximate proportion to sales, but then it continued to rise slightly even as sales experienced a clear slump. How this apparently contradictory development is to be accounted for will be explored in greater detail below.

Hugo F. Boss was very much concerned in his denazification proceedings to stress that, although he had benefited from party contracts since the early 1930s, they had not been the sole reason for his economic success – far from it; this had been chiefly the result of hard work. For one thing, following the bankruptcy, a number of his workers had shown an appropriate understanding of the precarious state of the company by continuing to work for him at a reduced wage. He had also had the help of his family: “Without the tirelessly loyal assistance of my wife and my two eldest daughters, who used to stay up late working, I could never have got my business back on its feet. I and an assistant and even my wife needed to attend trade fairs and markets; in fact, for something like seven years, up until 1938, I was permanently on the go, Monday to Thursday, selling my own goods at such trade fairs and

markets. We had to work half the night sometimes, for it was often at night that the lorries had to be unloaded. So it was only through tireless effort that I managed to get back on my feet.”<sup>133</sup> The second-eldest daughter of Hugo F. Boss, Hildegard Bazlen [as she became], said very similar things in an oral history interview conducted in 1994. She recounted how her father and his colleague Martin Eberhard had gone around the markets, selling his wares there: “This took them up to Riedlingen and even farther, across the border into Bavaria. They used to have to leave at two, three o’clock in the morning. That’s how we made our first money. It was tough, I can tell you. And it was always ten, eleven o’clock at night before my father got back. Then everything had to be ready to unload the lorry and load up the next one [...].”<sup>134</sup>

Both statements point to the fact that, even if uniforms indubitably formed part of Hugo Boss’s business, at least producing brown shirts and other politically related clothing in the 1930s did not constitute the firm’s sole field of commercial activity. However, such goods did have the advantage that they did not, as a rule, have to be laboriously touted and sold at trade fairs and markets. Advertisements from the mid-1930s show that Hugo Boss offered a broad range of products, and while that range certainly included uniforms for a great range of organizations, other items such as jackets and underwear were on the catalogue at the same time. We have Boss’s own written testimony that the trade-fair attendances continued until 1938 – the year when the firm’s sales started to climb very rapidly. One is inclined to assume that major contracts from government and party sources began to come in at this time, enabling the firm to concentrate increasingly, from 1938 onwards, on manufacturing uniforms. This had several advantages, not the least of which was that it allowed Hugo Boss himself to say goodbye to the afore-mentioned donkey work of patronizing trade fairs. Two contemporary witnesses, O. H. and H. W. (they asked not to be mentioned by name), said that in the late 1930s, when they began their apprenticeships with Hugo Boss, the firm was producing only uniforms for the *Wehrmacht*, together with coats and uniforms for the *Waffen-SS*.<sup>135</sup> Former seamstress Edith Poller, who worked at Hugo Boss from 1935 to 1945, recounted retrospectively (though unfortunately without specifying a date) that government contracts would trigger great euphoria amongst the management: “When the large orders began coming in they were dizzy with relief. They had the feeling: ‘We’ve finally made it.’”<sup>136</sup> In the same year, the firm acquired new and larger premises on Metzinger’s Kanalstrasse from glove manufacturer Gaensslen.<sup>137</sup>

Hugo F. Boss’s skills, as both tailor and tradesman, were described by contemporaries as somewhat limited. For instance, fellow Metzinger townsman Erwin Schuler gave it as his

opinion in an oral history interview that: “Hugo Boss senior was never a good businessman, let alone a good tailor or clothing manufacturer. Then his daughter married a Holy; he was a real master tailor. Having gone bankrupt before the *Machtergreifung* [when the Nazis seized power in 1933]), Boss became the most zealous party man ever. After that, he started producing brown shirts and things began to improve, but then they went bankrupt again. And Holy senior laid the foundations of the present firm. The two boys were then smart enough to make something of it.”<sup>138</sup>

There may well have been some justification for Schuler’s view, since, as we have seen, Hugo F. Boss did not complete his commercial training. The craft of tailoring was one in which, unlike his son-in-law Eugen Holy, he had never served a proper apprenticeship. Yet he was able, ultimately, to make up for this given that in the field of uniforms manufacture there was little room for creativity, as materials, cut, and, to a great extent, even mode of production were prescribed in advance. It followed that, as contemporary journalists stressed repeatedly, here was great scope for rationalizing a sector (namely, the clothing industry) that was still notorious for its craft-trade methods and small-scale operations.<sup>139</sup> Of particular importance in this aspect were the increased mechanization and greater use of factory production, as these were deemed more efficient than the outwork system.<sup>140</sup> However, to judge by the latter criterion, rationalization of production was evidently not very successful, for use of the outwork system rose almost continuously over the years until 1944:

**Diagram 4** Percentage use of the outwork system at Hugo Boss<sup>141</sup>



It is not easy to state unambiguously why percentage use of the outwork system at Hugo Boss remained so high or how this affected the productivity and profitability of the firm – not least

because it is unclear what precisely is meant by *Heimarbeit* or “use of the outwork system”. There is no indication that factory work was necessarily, in every case, either more productive or less costly. To start with, the only thing that distinguished the work of in-house seamstresses, for instance, was that it was done under supervision. On the other hand, where payment was made according to the number of articles delivered, the continuous rise in the use of the outwork system may be misleading as regards the output of the company, which, despite the 1942 sales slump, may well not have declined at all. Thus, in his comprehensive history of the clothing industry Friedrich-Wilhelm Döring points out that increased use of the outwork system during the Second World War can, primarily, be accounted for on a second-job basis, with the majority of outworkers being employed simultaneously in the agricultural sector. Sometimes even older men and married women were recruited in this connection for manufacturing work – people who were ordinarily unavailable so far as the labor market was concerned.<sup>142</sup> So it seems entirely plausible that, at a time when labor generally was in short supply, businesses should rely on the outwork system to an increased extent.

The impression that his firm operated unproductively was one that Hugo F. Boss deliberately tried to play down in his denazification proceedings. That formed part of his defense strategy – namely, to make clear that he had not been the darling of the NSDAP and that it had not been for that reason that contracts had come his way. He drew particular attention to the efforts his operation had made in the direction of rationalization.<sup>143</sup> He pointed out that the 1938 production boost had been coupled with improvements in operational organization including mechanical advances and the introduction of the so-called “Refa system”. “Refa” was short for *Reichsausschuss für Arbeitszeitermittlung* or *Arbeitsstudien*, a government body set up in the days of the Weimar Republic, but massively promoted by the National Socialists to further scientific analysis of production procedures with a view to making them more efficient – for instance, by determining piece-work times. Not least in its “Taylorist” and “Fordist” manifestations, it involved breaking down work processes, rewarding effective performance, and so on.<sup>144</sup> We particularly find a strengthening of attempts to introduce the Refa system into uniform manufacture from the start of the 1940s.<sup>145</sup> Hugo F. Boss stressed that as a result of “division of labor in the smallest positions”, the firm had been able to achieve improved familiarization of workers with their shorter work processes and, hence, increased output. They had also tried to eliminate idle work periods through targeted action. Another thing he mentioned was that it had been possible to save a substantial amount of time by drawing buttonholes, buttons, pockets, collars, sleeve insets, and so on with the aid of patterns.

At first glance, Hugo F. Boss's statement seems contradictory to how he boasts about his own rationalization endeavors, considering that he also mentioned that in 1938 labor costs had stood at RM 1.763 per capita and, towards the end of the war, they had risen in some instances to RM 2.489 a head. These details were supplied in order to show that Boss had not enriched himself at the expense of his workforce and that, for this reason, his profits remained relatively low:

**Table 9 Net sales revenue of Hugo Boss, 1932-1944 (in RM)<sup>146</sup>**

Year	Sales	Net profit	Net sales revenue (percentage)
1932	38,254	4,198	10.97
1933	84,490	14,082	16.67
1934	151,575	4,927	3.25
1935	155,030	22,519	14.53
1936	210,120	11,470	5.46
1937	296,545	10,042	3.39
1938	574,093	28,149	4.9
1939	885,668	65,140	7.35
1940	1,019,325	68,364	6.71
1941	958,039	73,565	7.68
1942	733,472	38,960	5.31
1943	772,627	50,627	6.55
1944	797,122	8,719	0.11

Taken overall, the profit margins of his firm were not exceptionally high; Hugo F. Boss was right about that. But neither, with the exception of 1944, were they exactly low. According to Boss, an average return of 6 percent was normal in the industry and, after the "dividend tax regulation" [*Dividendenabgabe-Verordnung*] of June 1941, the proportion of profit to sales was in fact not permitted to exceed that figure.<sup>147</sup> However, the picture drawn here is not complete without taking account of the 1942 slump in sales. If, in that year, sales declined markedly while numbers employed remained constant and net profit, at RM 38,960, though well down, was still acceptable, the only possible explanation is that in that year the firm received lower prices for its uniforms. We also need to bear in mind that from March 1, 1942, prices for public contracts in the area of uniforms manufacture were fixed. Whereas previously it had been possible to award contracts on the open market, with price being only one of a number of elements, now there were five wage groups. Firms in the first wage group supplied goods for the lowest prices at the same time as receiving preferential treatment when orders were being handed out.<sup>148</sup> In this way, the government sought to introduce rationalization incentives, which were reinforced by a stepping up of Refa campaigns around

the same time. By Hugo F. Boss's own admission, his firm was placed in wage group 1c, which was the group with the lowest costs. So the growing dominance of arms contracts at lower prices also exerted pressure on the firm's sales.

However, classification in a particular wage group permit conclusions regarding degree of rationalization only to a certain extent. A firm might also assign itself to the lowest wage group in order to secure the flow of contracts (at the expense of profitability). Be that as it may, the fact is that, during the Second World War, the firm of Hugo Boss was able, by means of piecework and by rationalizing its production technology, to achieve major successes. The area most highly rationalized was cutting, whereas in sewing, apparently, rather less potential was identified. To that extent the contribution of outwork to the firm's degree of rationalization appears somewhat misleading. Regarding the increased personnel costs, that leaves only the explanation that a marked rise in wages (particularly for skilled workers) during the war drove personnel costs upwards.<sup>149</sup> Increased numbers of skilled workers would, in turn, encourage greater endeavors in the direction of rationalization, although this cannot be determined with certainty without reliable data.<sup>150</sup> Another possible explanation is that the employment of forced laborers was not cheaper than a regular staff. In any case, however, the company profited from forced labor because other workers were simply not available.

A key contribution to management during the Second World War was made by Hugo F. Boss's son-in-law, Eugen Holy, who occupied the post of Technical Director from 1939 before being called up in 1944 and eventually becoming a POW.<sup>151</sup> Holy had been born in 1911 of a master-tailor father, Eugen Holy Sen. Both parents were extremely religious, members of the "Strict Bible Students" sect that later gave rise to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Unlike Hugo F. Boss, Eugen Holy Jun. did a full training as a master tailor, like his father. In 1933, following his apprenticeship, he spent a year working as a cutter in Spain. He was employed by Hugo Boss as early as 1936-37, but then left at his own request, switching to the firm of Wilhelm Bleyle. Unfortunately, it cannot be established whether Holy's departure from Hugo Boss was already connected with his growing friendship with Gertrud, eldest daughter of the firm's founder. They were married in 1939, the year in which Holy also joined the NSDAP.<sup>152</sup> After the Second World War, Holy was to become the guiding figure at Hugo Boss, heading the firm until the late 1960s, when he handed the reins to his two sons, Uwe and Jochen Holy.

As seamstress Edith Poller recalled those days (she worked for Hugo Boss from 1938 to 1945), rationalization endeavors were very much intensified under the direction of Eugen Holy.<sup>153</sup> Industrial discipline was tightened and piecework sharpened up on a number of occasions. In the process, however, fresh potential for industrial rationalization emerged starting 1944, as during

the last two years of the war, there was a relaxation of regulations that had formerly required the production of uniforms to involve a large amount of manufacture by hand. Uniforms previously had to be padded manually, for instance, and while buttons might be sewn on mechanically, they must subsequently be covered by hand. However, from 1944 onwards a far wider range of specialized machinery might be deployed.<sup>154</sup> The manufacture of uniforms, which actually lent itself more to mass production than almost any other segment of the clothing industry, was shackled in this respect by government dictate for a long time. Yet, as contemporary journalists were quick to point out, introducing the twin needle machine (as opposed to the single needle model) and, particularly, shifting over to assembly-line manufacture were capable of delivering huge productivity gains.<sup>155</sup>

At the same time, there was a growing awareness towards the end of the war that in the hierarchy of arms manufacture, the production of uniforms was becoming less and less important. It accords with this picture that in many of the units recruited late on in the war, including somewhere, in the last year of the fighting, even 16-year-olds were enlisted, full uniforms were no longer supplied. As early as 1943, the Hugo Boss company was ordered to shut down its factory in order to release materials and labor for arms production. The relevant document is included among Hugo F. Boss's denazification papers – without it being possible to tell how the shut-down was circumvented. At the end of 1944, the firm was required to “accommodate” [*hineinnehmen*] arms manufacturer Norma of Bad Cannstatt, which meant shutting down part of its uniforms-production operation. This is, at least, an indication that from 1944 there was ever-greater emphasis on exploiting territories less affected by Allied air raids.<sup>156</sup> To that extent, the testimony of Hugo F. Boss in his denazification proceedings that moving Norma into his operation proved he had no “standing” with the National Socialists is somewhat lacking in plausibility. On the contrary, such a move reveals primarily how priorities had shifted and points up the concentration of arms production in the final phase of “total war”. Moreover, Boss was allotted temporary space with the Metzinger embroidery firm of Carl Arnold, which the latter was obliged to vacate.<sup>157</sup> This happened in March 1945, so in all probability the move never took place.

That the Hugo Boss company was looked upon with great favor by the National Socialists is further demonstrated by the fact that (on the evidence of a French notary) one of its last contracts came from the very top of the SS.<sup>158</sup> In the light of this, there can be little question of the firm's having enjoyed no “standing” with the regime. It must be pointed out, however, that such an order *from* the top of the SS did not necessarily mean that uniforms were being produced *for* the SS leadership. The source mentions the uniform's grey [*feldgrau*] color and standard cut, so its highly likely that this was a “normal” order about uniforms for the Waffen-SS.

### 2.3 Everyday working life in Metzingen during the Second World War

Apart from the kind of business development we have been looking at, what was everyday working life like in Metzingen and more particularly at Hugo Boss during the Third Reich? In the existence of this small town, at least according to many contemporary witnesses, the coming to power of the National Socialists did not at first constitute an epoch-making upheaval. On the contrary, the concomitant changes appeared only gradually in that communal life became more and more standardized, as happened everywhere, and party functionaries such as the local head, *Ortsgruppenleiter* Eugen Klett, emerged with mounting clarity as key figures. One particularly rabid and (people thought) even blustering local leader, particularly after the *Ortsgruppe* was split up in 1939, was Georg Rath,<sup>159</sup> whose friendship with Hugo F. Boss was later one of the reasons why the first denazification trial handed down a comparatively harsh verdict against the clothing manufacturer.<sup>160</sup>

To a great extent, Metzingen was able to benefit from the 1930s economic boom. Not only did the Hugo Boss company expand; so did firms in the metalworking sector such as the two engineering works, Henning and Holder, and a firm manufacturing ball-bearings, Vereinigte Kugellagerfabriken AG. Other textile businesses were also able to develop their respective positions, like the glove manufacturer Schwenkel, which produced gloves for the armed forces; and the Emil Wurster clothing factory.<sup>161</sup> Because of the firms established in the town, Metzingen attracted increasing numbers of workers. As a result, in January 1939 Metzingen's Mayor, Otto Dipper, complained of a growing housing shortage in the town- In the last few years, he said, 69 families had moved into Metzingen, 10 of them after jobs at Hugo Boss.<sup>162</sup> The population of Metzingen was now some 7,400.

This expansion was to continue in the Second World War. During this time firms that were important militarily (Henning, for instance; even Hugo Boss) were able to boost the size of their payrolls further. For the same reason, the town received increasing numbers of forced laborers, whose history will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. During the 1930s, anti-Semitism also became more and more perceptible in Metzingen. Doris Braunwarth had said in her oral history interview that anti-Semitism as such had not existed previously in Metzingen.<sup>163</sup> This may well

have been partly true; very few Jewish people lived in small Swabian towns at the time. Nonetheless, this statement cannot be allowed to stand on its face. For one thing, the Jewish section of the population of Metzingen had included the businessman Hugo Nathan, partner in the firm of Braunwarth (Hugo F. Boss's youngest daughter Doris was later to marry his fellow partner), who had sold his share in the firm and emigrated in Switzerland back in 1936.<sup>164</sup> Metzingen's remaining Jewish component comprised, we are told, Adolf Herold and his family. Having started out as a textile goods salesman, Herold had then opened a knitwear factory. Moreover, for a long time he had been friends with Hugo F. Boss. The two men used to go hunting together, for instance, and Herold is said to have been a great help to Boss in connection with the latter's bankruptcy proceedings in 1931-32.<sup>165</sup> Walter Herold, Adolf's son, wrote later that his father's old friends had wanted no more to do with him under the Third Reich, which hardly sheds a good light on Hugo F. Boss in human terms. The Herold family left Metzingen in 1938 – after their shop windows had been stove in during *Reichskristallnacht*. They settled initially in Stuttgart, from whence the children emigrated in 1940 (just in time, in other words), eldest daughter Gertrud and son Walter heading for the US, younger daughter Gretel going to Palestine. Adolf Herold's knitwear operation was taken over by the Adolf Baur knitwear factory in Metzingen.<sup>166</sup> In 1941 the Herold parents were deported to Riga, where they died in 1943.<sup>167</sup> However, contact between the Boss and Herold families appears to have survived the Second World War, if perhaps loosely. Hildegard Bazlen placed on record that she had subsequently visited Adolf Herold's daughter in Haifa, and this was confirmed by Doris Braunwarth.<sup>168</sup> But since we are dealing with daughters of Hugo F. Boss here, such statements should be treated with a measure of caution.

So far as everyday working life at Hugo Boss is concerned, apart from the history of forced labor as recounted in the next chapter, there are unfortunately no sources. However, much information can be gleaned from a particular contemporary-witness account – that of former seamstress Edith Poller. Her account provides further confirmation of something that statements made in connection with the Hugo F. Boss denazification proceedings strongly suggest, namely that the management tier of the company consisted very largely of convinced National Socialists.<sup>169</sup> Poller recalled works manager Hans Schmid, who as a matter of principle always came to work in party uniform and of whom several former forced laborers (all female) interviewed retained unpleasant memories.<sup>170</sup> Apart from him, it was particularly a supervisor named Buchmann who mistreated some of the female laborers under him. Hugo F. Boss's eldest daughter Gertrud is said to have paraded her National Socialist convictions, as did (according to another source) Martin Eberhard, a close colleague of Hugo F. Boss for many years.<sup>171</sup>

Concerning Hugo F. Boss himself, however, Poller's verdict was comparatively favorable. She described him as "an easygoing fellow, by and large" who sometimes brought his female workers cakes on the late shift. He did this, she said, out of a desire to create a sympathetic atmosphere.<sup>172</sup> Providing food generally played a very important role during the Second World War. In this respect, the situation at Hugo Boss appears to have been relatively good, one reason being the canteen that was installed on the premises. Hugo F. Boss, who (and there are individual indications of this) because of his diabetes tended to maintain a certain distance between himself and the routine life of his firm during the 1940s, must have gone to considerable trouble to get hold of extra food supplies. Hildegard Bazlen, for instance, reported that her father had been in touch with a Bavarian farm from which he acquired provisions.<sup>173</sup>

In her article about the economic life of Metzingen during the Third Reich, Birgit Rettich-Mutschler writes that most Metzingen businessmen were not so much convinced National Socialists as opportunists. That may have been true of others, but some qualification is necessary with regard to the Hugo Boss company. Here (by Edith Poller's account, at least) most members of management were, in fact, convinced National Socialists, though whether this found expression in their treatment of forced laborers, for instance, is another question. The repressive regime of the NS government was, on the whole, something that management personnel had little cause to fear. This was not of course true of Eugen Holy's family.<sup>174</sup> As we have seen, Holy's parents were "Strict Bible Students", a group that the National Socialists persecuted intensively.<sup>175</sup> This Christian sect numbered some 35,000 members in Germany in the 1930s, at least half of whom (according to Hubert Roser)<sup>176</sup> were forced to undergo official sanctions, which might involve anything from interrogation and arrest by the Gestapo to internment in concentration camps and actual extermination. The elder Holys were arrested by the Gestapo in Stuttgart in June 1944. Eugen Holy Sen. spent two months in preventive detention in Ludwigsburg. His wife Anna, on the other hand, found guilty of "active involvement as a 'Strict Bible Student'", was obliged to remain behind bars from late June 1944 until 26 April 1945 (a total of nine months altogether) before being released by American troops. The greater part of that time she spent in police custody in Ellwangen.<sup>177</sup> What is striking about the lengthy incarcerations of Eugen Holy's parents is that they did not take place until 1944, when persecution of "Strict Bible Students" had lost its initial intensity – for the simple reason that most of them had already been rounded up.

After the war, Eugen Holy Sen. and his wife claimed compensation for these months spent in jail and eventually, in late 1949, received promises of sums of DM 1,350 (Anna Holy) and DM 42.73 (Eugen Holy Sen.) from the State of Baden-Württemberg.<sup>178</sup> What circumstances led to the very late arrest of the elder Holys cannot be determined. However, it seems quite clear that no

conclusion can be drawn from the parents' religious convictions regarding any distance that the son may have maintained between himself and the NS regime. After all, Eugen Holy Jun. did not merely join the NSDAP in 1939; in the same year he actively quit the Catholic church.<sup>179</sup> His previous adherence to Catholicism in itself indicates that his parents' faith left him cold.

### 3 Forced labor at Hugo Boss

#### 3.1 The forced-labor debate and research into the history of forced labor

It has always been known that during the Second World War millions of forced laborers were obliged to work for German companies, but it was only relatively recently that the history of *Zwangsarbeit* [“forced labor”] entered the spotlight of academic research and public concern. An important milestone in this connection was Ulrich Herbert’s study, published in 1985, which first set out in detail the whole story of “foreign workers” in Germany’s wartime economy.<sup>180</sup> However, the debate received a particular fillip in the late 1980s in connection with a book dealing with the history of Daimler-Benz during the Third Reich, which largely left the history of forced labor out of account and was, for this reason, heavily criticized.<sup>181</sup> A few years later came the Daimler-Benz study by Barbara Hopmann, Mark Spoerer, and others.<sup>182</sup> Subsequently, the VW Group financed a wide-ranging study of the Volkswagen works during the Third Reich.<sup>183</sup> Finally, the subject was thoroughly discussed in connection (mainly) with compensation payments to former forced laborers and the establishment of the German Business Compensation Fund [*Entschädigungsfonds der deutschen Wirtschaft*] in the late 1990s. After the media had once again taken up the topic in relation to Hugo Boss, the Metzingen firm too signed up to the compensation fund in 1999.<sup>184</sup> The company further commissioned historian Elisabeth Timm to write an account of its history under National Socialism. They did not publish the account, but neither did they forbid Timm from doing so, with the result that it is available on the Internet.

The compensation debate has produced a wide range of publications dealing with forced labor. Many German big businesses already in existence in the Third Reich commissioned investigations that, while written from the standpoint of corporate history, took a very good look at this topic. So it was that the “conspiracy of silence” that had existed formerly collapsed to some extent, giving way to an obligatory openness that, at the same time, rendered the traditional form of “corporate history” (which had chiefly extolled entrepreneurial performance) impossible. Consequently, historical knowledge of what happened under the forced-labor system has increased significantly in the last 15 years, and the number of studies devoted to the subject is now so vast that it can be difficult to take in. Regional historiography has, in particular, acquired

great merit in this field by processing a large quantity of local source material, thus supplying the building blocks for various syntheses of the debate.<sup>185</sup> Still, historian Werner Plumpe was probably not fully wrong when he remarked a few years ago that forced-labor research, while producing a huge quantitative increase in our empirical knowledge of the subject, has scarcely, in qualitative terms, uncovered any truly new findings regarding the nature and organization of forced labor as such.<sup>186</sup> Maybe so, but for the purposes of the present study it is an advantage to be able to stand on a firm research base and rank the history of forced labor at Hugo Boss accordingly. This makes it possible to evaluate the situation of forced laborers (particularly of the female sex) at Hugo Boss and how they were treated in comparison with other firms.

At the height of forced-labor deployment, official statistics tell us that approximately 7.6 million foreign workers, about half of them women, were working in Germany.<sup>187</sup> Many of those forced laborers came from Poland and the former Soviet Union. The sheer size of that number shows that most companies in the field of arms production employed forced labor, even if many of those laborers must have worked not in industry but in agriculture. At first, they were recruited (or at least some of them) on a voluntary basis, given that, in Poland and elsewhere, there was intensive canvassing for people to come and work in the *Reich*. Nevertheless (as we see from the example of Hugo Boss, among others), as early as 1940 there were Gestapo raids that recruited workers by force. Conversely, in the early years of the war, particularly after the defeat of France in the summer of 1940 French and Belgian prisoners of war were deployed for use as labor in the western districts of Germany.

German recruiting methods became increasingly radical from 1942 onwards with the appointment of Fritz Sauckel as General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment.<sup>188</sup> This was partly to do with the reorganization of Germany's war economy associated with the names of Fritz Todt and (after Todt's death in a plane crash in February 1942) Albert Speer, which had as its purpose to boost the military output of the German Reich by every means possible. One decision taken in this connection was that, instead of the millions of prisoners from the *Ostkrieg* or "war in the East" simply being left to starve, they should be imported into Germany for compulsory labor service.<sup>189</sup> Subsequently, a policy of enforced enlistment of workers from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and other countries was pursued energetically and with enormous ruthlessness. As a result, the number of workers in compulsory employment in the Reich steadily increased, as shown by a statistical survey carried out by Dietmar Petzina and others back in 1978. Nowadays, in fact, the number of forced laborers is reckoned to have been considerably higher.

**Table 10 Mobilization of workers during the Second World War (in millions)<sup>190</sup>**

Year	Workers			Aliens and POWs	Total called up into armed forces	Total no. of workers
	Germans					
	Men	Women	Total			
1939	24.5	14.6	39.1	0.3	1.4	39.4
1940	20.4	14.4	34.8	1.2	5.7	36.0
1941	19.0	14.1	33.1	3.0	7.4	36.1
1942	16.9	14.4	31.3	4.2	9.4	35.5
1943	15.5	14.8	30.3	6.3	11.2	36.6
1944a	14.2	14.8	29.0	7.1	12.4	36.1
1944b	13.5	14.9	28.4	7.5	13.0	35.9

(a = spring; b = autumn/winter)

The increasingly drastic recruitment methods used were a reaction to the way in which rising call-up numbers were creating a serious labor shortage in the German economy, there being evidently no great reserves of female workers in the country that might (without the use of violent measures potentially damaging to the public peace) be mobilized instead. Previous research had interpreted the stagnating numbers of female German workers as resulting from National Socialist ideology, which with its “woman’s place is in the home” approach stood in the way of attracting more of the sex to the labor market. However, against this, Richard Overy was able to demonstrate convincingly that no great reserves existed. In Britain, for instance, which for a long time was seen as a shining model of enhanced worker mobilization under democratic conditions, it was only at the end of the war that the number of women working in industry reached the level that Germany had attained in 1939.<sup>191</sup>

In just the same way as recruitment practice in relation to forced laborers became increasingly ruthless, treatment of such laborers worsened perceptibly as the war went on. One contributory factor was the German government’s racist legislation, which for Poles and *Ostarbeiter* [workers from eastern Europe and the Soviet Union], for instance, prescribed a lower level of remuneration, as well as trying harder and harder to keep them apart from the rest of the population. There were, of course, wide variations in the living conditions imposed on forced laborers. On the one hand, there were extreme cases of “extermination through labor” – such, for instance, as the case of Mittelbau-Dora, where production facilities for the V-2 rockets were literally carved out of a mountain. Here the life expectancy of a forced laborer was measured in weeks, at most.<sup>192</sup> To take another example, the firm of IG-Farben had begun at an early stage (partly as a result of bad investments in synthetic-fuel production in the late 1920s) to make deals with the NS government. These culminated in the setting-up

of the Buna 4 production facility in Auschwitz-Monowitz, where a large number of concentration-camp inmates were forced to work.<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, conditions in the countryside were on the whole better (comparatively speaking) than those in urban environments, just as in small and medium-sized firms they tended to be better than in big industry. This was partly because in the country food was more readily available and extra supplies could usually be obtained. A further contributing factor was that rural areas were less subject to Allied air raids. These represented a particular risk to forced laborers, who were refused access to bomb shelters.

As the pioneering study of the VW factory and its workers in the Third Reich by Grieger and Mommsen showed<sup>194</sup> (and as nearly all historical research done since has confirmed), there was a pronounced ethnic hierarchy so far as the treatment of forced laborers was concerned. So-called “*Westarbeiter*” received better treatment on the whole, enjoyed greater freedom, and were less poorly paid than workers from the East, particularly if they were Slavs and as such deemed “inferior”. At the very bottom of the scale were Jews, who from the early 1940s were in any case, in practical terms, involved in forced labor only as concentration-camp inmates.

A key question is how much freedom of action was available to companies so far as the treatment meted out to forced laborers was concerned. On the one hand, there were strict government regulations. Firms were not allowed to pay forced laborers more than specific, fixed amounts, for instance. Also, the “German Labor Front” [*Deutsche Arbeitsfront* or DAF] organization and the Gestapo exercised a degree of control over forced laborers (although in certain very precarious cases this might even redound to the latter’s relative advantage). On the other hand, companies were able to distribute extra rations, however, by no means was this always done from humanitarian motives; sometimes it was simply a reaction to the fact that under-nourished workers performed less well.<sup>195</sup>

Summarizing the forced-labor debate as it stands today, viewed from the corporate-history standpoint, the first thing to note is that companies acquired such labor in order to make up for shortages on the labor market caused principally by military mobilization. In other words, forced labor was a simple economic resource. Moreover, it was a resource in connection with which it was sometimes possible to make colossal savings, which often made things worse for those constituting that resource. So, if business calculations prompted such acquiring as a rule, the ideological and racist views of management (and not infrequently of staff as well) might seriously aggravate the treatment of the labor acquired. Employers, then, enjoyed

varying degrees of scope, depending on location, period, and situation. This much needs to be made clear before the history of forced labor at Hugo Boss is described in detail.

### **3.2 Recruitment of forced laborers at Hugo Boss**

During the Second World War, the Hugo Boss company employed some 140 forced laborers altogether, mainly women from Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, together with approximately 40 POWs, most of them from France. Their history is far better researched than the general corporate history of Hugo Boss during this period. In particular, oral history interviews have clearly increased our knowledge of forced labor in Metzingen and, hence, at Boss. What follows draws on such interviews and together with the available documentary evidence, seeks to portray and evaluate the manner in which that forced labor was recruited and how the persons concerned were treated.<sup>196</sup>

As we saw in the foregoing chapter, Hugo Boss expanded considerably during the 1930s, and the firm's labor requirement rose accordingly. To meet it, Boss advertised virtually throughout the Reich and attracted seamstresses from as far away as Austria and Bohemia.<sup>197</sup> The Boss company was not alone in this: to take just one example, the number of persons employed in the textile industry in Metzingen rose in the years 1925-37 from 1,317 to 1,557.<sup>198</sup> Yet, even though Hugo Boss tried in many ways to acquire new workers, at the beginning of 1940 it came up against a huge bottleneck. In fact, so did the entire Württemberg textile business, because, although in the field of uniforms production there were large and profitable contracts to be had, workers were, at the same time, moving into other militarily important sectors where wages were sometimes very much higher.<sup>199</sup> For Boss, there was the additional problem that, although the company was keen to expand, seamstresses in particular were in short supply.

It is in this light that an occurrence in the early months of 1940 should be considered, when several Württemberg companies seem to have banded together to recruit labor from occupied Poland.<sup>200</sup> A representative from the Hugo Boss company traveled to southern Poland for this specific purpose. After the war, in connection with Hugo F. Boss's denazification proceedings, ex-employee Frida Rauscher wrote that in May 1940 the *Arbeitsamt* or labor department had assigned 12 Polish women to Hugo Boss. All the women came from the town or region of Bielsko, a center of the Polish textile industry. The representative who traveled to Bielsko was apparently Martin Eberhard, a long-time associate and close colleague of Hugo

F. Boss himself.<sup>201</sup> His mission: to recruit female workers there: “These 12 Polish women were not forced laborers; they put their names down for work voluntarily.” Most of them returned to Poland during 1941 and 1942, some for family reasons and some because they had meanwhile turned out to be “ethnic Germans” [*Volksdeutsche*].<sup>202</sup>

As so often in connection with what Germans call “*Persilscheinen*” [“certificates of ‘whiter-than-white’-ness”], it is difficult in individual instances to distinguish what can actually be believed from what is simply designed to feign innocence. Here, however, the testimony of someone who was appearing as a defense witness is extremely questionable. In fact, what seems to have happened here is that a crucial point (one that might well have incriminated Hugo F. Boss) was deliberately falsified. According to the statement of one of the Polish forced laborers, far from emigrating to Germany voluntarily, they were captured on the occasion of a Gestapo raid and loaded onto transports.<sup>203</sup> Edith Poller recounted: “Suddenly, something like ten Polish women arrived (more, subsequently), who had doubtless been spotted in the street, rounded up, and carried off, that’s what it looked like to me: they were very scared, very afraid, and we realized they had not come of their own accord. They were really desperate. So we tried to calm them down; one of the Polish women – I even stroked her hair. Management didn’t like that. Gertrud Boss marched through the workshop berating us: ‘It’s vital that we think of the national commonweal [*Volksgemeinschaft*]!’ she said, and, ‘You’re undermining community spirit!’”<sup>204</sup>

The Polish women referred to were only the beginning, for the number of forced laborers of both sexes in the firm increased progressively. Other Metzingen companies also showed a clear rise. In total, forced laborers set to work in Metzingen during the Second World War numbered 1,241, with most being employed at the Friedrich Henning engineering works (164), ball-bearing manufacturer Vereinigte Kugellagerfabriken AG (156), and the object of the present study, Hugo Boss (139, although later there were some POWs as well). Another phenomenon observable in Metzingen was that, from 1941-42, French prisoners of war were increasingly replaced by Poles and so-called “Ostarbeiter” who had to display on their clothing, as appropriate, the letter “P” or the prefix “Ost”. Altogether, Russians made up the largest population of forced laborers in Metzingen, with 540 individuals, followed by 228 Poles, 191 French, 68 Dutch, and 52 Belgians.<sup>205</sup>

With regard to Hugo Boss, same pattern uncovered in Petra Bräutigam’s study of the small and medium-sized leather and shoe entrepreneurs of Württemberg is repeated: at first, mainly French forced laborers were to be found in such businesses, but the majority of these were

later replaced by eastern workers. In addition, the early war years often brought French prisoners of war.

**Table 11**      **Distribution of forced laborers (both sexes) at Hugo Boss by nationality**<sup>206</sup>

<b>Country</b>	<b>No.</b>
France	30 (including 25 women)
Belgium	2
Holland	4
Poland	62 (including 51 women)
Russia	5
Other countries	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

To these female forced laborers were added (according to official documents) a further 45 male French workers, although these were not required to work at Boss for longer than the relatively brief period from October 1940 to April 1941. The vast majority of forced laborers were women, as was only to be expected in the clothing industry. Of these, Polish women constituted the clear majority (51), while the French contingent numbered only twenty-five.<sup>207</sup>

Otherwise, assessing the total number of forced laborers employed by Hugo Boss on the basis of registration papers is relatively difficult because the status of such workers is not always unambiguous. For instance, for some months, one tailor and six seamstresses from Austria worked at Boss without being accommodated in the *Sammellager* or joint facility. These are unlikely to have been forced laborers, despite what Elisabeth Timm alleges. So the figure that she gives (approximately 150 forced laborers at Boss) probably needs to be slightly adjusted downwards.<sup>208</sup>

### **3.3 Accommodation of and catering for forced laborers**

In the first years of the war, most forced laborers in Metzingen were accommodated in camps owned by the relevant companies themselves (there were twelve such facilities) and temporary hutments. However, in particular, women workers, were often billeted on local families.<sup>209</sup> This system functioned relatively well so long as the numbers of forced laborers remained within manageable bounds. However, as these continued to rise, accommodating and catering for forced laborers became more and more of a problem for the town and

business community of Metzingen. It was not long before the forms of billeting practiced at the beginning of the war reached the limits of their capacity. There was also the fact that, as Metzingen's Mayor Otto Dipper reported in May 1941, accommodating the approximately 160 female foreign workers then living in Metzingen had led to "irregularities". Government-appointed *Ortsgruppenleiter*, Max Mader, disapproved of the fact that certain women, particularly Polish and French nationals, were behaving in such a way as to "provoke general public offence".<sup>210</sup>

In concrete terms, town and business deemed it urgently necessary to find a solution to this "problem" and sequester female "eastern workers" in particular from social life, which mainly meant keeping them away from the male population of Metzingen. Townspeople were forbidden to have any contact with forced laborers as early as 1942.<sup>211</sup> At the end of that year, a special camp (a so-called "*Ostarbeiterlager*") was built to centrally accommodate the forced laborers of both sexes from Poland, the Soviet Union, or other countries to the east that were employed in Metzingen firms. In adopting this course, Metzingen was choosing a path taken by other towns and villages – including nearby Reutlingen, for instance. On September 19, 1942, Mayor Otto Dipper and various managing directors of Metzingen firms met to discuss setting up such a camp. The assembled businessmen were unanimously in favor; existing circumstances, they felt, could no longer be tolerated. Having reached the decision to build the camp, the huts were ordered from a firm in Stuttgart.<sup>212</sup> The move was described as "far-sighted" – which it undoubtedly was in the sense that, a measure enacted by the State of Württemberg less than a year later, (on 21 August 1943) laid down that "*Ostarbeiter*" must in any case be kept apart from the indigenous population.<sup>213</sup>

The camp for eastern workers was designed as a kind of cooperative economic venture that should, at least, operate on a cost-covering basis. So, the firms involved had to first put up a sum of money that depended on the number of forced laborers to be accommodated. Initially, it was RM 100 a head, although the amount was later increased substantially. This sum was to be used to build the actual camp (huts, facilities, and so on). Subsequently, each company was required to make a monthly contribution per forced laborer to cover running costs. In return, workers were lodged and fed in the camp – not the least expense being accounted for by their supervision outside working hours. One expression of this enhanced social control was that, in the evenings, inmates were permitted to leave the camp only in groups of five, with one person assuming responsibility for the rest.<sup>214</sup> Former forced laborer Jan Kondak, whose job was to clean machinery at Hugo Boss, reports that, while inmates were allowed to cover the

distance between camp and workplace unsupervised, they had to clock in within a set period.<sup>215</sup>

The Hugo Boss company was a partner in the *Ostarbeiterlager* from the outset, although at first it appears to have accommodated only male forced laborers there – whereas of course the Boss payroll was very largely female. Other firms participating in the *Ostarbeiterlager* behaved very similarly, as a result, organizing the camp was beset by enormous financial problems from the start, due to its low rate of use. Designed for between 280 and 300, in the early days the camp had no more than some 60 inmates.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, prior to the camp being set up, the costs involved had not been properly calculated by the partners; certainly, nothing else can explain why the basic per capita contribution was set first at RM 100, then at RM 200, and finally at RM 300.<sup>217</sup>

To solve the cost-effectiveness problem of the *Ostarbeiterlager*, at the partnership meeting of May 19, 1943 those partner firms that had so far assigned no candidates to the camp, or only a few, were urged to accommodate all their forced laborers of both sexes therein without further ado. It was apparently for just such a reason that Camp Commandant Friedrich Henning (proprietor of the engineering company that we have already mentioned as employing the largest number of forced laborers in Metzingen) had asked a whole series of party functionaries to stress this demand. However, many firms (including Hugo Boss) hesitated, in particular, to quarter their female forced laborers in the *Ostarbeiterlager*, giving as their reason that this would have a disruptive effect on operations.<sup>218</sup> According to the statement made by Hugo F. Boss, what they meant above all was that many such women had already integrated well with their host families and, in some instances, helped with the housework. Grouping them all together in a central camp would inevitably uproot them from their social environment and might even, in the long run, reduce their work output.

These urgent warnings from the camp management, backed up by party authorities, seem to have had little effect at first. So in the course of 1943, official orders were adopted whereby it became compulsory to house and feed forced laborers in the camp.<sup>219</sup> What happened, though, was that at the precise moment when forced laborers from eastern Europe and beyond were forbidden to eat in the works canteen, not to mention in local hostelrys, catering in the camp took a dramatic turn for the worse. Camp Manager Ferdinand Hammer (although at the time of his statement he had been retired for some time on the grounds that, as he had it known, he no longer felt up to his grueling camp job) testified in writing that vegetables were virtually unobtainable and sauerkraut was currently under sequestration. Potatoes, too, were rarities. The task of feeding the *Ostarbeiter* was, likewise, made no easier by official

regulations to the effect that meat supplies for such workers must consist solely of so-called “Freibankfleisch” from Reutlingen (*Freibankfleisch* was meat from sick and injured carcasses that was cheaper than the normal product).

However, it was quite obvious that such sourcing problems were only half the problem. For instance, there had been talk at an earlier meeting of taking “Westarbeiter” (forced laborers, men and women, originating from western countries and as such more highly regarded by the National Socialists) into the camp. Hammer argued against this, however, reasoning that western workers would only live in the camp; they would go out to eat in local pubs and restaurants (from which unlike *Ostarbeiter* they were not banned). Consequently, they would be of no economic interest so far as the camp was concerned.<sup>220</sup> Here was a quite open admission that the contributions made by partner companies towards feeding the forced laborers represented the camp’s principal source of income; hence, conversely, the incentive to increase profitability by economizing on food. So when Otto Dipper observed some months later that “more could be done” in the catering department, his words were only too justified.<sup>221</sup>

At the same partnership meeting of February 1944 at which the camp’s catering problems came up for discussion, Dipper reported a request by the Hugo Boss company for the Polish women who worked for it to be excused from eating in the *Ostarbeiterlager* and allowed, as before, to take their meals in the firm’s own canteen. While Dipper basically sympathized with the request, he feared unfavorable repercussions from the ruling that the town’s eating establishments were off-limits to Poles and eastern workers. On the other hand, the effects of the catering crisis at the camp were becoming apparent in Metzingen’s business life. Some forced laborers were so undernourished as to be incapable of working; they might even collapse at their machines.<sup>222</sup> Hugo F. Boss justified his request by saying that, far from being concerned to make special welfare provision for the Polish women, he was interested only in the fact that catering at the camp was not up to ensuring his seamstresses’ level of output.<sup>223</sup> Whether his purely economic argument was in fact the sole reason cannot be established at this distance in time. What is worthy of note is that humanitarian motives could scarcely have been admitted to the other partner companies behind the *Ostarbeiterlager*. As Otto Dipper’s words suggest, the very fact that Hugo F. Boss put forward the request could be seen as a rebellion against the will of the party.

However, the sources are ambiguous on the question of whether, subsequently, Boss’s female forced laborers were actually fed in the works canteen. The same minutes record that the camp management agreed with Hugo F. Boss that the relevant workers should be kept in

the camp until the end of the current board-and-lodging period [*Versorgungsperiode*] (whenever that may have been). A supplementary note says: “Since it was possible to provide catering up until then in such a form that the reason for withdrawal from camp catering no longer applied, the Hugo Boss company continued to leave the Polish women in the system.”<sup>224</sup> Unfortunately, there is no telling when this note was added. On the other hand, in connection with the denazification proceedings against Hugo F. Boss, several Polish women workers testified that in reaction to the poor catering situation in the *Ostarbeiterlager* they went back to eating in the works canteen.<sup>225</sup> It seems improbable that the workers gave false testimony in this regard since (unlike details of payment, for instance), in denazification proceedings something like this could quite easily be checked.<sup>226</sup> So what may have happened is that, as a reaction to worsening food conditions in the camp, the women had already (or in parallel) received meals in-house – for which Hugo Boss only subsequently received the sanction of its partners,<sup>227</sup> but that as soon as the catering situation in the camp improved, the women were once again fed there. No definite clarification of the process is possible.<sup>228</sup> Hugo F. Boss claimed later that he had described the food in the *Ostarbeiterlager* as “muck” that it was “beneath human dignity to eat”; it was certainly not what anyone could have gone to work on.<sup>229</sup>

Following the relatively late occupation of Metzingen in April 1945, the *Ostarbeiterlager* was dissolved. Most forced laborers tried to return home as quickly as possible, but quite often this proved extremely difficult.<sup>230</sup> Some of the Polish women workers stayed on at Hugo Boss for a while, such as the two who testified in Hugo F. Boss’s favor at his appeal against the verdict of the denazification hearing. But they were exceptions; most were, no doubt, glad to be able to leave Metzingen and Germany behind them.

### **3.4 Treatment of forced laborers at Hugo Boss**

So what were the living conditions of forced laborers at Hugo Boss in concrete terms? Here the oral history interviews conducted in connection with the effort to take a fresh look at and reappraise the history of Metzingen during the Third Reich have thrown up a great many new findings. On the whole, it is possible today (as it was not a mere decade ago) to trace a relatively clear picture of how forced laborers were treated in Metzingen and at Hugo Boss.

An initial standpoint from which the living conditions of such workers may be deduced, at least in part, is that of their pay. There were numerous government regulations in this regard –

most of them not particularly clear. In fact, considered from region to region and from sector to sector, they produced very different outcomes. Payment of forced laborers depended on whether they worked in urban or rural environments, in industry or in agriculture. There was also the fact that, often, a large part of their pay was deducted in advance for board and lodging. In other words, the forced laborers concerned had disposal of only a fraction of their wages.<sup>231</sup> Regarding the remuneration of forced laborers at Hugo Boss we have three different statements, made in various contexts: one is by two former female forced laborers and was made in connection with denazification proceedings soon after the war, while two (likewise made by former female forced laborers) date from 2002.

The relevant witnesses from the denazification proceedings, gave their weekly wage as RM 25 to RM 30, from which deductions, they said, had already been made.<sup>232</sup> If the figure is correct, it was comparatively very high for forced laborers. Average gross earnings of a German female employee in the textile industry in March 1944, for instance, were RM 18.98, from which around 25 percent had still to be deducted for tax and other contributions.<sup>233</sup> So female forced laborers at Boss earned just as much as their German counterparts, and markedly more than the average German female employee in the textile industry. However, it should be noted, in this connection, that figures relating to the whole of Germany also included employees working only on a half-time basis.<sup>234</sup>

The second statement was made by former forced laborer, Maria Wocka. On a visit to Metzingen in 2002, she put gross weekly earnings at Hugo Boss at RM 75,<sup>235</sup> which after deductions for board and lodging left 50 RM a month or some ten or twelve RM a week. She said on record that the money would sometimes not even stretch to a crust of bread.<sup>236</sup> However, the conflict between Wocka's statement and those made in the context of Hugo F. Boss's denazification proceedings is somewhat lessened if the "deductions" referred to in the latter meant tax only and did not include board and lodging costs.<sup>237</sup> Maria Wocka said that these accounted for easily the largest part of their wages.

Finally, the third statement stems from Elzbieta Kubala-Bern, who gave weekly earnings at Hugo Boss as between six and seven RM, which again, assuming private board and lodging costs had already been deducted, would have amounted to something like 25 RM to 30 RM a month.<sup>238</sup>

What are we to make of these not fully reconcilable statements? At first glance, the figures given in the denazification proceedings seem so improbably high that one is very tempted to assume that false information is being provided here. Furthermore, at these wage rates, Hugo Boss would have been contravening existing legislation. So a more reasonable course would

seem to be to refer to the information provided by former female forced laborers in oral history interviews. What information is correct here is not something that can be definitively established. Wage figures may also relate to different times. But this too, as we have said, cannot be verified with certainty.<sup>239</sup> Another thing to be kept in mind is that the oral history interviews concern events going back more than half a century. So it may also be the case that precise earnings could no longer be recalled.<sup>240</sup> Keeping in mind that wages in the clothing industry were relatively low and that female forced laborers were generally paid less compared to their male counterparts, the earnings of forced laborers at Hugo Boss exceeded the usual.<sup>241</sup> Admittedly, because of the big differences depending on region, branch, and point of time, it is quite difficult to identify the “usual”. But in light that the average weekly pay in the textile industry was RM 18.98 in March 1944, the wages at Hugo Boss (in so far as the costs for lodging and board were already deducted) seem to have been somewhat acceptable.

At the same time, deductions for bed and board make clear that wage levels on their own are a very inadequate indicator as regards the living conditions of forced laborers because sums of money alone say nothing whatsoever about the quality of food and sleeping facilities provided. Taking accommodation to begin with, circumstances must have been at least halfway acceptable in that most female forced laborers were billeted privately (although some of them had to help with the host family’s housework), whereas most of the men were obliged to spend the night in a hutment owned by the firm they worked for. Conditions in these were described as basic in general, but hygienically adequate.<sup>242</sup>

However, a dramatic fall in the standard of accommodation followed the move into the *Ostarbeiterlager*, the special encampment set up for forced laborers from Eastern Europe and Russia in 1943. One former forced laborer, Maria Klima, when asked about her Metzingen experiences in an oral history interview, countered bitterly with some questions of her own: “Have you ever slept in a bed that’s been snowed on? Have you ever spent Christmas in a prison camp? Were you ever beaten for picking something up off the ground in order to eat it?” Her statement not only points to the poor state of the huts; but it indicates that camp guards used violence in their attempts to prevent forced laborers from gathering food that members of the public had thrown over the fence. Other oral history interviews also describe living conditions in the camp as being, at times, nothing short of catastrophic. Former forced laborer Jan Kondak, for instance, who cleaned machinery at Hugo Boss, said that the huts in the *Ostarbeiterlager* had been infested with lice and fleas, and the food was extremely poor.<sup>243</sup>

Turning to the food situation, this was closely bound up with standard of accommodation. In other words, as long as catering was provided mainly by the Boss works canteen or by private host families, it was reasonable. But here, too, the shift to the *Ostarbeiterlager* system brought a massive deterioration. We have already discussed the camp's catering problems from late 1943, as we have the fact that the camp administration clearly economized on food, which led to a falling-off in output on the part of forced laborers. But even if the circumstance so often cited in the literature (namely, that from early 1944 the Hugo Boss company went back to feeding its female forced laborers in its own canteen) does not unambiguously align with the sources, nevertheless, the frequent references in the post-war denazification proceedings and in oral history interviews suggest that Hugo F. Boss did, in fact, take pains to improve the catering for his employees. To all appearances, he had access to private sources in this respect; he had his own way of getting his hands on additional food supplies. Whether he was prompted by sympathy in this or purely by economic motives cannot be decided here. However, that does not alter the fact that, comparatively speaking, Boss employees had it better than some.

Another point (and one that, after all, is of crucial importance as regards assessing the living conditions of forced laborers) is how long they were made to work. Former female forced laborers all say: twelve hours a day. Anna Wocka reports that she had to work from six in the morning until six in the evening,<sup>244</sup> although there must have been a lunch break in between. Elzbieta Kubala-Bern writes that after work she had to spend another four hours helping out in the guesthouse where she was accommodated. This brought her working day up to 16 hours, but on her own admission it meant that she enjoyed a well above-average level of catering.<sup>245</sup> On the whole, though, her case is likely to have been exceptional. At one *Ostarbeiterlager* partnership meeting there was discussion, for instance, of whether female forced laborers might not, after their day's work in the factory, be required to give their host families a hand with the housework. But the proposal was rejected with reference to certain bad experiences that Reutlingen had had in this regard. The women had to work until six p.m. every day. By the time supper was over it was seven, "and then it was too late for any further work to be required of them".<sup>246</sup> Jan Kondak, questioned in an oral history interview, gave his working day as eight hours – a below-average figure.<sup>247</sup> These are all the statements we have regarding working hours of forced laborers at Hugo Boss.

A third key point is how forced laborers were treated by management and by their fellow workers. Here again, apart from drawing on the statements of former female forced laborers, the present investigation only has the oral history interview of Edith Poller and two other

former female forced laborers to fall back on. Whereas Edith Poller, as we have seen, had nothing negative to say about Hugo F. Boss himself, she did report that members of management treated female forced laborers in particular badly. She picked out works manager Hans Schmid, and she mentioned above all a supervisor named Buchmann as having occasionally, at work, given full expression to his sadistic side: “When a Polish woman was injured he made sure she was not attended to immediately but left to suffer – one had hurt herself, accidentally sticking a needle in her finger; the needle had then broken off. Buchmann pulled out the broken-off bit of needle as slowly as he possibly could, grinning all over his face. One of the Polish women was very upset: she swallowed pins as she worked; she was trying to kill herself.”<sup>248</sup> When Edith Poller had shown outrage at such conduct, she had been threatened, she said, by the supervisor and by Hans Schmid with imprisonment in a concentration camp. Hugo F. Boss and Eugen Holy, she added, had been standing beside the men as they spoke.<sup>249</sup> The Polish woman evidently survived her suicide attempt, but she never came back to work. According to Elzbieta Kubala-Bern, Martin Eberhard threatened that, if such a thing ever happened again, ten Polish women would be sent away.<sup>250</sup>

On the other hand, Edith Poller insisted in her statement that great solidarity existed amongst staff. The German workers, she said, used to bring food in to work, particularly when catering arrangements in the *Ostarbeiterlager* turned catastrophic: “We always slipped them some secretly. All our seamstresses from the villages, from places like Neuhausen, Kohlberg, Kappishäusern, and Dettingen had their own gardens and always brought food in with them, which would then be distributed on the sly. At break times none of my colleagues ever objected when I sat with the Poles.”<sup>251</sup> The two ex-employees of the firm who asked for their names to be withheld also stated that there was no ban on contact between German and foreign workers. They further testified that the firm’s management took care to ensure that there was extra food for staff – forced laborers included.<sup>252</sup>

So how, from the perspectives of pay, catering, accommodation, and working hours, are we to assess the treatment of forced laborers at Hugo Boss? Even throwing in (as we must) the qualification that the sources are thin on the ground and not all statements are unambiguous (particularly as regards how much female forced laborers were paid), we can say, choosing our words with great care, that forced laborers at the firm were treated in a comparatively correct manner. That is not to say that they had a good life at Hugo Boss – far from it; the statements of contemporary witnesses tell a very different story.<sup>253</sup> On the other hand, there was no “extermination through labor” at Hugo Boss. Seen in the context of what was customary at the time, the catering appears to have been relatively good and female

workers were certainly not paid any worse than was usual for forced laborers in Germany during the Second World War – if anything, slightly better. That even goes for the wage rate of between six and seven Reichsmarks a week cited by Elzbieta Kubala-Bern. This is not, of course, in any way to justify forced labor. However, the example of Hugo Boss confirms the findings of extensive research on this subject: namely, that in rural areas and small-scale industries forced laborers tended to have things better than in urban heavy-industrial contexts.

That does not mean that terrible things did not sometimes happen among the firm's forced laborers, as they did in the case of Josefa Gisterek. Her sister Anna had been one of the Polish women packed off to Metzingen in connection with the campaign of spring 1940. In October 1941, Josefa too was put to work as a forced laborer at Hugo Boss. In December, the father of the two girls wrote to his daughters, informing them that their mother had had an accident and asking for help to care for the other eight children of the family. Josefa Gisterek applied for leave, but this was refused by the company on the grounds that she had not worked at the firm for long enough.<sup>254</sup> Whereupon she resolved to flee, and taking her and her sister's money, she travelled back to their home in Oświęcim.

Her sister Anna Gisterek (Anna Wocka after her marriage), when her normal leave fell due, likewise left for Oświęcim on January 4, 1942. On her arrival, however, she no longer found her sister there because the Gestapo had already called at the parental home and taken Josefa into custody. She [Josefa] was subsequently interned in various concentration camps, including (for short periods) Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and Dachau. In March 1943, she returned to Metzingen, Hugo F. Boss having located her through his party contacts.<sup>255</sup> Her sister recalled: "She looked very bad when she was brought back to Metzingen". Nevertheless, she was forced to return to work at Boss because, as Anna Wocka stated later, Hans Schmid and Eugen Holy were determined to make an example of Josefa Gisterek.<sup>256</sup> "The Boss company's trusty made her work although she was already very ill and had dreadful headaches. Only after much pleading was she allowed to visit Dr. Bornhäuser. She was so weak she once passed out after an injection."<sup>257</sup>

After Josefa Gisterek had been given special permission to spend three months recuperating in the home of Metzingen townswoman Anna Speidel, she had once again to start work. On July 5, 1943, she took her own life in her host family's house without leaving a suicide note.<sup>258</sup> Her funeral in the same month was attended by her parents from Poland (not by any means a usual occurrence), who bade farewell to their daughter as she lay in an open coffin in the cemetery chapel. Being a suicide, she could not be buried in the cemetery; the Catholic Church was still very strict on this point.

In Henning Kober's historic account of the case, reference is made to the fact that, while Hugo F. Boss paid the funeral expenses and funded the family's trip, Josefa's former employer gave the family no further assistance.<sup>259</sup> On the one hand, Hugo F. Boss's conduct may be considered reprehensible. On the other, we should probably not be too wide off the mark in surmising that the vast majority of German businessmen would not even have paid the funeral expenses. His motives for doing so are unclear, but Hugo F. Boss did pull Josefa Gisterek out of the concentration-camp system. She was able subsequently (but only after her health collapsed) to take three months off work, which for the period was quite extraordinary. On the other hand, he took no action against the sentences passed on by a member of his staff. All in all, the case of Josefa Gisterek demonstrates in an exemplary fashion that the behavior of the Boss management towards its forced laborers of both sexes comprised a blend of harshness, compulsion, and care that is difficult to assess, resisting as it does any attempt to pigeon-hole it.

Personal views of the way in which the Hugo Boss company was managed are likewise mixed. Works manager Hans Schmid, a convinced Nazi whom we looked at in the last section of chapter 2 (2.3: Everyday working life in Metzingen during the Third Reich), was someone whom certain forced laborers recalled with aversion. On the other hand, personal views of the man Hugo F. Boss, particularly as held by former female forced laborers, incline towards the positive. Edith Poller calls him "an easygoing fellow, by and large," who brought in cakes for staff working overtime.<sup>260</sup> Maria Klima told in an oral history interview: "Mr. Boss was a Nazi, so they said, but his manner with us youngsters was friendly."<sup>261</sup> In other words, the fact that Hugo F. Boss was a member and supporter of the NSDAP apparently did not prevent him from retaining a minimum of humanity at work, even if (as in the case of Josefa Gisterek), while not perpetrating abuse himself, he did nothing to counter it.<sup>262</sup> This, in fact, aligns with something contemporary witnesses were aware of: namely, that in the Second World War, Hugo F. Boss had begun to withdraw from his managerial duties somewhat, this function presumably being now performed by Eugen Holy, Martin Eberhard, and Hans Schmid.<sup>263</sup>

## 4 The company after the Second World War

### 4.1 Denazification proceedings against Hugo F. Boss

With the end of the Second World War, production at the Hugo Boss clothing factory (unsurprisingly) came to a temporary halt. On April 23, 1945, American troops occupied Metzingen. However, these troops moved on relatively quickly and supreme command of the town was taken over by French colonial troops, mainly made up of soldiers recruited from North Africa.<sup>264</sup> We know from Hugo F. Boss's youngest daughter, Doris Braunwarth, that as a former member of the NSDAP (an "ex-Pg." [*Parteigenosse*], they were called), her father was obliged to perform labor services for the occupying power for a while after the war.<sup>265</sup> Subsequently, acting on health grounds, he handed the reins as managing director of his company over to his son Siegfried (b. 1915), although he continued to function as deputy managing director.<sup>266</sup> However, continuing to manage the firm was about to be made quite impossible for Hugo F. Boss, in any case, by the institution of proceedings before a body known as a *Spruchkammer* or "denazification" court.

Purging the economy of southern Württemberg commenced in the French zone of occupation in December 1945, which was relatively late on compared with the British and American zones. In this connection, a total of 823 persons were examined in the Reutlingen chamber of commerce region and some 83 (around ten percent) actually penalized. For 41 of the latter, this meant that they could no longer exercise their profession, while 21 were sentenced to pay a fine – on top of other punitive measures. The largest such fine was RM 200,000<sup>267</sup> (which, in a context of rapidly galloping inflation, constituted a far greater sum at the time than was the case, say, two years later, following various appeals). A certain clothing and uniforms manufacturer named Hugo F. Boss was one of those sentenced in the Reutlingen chamber of commerce region. Under a decree of March 1, 1946, he was ordered to pay a smaller, but by no means negligible, fine of RM 100,000.<sup>268</sup>

As part of this first trial, Hugo F. Boss had to disclose his assets and answer the charges that he been a National Socialist and had benefited economically from National Socialism. He could not contest either charge very well, but he did point out that in 1944 he had been

affected by a change of business premises. He had joined the NSDAP in 1931, he said, because the party had promised to abolish unemployment. Otherwise he had not been a particular supporter of the party, claiming that his idealism had been abused.<sup>269</sup> Hugo F. Boss was accused, in particular, by the communist Albert Fischer, principal protagonist of the KPD in Metzingen and a man who had himself been persecuted by the NS regime. Fischer's son (also called Albert) was later to describe Hugo F. Boss in an oral history interview conducted by the Metzingen municipal archives as a "super-Nazi" ["Obernazi"] who still, in 1945, had a picture of himself with Adolf Hitler on the Obersalzberg hanging on his office wall.<sup>270</sup> Another statement confirms that Hugo F. Boss was in close sympathy with the party, even if, in propaganda terms, he tended to take a back seat.<sup>271</sup> The thing that counted in particular against Hugo F. Boss was his friendship with the notorious NSDAP official in Metzingen, *Ortsgruppenleiter* Georg Rath. One witness in the initial trial went so far as to describe Rath as a Boss family friend. A lorry-driver by trade, Georg Rath had joined the party as early as 1928 and become a member of the SS in 1932. In Metzingen, he particularly stood out on account of his coarse, loud manner, which is why, according to one contemporary witness, he "could no longer show his face" in the town after the war.<sup>272</sup>

All in all, key reasons for Hugo F. Boss's "guilty" verdicts in the first trial were: his early entry into the party, his status, for a time, as "patron member" [*förderndes Mitglied*] of the SS, his having profited from National Socialism financially, and his friendship with Georg Rath. He was sentenced, as we have seen, to pay a large fine (RM 100,000). In addition, his eligibility for political office was taken away. He was barred for ten years from exercising any managerial function.<sup>273</sup> The overall estimate of his person by the court was "compromised" [*belastet*].

What are we to make of this verdict? In her seminal essay on how the denazification court went about its business in Württemberg-Hohenzollern, Cornelia Rauh-Kühne deals explicitly with the apparent contradiction that, despite the notorious severity of the denazification process as implemented in the French zone of occupation generally,<sup>274</sup> in total only a handful of entrepreneurs were actually condemned.<sup>275</sup> In the process she contradicts Klaus-Dietmar Henke's view that this was grounded in a deliberately defensive function of economic purging. According to Henke, the low condemnation rate was designed to avoid handing the French occupier further excuses for its already enormous requisitions and confiscations of machinery.<sup>276</sup>

Rauh-Kühne took the view that the low number of convictions in the area she looked at (namely, the region covered by the Reutlingen chamber of commerce) and in the

Württemberg economy resulted from the fact that here the denazification process was implemented in accordance with such formal criteria as date of joining the party, membership of party organizations, and whether the accused had profited from National Socialism.<sup>277</sup> However, these were points that, to a limited extent, only made it possible to assess the person's actual involvement in the war economy (one significant indicator of which was the somewhat peripheral title "NS-Wirtschaftsführer" ["NS business leader", more or less], which constituted a gravely incriminating factor in denazification proceedings). That kind of formalism led to only very few businessmen qualifying for condemnation in the first round of the denazification process.

For instance, such prominent figures as Karl Maybach and Claude Dornier, whose companies were in Friedrichshafen (i.e. in the same chamber of commerce region), initially got off without a fine. Moreover, the firms concerned were Maybach-Motorenbau, Germany's largest producer of tank engines, and Dornier-Metallbauten, which, as a manufacturer of military aircraft, was equally involved in the arms business.<sup>278</sup> Maybach and Dornier were also sentenced to substantial fines sometime later (and even then, only after the intervention of the French occupying power): Dornier to RM 300,000 and Maybach to RM 200,000. And that was even in spite of the fact that Karl Maybach cultivated good relations with the French occupier.<sup>279</sup> It follows that, contrary to what some sources suggest,<sup>280</sup> the verdict against Hugo F. Boss indicates particularly deep economic involvement with the NS regime only to a limited extent. Rather, it shows that from various political viewpoints, the man ticked many of the boxes for a "guilty" verdict, but it does not (for the reasons we have talked about) say much about his contribution to the war economy.

Hugo F. Boss appealed against the verdict of the first hearing. Subsequent proceedings followed a typical course, which was that the accused called a large number of defense witnesses who formally placed on record that the same accused had committed no crime. Such "Persil certificates" [*Persilscheine*], as these attempts to make someone appear "whiter than white" were dubbed, characterized all denazification proceedings in the aftermath of the Second World War and cannot be taken as evidence that the "holder" maintained a degree of distance from or actually opposed the National Socialist government. In this instance, all the statements conceded that Hugo F. Boss had, of course, been a party member but that he had not been an active propagandist and had never, at work, distinguished between "comrades" and "non-comrades" – as indeed had been confirmed at the first hearing by someone whose attitude to Hugo F. Boss was basically critical. A former mayor of Metzingen, Otto Dipper, had testified that

the accused had consistently shown restraint in public life, turning down all offers of political or party office, which was undoubtedly true.

What is interesting (and we mentioned this earlier on) is that in his own statement Hugo F. Boss expanded on his reasons for becoming a member of the NSDAP in 1931. He pointed out that had he not joined the party in 1931 he would not have been awarded the contracts for uniforms that had been so vitally necessary for the survival of his business. The plausibility of this statement has already been discussed. It need not, in any way, conflict with what was said at the first hearing. The only thing is, Hugo F. Boss must never be thought of as having been personally out of sympathy with the NSDAP. That was quite certainly not the case.

The appeal was eventually successful (as most of them were; German historian Lutz Niethammer famously called these denazification appeals a *Mitläuferfabrik*, a “fellow-traveler factory”). In a ruling of March 1, 1948, the Nürtingen denazification court assigned Hugo F. Boss to group 4, the “fellow-traveler” category [“fellow-traveler” not of course in the communist but in the fascist sense; *Tr.*]. The fine was reduced to RM 25,000,<sup>281</sup> particularly since the disclosure of Hugo F. Boss’s financial situation suggested a lower penalty: the sum of DM 100,000 was not at all easy for him to find, as one of the few critical voices in the appeal proceedings had asserted.<sup>282</sup> Granted, according to a ruling by the Urach tax office Hugo F. Boss’s total fortune on January 1, 1946 amounted to RM 201,000, but the figure included shares in his own company, which could not so readily be turned into cash.<sup>283</sup> For the rest, Hugo F. Boss had his right to be eligible for public office revoked until March 31, 1951, and he was obliged to pay costs.

However, around the time of the verdict, his already fragile health deteriorated further.<sup>284</sup> Hugo F. Boss died in a Tübingen hospital on August 9, 1948, having already suffered for some time from diabetes and a weak heart.<sup>285</sup> The actual cause of death was a fever set off by a decaying tooth. Death occurred before the court’s verdict came into force, as a result of which the latter was declared null and void and proceedings halted.<sup>286</sup>

## 4.2 Post-war production

The economic situation of Metzingen between 1945 and the reform of the currency and founding of the Federal Republic in 1948-49 was determined not only by a poor food situation, supply bottlenecks, and collapsed markets, but in equally great measure also by the politics and interests of the French occupying power. The French intervened hugely in economic life, putting forward detailed production programs and going to great lengths to dismantle much of what they found.

The latter concern also badly affected Württemberg-Hohenzollern's textile and clothing industry. Historians have yet to reach a unanimous verdict regarding the character of the French zone of occupation. For instance, there was a persistent view (in fact, it is still very much around) that the French zone of occupation constituted a kind of *Ausbeutungskolonie*, a "colony to be looted". In the opinion of historian Werner Plumpe, France used its zone of occupation "for its own economic interests in a manner that was very much more reminiscent of Soviet practice than of the American or British way of doing things."<sup>287</sup> Other authors, however, see the French occupying government in a much milder light and dismiss talk of "exploitation" as inadmissible.<sup>288</sup>

The clash of opinions, irrespective of one's own standpoint in the matter, at least shows that the repercussions of French occupational policy were neither unambiguously negative nor unambiguously positive. There was, as we have said, a lot of dismantling, and many firms were taken into the service of the occupying power. But at the same time, this did supply them with orders and led to the textile industry in Württemberg-Hohenzollern, for instance, describing itself in 1948 as "busy". In fact, up until that point, a large part of the textile and clothing industry was kept going by French contracts. For instance, in 1946, firms in the sector were working at 80 percent for the French occupying power, although their productive capacity was only poorly used.<sup>289</sup> In other words, employment levels in the French zone of occupation were heavily dependent upon the number of contracts awarded by the authorities.<sup>290</sup>

For Hugo Boss, too, the French occupation economy made it possible to reuse productive capacity that would otherwise have had to be reorganized on a massive scale. Here, in fact, there was little dismantling, although according to Doris Braunwarth the French "helped themselves to fabric and everything, any amount of it, whatever they could find in the warehouse".<sup>291</sup> And there must have been a great deal left in the warehouse, because Edith Poller reports that, at the end of the war, each of the women working for Boss was given a bundle of fabric to take home.<sup>292</sup> That suggests that even in 1945, the firm of Hugo Boss still had orders on its books; otherwise, the evident presence of large stores of fabric is difficult to explain.

So, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Hugo Boss began working for the occupier. At first, the company continued to produce uniforms; now, however, the uniforms were no longer for the *Wehrmacht* or SS organizations, but for the French army and the French Red Cross. In fact, some SS uniforms were re-tailored with the insignia of the occupying forces.<sup>293</sup> At least until August 1946, the firm was busy with a contract for 1,500 cloth uniforms for French prisoners of war. Shortly afterwards it received orders for 2,500 shirts ("chemises"), 8,000 headscarves, and 11,000 blue work suits.<sup>294</sup>

In connection with such orders, the general problem facing the authorities in Württemberg was an ongoing serious raw-materials shortage. Because of this, many orders could not or could only be partly executed, although once again the uniforms that were no longer required served as a fabric reservoir.<sup>295</sup> For instance, according to a report dating from August 1946, the weaving firm of Gaeslen & Völter, which had been by far the largest textile business in Metzingen back in the 1930s, had very small quantities of raw materials still available and was therefore talked of as “running on empty”.<sup>296</sup> Hugo Boss, on the other hand, was able to fill the POW clothing order from its own stocks. But more than just leftovers from Second World War uniforms production was involved. To enable it to meet the order for the production of military headwear, according to this report, it bought a consignment of cloth from Paris.<sup>297</sup> In such ways, the company seems to have managed to keep its head above water quite comfortably. By 1950, in fact, Hugo Boss was already back up to 128 employees,<sup>298</sup> and the number rose further in ensuing years.<sup>299</sup> As a result, for the first time, Hugo Boss became a significant enterprise.

**Table 12** Numbers employed at Hugo Boss 1946-1987<sup>300</sup>

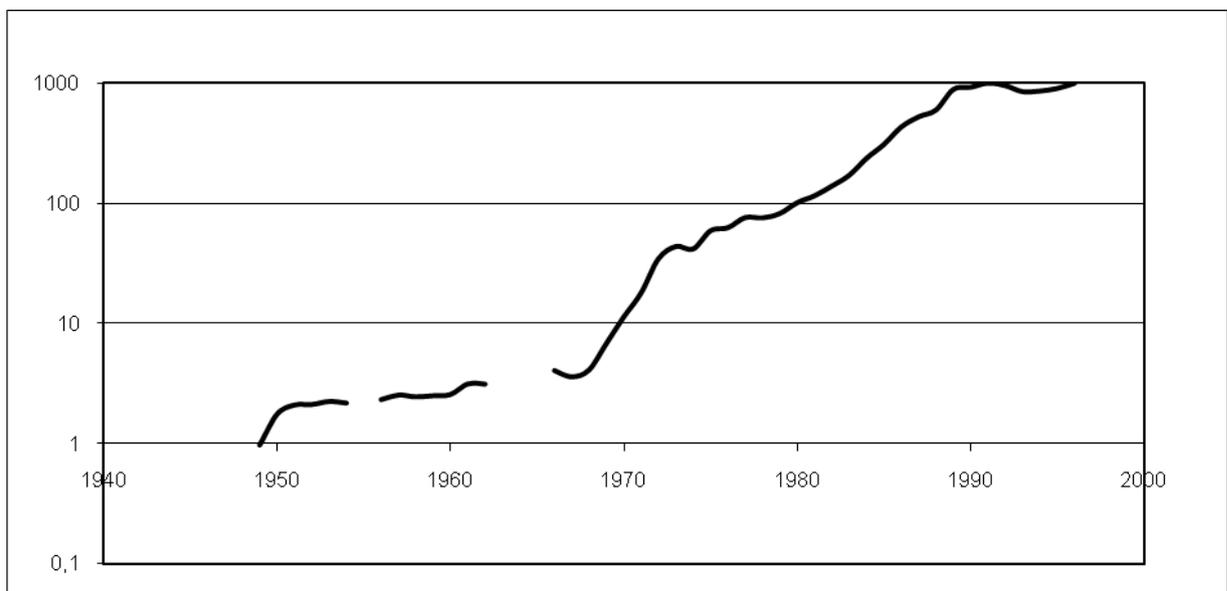
1946	1953	1965	1977	1987
128	190	150	520	880

From the 1950s, finally, under the aegis of Eugen Holy, the company began to produce work clothing as well as uniforms; in addition, Hugo Boss had already added men’s suits to its program. Moreover, this was the period when the textile and clothing industry adopted comprehensive mechanization.<sup>301</sup> As a result, in 1962, ready-to-wear goods accounted for at least 85 percent of menswear total production and 90 percent for womenswear.<sup>302</sup> So, of the overwhelming importance of work done by hand (deemed indispensable because of customers’ individual requirements for some time) little more was heard – which, over time, was mainly due to competition, initially from Italy and then to an increasing extent from Asia.

However, Hugo Boss hit upon a course that would avoid this downward trend, and eventually that course met with success. The firm was on the brink of insolvency at the time, but by the late 1960s it had managed to boost its sales to DM 3.5 million. It was in 1969 that the two sons of the marriage of Eugen Holy and Gertrud Boss, namely Uwe and Jochen Holy, took over the reins at Hugo Boss. Little by little, they turned the company into the international fashion group we see today, although, of course, much of it is no longer

embedded in the Swabian environment in which it originated. To begin with, production of work clothing was scaled down and the operation's range adopted a new focus: men's suiting in an elevated price bracket. By processing high-quality material, introducing new patterns, and pursuing a clever marketing policy, the "Boss" brand gained a firm foothold first in the German market and then eventually, during the 1970s, in the international market. In the process, this "newcomer" (as it were) competed with old-established luxury brands without linking its own popularity to the name of a famous designer. Simultaneously, the firm's production facilities were constantly modernized and expanded from the 1970s onwards. The company moved out of the center of Metzingen to the Längenfeld industrial estate.<sup>303</sup> In the 1980s, Hugo Boss was eventually converted into a joint-stock company [*Aktiengesellschaft* or AG] and successfully floated on the stock exchange. Since the Holys sold the business to the Japanese Leyton House group, it has changed hands a number of times. Today, the majority shareholding is controlled by a British investment fund, Permira. The Holy brothers, for their part, have since become increasingly involved in making the factory sale such a feature of present-day Metzingen. Moreover they have also pursued certain fashion interests.<sup>304</sup>

**Diagram 5** Hugo Boss turnover 1949-1996 (in millions of DM, logarithmic representation)<sup>305</sup>



As the diagram shows, the company was able to establish itself as a major clothing producer as early as the 1960s, despite all its problems. It went on, during the 1970s and

1980s, to enjoy a sustained expansion that went hand in hand with the international establishment of the “Boss” brand and rocketing sales.

This recent development of the firm does not form the object of the present study. Nevertheless, in terms of economic history, it is a highly interesting case of how a manufacturing business with its roots in a small town in south-west Germany has been able to develop into a fashion group operating on a global scale. For future corporate-history undertakings, this would seem to offer a promising area of research.<sup>306</sup>

## Conclusion

So what is our final, overall assessment of the corporate development of Hugo Boss and the history of forced labor at the firm during the Third Reich? The first thing to place on record is that the firm did demonstrably profit from National Socialism. What at the beginning of the 1930s was a small manufacturing business or one up from a tailor was able, partly through the increased demand for uniforms, to establish itself as a medium-sized independent operation and grow during the Second World War into Metzingen's largest textile company. In the process, it benefited from the wider economic boom of the 1930s, which was partly also fueled by the demand for articles other than uniforms. Then, in 1938, the company went over completely to producing uniforms, not only for the armed forces but also to a great extent for the NSDAP, including the SA and the SS.

However, as its maximum payroll of 330 in 1944 and its peak turnover of RM 1 million in 1941 indicate, Hugo Boss was not a large-scale enterprise. Its rise scarcely invites comparison with those of companies that were hugely inflated by the war economy such as Krupp, IG Farben, Junkers, and the rest. By placing that rise in its proper economic-history context, it has been possible to show that the Hugo Boss clothing factory was ultimately one of a number of small manufacturing operations that participated in uniforms production. There was no "market leader" in this particular field; production took place on a strongly decentralized basis, reflecting the corporate structure of the clothing industry. The firms involved had no part in developing the patterns for those uniforms, which rather undermines the much-cultivated myth that the Hugo Boss enterprise was "Hitler's tailor", as has been claimed. There were many clothing manufacturers that were very much bigger than Boss; Erich Reitz of Wuppertal has been cited, with 2,300 employees at the end of 1941, but there were others, two examples being Umag of Frankfurt and the firm of Bumag AG from Munich (although these were not large-scale enterprises either). In the central trade gazette for uniforms manufacture (named *Uniformen-Markt*) for instance, Hugo Boss was not mentioned once.

All of which suggests that, in the context of uniforms production during the Third Reich, the Hugo Boss company did not occupy a particularly elevated position. On the contrary, in some respects, the firm's development seems almost typical of the uniforms industry. This was a medium-sized, independent manufacturing operation that was enabled to expand by the

growing membership of the National Socialist organizations and not least also by the massive expansion of the armed forces. As with the great majority of firms in the sector, production was rationalized during the Second World War, notably in the area of cutting out; otherwise, the business could scarcely have achieved profitable status in the lowest price bracket – to which it was assigned in the early part of 1942. In any case, its profit margins were not unusually high. So it cannot have been the firm's nearness to the party alone that brought in the contracts, even if the natural inclinations of Hugo F. Boss and other members of the management tier and their contacts with the NSDAP did conceivably play a role. However, there is no proof of this in the sources. Also, such contacts inevitably lost something of their value as rationing of woven-textile products became more severe and rationalization of the war economy more intensive. Still, the apparently substantial reserves of raw materials left over at Hugo Boss at the end of the war suggest that the firm was well able to keep its head above water.

Such conjectures aside, however, we are left with the question of the personal responsibility of the persons involved, not least so far as their attitude to the National Socialists was concerned and the treatment they meted out to forced laborers. As regards the founder of the firm, Hugo F. Boss himself, the sources would appear to paint an unambiguous picture. It may be considered beyond dispute that Boss did not join the NSDAP solely because he looked to the party to give him contracts. No, as he testified in connection with the first denazification hearing, he clearly hoped that it was going to mount an effective defense against the growing scourge of unemployment. The fact that the orders from NSDAP and *Wehrmacht* had the result of putting his firm back on its feet probably strengthened his identification with the party, particularly since obtaining the contracts had rescued him from a disastrous financial situation. Whatever degree of identification with the ideological content of National Socialism may or may not have been present, the fact that Hugo F. Boss did benefit enormously from the rise of the NSDAP probably contributed in no small way to an "inner affinity" with the "movement".

Conversely, unlike other individuals, most of things that ex-employees and female forced laborers said about the man, Hugo F. Boss, were thoroughly positive. Edith Poller described him as a "pretty easygoing sort", while former forced laborer Maria Klima said that, although Hugo F. Boss was generally regarded as a Nazi, he had been "sociable with the youngsters". So, his being close to National Socialism did not necessarily mean that he maltreated the forced laborers employed in his firm. However, the same was not true of the members of his management. Here there were some convinced National Socialists who did treat female forced

laborers badly, who would threaten staff with imprisonment in concentration camps – etc. The available sources indicate that, while Hugo F. Boss did not himself take an active role in such incidents, he did not do anything to stop them.

As for remuneration, feeding, and accommodation of forced laborers, these appear to have been comparatively good on the whole. Earnings of former female forced laborers were without exception, by the recipients' own account, above what constituted the average for the time. The problem, however, is that the relevant statements date from more than 50 years after the event; the precise figures may not have been recalled with total accuracy after all that time. The situation with regard to catering seems to have been that this was adequate as a rule, at least in comparison with the conditions governing forced labor in the rest of Germany. For instance, a works canteen was set up at Hugo Boss, and there is plenty of evidence that people at the firm went to great pains to procure additional food supplies, for which there were potential sources in the countryside. Accommodation seems to have been pretty much all right, so long as forced laborers lived in private lodgings or the company's own hutment. However, the construction of a central camp for workers from eastern Europe, the so-called "Ostarbeiterlager", in late 1942 meant a serious deterioration in this regard, particularly concerning hygiene. But, putting forced laborers in the *Ostarbeiterlager* was not the company's choice; it was, to some extent, imposed by government agencies. Hugo F. Boss himself preferred female forced laborers in particular to be quartered in private homes, partly because conditions in the *Ostarbeiterlager* reduced their work output.

One final point of key importance, which has been brought up repeatedly in relation to the history of the firm in the years 1933-45, is the question of how far the company's involvement in the NS war economy laid the foundation for or even accounted for its post-war success. Here, a certain amount of weighing-up needs to be done. On the one hand it is an incontrovertible fact that, as we have seen, Hugo Boss owed its existence as an independent small business to an increased demand for uniforms and hence to National Socialism. Yet, on the other hand, the firm can also be said to simply have benefited from the boom years of the 1930s; in other words, there is no guarantee that, without these external incentives, Hugo Boss would have survived. At the same time, from the standpoint of corporate history, it must be categorically stated that no causal link can be discerned between the actual rise of the company since the 1970s and its production during the period of the Third Reich. In fact, what has become of the company since the end of the war could not have been predicted during the Third Reich – any more than it could in the 1950s and 1960s.

## List of abbreviations

AG	<i>Aktiengesellschaft</i> or “joint-stock company”
AKS	<i>Arbeitskreis Stadtgeschichte</i>
BA	<i>Bundesarchiv</i> or “Federal Archives” [the German national record office currently moving to new premises in Berlin Lichterfelde; <i>Tr.</i> ]
BDM	<i>Bund deutscher Mädel</i> or “League of German girls”
DAF	<i>Deutsche Arbeitsfront</i> or “German Labor Front”
DDR	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i> or “German Democratic Republic” [= East Germany]
DM	<i>Deutsche Mark</i> or “German mark” (also referred to in English as “Deutschmark”), unit of currency in Germany since the currency reform of 1948-49.
Gestapo	<i>Geheime Staatspolizei</i> or “National Secret Police”
KG	<i>Kommanditgesellschaft</i> or “limited partnership”
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> or “German Communist Party”
KZ	<i>Konzentrationslager</i> or “concentration camp”
NS	<i>Nationalsozialist</i> or “National Socialist”
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> or “National Socialist German Workers’ Party”, later dubbed [in German as well] the “Nazi” party
OHG	<i>Offene Handelsgesellschaft</i> or “general partnership”
RM	<i>Reichsmark</i> or “Reich mark” (also referred to in English as “Reichsmark” or “reichsmark”), unit of currency in Germany from 1924 to 1948
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> or “Storm Detachment” (usually referred to in English as “Storm Troopers”)
SdtA	<i>Stadtarchiv</i> or “municipal archives”
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> or “Shield Squadron” (usually referred to in English simply as “SS”)
StA	<i>Staatsarchiv</i> or “state archives”

WABW      *Wirtschaftsarchiv Baden-Württemberg* or “Baden-Württemberg economic archives”

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AKS Befragung Zwangsarbeiter

Zeitzeugenbefragung Metzingen 1930-1950

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**Elisabeth Timm**, *Zwangsarbeit in Esslingen 1939-1945. Kommune, Unternehmen und Belegschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* [“Forced labor in Esslingen 1939-1945. Local authority, company, and employees in the National-Socialist war economy”], Ostfildern, 2008.

**Adam Tooze**, *The wages of destruction: The making and breaking of the Nazi economy*, London, 2006 [translated into German as *Ökonomie der Zerstörung. Die Geschichte der Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, Munich, 2007].

**Thomas Veszelits**, *Die Neckermanns. Licht und Schatten einer deutschen*

*Unternehmerfamilien* [“The Neckermann family. The light and dark sides of a German business dynasty”], Frankfurt and New York, 2005.

**Jens-Christian Wagner**, *Zwangsarbeit für den “Endsieg”. Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* [“Forced labor for ‘final victory’. The Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp”] 1943-1945, Erfurt, 2006.

**Friedrich-Franz Wauschkuhn**, *Die Anfänge der württembergischen Textilindustrie im Rahmen staatlicher Gewerbepolitik* [“The beginnings of the Württemberg textile industry in the context of government policy for trade and industry”] 1806-1848, Hamburg, 1974.

**Peter Wivel**, “Modeimperium levedere uniformer til SS”, in [Danish daily newspaper] *Politiken* (31 August 2008).

**Dieter Ziegler**, *Die Industrielle Revolution*, Darmstadt, 2005.

**Bruno Zopp**, “Grossdeutschlands Uniformindustrie”, in *Beiratssitzung, op. cit.* (see under “Alfred Kemper” above), pp. 14-30.

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- <sup>1</sup> Peter Wivel, “Modeimperium levedere uniformer til SS”, in *Politiken* (31 August 2008).
- <sup>2</sup> Such as German-British artist Tanya Ury’s installation *Who’s Boss*, for example.
- <sup>3</sup> See also anon., “Wie werde ich Behördelieferant?” [“How do I become an official supplier?”; a translation of German titles is provided where appropriate], in *Uniformen-Markt* 2 (1 August 1935), pp. 1 f.
- <sup>4</sup> Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des “Dritten Reiches”. Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* [“The splendid display staged by the ‘Third Reich’. The spell and sheer might of Fascism”], Frankfurt, 1996.
- <sup>5</sup> Elisabeth Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss (1885-1948) und die Firma Hugo Boss. Eine Dokumentation*, Metzingen, 1999 ([www.metzingen-zwangsarbeit.de](http://www.metzingen-zwangsarbeit.de)).
- <sup>6</sup> This requirement appears to be better met in Elisabeth Timm’s most recent work: see Elisabeth Timm, *Zwangsarbeit in Esslingen 1939-1945. Kommune, Unternehmen und Belegschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* [“Forced labor in Esslingen 1939-1945. Local authority, company, and employees in the National-Socialist war economy”], Ostfildern, 2008.
- <sup>7</sup> Most of the latter stem from a comprehensive project on the history of Metzingen during the “Third Reich” and are collected in the anthology edited by Rolf Bidlingmaier, *Metzingen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Metzingen, 2000. In addition (prompted not least by Elisabeth Timm’s study), numerous contemporary-witness interviews [*Zeitzeugeninterviews*, also translated as “oral history interviews” or “interviews with surviving witnesses”, are a recognized historiographical tool, particularly in Germany (where they often relate to the Nazi period); *Tr.*] were conducted with former forced laborers. These are available in the Metzingen Municipal Archives [*Stadtarchiv Metzingen*] and in Henning Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen. Eine Studie* [“Living with forced laborers in Metzingen. A study”], published in Metzingen in 2001 and available, like Elisabeth Timm’s study, at [www.metzingen-zwangsarbeit.de](http://www.metzingen-zwangsarbeit.de).
- <sup>8</sup> Manfred Grieger, “Der Betrieb als Ort der Zwangsarbeit. Das Volkswagenwerk und andere Unternehmen zwischen 1939 und 1945” [“Forced labor on the shop floor. The Volkswagen works and other business enterprises between 1939 and 1945”], in Jürgen Lillteicher (ed.), *Profiteure des NS-Systems? Deutsche Unternehmen und das “Dritte Reich”* [“Profiteers of the NS system? German firms and the ‘Third Reich’ ”], Berlin, 2006, pp. 82-107.
- <sup>9</sup> Hartmut Berghoff, *Zwischen Weltmarkt und Kleinstadt. Hohner und die Mundharmonika 1857-1961. Unternehmensgeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* [“Between global market and small town. Hohner and the mouth organ 1857-1961. Corporate history as social history”], Paderborn, 2006 (second edition).
- <sup>10</sup> The company’s records do not go back so far. One can only hope that some sources are still in the possession of the family.
- <sup>11</sup> Gerd Höschle, *Die deutsche Textilindustrie zwischen 1933 und 1939. Staatsinterventionismus und ökonomische Rationalität*, Stuttgart, 2004.
- <sup>12</sup> Petra Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer in Nationalsozialismus. Wirtschaftliche Entwicklungen und soziale Verhaltensweisen in der Schuh- und Lederindustrie Baden und Württembergs* [“Small and medium-sized businesses under National Socialism. Economic developments and social behavior in the shoe and leather industry of Baden and Württemberg”], Munich, 1997.
- <sup>13</sup> Astrid Gehrig, *Nationalsozialistische Rüstungspolitik und unternehmerischer Entscheidungsspielraum. Vergleichende Fallstudien zur württembergischen Maschinenbauindustrie* [“National Socialist arms policy and entrepreneurial scope for decision-making. Comparative case studies from Württemberg’s mechanical-engineering industry”], Munich, 1996.
- <sup>14</sup> Werner Sombart, *Krieg und Kapitalismus* [“War and capitalism”], Munich, 1913, p. 173.
- <sup>15</sup> Peter Marschalck, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Deutschlands im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* [“Demographic history of Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”], Frankfurt, 1984, pp. 145 f.
- <sup>16</sup> Dieter Ziegler, *Die Industrielle Revolution*, Darmstadt, 2005, pp. 51 ff.
- <sup>17</sup> Werner Hagemann, *Textilwirtschaft*, Breslau, 1928, p. 34.
- <sup>18</sup> Höschle, *Die deutsche Textilindustrie zwischen 1933 und 1939*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- <sup>19</sup> Hugo Riede, *Die württembergische Textilindustrie*, Frankfurt, 1939-40, p. 22.
- <sup>20</sup> Friedrich-Franz Wauschkuhn, *Die Anfänge der württembergischen Textilindustrie im Rahmen staatlicher Gewerbepolitik* [“The beginnings of the Württemberg textile industry in the context of government policy for trade and industry”] *1806-1848*, Hamburg, 1974.
- <sup>21</sup> For an overall view of the clothing industry, see Friedrich Wilhelm Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie. Zur Geschichte der Technisierung und Organisation der Massenproduktion von Bekleidung* [“From the ready-to-wear trade to the clothing industry. A contribution to the history of the mechanization and organization of the mass production of clothing”], Frankfurt, 1992. However, this study deals

- mainly with questions having to do with the development of mechanization and the organization of labor and less with economic-history aspects.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 81 ff.
- <sup>23</sup> Redlich, *Die deutsche Konfektionsindustrie*. *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 66.
- <sup>24</sup> Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt [“Imperial Office of Statistics”], *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* [“Statistical Yearbook for the German Empire”] 33 (1912), p. 53.
- <sup>25</sup> Statistisches Reichsamt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 47 (1928), pp. 98 f.
- <sup>26</sup> Gerd Hohorst *et al.*, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch II. Materialien zur Geschichte des Kaiserreichs 1870-1914*, Munich, 1978, p. 76.
- <sup>27</sup> Volkmar Dick, “Bekleidungsindustrie”, in *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften*, Vol. I, Stuttgart, 1956, pp. 731-41, esp. pp. 731 f.
- <sup>28</sup> Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106 f.
- <sup>29</sup> Dick, “Bekleidungsindustrie”, *op. cit.*, p. 731.
- <sup>30</sup> Redlich, *Die deutsche Konfektionsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- <sup>31</sup> Whereas in England, for instance (notably in Leeds and London), the “rag trade” [as it was called] was mechanized and concentrated to a higher degree. See Katrina Honeyman, *Well suited. A history of the Leeds clothing industry, 1850-1990*. Oxford, 2000, pp. 60 ff.
- <sup>32</sup> See Bernhard Harms, *Kriegstagebuch* [“War diary”] I-IV, Kiel manuscript (transcribed by Cornelia Harms, Kiel, 1997).
- <sup>33</sup> Walter G. Hoffmann, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* [“The growth of the German economy from the middle of the nineteenth century”], Berlin, 1965, p. 373.
- <sup>34</sup> Dick, “Bekleidungsindustrie”, *op. cit.*, p. 734. Remarkably, during this period the share of the clothing industry in the total sales of the clothing business hardly increased at all.
- <sup>35</sup> Statistisches Reichsamt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 57 (1938), Berlin, 1937, pp. 144 f.
- <sup>36</sup> Rolf Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament. Die Industrialisierung in Metzingen und im Ermstal* [“Factory and ornament. Industrialization in Metzingen and the Erms valley”], Metzingen, 1994, p. 26.
- <sup>37</sup> Hugo Boss, NSDAP membership card. BA [see ‘List of abbreviations, p. 73] Berlin, Best. 31XX, CO 106.
- <sup>38</sup> Register of families [*Familienregister*], SdtA Metzingen.
- <sup>39</sup> Hugo Ferdinand Boss questionnaire [*Fragebogen*] (17 April 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2 1658.
- <sup>40</sup> Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner’s Office for the political purging of Württemberg-Hohenzollern [*Schreiben Hugo Boss an das Staatskommissariat für die politische Säuberung Württemberg-Hohenzollern*] (3 December 1947), Appeal [*Einspruch*], StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2, 1658.
- <sup>41</sup> Register of families, SdtA Metzingen.
- <sup>42</sup> Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner’s Office, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 27).
- <sup>44</sup> For a general view, see Hartmut Kiehling, “Die wirtschaftliche Situation des deutschen Einzelhandels in den Jahren 1920 bis 1923, Das Beispiel des Lebensmittel- und Bekleidungseinzelhandels” [“The economic situation of the German retail trade in the years 1920 to 1923. The example of the food and clothing retail trades”], in *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 41 (1996), pp. 1-27. One of the things Kiehling observes in the hyperinflation period is a political radicalization of retailers, during the course of which they executed a powerful shift to the right.
- <sup>45</sup> Redlich, *Die deutsche Konfektionsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>46</sup> Trading business registration [*Gewerbeeintrag*], SdtA Metzingen MA 403, Abt. I.
- <sup>47</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
- <sup>48</sup> It is not entirely clear whether the parental trousseau shop closed when the clothing factory was started up. The trade gazette still gives a taxable income for the shop, but a very small one - scarcely enough to provide a living. Possibly the shop continued in some form or another as a supplementary business. Also rather curious is the fact that in 1931, the year bankruptcy was declared, an “Anna Holy clothes factory” is registered. It may be that here a way of securing assets was being sought. SdtA Metzingen MA 403, Abt. I.
- <sup>49</sup> One wonders, however, whether in view of her youth at the time (she had been born in 1911) she can have had much awareness of economic problems.
- <sup>50</sup> Trading business registration, SdtA Metzingen MA 403, Abt. II. The entry indicates neither the legal form of the business nor the amount of its capital. In all probability it was a private company, i.e. a KG [*Kommanditgesellschaft* or “limited partnership”] or OHG [*offene Handelsgesellschaft* or “general partnership”].
- <sup>51</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>52</sup> Employment in ready-to-wear clothing firms [*Beschäftigung der Konfektionsbetriebe*], WABW A7, Bü 471.
- <sup>53</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.
- <sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.

- <sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.
- <sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>58</sup> Trading business registration, SdtA Metzingen MA 403, Abt. II.
- <sup>59</sup> Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner's Office, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 27).
- <sup>60</sup> On the history of the SA uniform, see Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde. Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristum und in der deutschen SA* ["Fascist combat leagues. Violence and community in Italian 'squadristum' and in the German SA"], Cologne, 2002, pp. 579 ff.
- <sup>61</sup> Anon., "Vom Werden der Uniform der Bewegung. Entwicklung der zugelassenen Verkaufsstellen" ["How the uniform of the movement came about. The development of licensed retail outlets"], in *Uniformen-Markt*, 1 July 1937, pp. 199 f.
- <sup>62</sup> See facsimile in Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>63</sup> Only a taxable business yield of RM 3,000 for each of the years 1924 and 1925 has survived. Trading business registration, SdtA Metzingen MA 403, Abt. II.
- <sup>64</sup> Overview of short-time working in Metzingen municipality [*Übersicht über die Kurzarbeit in der Stadtgemeinde Metzingen*] 1925-1926, SdtA Metzingen MA 668.
- <sup>65</sup> Business-list entry for Rudolf Born. Announcement of institution of proceedings for bankruptcy [*Gewerbelisteneintrag Rudolf Born. Bekanntmachung über Eröffnung des Konkursverfahrens*], SdtA Munich.
- <sup>66</sup> "...auf der Kippe". Conversation with Hildegard Bazlen (9 November 1994), p. 3, SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung 1930/50, Gespräch II*.
- <sup>67</sup> Industrial firms in Metzingen with 20 or more workers (1928 and the following years) [*Gewerbliche Betriebe in Metzingen mit 20 und mehr Arbeitskräften (1928 und folgende Jahre)*], SdtA Metzingen MA 1006. Statistics relating to workers for Württemberg Supervisory Office [*Statistik über Arbeitskräfte für das Württembergische Gewerbe- und Handelsaufsichtsamt*] (1927), SdtA Metzingen MA 1006.
- <sup>68</sup> Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner's Office, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 27).
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer im Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 f.
- <sup>72</sup> See the discussion in Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 f.
- <sup>73</sup> Oral history interview [*Zeitzeugeninterview*] with Doris Braunwarth (24 November 1994), SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung* ["Oral history investigation"] 1930-50. *Gespräch* ["interview"] IX.
- <sup>74</sup> Hugo Ferdinand Boss questionnaire (17 April 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2, 1658.
- <sup>75</sup> See for instance Peter Hayes, *Industry and ideology. IG Farben in the Nazi era*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 103.
- <sup>76</sup> For a general treatment of the subject, see Adam Tooze, *The wages of destruction: The making and breaking of the Nazi economy*, London, 2006.
- <sup>77</sup> For an overview of the figures, see Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner's Office, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 27).
- <sup>78</sup> Christoph Buchheim, "Die Überwindung der Weltwirtschaftskrise in Deutschland" ["Surmounting the world economic crisis in Germany"], in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 56 (2008), pp. 381-414, esp. 381 ff.
- <sup>79</sup> Hoffmann, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, *op. cit.*, p. 373.
- <sup>80</sup> Höschle, *Die deutsche Textilindustrie zwischen 1933 und 1939*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>81</sup> For a thorough treatment of this, see Adam Tooze, *Ökonomie der Zerstörung*. *op. cit.*, pp. 93 ff. See also Michael Ebi, *Export um jeden Preis. Die deutsche Exportförderung von 1932-1938* ["Export at any price. German promotion of exports from 1932-1938"], Stuttgart, 2004.
- <sup>82</sup> On the adjustment made by the textile industry, see for example Walter Schneider, *Strukturwandlungen in der Textilwirtschaft durch das Aufkommen der Kunstseide* ["Structural changes in the textile business following the rise of artificial silk"], Nuremberg, 1935.
- <sup>83</sup> Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Der Manager der Kriegswirtschaft. Hans Kehrl: Ein Unternehmer in der Politik des "Dritten Reiches"* ["Manager of the war economy. Hans Kehrl: An entrepreneur in the politics of the 'Third Reich'"], Essen, 1999, pp. 38 ff.
- <sup>84</sup> See André Steiner, "Umrisse einer Geschichte der Verbraucherpreispolitik unter dem Nationalsozialismus der Vorkriegszeit" ["Towards a history of consumer-price policy under the National Socialism of the pre-war period"], in Werner Abelshäuser *et al.* (eds.), *Wirtschaftsordnung, Staat und Unternehmen. Neue Forschungen zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus* ["Economic order, government, and business. New research studies in the economic history of National Socialism"], Essen, 2003, pp. 279-303, esp. pp. 284 ff.
- <sup>85</sup> See Roberta S. Kremer (ed.), *Broken threads. The destruction of the Jewish fashion industry in Germany and Austria*, Oxford, 2007.
- <sup>86</sup> On this subject, see Ludolf Herbst, "Banker in einem prekären Geschäft. Die Beteiligung der Commerzbank an der Vernichtung jüdischer Gewerbetätigkeit im Altreich" ["Bankers in a precarious business. The involvement of Commerzbank in the destruction of Jewish business activity in the 'Old Reich'"] (1933-1940)", in *idem* and

- Thomas Weihe (eds.), *Die Commerzbank und die Juden 1933-1945*, Munich, 2004, pp. 74-137, esp. p. 77. Limited partnerships [*Kommanditgesellschaften* or KGs] and general partnerships [*offene Handelsgesellschaften* or OHGs] were deemed to be “Jewish” if the principal partner was a Jew. In the case of a joint-stock company [*Aktiengesellschaft* or AG], a quarter of the seats on the supervisory board had to be occupied by Jews or the majority of the capital be in Jewish hands.
- <sup>87</sup> Wilhelm Lorch, “Die Industrie der Bekleidung”, in *Die Wirtschaftskurve* 21/IV (1942), pp. 169-78, esp. p. 171.
- <sup>88</sup> Anon., “Statistik aus unseren Fachgebieten” [“Statistic from our specialist fields”], in *Uniformen-Markt* 6 (1 June 1939), p. 169.
- <sup>89</sup> Thomas Veszelits, *Die Neckermanns. Licht und Schatten einer deutschen Unternehmerfamilien* [“The Neckermann family. The light and dark sides of a German business dynasty”], Frankfurt and New York, 2005, p. 80.
- <sup>90</sup> Michael H. Kater, *Hitlerjugend*, Darmstadt, 2005, p. 22 (originally published as *Hitler youth*, Cambridge [Mass.], 2004).
- <sup>91</sup> Alfred Kemper, “Begrüßungsansprache des Leiters der Fachuntergruppe Uniformindustrie” [“Welcome address by the head of the uniform-industry section”], in *Beiratssitzung* [“Meeting of the advisory board...”] *der Fachuntergruppe Uniformindustrie in der Wirtschaftgruppe Bekleidungsindustrie*, Vienna, 1938, pp. 3-13, esp. p. 5.
- <sup>92</sup> Anon., “Bereinigung der braunen Branche” [“Sorting out the brown branch”], in *Uniformen-Markt* 3 (1 February 1936), p. 1.
- <sup>93</sup> Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer im Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- <sup>94</sup> See also Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic? Fashioning women in the Third Reich*, New York, 2004.
- <sup>95</sup> Margarete Helene Mankertz, *Massenfertigung in der Bekleidungsindustrie* [“Mass production in the clothing industry”], Frankfurt, 1945 (Frankfurt University dissertation, 1945), p. 52.
- <sup>96</sup> Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 286.
- <sup>97</sup> Bruno Zopp, “Grossdeutschlands Uniformindustrie”, in *Beiratssitzung*, *op. cit.* (see this chapter, n. 14), pp. 14-30, esp. p. 17.
- <sup>98</sup> For an overview of the figures, see Letter from Boss to State Commission, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 27).
- <sup>99</sup> Anon., “Bevorstehende Beschaffungsaufträge in SA-Mänteln” [“Forthcoming procurement orders for SA coats”], in *Uniform-Markt* 2 (1 January 1935), p. 3.
- <sup>100</sup> Zopp, “Grossdeutschlands Uniformindustrie”, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>101</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>102</sup> Lorch, “Die Industrie der Bekleidung”, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
- <sup>103</sup> Zopp, “Grossdeutschlands Uniformindustrie”, *op. cit.*, pp. 29 f.
- <sup>104</sup> Guenther, *NaziChic? op. cit.*, pp. 226 f.
- <sup>105</sup> Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer im Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 f.
- <sup>106</sup> Lorch, “Die Industrie der Bekleidung”, *op. cit.*, pp. 175 f.
- <sup>107</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>108</sup> Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 133 ff.
- <sup>109</sup> Veszelits, *Die Neckermanns*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
- <sup>110</sup> Elisabeth Haaf, *Wie dem auch sei, es lebe hoch die Schneiderei. Leidersbach: Vom armen Spessartdorf zum Zentrum der Bekleidungsindustrie* [“Be that as it may, three cheers for tailoring. Leidersbach: From impoverished Spessart village to clothing-industry center”], Aschaffenburg, 1996, p. 73.
- <sup>111</sup> For the example of the brewing industry in the First World War, see also Roman Köster, *Die Konzentrationsbewegung in der Dortmunder Brauindustrie 1914-1924. Das Beispiel der Dortmunder Actien-Brauerei*, Essen, 2003.
- <sup>112</sup> Haaf, *Leidersbach*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
- <sup>113</sup> Anon., “Im Dienste der Wehrmach . . . Jetzt machen wir Uniformen” [“Serving the armed forces . . . Let’s make uniforms”], in *Uniformen-Markt* 8 (1 June 1941), p. 102. Peek & Cloppenburg had their subsidiary BeHaWe manufacture the uniforms.
- <sup>114</sup> Bruno Zopp, “Leistungssteigerung der Uniformindustrie im Kriege” [“Increased output of the uniforms industry in the war”], in *Uniformen-Markt* 8 (1 December 1941), pp. 241 f.
- <sup>115</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>116</sup> Anon. “Wirtschaft und Uniformen” [“Business and uniforms”], in *Uniformen-Markt* 8 (15 June 1941), p. 111.
- <sup>117</sup> Mankertz, *Massenfertigung in der Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- <sup>118</sup> Lecture by *Oberfeldintendant* [lieutenant-colonel/paymaster] Land, “Rüstungswirtschaft und Beschaffungswesen der Wehrmacht bei Bekleidung and Ausrüstung des Mannes im Zietraum April 43 - März 44” [“The arms economy and procurement for the armed forces in terms of clothing and personal equipping in the period April 43 to March 44”] (13 March 1944), BA Berlin RM 9/26.

- <sup>119</sup> Lecture by Dr. Wilhelmi of the Military Procurement Office, “Vergleichende Darstellung über die besonderen Schwierigkeiten bei der Beschaffung von Bekleidung und Ausstattung im Zeitraum April 43 - März 44 [“Comparative representation of the special problems facing procurement of clothing and personal equipment in the period April 43 - March 44”], BA Berlin RM 9/26.
- <sup>120</sup> Ernst Melzer, “Verteilungsstelle für Bekleidung”, in *Uniformen-Markt* 8 (1 January 1941), pp. 1 f.
- <sup>121</sup> Veszelits, *Die Neckermanns*, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 ff.
- <sup>122</sup> As regards the shoemaking and leather industries, see also Bräutigam, *Mittelständische Unternehmer im Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
- <sup>123</sup> Friedrich-Wilhelm Schnitz, “Voraussetzungen und Grenzen der Rationalisierung in der textilen Bekleidungsindustrie” [“Prerequisites for and limits to rationalization in the textile clothing industry”], in “Forschungsstelle für Allgemeine und Textile Marktwirtschaft” [“General and textile market economy research office”] (ed.), *Arbeitsberichte zur Marktforschung* 1941, pp. 179-90, esp. p. 180.
- <sup>124</sup> Certainly one is tempted to offer a variant on the thesis put forward by Werner Sombart, who thought that the Prussian government’s colossal demand for uniforms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a key factor in the industrialization of the textile business. Here again the manufacture of uniforms could be interpreted as paving the way towards the mass-production of clothing in Germany. See Gisela Krause, *Altpreuussische Uniformfertigung als Vorstufe der Bekleidungsindustrie* [“Old Prussian uniform manufacture as preliminary stage of the clothing industry”], Hamburg, 1965. See also Rudolf Christian Meier, *Bekleidungsindustrie. Struktur und Wachstum* [“The clothing industry. Structure and growth”], Munich, 1964, pp. 21 ff. On rationalization during the Second World War generally, see Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit im “Dritten Reich”*: *Untersuchungen zu Lohn- und Arbeitsbedingungen in Deutschland 1933-1945* [“Industrial labor in the ‘Third Reich’: Studies of wage conditions and working conditions in Germany 1933-1945”], Göttingen, 1989, pp. 77 ff.
- <sup>125</sup> Anselm Lippisch, “Wandlungen in der Wiener Bekleidungsindustrie” [“Changes in the Viennese clothing industry”], in *Die Deutsche Volkswirtschaft* 4, 1944, pp. 112 f.
- <sup>126</sup> *ibid.* This should be seen against the background that the Viennese clothing industry generally was regarded as somewhat backward.
- <sup>127</sup> Mankertz, *Massenfertigung in der Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- <sup>128</sup> Veszelits, *Die Neckermanns*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139 f.
- <sup>129</sup> Lecture by Dr. Wilhelmi, *op. cit.* (see above, note 42).
- <sup>130</sup> Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 150 ff.
- <sup>131</sup> As regards the sales figures cited here, it should be noted that Elisabeth Timm gives two different sets of sales figures in her study, with some of the figures in the second set being three times higher than those cited in the present work. Timm writes in this connection that the sources offer no explanation for the differences. However, that is not true. In fact, the relevant source clearly says of these higher figures that they do not represent actual quantities but accounting numbers by means of which Boss sought to show that he had earned relatively little by manufacturing uniforms. Timm’s approach also seems to be problematic methodologically, referring as it does to one or the other set purely according to taste. See Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*, p. 35, and the summary of business figures given in Letter from Hugo F. Boss to Württemberg-Hohenzollern State Commission for Political Cleansing, *op. cit.* (see chapter 1, note 27).
- <sup>132</sup> Summary of business figures in Letter from Hugo F. Boss to Württemberg-Hohenzollern State Commission, *op. cit.* (see chapter 1, note 27).
- <sup>133</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>134</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen (9 November 1994), p. 3. SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung 1930-50*.
- <sup>135</sup> Oral history interview conducted on the business premises of Hugo Boss AG on 20 May 2009.
- <sup>136</sup> Edith Poller account [*Bericht Edith Poller*], “Meine Metzinger Zeit bei Hugo Boss” [“My Metzingen time at H, SdtA Metzingen.
- <sup>137</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 223.
- <sup>138</sup> Oral history interview with Erwin Schuler (12 April 1994), SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung Metzingen 1930-50*. Incidentally, in many oral history interviews one repeatedly finds mention of Hugo Ferdinand Boss as having still been a small man at the time. Here is a further very clear illustration of how the present-day organization throws such a viewpoint into sharp contrast.
- <sup>139</sup> Paul G. Erhard, *Uniformen am laufenden Band. Ein Bericht aus der rhein-mainischen Industrie* [“Assembly-line uniforms. A report from Rhine-Main industry”], (no place of publication given), 1938.
- <sup>140</sup> Mankertz, *Massenfertigung in der Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.* pp. 7 ff.
- <sup>141</sup> Summary of business figures in Letter from Hugo F. Boss to Württemberg-Hohenzollern State Commission for Political Cleansing, *op. cit.* (see chapter 1, note 27)
- <sup>142</sup> Döring, *Vom Konfektionsgewerbe zur Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

- <sup>143</sup> Elisabeth Timm rates Hugo F. Boss's statements to this effect as attempts at self-justification pure and simple, particularly since the fact that one of his employees had collaborated with the Gestapo would reveal the closeness of his party ties. However, an element of caution is advisable here. Even if this exceptionally close relationship had actually existed, the system of "private awarding of contracts" was making things more and more difficult in the early 1940s. In fact, the so-called "weapons inspections" [*Rüstungsinspektionen*] may have extended to the firm of Hugo Boss. So at that time contracts can scarcely have been awarded on a wholly corrupt basis. See Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- <sup>144</sup> On the spread of the "Refa system" under National Socialism, see Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit im "Dritten Reich"*, *op. cit.*, pp 175 ff.
- <sup>145</sup> Anon., "The clothing working group" ["Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bekleidung"], in *Uniformen-Markt* 8 (1 March 1941), p. 33; Anon., "Refa is the word" ["Reifa heist die Parole"], in *Uniformen-Markt* 9 (15 December 1942), p. 185. See also Stephan H. Lindner, *Den Faden verloren. Die westdeutsche und die französische Textilindustrie auf dem Rückzug* ["Losing the thread. The West German and French textile industries on the retreat"] (1930/45-1990), Munich, 2001.
- <sup>146</sup> Calculated according to Summary of business figures in Letter from Hugo F. Boss to Württemberg-Hohenzollern State Commission for Political Cleansing, *op. cit.* (see chapter 1, note 27).
- <sup>147</sup> Stephan H. Lindner, *Das Reichskommissariat für die Behandlung feindlichen Vermögens im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Eine Studie zur Verwaltungs-, Rechts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands* ["The Reichskommissariat for Dealing with Enemy Assets in the Second World War. A contribution to the administrative, legal, and scientific history of National Socialist Germany"], Stuttgart, 1991, pp. 124 ff.
- <sup>148</sup> Walter Schneider, *Betrachtungen zur deutschen Preispolitik in der Textilwirtschaft von 1933 bis 1945. Eine Studie zum Problem der Preisbildung auf der Basis eines Vergleichspreises* ["Observations on price policy in the textile business from 1933 to 1945. A study concerning the problem of price formation on a comparative-price basis"], Basel, 1958, pp. 59 ff. On the introduction of price gradation, see also Markus Albert Diehe, *Von der Marktwirtschaft zur nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft. Die Transformation der deutschen Wirtschaftsordnung 1933-1945*, Stuttgart, 2005, p. 75.
- <sup>149</sup> Willi A. Boelcke, *Sozialgeschichte Baden-Württembergs 1800-1989*, Stuttgart, 1989, p. 334.
- <sup>150</sup> On wage trends in the textile sector, see also Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit*, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 106 f. However, the rates of wage increase given there do not match those of the wage increases cited by Hugo F. Boss.
- <sup>151</sup> See NSKK [*Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahrkorps* or National Socialist Motor Corps, to which Eugen Holy belonged] list of Metzingen Ortsgruppe ["local group"] (10 July 1945), SdtA Metzingen, MA 1017.
- <sup>152</sup> "Gouvernement Militaire en Allemagne", Eugen Holy questionnaire, StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1683.
- <sup>153</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* [see above, n. 59].
- <sup>154</sup> Mankertz, *Massenfertigung in der Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, pp. 52 ff.
- <sup>155</sup> Lorch, *Industrie der Bekleidung*, *op. cit.*, p. 175. For a sceptical view, see Schmitz, *Voraussetzungen und Grenzen der Rationalisierung in der textilen Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>156</sup> See Roland Peter, *Rüstungspolitik in Baden. Kriegswirtschaft und Arbeitseinsatz in einer Grenzregion im Zweiten Weltkrieg* ["Arms policy in Baden. The war economy and labor deployment in a frontier region in the Second World War"], Munich, 1995.
- <sup>157</sup> Letter from Landrat Reutlingen Von Engel to the firm of Carl Arnold [*Schreiben des Landrats Reutlingen Von Engel an die Firma Carl Arnold*] (26 March 1945), SdtA Metzingen. MA 980.
- <sup>158</sup> Letter from Notary Dieter to the French Military Government in Reutlingen [*Schreiben Notar Dieter an die französische Militärregierung in Reutlingen*] (31 December 1945), AdO Colmar, W-H, c. 2989.
- <sup>159</sup> Ullrich Brett, "Für den neuen, grossen Geist", Stadtverwaltung und Partei", in Bidlingmaier (ed.), *Metzingen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-94, esp. p. 74.
- <sup>160</sup> Verdict of denazification hearing [*Urteil Spruchkammerverfahren*] (8 March 1946), StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1658.
- <sup>161</sup> Birgit Rettich-Mutschler, " 'Bravo Metzingen'!? Das Metzinger Wirtschaftsleben in der NS-Zeit", in Bidlingmaier (ed.), *Metzingen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-126, esp. p. 98.
- <sup>162</sup> Negotiating paper before the town council. Statement by Mayor Dipper [*Verhandlungsniederschrift mit den Ratsherren. Stellungnahme Bürgermeister Dipper*] (17 January 1939), SdtA Metzingen, MB 63.
- <sup>163</sup> Oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 60), p. 4.
- <sup>164</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- <sup>165</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 57).
- <sup>166</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- <sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, p. 98.
- <sup>168</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 57), p. 8; Oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 60).
- <sup>169</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* [see above, n. 59].

- <sup>170</sup> See AKS, Examination of former forced laborers from Metzingen firms (6 June 2002), Anna Wocka statement [*Befragung der ehemalige Zwangsarbeiter aus Metzinger Firmen (6.6.2002), Aussage Anna Wocka*], SdtA Metzingen.
- <sup>171</sup> AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see above, n. 93].
- <sup>172</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* [see above, n. 59].
- <sup>173</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 57), p. 8; Oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 60).
- <sup>174</sup> Survey of all persons arrested and penalized on political grounds under the Third Reich government [*Erfassung aller während der Herrschaft des Dritten Reichs aus politischen Gründen Verhafteten und Bestraften*], SdtA Metzingen, MA 1036.
- <sup>175</sup> For a general treatment of this subject, see Michael H. Kater, "Die Ernsten Bibelforscher im Dritten Reich", in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 17 (1969), pp. 181-218.
- <sup>176</sup> Hubert Roser, "Widerstand und Verweigerung der Zeugen Jehovas im deutschen Südwesten 1933 bis 1945" ["Resistance and non-cooperation by Jehovah's Witnesses in the German south-west between 1933 and 1945"], in *idem* (ed.), *Widerstand als Bekenntnis* ["Resistance as profession of faith"]. *Die Zeugen Jehovas und das NS-regime in Baden und Württemberg*, Konstanz, 1999, pp. 11-87, esp. p. 12.
- <sup>177</sup> Appendix to declaratory decree regarding compensation for political arrest of 29 August 1948 (29 September 1949) [*Nachtrag zum Feststellungsbescheid über Entschädigung für politischen Haft vom 29.8.1948 (29.9.1949)*], StA Ludwigsburg, EL 350 I, Bü 2818.
- <sup>178</sup> *ibid.*; Ruling of Stuttgart district reparation agency [*Urteil Landesbezirksstelle für Wiedergutmachung Stuttgart*] (26 June 1950), StA Ludwigsburg EL 350 I, Bü 2817.
- <sup>179</sup> Eugen Holy questionnaire [*Fragebogen Eugen Holy*], StA Sigmaringen Wü 13 T2 1658.
- <sup>180</sup> Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* ["Foreign workers. Politics and practice of 'deployment of aliens' in the war economy of the 'Third Reich'"], Berlin, 1985.
- <sup>181</sup> Hans Pohl *et al.*, *Die Daimler-Benz AG 1933-1945. Eine Dokumentation*, Stuttgart, 1986. On the criticism, see Karl-Heinz Roth (ed.), *Die Daimler-Benz AG 1916-1948. Schlüsseldokumente zur Konzerngeschichte* ["Daimler-Benz AG 1916-1948. Key documents relating to the history of the group"], Nördlingen, 1987.
- <sup>182</sup> Barbara Hoppmann *et al.*, *Zwangsarbeit bei Daimler-Benz*, Stuttgart, 1994.
- <sup>183</sup> Hans Mommsen and Manfred Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich*, Düsseldorf, 1996.
- <sup>184</sup> "Schwarze Liste für schwarze Schafe. Wie Bahlsen, Boss, und andere sich verhalten. Betriebe sind schlecht vorbereitet" ["Black list for black sheep. How Bahlsen, Boss, and others are reacting. Firms are largely unprepared"], newspaper article in *Südwest-Presse*, 17 December 1999.
- <sup>185</sup> See above all Mark Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz. Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa* ["Forced labor under the swastika. Foreign civilian laborers, POWs, and other prisoners in the German Reich and in occupied Europe"] 1939-1945, Stuttgart, 2001.
- <sup>186</sup> Werner Plumpe, "Unternehmen in Nationalsozialismus. Eine Zwischenbilanz" ["Businesses under National Socialism. An interim balance"], in Abelshäuser (ed.), *Wirtschaftsordnung, Staat und Unternehmen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-66, esp. p. 254.
- <sup>187</sup> Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- <sup>188</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.*, p. 256
- <sup>189</sup> Tooze, *Ökonomie der Zerstörung*, *op. cit.*, pp. 591 ff.
- <sup>190</sup> Dietmar Petzina *et al.*, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch III. Materialien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Reiches 1914-1945*, Munich, 1978, p. 85.
- <sup>191</sup> Richard J. Overy, *War and economy in the Third Reich*, Oxford, 1994, p. 305.
- <sup>192</sup> Jens-Christian Wagner, *Zwangsarbeit für den "Endsieg". Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* ["Forced labor for 'final victory'. The Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp"] 1943-1945, Erfurt, 2006.
- <sup>193</sup> Hayes, *Industry and ideology*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>194</sup> Mommsen and Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>195</sup> Carola Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie. Eine Untersuchung zur sozialen Rationalisierung in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* ["Siemens, National Socialism, and the modern family. A study of social rationalization in Germany in the twentieth century"], Hamburg, 1990, pp. 184 ff.
- <sup>196</sup> See not only Elisabeth Timm's study but also the work, likewise available on the Internet, of Henning Kober: Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>197</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 59).
- <sup>198</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- <sup>199</sup> For an overall view, see Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit im "Dritten Reich"*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

- <sup>200</sup> See AKS, Examination. Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93]. Kubala-Bern reports that 17 railway trucks containing 60 persons each made their way to southern Germany. That strongly suggests a coordinated campaign by a number of firms.
- <sup>201</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 57).
- <sup>202</sup> Statement by Frida Rausche, StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1658. The witness was no doubt unaware that her statement contained a contradiction.
- <sup>203</sup> AKS, Examination... Anna Wocka statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>204</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 59]. According to Anna Wocka's testimony, there were 20 Poles (4 tailors and 16 seamstresses); AKS, Examination... Anna Wocka statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>205</sup> Cited in Rettich-Mutschler, "Bravo Metzingen"!, *op. cit.*, pp. 111 f.
- <sup>206</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>207</sup> Composition of forced labor [*Zusammenstellung Zwangsarbeit*], SdtA Metzingen.
- <sup>208</sup> Timm, *Hugo Ferdinand Boss*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>209</sup> We have an example in the statement of Elzbieta Kubala-Bern, who although at first accommodated in a camp subsequently (from 1942) lived in the inn run by the Baumann family. AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>210</sup> Rettich-Mutschler, "Bravo Metzingen"!, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
- <sup>211</sup> Metzingen citizen Willi Schaich said in an oral history interview: "In Metzingen there were prisoners of war and Poles and Russians who lived in a kind of camp. They worked in the factories. There were people from Holland, too, and a lot of Frenchwomen. Because Boss made uniforms for the SS, the SA, and the military as well. That was what the Frenchwomen had been brought in for. And of course, we were forbidden to spend any time with the foreigners. The rules were strict. All the same, we young lads would talk to the Frenchwomen and flirt a bit. But you didn't want to get caught at it." Oral history interview with Willi Schaich (2 December 1994), p. 3. SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung 1930-50, Gespräch XLIII*.
- <sup>212</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*Gesellschafterversammlung Ostarbeiterlager*] (19 September 1942), SdtA Metzingen, MA 986.
- <sup>213</sup> Karin-Anne Böttcher, "'Schuld daran sind nur Faschismus und der verfluchte Krieg'. Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeiter in Reutlingen während des Zweiten Weltkriegs" ["'The fault lies only with Fascism and the wretched war'. Forced laborers in Reutlingen during the Second World War"], in *Reutlinger Geschichtsblätter* 1995 NF no. 34 (1995), pp. 29-88, esp. pp. 40 ff. Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- <sup>214</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (12 February 1943).
- <sup>215</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- <sup>216</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (5 March 1943).
- <sup>217</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (19 May 1943).
- <sup>218</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>219</sup> Rettich-Mutschler, "Bravo Metzingen!?", *op. cit.*, p. 113.
- <sup>220</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (19 May 1943).
- <sup>221</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (9 February 1944).
- <sup>222</sup> Rettich-Mutschler, "Bravo Metzingen!?", *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- <sup>223</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (9 February 1944).
- <sup>224</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>225</sup> Statement by Johanna Bauer and Maria Usieko [*Erklärung Johanna Bauer, Maria Usieko*] (18 April 1947), StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1658. But actually, the workers give 3 February 1944 as the date when they left the firm, whereas the partnership meeting at which Hugo F. Boss put forward the request referred to in the text took place almost a week later.
- <sup>226</sup> See also oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* [see ch. 1, n. 60], p. 6.
- <sup>227</sup> The fact that camp commandant Hammer was sick at this time and had to resign may have made this possible. Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (9 February 1944).
- <sup>228</sup> One's suspicions are aroused by the fact that the statements of two Polish women workers made respectively on 26 November 1946 (names indecipherable) and 18 April 1947 are worded almost identically. This suggests at least a degree of legal "prompting" in the writing thereof, although it does not necessarily mean that untruths are being propounded here. StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1658
- <sup>229</sup> Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner's Office, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 27).
- <sup>230</sup> On the problems associated with what became known as "displaced persons" [the English phrase was widely used; *Tr.*], see (among other sources) Gabriele Dietz-Görrig, *Displaced persons. Ihre Integration in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* ["Displaced persons. Their integration into economy and society in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia"], Düsseldorf, 1992; Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.*, pp. 209 ff.

- <sup>231</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.*, pp. 151 ff.
- <sup>232</sup> Statement by Johanna Bauer and Maria Usieko, *op. cit.* [see above, n. 46].
- <sup>233</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
- <sup>234</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>235</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.* Kober's transcription reads "60 DM", but presumably "RM" were meant.
- <sup>236</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>237</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.*, pp. 156 f.
- <sup>238</sup> Statement by Elzbieta Kubala-Bern as cited in Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 19. The statement contains a certain amount of confusion. For example, Kubala-Bern testifies that, following her arrival in Metzingen in 1941, she was first assigned to the *Ostarbeiterlager* (which at the time did not yet exist). Presumably she meant the Boss firm's own hutment.
- <sup>239</sup> It is possible that Kubala-Bern is talking about wage levels as they were in 1940-41, whereas later they went up (which was not at all unusual).
- <sup>240</sup> An example of this may perhaps be that, in the oral history interviews, at one point Maria Wocka puts gross weekly earnings at RM 70, at another point at RM 60.
- <sup>241</sup> Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz*, *op. cit.* See also Elisabeth Timm, *Zwangsarbeit in Esslingen 1939-1945. Kommune, Unternehmen und Belegschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* ["Forced labor in Esslingen. Local authority, company, and employees in the National Socialist war economy"], Ostfildern, 2008, pp. 186 f.
- <sup>242</sup> Statement by Jan Kondak, cited in Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- <sup>243</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- <sup>244</sup> AKS, Examination... Anna Wocka statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>245</sup> AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>246</sup> Eastern workers' camp partnership meeting [*op. cit.*, see above, n. 33] (24 February 1944).
- <sup>247</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- <sup>248</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 59).
- <sup>249</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>250</sup> AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>251</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 59). The two former Boss employees who wished to remain anonymous also said (in an oral history interview conducted on the premises of Hugo Boss AG on 20 May 2009) that they had simply been unable to communicate with the Polish women linguistically; that was why they had not sat together.
- <sup>252</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>253</sup> Oral history interview with Hildegard Bazlen, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 57): "They grew fat with us and were well fed. The department that had all the camps under it sent along some people who asked what we would actually do. They [the inmates] were inspected constantly and weighed. What we used to give them to eat was well out of the ordinary, you see." However, it is not entirely clear which firm is meant here - Boss or Bazlen.
- <sup>254</sup> Such leave had to have the approval of the *Arbeitsamt*, so of course the decision as to whether or not to grant it did not lie with Hugo Boss alone.
- <sup>255</sup> AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93].
- <sup>256</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>257</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- <sup>258</sup> Henning Kober, "Besuch bei Boss" ["A visit to Boss"], in *Die Tageszeitung*, 18 June 2002.
- <sup>259</sup> See Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- <sup>260</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>261</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 19 f.
- <sup>262</sup> Edith Poller had similar recollections. See Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 59).
- <sup>263</sup> There is also a suggestion of this in AKS, Examination... Elzbieta Kubala-Bern statement, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 93]. Yet the statement of the two anonymous oral history witnesses indicates otherwise. They said (in an oral history interview conducted on the premises of Hugo Boss AG on 20 May 2009) that there had not, at that time, been any withdrawal from working life through illness.
- <sup>264</sup> This is why the Metzingen oral history interviewees initially refer to the French occupying forces as "the Moroccans". See also Ullrich Brett, "Im Schatten des Krieges. Zweiter Weltkrieg und Kriegsende in Metzingen" ["In the shadow of war. The Second World War and the end of the war in Metzingen"], in Bidlingmaier, *Metzingen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-30, esp. pp. 228 f.
- <sup>265</sup> Oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 60), p. 11.

- <sup>266</sup> Siegfried Boss questionnaire [*Fragebogen Siegfried Boss*] (17 January 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 15, T1 306. Letter from Hugo Boss to Reutlingen chamber of industry and commerce [*Schreiben Hugo Boss an die IHK Reutlingen*] (17 January 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 15, T1 306.
- <sup>267</sup> Cornelia Rauh-Kühne, “Die Unternehmer und die Entnazifizierung der Wirtschaft in Württemberg-Hohenzollern” [“Entrepreneurs and ‘denazification’ of the economy in Württemberg-Hohenzollern”], in *idem* and Michael Ruck, *Regionale Eliten zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, Munich, 1993, pp. 305-31, esp. p. 317.
- <sup>268</sup> Judgement [*Urteil*] against Hugo F. Boss (1 March 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 15, T1 312.
- <sup>269</sup> Letter from Hugo Boss to State Commissioner’s Office, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 27).
- <sup>270</sup> Kober, *Der Umgang mit den Zwangsarbeitern in Metzingen*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>271</sup> Statement [*Aussage*] by Principal Bauer (12 December 1947), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2 1658.
- <sup>272</sup> Ullrich Brett, “Für den neuen, grossen Geist. ’ Stadtverwaltung und Partei”, in Bidlingmaier, *Metzingen in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-94, esp. p. 74. In his own denazification proceedings, which eventually, following an appeal, placed him in the “less compromised” [*minderbelastet*] category, Rath said he had “believed [in Adolf Hitler] like a child”, which the appeals of other “party comrades” in turn put into perspective.
- <sup>273</sup> In this connection, see also Rauh-Kühne, “Die Unternehmer und die Entnazifizierung der Wirtschaft in Württemberg-Hohenzollern”, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
- <sup>274</sup> See Klaus Dietmar Henke, *Politische Säuberung unter französische Besatzung. Die Entnazifizierung in Württemberg-Hohenzollern*, Stuttgart, 1981.
- <sup>275</sup> Rauh-Kühne, “Die Unternehmer und die Entnazifizierung der Wirtschaft in Württemberg-Hohenzollern”, *op. cit.*, pp. 317 ff.
- <sup>276</sup> Henke, *Politische Säuberung unter französische Besatzung*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180 ff.
- <sup>277</sup> Rauh-Kühne, “Die Unternehmer und die Entnazifizierung der Wirtschaft in Württemberg-Hohenzollern”, *op. cit.*, pp. 311 ff.
- <sup>278</sup> See Christa Tholander, “Der Zeppelin-Konzern in der Kriegswirtschaft 1938 bis 1945” [“The Zeppelin group in the war economy 1938-45”], in Stadt Friedrichshafen (ed.), *Zeppelin 1908 bis 2008. Stiftung und Unternehmen*, Munich, 2008, pp. 187-224, esp. pp. 205 ff.
- <sup>279</sup> Rauh-Kühne, “Die Unternehmer und die Entnazifizierung der Wirtschaft in Württemberg-Hohenzollern”, *op. cit.*, pp. 312 f.
- <sup>280</sup> Wivel, “Modeimperium levedere uniformer til SS”, *op. cit.*
- <sup>281</sup> Ruling of 1 March 1948 by the Nürtingen *Spruchkammer* - “Der öffentliche Kläger” [“the Public Prosecutor”].
- <sup>282</sup> Statement [*Stellungnahme*] by Leuthle, Metzingen, File note [*Aktenvermerk*] 12 December 1947, StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2 1658. See also Letter from Hugo F. Boss to State Commissioner’s Office, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, n. 27), with appendix concerning financial situation.
- <sup>283</sup> Urach tax office [*Finanzamt*], 6 August 1948, document relating to “declaration of assets of Defendant Hugo F. Boss, businessman and manufacturer born (8 July 1885) and domiciled in Metzingen”, StA Sigmaringen Wü 13, T2 1658. According to the slightly obscure testimony of one contemporary witness, Hugo F. Boss apparently raised the money to pay the denazification court’s fine by selling reserves of parachute silk on the black market. That may or may not be true; let us leave the question open for now. Oral history interview of Hermann Knittel (12 January 1995, SdtA Metzingen, *Zeitzeugenbefragung 1930/50*. It is not clear, however, whether Hugo F. Boss had in fact paid his fine before the resumption of proceedings. If he had, he may have had grounds for claiming a refund, following the more lenient appeal verdict.
- <sup>284</sup> He had already claimed to be suffering not only from diabetes but also from a chronically inflamed hip joint at the time of the initial hearing. Hugo Ferdinand Boss questionnaire (17 January 1946), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2 1658.
- <sup>285</sup> Minutes of the testimony of Dr. Emil Salzer (Reutlingen, 28 January 1947), StA Sigmaringen, Wü 13, T2 1658.
- <sup>286</sup> Ruling of denazification court II (undated).
- <sup>287</sup> Werner Plumpe, “Das Kriegsende in Deutschland”, in Stadt Friedrichshafen (ed.), *Zeppelin 1908 bis 2008. Stiftung und Unternehmen*, Munich, 2008, pp. 225-35, esp. p. 228.
- <sup>288</sup> One example being Stephanie Hinz, *Die Rekonstruktion der tarifpolitischen Beziehungen nach 1945. Dargestellt am Beispiel der Textilindustrie in Württemberg-Baden, Baden und Württemberg-Hohenzollern*, Frankfurt, 2002, p. 116, *passim*.
- <sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.
- <sup>290</sup> “Business activity in ready-to-wear firms” [*Beschäftigung der Konfektionsbetriebe*], WABW Stuttgart-Hohenheim, A7, Bü 471.
- <sup>291</sup> Oral history interview with Doris Braunwarth, *op. cit.* (see ch. 1, no. 60), p. 12.
- <sup>292</sup> Edith Poller account, *op. cit.* (see ch. 2, n. 59).
- <sup>293</sup> Letter from Notary Dieter to the French Military Government in Reutlingen, *op. cit.* [see ch. 2, n. 81].

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- <sup>294</sup> French orders for the ready-to-wear industry [*Französische Aufträge an die Konfektionsindustrie*], WABW Stuttgart-Hohenheim, A7, April 1946.
- <sup>295</sup> Haaf, *Wie dem auch sei, es lebe hoch die Schneiderei*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
- <sup>296</sup> Clothing industry report [*Bericht Bekleidungsindustrie*] (August 1946), WABW Stuttgart-Hohenheim, A7, Bü 471.
- <sup>297</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>298</sup> List of the roster of businesses in Metzingen [*Liste über den Stand der gewerblichen Betriebe in Metzingen*], Kreis Reutlingen (1950), SdtA Metzingen, MA 515.
- <sup>299</sup> Bidlingmaier, *Fabrik und Ornament*, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
- <sup>300</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>301</sup> For the textile industry, see Lindner, *Den Faden verloren*, *op. cit.*
- <sup>302</sup> Meier, *Bekleidungsindustrie*, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- <sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, p. 255.
- <sup>304</sup> Peter Schelling, “Wie Hugo Boss in die Provinz kam”, newspaper article in *Die Welt* (16 August 2008).
- <sup>305</sup> Survey of Hugo Boss sales, SdtA Metzingen. The gap in the graph is present in the source.
- <sup>306</sup> The economic and corporate history of fashion production remains largely unexplored. For a ground-breaking start in this direction, see Regina Blaszczyk (ed.), *Producing fashion. Commerce, culture, and consumers*, Philadelphia, 2008.