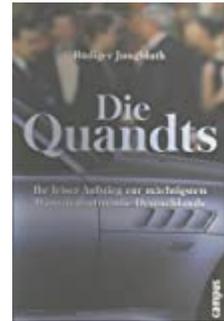




**Rüdiger Jungbluth.** *Die Quandts: Ihr leiser Aufstieg zur mächtigsten Wirtschaftsdynastie Deutschlands.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002. 391 S. + 28 s/w Abb. (gebunden), ISBN 978-3-593-36940-2.



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## **The Quandts: A Family History of German Big Business, 1871-2002**

Rüdiger Jungbluth's *Die Quandts: Ihr leiser Aufstieg zur mächtigsten Wirtschaftsdynastie Deutschlands* is a history of big business in Germany viewed through the prism of the Quandt family. During the Great Depression of 1873, Emil Quandt, the family patriarch, took control of the textile firm of the Brothers Draeger and soon became the exclusive producer of uniforms for the burgeoning imperial German navy and, later, the other branches of the military and civil service. Just as more and more German firms diversified and grew in size after 1895, the Quandt family's interests in the textile industry soon expanded to include potash in 1918.

From major interests in the textile and potash industries, the Quandt family acquired interests in the Accumulatoren-Fabrik AG (AFA) in the midst of the Great Inflation of 1923. The acquisition of this firm, the major supplier of submarine batteries during the First World War, allowed the Quandt family to make the leap to the big time in German manufacturing as part of the weapons industry. From submarine batteries the Quandt family then turned to large-scale munitions manufacture with the seizure of the Deutsche Waffen- und Munitions-

fabriken (DWM) in 1928, just on the eve of the Great Depression.

With the rise of Hitler, the Quandts became enmeshed in the Nazi horror. The marriage of Günther Quandt's ex-wife Magda to Joseph Goebbels initially linked the Quandt family to the Nazis, but Günther Quandt and his sons all played significant independent roles in the Third Reich. Each eventually became a member of the Nazi party, and, more importantly, the Quandt firms of AFA and DWM (as well as the heavily Quandt-invested Daimler-Benz) utilized slave labor from the concentration camps of Hannover-Stöcken, Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen. In the immediate post-war period, the Quandts were subject to close scrutiny and heavy fines as a result of denazification. The family also faced the loss of factories due to wartime destruction and confiscation of properties in the Soviet zone. The Quandts' version of the Economic Miracle occurred largely thanks to the rearmament of West Germany in the mid-1950s, which made DWM and AFA profitable once again. At the same time, the investment in a then-struggling automobile firm called BMW also played an important role

in the growth of the Quandt family fortune in the 1960s. In this popular history, Jungbluth uses the story of the Quandt family a vehicle to understand not only the rise, fall, and rebirth of German big business but also its relationship to the state in modern German history.

Jungbluth's book rests on three privately published works, which were commissioned by and for the Quandt family: the memoirs of Gnter Quandt written during his internment following World War II, Wilhelm Treue's biography of Herbert Quandt from the early 1980s, and a biography of Harald Quandt by Gnter Jacob from 1996. To supplement these materials, Jungbluth draws on the official chronicles of the AFA and DWM, Goebbels's diaries, published records of Nazi slave labor, and denazification proceedings against Gnter Quandt. Unfortunately, Jungbluth was not granted access to the Quandt family and business archives, so he had to rely almost exclusively on secondary works to complete his narrative. The lack of extensive archival research and citations define the book for what it is: a popular history. Nonetheless, Jungbluth attempts to place the Quandt family into the context of modern German history and to call into question the accuracy of the commissioned histories of the Quandts, while providing an entertaining saga of one of Germany's most powerful families. He succeeds on all three counts.

The book is divided into five major units, which correspond with the *Kaiserreich*, Weimar Republic, Third Reich, the early Federal Republic of Germany during the "Economic Miracle," and the Federal Republic of Germany from Kohl to Schroeder. There is little here that will surprise scholars of modern Germany. What Jungbluth offers, however, is a personalized journey through this history. This alone makes his book worth reading. As Lothar Gall demonstrated with his sophisticated study of the Bassermann family in nineteenth-century Germany, a marriage of family and social history can do much to document the major structural changes in modern German society.

The story of the Quandts offers particular insight into the transformation of the middle class in nineteenth-century Germany via the complex relationship between industrialization and education. Much as Friedrich Daniel Bassermann joined his fellow burghers to petition for a modern secondary education to prepare his son for the rigors of an industrial world in 1846, Emil Quandt sends Gnter to a modern secondary school (*Realschule*) focusing on mathematics, science, and modern languages. More importantly, the Quandt family story

allows one to chronicle the emergence of new industries in the late nineteenth century, such as the chemical industry, and the continued presence of older and heavy industries, such as textiles and munitions. The description of Guenther Quandt's journey from Great War to Cold War is the most useful section of the book. His struggle to take control of Accumulatoren-Fabrik AG (AFA) and Deutsche Waffen- und Munitionsfabriken (DWM) reveals another aspect of the Great Inflation and Great Depression (i.e., the growth and consolidation of certain German industries even as other businesses collapsed.)

Lastly, Jungbluth discusses the often-contentious question of the connection between German big business and the Nazis with nuance and subtlety. Much as Henry Turner and others have documented, Gnter Quandt initially greeted the Nazis with disdain. In March 1933, however, Quandt contributed 25,000 marks to the party as "insurance," actually joined the party later that year, and eventually became implicated in the crimes of the Nazi regime via the Quandts' prominent role in the armaments industry. Gnter Quandt's struggle with his own Nazi past in the immediate postwar period thus offers a test case of the connections between denazification and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the postwar period. The roles played by the rebirth of the German arms industry and the expansion of the German automobile industry in the "Economic Miracle" is also enlightening, since it expands such accounts beyond the usual accounts of the Marshall plan and the Cold War.

One wishes Jungbluth had expanded the secondary literature to deal with the issue of organized labor and the SPD. In particular, more information about the Quandt management style and relations to its workforce would illuminate the issue of continuity and change in labor practices and management policies in German big business, and, therefore, perhaps provide a crucial context for the use of slave labor in the Nazi era. Also, Jungbluth's discussion of the political leanings of the Quandt family is rather too narrow in focus. Jungbluth effectively debunks postwar accounts (i.e., the three major unpublished works that provide the starting point of his book), which suggest that the Quandts were forced to join the Nazi party. But it would be more useful to learn more about their political preferences both prior to 1933 and after 1945 to place the Quandts' choice of the Nazis into a broader context.

An English translation of the book would be potentially useful for undergraduate students of modern German history, particularly since it is beautifully written

and geared to a general audience. The book would add a human face to lectures about the history of industrial capitalism in Germany. While most German historians will find nothing that is startlingly new in this book, Jungbluth has offered an entertaining personal journey through the major issues of modern German history.

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