

# Automobile tourism and Nazi propaganda

## Constructing the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn*, 1933–1939

Richard Vahrenkamp University of Kassel

In the past, research on Nazi *Autobahn* construction has focused on topics such as the background, the decision-making process, the landscaping of the *Autobahn*, the organisation and financing of *Autobahn* construction as well as the project's importance for job creation, propaganda, motorisation policy and military policy. Many authors emphasised Hitler's goal to develop a 'car culture' and an automotive-centred economic sector.<sup>1</sup> However, while numerous studies of tourism in the 1930s explored the support of tourism by railway, the question how the *Autobahn* project promoted tourism by offering opportunities of motorised transport was not investigated before.

This article explores the tourist aspects of the German *Autobahn* project from 1933 to 1939 and its relation to political propaganda. Before we focus on propaganda, a short note on the research procedure is given and we discuss the relation of our approach to the tourist policy in Nazi Germany. Then we will investigate the relation of the *Autobahn* project to the promotion of tourism in the context of political propaganda. A following section contains a detailed study of how political propaganda was combined with the aim to support tourism, using the famous Munich–Salzburg route as a case study. The data of the excursion traffic on holidays indicate that the people adapted to the new opportunities. The article explores how bus routes, opened on the *Autobahn* sections, supported tourist excursions and introduced intermodal competition by operating parallel to existing railway lines.

The National Socialism's (NS) *Autobahn* project 1933 to 1939 was preceded by a debate in the years between 1926 and 1933 on the need for a separate highway network in Germany. This discussion was promoted by the 'HaFraBa' association,<sup>2</sup> which was founded in the town hall of Frankfurt am Main on 6 November 1926.<sup>3</sup> HaFraBa, an abbreviation of Hamburg–Frankfurt–Basel, was founded to promote an *Autobahn* from the ports on the North Sea via Frankfurt as an important place of commerce in western Germany to southern Germany at the border with Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> HaFraBa's objectives were characterised by the desire to adapt roads to the automobile as a modern means of mobility, by constructing roads as a means of reducing unemployment and as a stimulus to the development of the backward German automobile industry; and by building a road network as an

incentive to expand the sales of automobiles and to support the needs of tourist excursions. These topics were published in the HaFraBa newsletter several times, so that an analysis of this newsletter can illustrate the transport policy from the view of the HaFraBa association.

For our study we explored the HaFraBa newsletter and *Die Strasse* (The Road) of the years from 1926 to 1939.<sup>5</sup> The three topics mentioned above that were covered by the HaFraBa newsletter also appeared in *Die Strasse*. At first glance, there was no difference between the HaFraBa and the NS visions of the *Autobahn*. But *Die Strasse* broadened the scope: the NS *Autobahn* project expanded the single HaFraBa route from Hamburg to Basel to an entire network and regarded the *Autobahn* as a monument of the NS policy that should last for hundreds of years. In 1934 a former member of the HaFraBa execution board, Kurt Becker, provided some unintentional comedy when he compared the construction of the *Autobahn* to that of the pyramids in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> When the Nazi party entrenched its rule the German *Autobahn* project managers started to build the first route, Frankfurt am Main to Darmstadt, in 1933 on the basis of the blueprints of HaFraBa.<sup>7</sup>

Many interrelated goals were formulated in the NS *Autobahn* project so that it appeared as an ambivalent project. The lack of a democratic debate in the public arena, which should result in certain priorities, makes it difficult to assess the importance of the goals. However, one can observe some tensions between the *Autobahn* project and other fields of policy. The use of resources of labour and steel competed with the demands of the four-year plan of rearmament after 1936.<sup>8</sup> Second, the provision of a network of high-performance roads was used for freight transport only to a small extent, because the transport administration restricted the use of trucks and caused a transport crisis in 1938.<sup>9</sup> Some authors pose the question of military goals behind the NS *Autobahn* project. But there is no evidence to support this view.

There have been different approaches to analysing the rule of the National Socialists. After the focus on brutality and criminality until 1970 the later approaches analyse the daily life in the community of the folk (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and how the NS party tried to satisfy consumer needs under conditions of scarce resources and to provide some entertainment for the folk, such as the promotion of tourism and motorisation, to stabilise their rule.<sup>10</sup> Within the NS mass organisations the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) 'union' was important because it substituted the compulsory dissolved socialist and liberal unions and united the industrial and the construction workers. DAF ran the organisation Kraft durch Freude (KdF, Strength through Joy) which provided programmes of travel, sport, education and entertainment.<sup>11</sup> KdF offered package tours at unrivalled low prices to various resorts, including desirable resorts like Reit im Winkel in Bavaria and tourist destinations like Heidelberg, creating the travel market of mass tourism, and transformed it into industrial dimensions.<sup>12</sup> This policy was supplemented by the NS *Autobahn* project, although there is no indication of joint planning. Both fields developed independently.

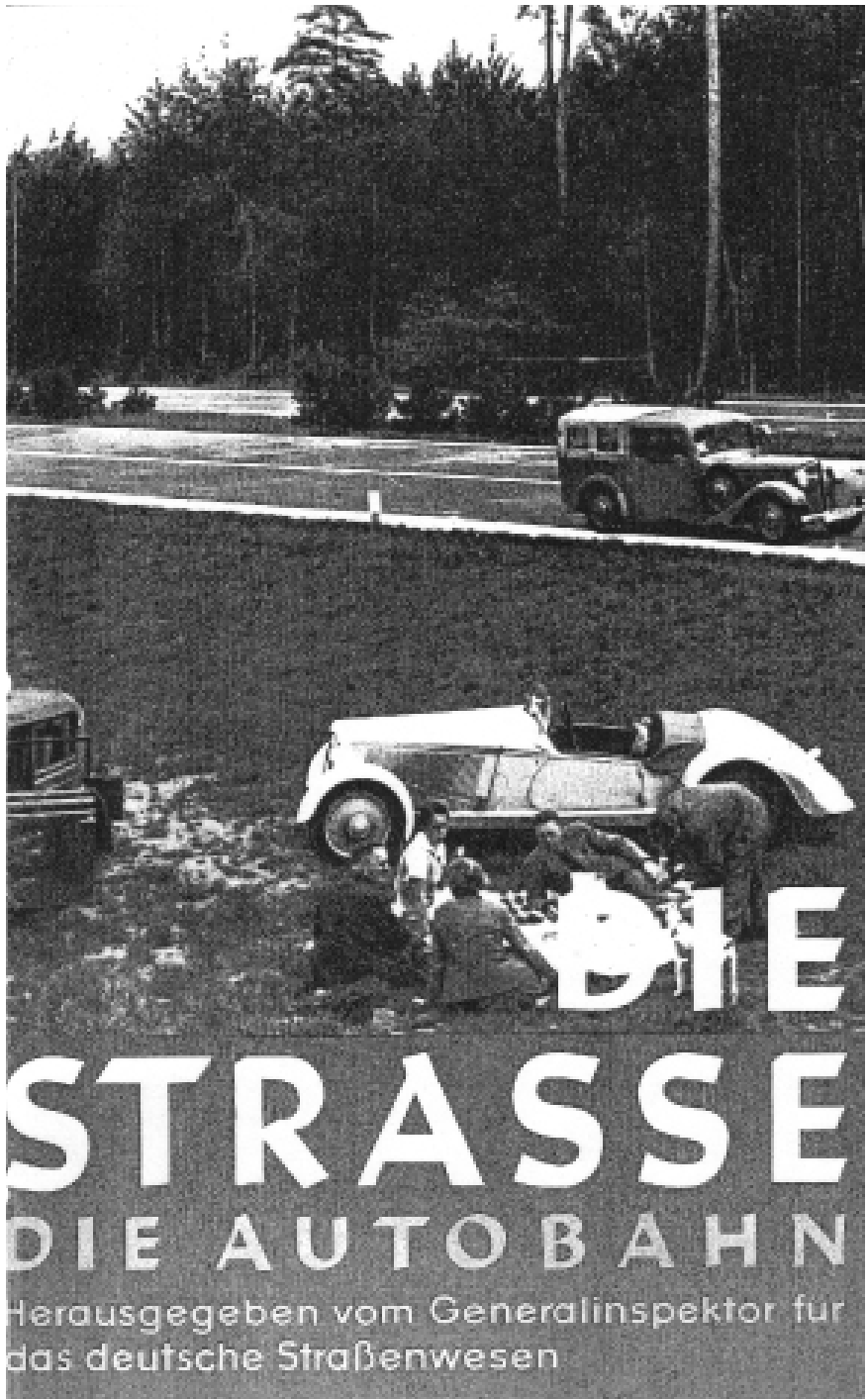
The study by Keitz of KdF tourism showed that the package tours and day trips used the railway as means of transport, not coaches on the *Autobahn*.<sup>13</sup> But there are some connections between the tourism activities of KdF and the NS *Autobahn* project when one refers to the term 'tourist gaze' which the British sociologist John Urry coined for the desire of tourists for rapid movement, the search for panoramic views, and spatial and temporal removal from their normal routine.<sup>14</sup> Like KdF, which transformed landscape in a consumer good of package tours, the NS *Autobahn* project enabled Germans to adopt the tourist gaze with its concepts of adapting the road alignment to the landscape and providing a sequence of striking views for the driver.<sup>15</sup> If one considers that the construction of the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg in 1938 also was run under the responsibility of the DAF, it appears at first glance as a coherent strategy. One could identify a nice trilogy of tourism: KdF, Volkswagen and the *Autobahn*. But as historical research has revealed, the relation of the Volkswagen plant to the KdF was an outcome of an erratic process.<sup>16</sup>

### The tourism goals of the *Autobahn* project

When one analyses the decision-making process of the *Autobahn* project one finds the explicitly announced 'hard' objectives of creating employment and promoting motor transport. The hidden goal of the *Autobahn* project has been political propaganda which used the topic of the *Autobahn* and the promotion of tourism. The role of tourism as a domain of political propaganda is underlined by the fact that the central organisation of the travel agencies was part of Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda.<sup>17</sup>

From the start the *Autobahn* project was supported by strong propaganda in all media. Propaganda for the *Autobahn* project could combine diverse intentions such as concealing the backward-looking ideas and aggressive objectives of National Socialism – such as racial, religious and sexual discrimination, the glory of handicrafts and farm labour as foundations of a 'healthy folk' and the desire for colonial expansion – with the modern transport concept of the *Autobahn* while also providing a project to satisfy those parts of the Nazi movement that were pushing for modernisation. For this combination of a backward ideology and modernisation Herf coined the term 'reactionary modernism'.<sup>18</sup> Fritz Todt, the 'Inspector General of German Roads', appointed by Hitler in 1933, can be considered as a representative of this modernising segment of the movement. He had already issued a memorandum about the inadequacies of the road network in December 1932.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, *Autobahn* construction enabled the propagandists to demonstrate the government's determination to push through new projects with an apparently endless concrete ribbon that was visible to all and to use the *Autobahn*'s claim to modernity to proclaim the dawn of a new era.<sup>20</sup>

Beside the 'hard' goals the propagandists shifted the debate to a whole series of 'soft' goals: The project would create a giant work for the future of



**Figure 1** Picnic by the *Autobahn*.  
Source *Die Strasse* 6 (1936), front page

transport; It would build a monument to National Socialism that would stand for centuries: 'Adolf Hitler's roads' would be built. Principles of landscape aesthetics would be realised. The *Autobahn* would be adapted to the landscape (at the same time, the landscape was to be cared for). An ideology was developed in order to reconcile technology and nature. Last, the *Autobahn* opened opportunities for leisurely touring and tourism. Focusing on the last aspect and on the question how the people adapted to the new opportunities for recreation, it should be stressed that, already at the beginning of the *Autobahn* project in 1933, proposals had been published on how the *Autobahn* could stimulate tourism in regions where it was less developed.<sup>21</sup> Already, in the 1920s, the importance of tourism as a factor of economic development was recognised.<sup>22</sup>

For propaganda purposes the peculiar idea of *Autowandern* (touring by car) was introduced.<sup>23</sup> It was supposed to combine enjoyment of the landscape with driving through it on the *Autobahn*. In *Die Strasse* Fritz Todt published numerous articles to promote motor touring,<sup>24</sup> which was connected with the proposal of picnicking on the grass verge of the *Autobahn* (Figure 1). However, all these ideas were primarily politically propagandist, because hardly any cars were to be seen on the *Autobahn*, owing to the low density of car ownership.<sup>25</sup> Only at holiday times, such as Easter or Whit, was some leisure traffic to be observed, as traffic counts in the years 1937, 1938 and 1939 revealed.

As a second theme, excursion traffic at weekends became more important in the propaganda. Already in 1933 the Brandenburg section of the National Socialists' SA troops counted the traffic on the arterial roads of Berlin from 23 to 30 August. They came to the conclusion that traffic doubled on Sunday compared with the average on the six working days.<sup>26</sup> The number of cars and bicycles doubled and that of motor cycles actually tripled, depending on regional and social factors. The heaviest bicycle traffic originated from the workers' districts on the road to Grünau in the south-east. Traffic in the Wannsee direction to the west was dominated by cars from bourgeois districts. However, such data were not published in Todt's journal before 1936. It is interesting that from 1933 to 1936 no systematic traffic counts were conducted in the whole Reich. Only the Hansa section of the *Autobahn* project company (GezuVoR) did a traffic count, in 1934 in the northern parts of Germany.<sup>27</sup>

As another focus of propaganda, the *expected* excursion traffic, was dealt with in Todt's journal. In 1936 an article illustrated the growth of the regions that the inhabitants of the four cities of Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Munich and Leipzig could reach on a weekend excursion for the three years 1880, 1912 and 1938, when the *Autobahn* network was expected to be rather complete. Associated regional maps were presented for the three years mentioned to support a comparison.<sup>28</sup> The aim was to demonstrate the development of wide areas that could be visited for leisure purposes by *Autobahn*. A second article described how the inhabitants of the capital, Berlin, could reach the popular seaside resorts on the Baltic coast and how the completion of the *Autobahn* route to Stettin in 1937 could shorten the journey.

## Traffic on the *Autobahnen*

When parts of the *Autobahn* network were finished, from 1935 to 1938, two developments could be observed. First, bus routes were opened as soon as a new stretch of motorway was complete. These bus routes were run by the national railway company, which had the exclusive right to run buses on the *Autobahn*.<sup>29</sup> This was in line with the Nazi economic policy of restricting the small business sector, as I have demonstrated for the example of truck entrepreneurs.<sup>30</sup> This aspect is remarkable in so far as the railway company regarded the *Autobahn* as a rival transport system and was the most important opponent of the *Autobahn* idea until 1933. As an additional goal the bus routes promoted tourist excursions for those who could not afford an automobile.

The first bus route on the Frankfurt–Darmstadt *Autobahn* started operation from the main station in Frankfurt to the main station in Darmstadt on 20 May 1935, one day after the opening of the route.<sup>31</sup> To stress the modernity of the new transport mode the buses had a streamlined shape according to the design fashion of the 1930s. Yet the bus ride took thirty-eight minutes, seventeen minutes longer than the train. In addition the fare was higher than the cost of a third-class train ticket. So the bus service did not attract many passengers.<sup>32</sup>

Other examples of bus routes on the *Autobahn* can be found in the archives.<sup>33</sup> The first example is Munich–Lake Tegern, opened in 1935. The second is the route Kassel–Frankfurt from main station to main station with two pairs of buses a day. The duration of the bus ride amounted to two hours fifty minutes, comparable to a medium-speed local train (*Eilzug*). The service opened on 4 December 1938, one day after the opening of the entire Kassel–Frankfurt am Main *Autobahn* route (Figure 2).

A coverage of a bus touring from Kassel to Frankfurt on the *Autobahn* stressed tourist highlights, such as castles and the intensity of the experience when the passengers saw the beauty of the landscape,<sup>34</sup> similar to the experience of car drivers on the *Autobahn*.<sup>35</sup> The liberal journalist Walter Dirks reflected on his car touring on the *Autobahn* from Frankfurt a.M. to Kassel in 1938 and described his experience that the relation of the car to the road surface was turned upside-down: it was not the car that was driving along the road but the road moving fast and smoothly to ‘draw’ the car on.<sup>36</sup>

Next to bus lines, one can observe how propaganda shifted to the resulting traffic on the routes that has been counted in a systematic manner. Traffic counts of the excursion traffic on the Easter and Whit holidays in 1936 were continued in 1937, 1938 and 1939. In 1938 at twenty-nine points all over the Reich traffic was counted on the *Autobahn*. In addition, there were twelve checkpoints on roads important for the excursion traffic.<sup>37</sup> The number of vehicles counted at Whit in 1938 on the twenty-nine checkpoints ranged from a minimum of 3,047 near Königsberg in East Prussia to a maximum of 55,170 near Cologne, with an average of 12,047. The count took place from Saturday evening before the Whit holiday at midnight till



**Figure 2** The Reichsbahn bus on the Kassel–Frankfurt *Autobahn* in January 1939.  
 Source Rolf Mengel, 'Die schnellen Riesen der Reichsautobahn', *Kurhessische Landeszeitung*, 14 January 1939, p. 3, Kassel town archive

Tuesday after the holiday at midnight, in both directions. The traffic near Stettin, at 16,451 vehicles, was less than one and a half times the mean – a low number compared with the expected excursion traffic out of the capital Berlin to the Baltic.

In general, traffic on the *Autobahn* was so sparse that the observed peaks at Easter and Whit Holiday were proudly reported by the propaganda to justify the *Autobahn* project. Even the head of the *Autobahn* project, Todt, used the data for his success stories. In 1937 and in 1938 he reported performance in achieving the aims of *Autobahn* construction from the speaker's podium at the NS party congress in Nuremberg, the Third Reich's centre stage, also referring to the holiday traffic during Whit Holiday.<sup>38</sup>

### The Munich–Salzburg route

The tourist aspects of the *Autobahn* project can be demonstrated by focusing upon the route from Munich to Salzburg via Lake Chiem. Little research has been carried out on this topic until now.<sup>39</sup> Actually the route terminated near Bad Reichenhall on the German side of the border (see Figure 4). This route is a famous example of adapting the *Autobahn* to the landscape and of including tourist highlights, a topic about which numerous articles were published in the Nazi press.<sup>40</sup>

To blend the *Autobahn* into the landscape, Todt made special efforts for this route. For the first time during the *Autobahn* project, he had already in

1933 engaged the landscape architect Alwin Seifert, whose views were congenial to Todt.<sup>41</sup> Both wanted to avoid the adverse impact on the landscape of engineering structures that had occurred during the construction of the railways 100 years earlier. In his first letter to Seifert Todt formulated the principle that the stretch of motorway through the Hofolding forest near Munich should not look like a railway embankment.<sup>42</sup> In his exemplary study Thomas Zeller has shown the influence of Seifert on the blueprint of the *Autobahn* and how Todt adapted his concept of landscape aesthetics from the parkways in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

From Munich originated heavy traffic in the form of weekend trips to neighbouring places which can be partly explained by the high density of motor vehicles in the city. With one motor vehicle (including motor cycles) per twenty-four inhabitants Munich had the highest density of vehicle ownership in Germany in 1932 (compared with Berlin's one per thirty-eight inhabitants).<sup>44</sup> In addition to private motor vehicles there were bus services on thirteen routes – run by the German Post Company – to tourist destinations in the surrounding area (Figure 4). In 1934 some 700,000 people bought tickets. The German Post reported that the most popular destinations at weekends were the river Inn, Bad Tölz, Grünwald, Wolfrathshausen, Lake Starnberg and Lake Ammer.<sup>45</sup> However, the important destinations to the east of Munich, such as Lake Tegern and Lake Chiem (Figure 5) were not served by the buses. Wörner described the eastern region as hardly



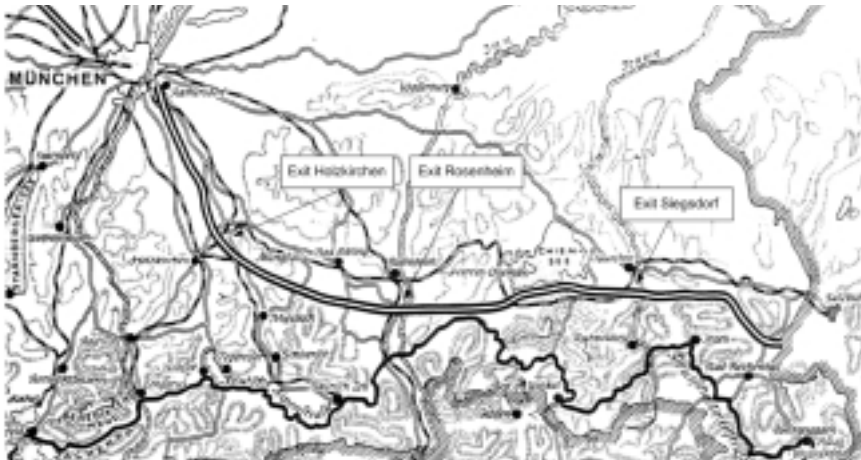
**Figure 3** View over the expanse to the alps at Rosenheim.

Source Edith Ebers, 'Natürlicher Landschaftsraum und künstliche Raumgestaltung an der Straße', *Die Strasse 15* (1936), 468–71, at p. 469





**Figure 4** The arterial bus routes from Bayer-Strasse in Munich (main station) in the environs of Munich in 1934.  
 Source 'Der von München ausgehende Kraftpostverkehr', *Die Strasse* 12 (1935), appendix p. 33



**Figure 5** Tourist destinations in the eastern region of Munich.  
 Source 'Ausflugsverkehr der Großstädte', *Die Strasse* 6 (1936), p. 165

accessible.<sup>46</sup> So from the tourist point of view there was a need to develop the area to the east with a high-performance road system.

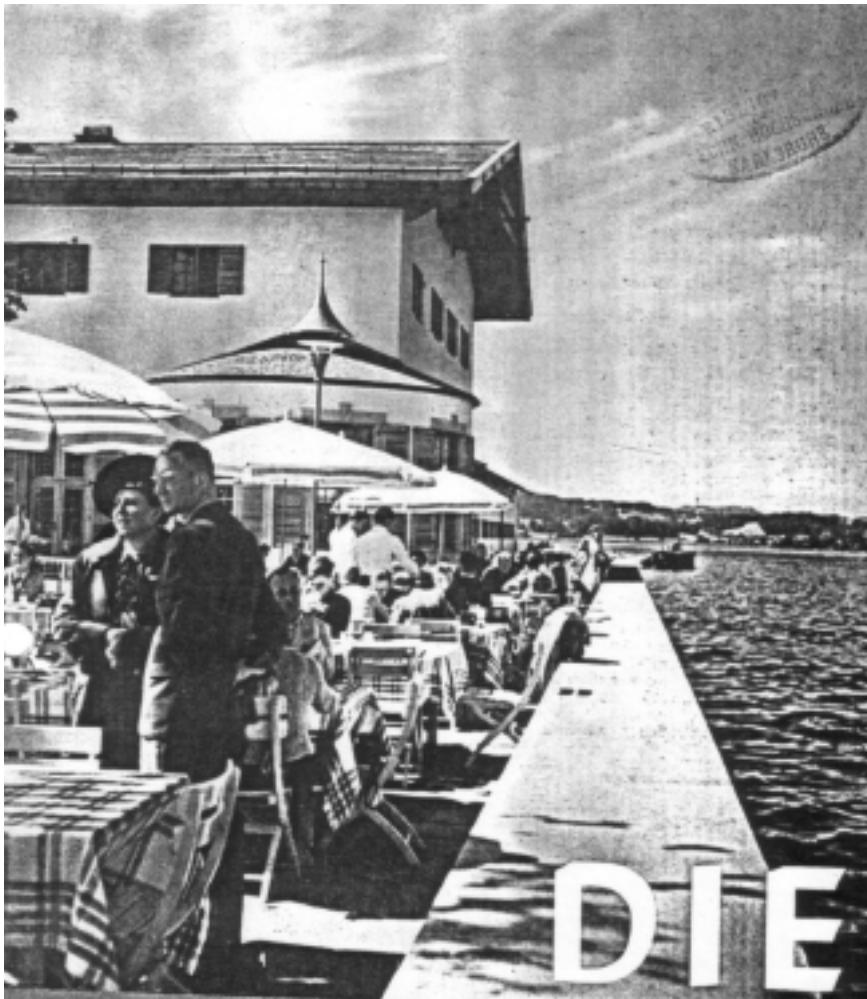
In fact, plans for the *Autobahn* to Lake Chiem were based primarily on the expected weekend traffic. According to Kaftan, too many visitors from Munich were putting an excessive burden on the Lake Starnberg destination at weekends, and alternative tourist destinations were sought in consultation

with the construction industry.<sup>47</sup> However, travel times from Munich to important tourist destinations in the eastern region of Munich by train were lengthy. Alfons Wörner estimated that it would take five hours to reach the famous ski region of Reit im Winkl from Munich by rail compared with only an hour and a half by car on the *Autobahn*.<sup>48</sup> Although a promoter of car mobility, Wörner did not exaggerate the long travel time of five hours from Munich to Reit im Winkl by rail, as a screening of the railway timetable for the year 1930 in the archive of the German Railway in Nuremberg verified. Wörner was the owner of the Munich-based building company Sager & Wörner – where Fritz Todt was employed as chief engineer – and head of the Bavarian section of the *Autobahn* project company GezuVoR.

In the planning of the route from Munich to Salzburg one can identify the strategy of combining successive tourist highlights to produce tourist gazes. The Munich press on many occasions stressed the importance of several tourism high spots along the way. To make the recreational areas of Lake Tegern, Lake Schlier, Lake Seeham and Bayrisch Zell accessible the southern route was chosen via Holzkirchen instead of the shorter northern route via Grafing. So the length of the Munich–Salzburg section increased by 20 km, from 102 km to 122 km. As Wörner and the Munich press reported, this outline of the route was decided by Hitler himself.<sup>49</sup> As another highlight the *Autobahn* ran over the bridge over the river Mangfall<sup>50</sup> and afforded a view of the church at Weyarn with its world-famous Annunciation group by Ignaz Günther. The ascent from the Leizach valley up Irschen hill gave a tremendous view of the Alps and from Hüttenkirchen hill there was a wonderful panoramic view of Lake Chiem. To bypass the moor to the south the route was directed at the southern shore of Lake Chiem, resulting in a panoramic views over the lake. And last, near Salzburg the route headed south to reach the tourist destination of Bad Reichenhall (Figure 5).

Seifert described this *Autobahn* route in the following enthusiastic words: ‘The increase in the beauty of the landscape on the route from Munich to Lake Chiem, which seemingly could not be surpassed, is summarised in the view of the endless expanse, reminding one of the pictures of Adalbert Stifter.’<sup>51</sup>

Hitler had a strong preference for the Munich–Salzburg route because he had his country seat, Haus Wachenfeld, in the county of Berchtesgaden, near Salzburg. This retreat itself became a magnet for mass tourism.<sup>52</sup> Hitler was personally involved in the planning process,<sup>53</sup> and – as the Bavarian section of the *Autobahn* project company GezuVoR announced – was the originator of the idea of the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn* route.<sup>54</sup> As Windisch-Hojnacki showed, he selected the models for bridges and service areas<sup>55</sup> and, together with Todt, often inspected the progress of construction. In the Lake Chiem service area Hitler had a reserved room for a break on his journeys to Berchtesgaden.<sup>56</sup> The high importance of this route for Hitler explains the intense efforts to complete it. After preparatory works in 1933, the construction of the route started officially in spring 1934, on 21 March, at Unterhaching, near Munich, as a great propaganda spectacle with Hitler as speaker.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 6** On the terrace of the service area, Lake Chiem.  
Source front page of *Die Strasse 22* (1938)

Roughly a year later, on 29 June 1935, the 25 km route already reached Holzkirchen – an exit for the important tourist destination Lake Tegern, where high-ranked Nazi leaders also had their country seats. Less than a year later, on 24 May 1936, the route reached the city of Rosenheim, close to the tourist area of Lake Chiem (Table 1).<sup>58</sup>

To promote tourism, an attractive service area on the shore of Lake Chiem was built at great expense, including a hotel and a restaurant, both designed in the Bavarian rural style, as well as a terrace. In fact the restaurant was built out over the water on piles. The layout was supplemented with a swimming area by the lake. As the restaurant opened on 27 August 1938 it attracted many visitors. On one of the first Saturdays nearly 6,000 cups of coffee were sold (Figure 6).<sup>59</sup>

Table 1

<i>Route</i>	<i>Length (km)</i>	<i>Date of opening</i>
Frankfurt a.M.–Darmstadt	22.0	19 May 1935
Munich–Holzkirchen	25.0	29 June 1935
Darmstadt–Mannheim (Heidelberg)	61.0	3 October 1935
Holzkirchen–Weyarn	7.0	11 January 1936
Leipzig–Halle	26.5	25 April 1936
Cologne–Düsseldorf	24.5	21 May 1936
Weyarn–Rosenheim	33.0	24 May 1936
Rosenheim–Siegsdorf	35.0	17 August 1936

Just after the opening of the first section, Munich–Holzkirchen, of the *Autobahn* on 29 June 1935 the bus routes from Munich to Lake Tegern and to Lake Schlier via the *Autobahn* exit at Holzkirchen opened on 1 July with buses of streamlined design. Each day there were three connections starting from Starnberg, the main railway station in Munich.<sup>60</sup> A journey from Munich to Lake Tegern village took an hour and fifteen minutes by bus. This journey time was competitive with the train. As the railway timetable for 1939 shows, Munich to Schafflach took one hour two minutes and the local train to Lake Tegern village twenty-four minutes. Additional time was needed for the change of train.<sup>61</sup>

In order to assess the development of Bavarian tourism in the 1930s, not only the construction of the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn* has to be taken into account, but also related factors. For instance, in 1933 the German government introduced a high penalty tax for German tourists visiting Austria, lasting from June 1933 to August 1936.<sup>62</sup> This policy drastically reduced German tourist flows and probably turned them to Bavaria instead. Bad Reichenhall reported that this factor led to an increase in tourists.<sup>63</sup> Although there are excellent time series of overnight stays in small resorts, evidence of the influence of the *Autobahn* on additional tourist numbers is hard to come by (Table 2).

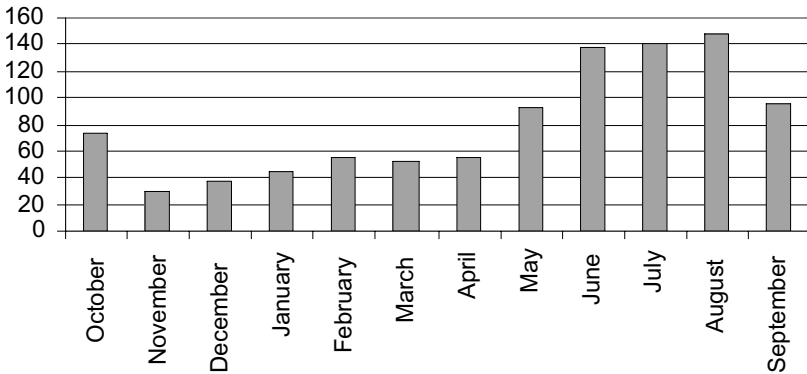
In Table 2 we see no or only a slight reduction of the number of overnight stays in 1937 that could be explained by the abandonment of the tourist penalty tax for Austria in August 1936. A reduction took place only in 1938 and was probably due to the military and political tensions due to the Czechoslovak crisis. The reduction in 1939 was caused by the outbreak of war. Tourism was stopped as from September 1939.<sup>64</sup> For the resort of Tegernsee we do not see an increase in 1936 as a consequence of the opening of the *Autobahn* exit in July 1935. The increase in the numbers visiting Prien am Chiemsee amounted to 10.6 per cent in 1936, which could be connected with the opening of the Rosenheim exit in May 1936. But this resort had already shown a strong increase of 38.5 per cent in 1935 without the *Autobahn*. The data for Reit im Winkl of 55.1 per cent in 1936 can be explained by better access via the Rosenheim exit. In general, Alfons Wörner's forecast in 1933 that tourism would increase with the development of the eastern part of the Munich excursion area by an *Autobahn* cannot be substantiated.<sup>65</sup>

Table 2

	SHY 1934	SHY 1935	SHY 1936	SHY 1937	SHY 1938	SHY 1939
	<i>No. of overnight stays</i>					
Bad Reichenhall	453,314	506,271	606,773	617,457	595,457	562,699
Bad Tölz	271,563	288,652	277,695	275,468	269,213	233,593
Bayrischzell	72,849	87,872	92,724	107,997	86,525	85,048
Berchtesgaden ( <i>Land</i> )	947,007	902,421	979,646	1,038,407	780,893	674,185
Füssen	144,782	158,676	156,874	182,815	143,379	141,730
Garmisch-Partenkirchen	943,765	707,075	713,135	811,292	594,448	534,453
Mittenwald	292,022	254,190	312,965	406,702	323,639	269,154
Prien am Chiemsee	60,645	83,979	81,444	90,048	No data	No data
Reit im Winkl	37,276	66,616	66,662	103,423	84,762	69,655
Ruhpolding	144,412	161,129	162,372	189,184	190,480	189,548
Schliersee	163,948	137,089	172,930	188,252	130,588	130,469
Tegernsee	216,054	205,069	207,396	218,651	181,409	104,562
	<i>% change</i>					
Bad Reichenhall		11.7	19.9	1.8	-3.6	-5.5
Bad Tölz		6.3	-3.8	-0.8	-2.3	-13.2
Bayrischzell		20.6	5.5	16.5	-19.9	-1.7
Berchtesgaden ( <i>Land</i> )		-4.7	8.6	6.0	-24.8	-13.7
Füssen		9.6	-1.1	16.5	-21.6	-1.2
Garmisch-Partenkirchen		-25.1	0.9	13.8	-26.7	-10.1
Mittenwald		-13.0	23.1	30.0	-20.4	-16.8
Prien am Chiemsee		38.5	-3.0	10.6	No data	No data
Reit im Winkl		78.7	0.1	55.1	-18.0	-17.8
Ruhpolding		11.6	0.8	16.5	0.7	-0.5
Schliersee		-16.4	26.1	8.9	-30.6	-0.1
Tegernsee		-5.1	1.1	5.4	-17.0	-42.4

Traffic counts on the *Autobahn* at Ramersdorf (the starting point of the *Autobahn* in a suburb of Munich) revealed the number of buses per month as between fifty and 150 in 1937 and 1938. Most of them were occasional, non-scheduled traffic (Figure 7).<sup>66</sup> As the construction of the *Autobahn* provided easy access to the tourist destinations with automobiles and buses, an increase in traffic can be observed. However, the increased traffic led to congestion on the local roads leading to the destinations, so that the need to extend their capacity became acute. The mayor of the community of Lake Tegern complained in a letter to the regional government in 1939 that tourists were deterred from walking along the lake shore road by the volume of traffic.<sup>67</sup> Conflict arose over road widening when land belonging to the Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler was in question. Todt had to put a stop to the works.<sup>68</sup>

In 1937 a traffic count on the *Autobahn* to Lake Chiem at the Ramersdorf checkpoint throughout the month of June clearly showed peaks some 100 per cent above work days caused by pleasure traffic on Sundays.<sup>69</sup> So the peaks had the same characteristic as those in the Berlin traffic count of 1933. The weekend traffic on the Whit holiday in 1938 (from the Saturday evening before till midnight the Tuesday after the holiday, in each direction) resulted



**Figure 7** Number of buses counted at Ramersdorf in 1937 and 1938.

Source Rudolf Hoffmann, 'Die Wirtschaftlichkeit von Autobahnen', *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, 23 November 1938, Bavarian Economic Archive, Munich, K9/1491

in the data shown in Table 3.<sup>70</sup> The total of 45,071 vehicles at the counting point between Ramersdorf (Munich) and Hofolding represents the second highest traffic density after the Cologne to Düsseldorf route among twenty-nine census points on the *Autobahn* network. If we assume one person on a bike, two in a car, twenty on a bus and one in a truck we derive the figure of about 100,000 persons travelling in both directions at the point close to Ramersdorf. So we can estimate about 50,000 persons leaving Munich on the *Autobahn* for an outing on the Whit holiday in 1938, which is the equivalent of no less than 15 per cent of the population of Munich. Similar figures for Whitsun in 1939 have also been presented by Hoffmann.<sup>71</sup>

**Table 3**

Census point	Motor bikes	Automobiles	Buses	Trucks	Total
Between Ramersdorf (Munich) and Hofolding	13,217	29,984	835	1,035	45,071
Between Bergen and Siegsdorf	9,172	16,445	676	344	26,637

## Conclusion

This article has explored the factors underlying the *Autobahn* project and evaluated how political propaganda of the *Autobahn* project made use of the topics of tourism and recreation. The question was addressed whether a comprehensive tourism policy existed under the Third Reich which the tourism organisation Kraft durch Freude and the *Autobahn* project were parts of. The access to the destinations of excursion traffic from the big cities that was afforded by the *Autobahn* network was described. The Munich–Salzburg sec-

tion of the *Autobahn* was explored as an example showing that the road was adapted to tourist expectations and views.

The argument that the *Autobahn* would develop tourism in the Munich–Salzburg area could not be supported with time series of overnight stays. Moreover the example of excursion travel out of Munich on leisure pursuits was evaluated. Besides other bus routes on the *Autobahn* the example of the Munich–Salzburg route illustrated the case where a bus route opened new opportunities for tourist travel with noticeably shorter journey times than the railway timetable. These results show that the tourist phenomenon should be added to our understanding, up to now based on the existing literature, of the *Autobahn*'s main functions.

## Notes

- 1 E. Schütz and E. Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn* (Berlin, 1996). R. Stommer (ed.), *Reichsautobahnen. Pyramiden des Dritten Reiches* (Marburg, 1982). J. D Shand, 'The Reichsautobahn: symbol for the Third Reich', *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (1984), 189–95. C. Windisch-Hojnacki, *Die Reichsautobahn. Konzeption und Bau der RAB, ihre ästhetischen Aspekte, sowie ihre Illustration in Malerei, Literatur, Photographie und Plastik* (Bonn, 1989). C. Kopper, 'Modernität oder Scheinmodernität nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft. Das Beispiel der Verkehrspolitik', in Christian Jansen, Lutz Niethammer and Bernd Weisbrod (eds), *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit. Festschrift für Hans Mommsen* (Berlin, 1995), pp. 399–411. Bruce E. Seely, 'Der amerikanische Blick auf die deutschen Autobahnen. Deutsche und amerikanische Autobahnbauer 1930–1965', *Werkstatt Geschichte* 21 (Hamburg, 1998). T. Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama. Verkehrswege und Landschaftsveränderung in Deutschland 1930 bis 1990* (Frankfurt, 2002). Richard Vahrenkamp, 'Der Autobahnbau 1933–1939 und das hessische Autobahnnetz', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde* (Neustadt an der Aisch), 109 (2004), 225–66; an English version and a study of the HaFraBa association are available at the Internet resource [http://www.wirtschaft.uni-Kassel.de/Vahrenkamp/History\\_Mobility/History\\_Mobility.htm](http://www.wirtschaft.uni-Kassel.de/Vahrenkamp/History_Mobility/History_Mobility.htm). Gijs Mom, 'Roads as rails: European highway-network building and the desire for long-range motorised mobility', *Technology and Culture* 4, 46 (2005), 745–72.
- 2 Verein zur Vorbereitung der Autostrasse Hansestädte–Frankfurt–Basel (Society for the Promotion of the Hansestädte–Frankfurt–Basel *Autobahn*).
- 3 Report of the first meeting of the board of HaFraBa on 10 February 1927 (Hanover, 1927).
- 4 Kurt Kaftan, *Der Kampf um die Autobahnen* (Berlin, 1955). M. Kornrumpf, *HaFraBa eV. Deutsche Autobahn-Planung 1926–1934* (Bonn, 1990).
- 5 From 1932 the newsletter was entitled *Die Autobahn*, with twelve issues a year. In 1933, for political reasons, the editors switched to Hitler as the most important advocate of the *Autobahn* idea. The July 1933 issue showed Hitler on the front page with the headline 'The *Autobahn* network is the path to the rebirth of Germany's rise and glory.' A year later the number of issues nearly doubled, from twelve to twenty-two. At the end of 1934 publication ceased and the head of the *Autobahn* project, Fritz Todt, brought out his own journal, *Die Strasse*, with twenty-four issues per year and a reduced number of issues from 1940 until 1942. This journal presented scientific papers on road building, traffic and transport history and forms a window on to the transformation of the *Autobahn* project. Further, *Die Strasse* contained a curious mixture of obtrusive NS propaganda and from 1938 included reports on Hitler's expansionary foreign policy and 'success' in the war.
- 6 'Statement of the member of the government Rudolf Hess in the opening speech of the road construction congress in Munich on 6 September 1934', *Die Strasse* 2 (1934), 38, and Becker, 'Von der HaFraBa zur Reichsautobahn', *Kasseler Post*, 18 March 1934, p. 3 (Kassel University Library).
- 7 See the file Autostrasse Hamburg–Frankfurt–Basel 1930–34, MA6289, Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt (Main), and E. Schütz und E. Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn* (Berlin, 1996), 2nd edn 2000.

- 8 Berenice A. Carroll, *Design for Total War: Arms and Economics in the Third Reich* (The Hague, 1968), p. 200.
- 9 Heidi Rohde, *Transportmodernisierung oder Verkehrsbewirtschaftung?* (Frankfurt, 1999).
- 10 Wolfgang König, 'Nazi visions of mass tourism', in Laurent Tissot (ed.), *Development of a Tourist Industry* (Neuchâtel, 2003), pp. 261–8.
- 11 Timothy W. Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: the Working Class and the 'National Community', 1918–1939* (Oxford, 1993).
- 12 Hasso Spode, 'Ein Seebad für zwanzigtausend Volksgenossen. Zur Grammatik und Geschichte des fordistischen Urlaubs', in Peter J. Brenner (ed.), *Reisekultur in Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1997), pp. 7–48.
- 13 Christine Keitz, *Reisen als Leitbild. Die Entstehung des modernen Massentourismus in Deutschland* (Munich, 1997), pp. 223–32. For the labour camps at the *Autobahn* KdF provided theatre entertainment once a month: see Kraft durch Freude, Gau Kurhessen, Programme February 1937 to April 1937, University of Marburg Library.
- 14 Shelly Baranowski, 'Tourism industry and modernity: comments', in Laurent Tissot (ed.), *Development of a Tourist Industry* (Neuchâtel, 2003), p. 25. John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London, 1990).
- 15 Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama*.
- 16 Hans Mommsen and M. Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1996). Heidrun Edelmann, 'Der Traum vom "Volkswagen"', in Hans-Liudger Diemel and Helmuth Trischler (eds), *Geschichte der Zukunft des Verkehrs* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp. 280–9.
- 17 König, 'Nazi visions of mass tourism'.
- 18 Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge, 1984), chapter 8.
- 19 Todt's study was entitled 'Straßenbau und Straßenverwaltung', Archive of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesarchiv), Berlin, R 4601, volume 3001/A.
- 20 On this interpretation see also Shand, 'The Reichsautobahn'.
- 21 Anton Woerner, 'Die Reichsautobahn München–Salzburg', *Die Autobahn*, No. 9 (1933), 10–12, and Herbert Schmidt-Lamberg, 'Hebung des Fremdenverkehrs durch Autobahnen', *Die Autobahn*, No. 6 (1933), 2.
- 22 Keitz, *Reisen als Leitbild*.
- 23 This, of course, was not new: Mom, 'Roads as rails', characterises early automobilism as adventurous in three respects: speed, touring and tinkering.
- 24 On *Autowandern* see *Die Strasse*, Nos 3, 6, 11, 14 (1936). In 1935 Todt gave the order to build some parking lots and picnic lawns beside the newly built first route, Frankfurt–Darmstadt; see Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden, Akte 485–12 (Orders of Todt).
- 25 In 1932 car ownership per 1,000 inhabitants amounted only to a quarter of that of France and a third that of England; see *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* (Berlin, 1933), p. 84\*.
- 26 'Zahlen zum Ausflugsverkehr auf den Berliner Ausfallstrassen', *Die Strasse*, No. 6 (1936), 178.
- 27 Gesellschaft zur Vorbereitung der ReichAutobahnen (ed.), *Die Planungsarbeiten für die Reichsautobahnen. Zweieinhalb Jahre GezuVoR* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 46 f. For the traffic count in 1936 see Rudolf Hoffmann, 'Die Entwicklung des Kraftverkehrs auf Reichsautobahnen und Reichsstrassen', in Forschungsgesellschaft für das Strassenwesen (ed.), *Strassenbau-Jahrbuch 1937–1938* (Berlin, 1938), pp. 29–42.
- 28 'Ausflugsverkehr der Großstädte', *Die Strasse*, No. 6 (1936), 163–7.
- 29 See the lecture by Rudolf Hoffmann, an official in Todt's administration, 'Die Wirtschaftlichkeit von Autobahnen', in *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, 23 November 1938, Bavarian Economic Archive Munich, K9/1491. In 1933 the head of the construction project company for the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn*, the delegated railway official Doll, was already raising (in a letter of 11 December) the question of how the German Railways could furnish the bus traffic which could be expected on the new *Autobahn*; Bavarian State Archive Munich, Autobahndirektion Süd, vol. 248.
- 30 L. Herbst, *Der Totale Krieg und die Ordnung der Wirtschaft* (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 153–60. See my lecture 'Rivalry and Regulation: German Freight Transport Policy, 1920–2000', presented at the first International Conference on the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T<sup>2</sup>M), Eindhoven Technical University, Netherlands, 6–9 November 2003, Working Paper in History of Mobility No. 2/2003 in the Internet resource [http://www.wirtschaft.uni-Kassel.de/Vahrenkamp/History\\_Mobility/History\\_Mobility.htm](http://www.wirtschaft.uni-Kassel.de/Vahrenkamp/History_Mobility/History_Mobility.htm).



- 31 The article 'Der Kraftwagenschnellverkehr der Reichsbahn', *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, 24 May 1935, Bavarian Economic Archive Munich, K9/1491, stresses the tourist importance of this bus link.
- 32 W. Linden, 'Reichsbahn-Autobus-Verkehr auf Reichsautobahnen', *Deutsche Wirtschaftszeitung*, 23 May 1935, pp. 480–3, and R. Roesner, 'Der Kraftwagen-Linienvorkehr der Reichsbahn auf den Reichsautobahnen', *Deutsche Wirtschaftszeitung*, 23 April 1936, pp. 386–9, both Bavarian Economic Archive K9/1491.
- 33 There is documentation for other bus routes in 1939, e.g. Munich–Augsburg, Munich–Nuremberg–Berlin, in the Munich town archive, vol. Verkehr 188. Up to 1939 the journal *Die Strasse* reported fourteen times on buses on the *Autobahn*.
- 34 R. Mengel, 'Die schnellen Reisen der Reichsautobahn', *Kurhessische Landeszeitung*, 14 January 1939, p. 3, Kassel town archive.
- 35 Breloer, 'Landschaft und Landschaftsgestaltung', in Bundesminister für Verkehr (ed.), *HaFraBa-Bundesautobahnen Hansestädte-Frankfurt-Basel* (Wiesbaden and Berlin, 1962), p. 101.
- 36 Walter Dirks, 'Das Dreieck auf der Autobahn', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 11 December 1938. I owe this source to my colleague Eberhard Schütz.
- 37 R. Hoffmann, 'Die Entwicklung des Kraftverkehrs auf Reichsautobahnen und Reichsstrassen'; 'Der Kraftverkehr auf deutschen Strassen zu Pfingsten 1938', *Die Strasse*, No. 12 (1938), 388–92; 'Der Kraftverkehr auf deutschen Strassen zu Pfingsten 1939', *Die Strasse*, No. 11 (1939), 377–80; 'Der Kraftverkehr auf deutschen Straßen Ostern 1939', *Die Strasse*, No. 9 (1939), 283–9.
- 38 F. Todt: the Inspector General of German Roads presented a report at the Nazi party convention in Nuremberg 1937 on 'Bau und Verkehr auf den Strassen Adolf Hitlers', *Die Strasse*, No. 18 (1937), 518–20; and 'Der Generalinspekteur für das deutsche Strassenwesen berichtet auf dem Parteitag Großdeutschlands über die Strassen des Führers als Schrittmacher der deutschen Bauwirtschaft', *Die Strasse*, No. 19 (1938), 600–3.
- 39 See T. Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama. Verkehrswege und Landschaftsveränderung in Deutschland 1930 bis 1990* (Frankfurt, 2002), pp. 158 f., and Windisch-Hojnacki, *Die Reichsautobahn*.
- 40 Todt's journal *Die Strasse* had reported thirty-six times between 1934 and 1938 on the Munich–Salzburg *Autobahn*. The preceding journal, *Die Autobahn*, had reported seven times on this topic between 1933 and 1934. See also *Reichsautobahn München*.
- 41 Seifert published thirty articles on landscaping in Todt's journal *Die Strasse* between 1934 and 1942.
- 42 Letter of 23 November 1933, Deutsches Museum archive, Munich, Seifert Nachlass, NL 133/056.
- 43 Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama*.
- 44 *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich* (Berlin, 1933), p. 159.
- 45 'Der von München ausgehende Kraftpostverkehr', *Die Strasse*, No. 12 (1935), appendix p. 33.
- 46 Anton Wörner, 'Die Reichsautobahn München–Salzburg', *Die Autobahn*, No. 9 (1933), 10–12.
- 47 Kaftan, *Der Kampf um die Autobahnen*, p. 153.
- 48 Wörner, 'Die Reichsautobahn München–Salzburg', including a personal record of Wörner and a portrait photo.
- 49 *Ibid.* and *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 6 September 1933, Bavarian Main State Archive, Munich, vol. MWi 8682.
- 50 There were many reports on the construction of the bridge in the journal *Die Autobahn*.
- 51 A. Seifert, 'Die landschaftliche Eingliederung der Strecke', *Die Strasse*, No. 12 (1935), pp. 446 f. Stifter was a Czech painter, 1805–68.
- 52 See the remark on Hitler's country seat, 'Reichsautobahn München–Salzburg', p. 20. The popularity of the health resort of Bad Reichenhall was partly explained by the proximity of Hitler's country seat: *Die Strasse*, No. 12 (1935), appendix p. 29. The National Socialist Party daily *Völkischer Beobachter* reported on 24 August 1934 that every day several thousand people passed by it.
- 53 This could be deduced from several letters of Todt, who referred to Hitler's wish that construction should be pushed through rapidly: see Todt to Doll, 5 October 1933, and Doll to Todt, 1 June 1934, Bavarian State Archive Munich, Autobahndirektion Süd, vol. 248. Doll was head of the construction project company responsible for building the Munich–Salzburg link.

- 54 Circular letter of the Bavarian section of the *Autobahn* project company GezuVoR to construction companies and stone suppliers, 14 September 1933, Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, vol. C235, p. 21.
- 55 Windisch-Hojnacki, *Die Reichsautobahn*, pp. 97, 147.
- 56 P. Hafen, 'Das Rasthaus am Chiemsee', *Die Strasse*, No. 22 (1938), 702–8.
- 57 For propaganda reasons on this date construction started simultaneously at twenty-two points all over the Reich: *Die Autobahn*, No. 00 (1934), p. 168. This action was conducted by Goebbels, see letter of 12 February 1934 from the Thüringian section of the propaganda administration in Berlin to the president of the state of Thüringia, Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, vol. C234, p. 19. Hitler's speech at Unterhaching was transmitted by radio to the workers at the other twenty-one starting points.
- 58 In cross-section the formation was as follows. The total width of 24 m comprised two lanes, together 7.5 m wide, in each direction, divided by a grass central reservation 5 m wide. Two shoulders, each of 2 m, supplemented the lanes. From the Siegsdorf exit to Bad Reichenhall the width was reduced to 17 m owing to the lesser amount of traffic expected; see Friedrich Doll, 'Technische Aufgaben beim Bau der Reichsautobahnstrecke München–Landesgrenze', *Die Strasse*, No. 5 (1935), 432.
- 59 A. Grüb, 'Reichsautobahn-Raststätte am Chiemsee', *Die Strasse*, No. 7 (1938), 217, and Hafen, 'Das Rasthaus am Chiemsee', containing photos and the ground plan. The restaurant has been used by the US army since 1945 and no present-day photos exist.
- 60 *Münchener Zeitung*, 28 June 1935, Munich town archive, press cutting collection ZA Autobahn, München–Salzburg 1935.
- 61 S. Bufe *et al.*, *Die Tegernsee Bahn* (Egglham, 2001), p. 24.
- 62 *Reichsgesetzblatt I* (1933), p. 311. I owe this hint to Hasso Spode.
- 63 *Die Strasse*, No. 12 (1935), supplement, p. 29.
- 64 Keitz, *Reisen als Leitbild*, p. 246.
- 65 Wörner, 'Die Reichsautobahn München–Salzburg', p. 12.
- 66 Hoffmann, 'Die Wirtschaftlichkeit von Autobahnen'.
- 67 Letter of 14 April 1939, Archive of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesarchiv), Berlin, vol. NS26-1187.
- 68 Letter from Todt to the Bavarian government, 1 March 1939.
- 69 For the data see Hoffmann, 'Die Entwicklung des Kraftverkehrs auf Reichsautobahnen und Reichsstrassen', pp. 32 f. The days of the week were computed from the dates with Microsoft Excel. Hoffmann reports that at the Ramersdorf census point the traffic was counted continuously by a 'special order', p. 31.
- 70 Hoffmann, 'Der Kraftverkehr auf deutschen Strassen zu Pfingsten 1938'.
- 71 Hoffmann, 'Der Kraftverkehr auf deutschen Strassen zu Pfingsten 1939'.

### Address for correspondence

Department of Economics and Business Administration, University of Kassel, Mönchebergstrasse 19, D-34109 Kassel, Germany. *E-mail* vahrenkamp@gmx.net