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The Many lives of German Labour: A Review Essay

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The Many Lives of German Labour: A Review Essay

David Crew

Michael J. Neufeld, *The Skilled Metalworkers of Nuremberg: Craft and Class in the Industrial Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1989).

Bernard P. Bellon, *Mercedes in Peace and War: German Automobile Workers, 1903-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press 1990).

Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers/Forced Laborers/Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1990).

Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

Karen Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik: Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag 1990).

IN THE PAST TWO DECADES, social-historical approaches have made a substantial contribution to the history of the 19th- and 20th-century German labour movement. Each of the books under review here carries this general project forward; yet each book also confronts us with quite different, at times, incompatible representations of "the German working-class." Indeed one comes away from reading these five new studies with a troubling question; is there still a "collective subject" whose history German labour historians can continue to write?

The skilled metalworkers described by both Neufeld and Bellon lived very different lives, inhabited quite different worlds than the foreign labourers who are the subject of Ulrich Herbert's excellent, original, and much-needed study. Ute Daniel's and Karen Hagemann's pioneering studies clearly show that gender played a major role in structuring working-class experiences, interests, and identities. And Hagemann's book also warns us about the dangers of taking the rhetoric

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or practices of socialist parties and trade unions as unproblematic expressions of these gendered interests and identities.

Michael Neufeld's local study of the north Bavarian city of Nuremberg takes us inside the classical *habitus* of the German labour movement — the world of the skilled, male, protestant metalworker. Neufeld's rich and careful analysis traces the dissolution of the old artisan order, in the years between 1835 and 1868, and the formation of a new working class (1869-1905). Neufeld shows that four major factors were responsible for the dissolution of the old artisan order and the formation of a new working class — "capitalism, industrialization, population growth, and political repression — of which capitalism was most important." (167) Capitalist industrialization doomed most journeymen to a life-long status as workers and set men against their masters well before the eventual triumph of factory industry in Nuremberg. These conflicts emerged in the 1848 Revolution and by the 1870s metalworking artisans were already willing to accept trade unions and socialism. Because Nuremberg's "skilled labor remained central to the production process in virtually all branches of the industrial use of metals," (168) metalworkers could continue to think of themselves as members of an exclusive "craft" even as they began to speak in a broader, more abstract "language of class." Indeed, Neufeld argues that the eventual emergence of the DMV "as a large, bureaucratic industrial union ... demonstrates the existence of a dialectic of craft consciousness and class consciousness among Nuremberg metalworkers." (170-1) Neufeld certainly admits that the narrower forms of "craft consciousness" did sometimes hinder the growth of a broader "class consciousness." (5) But he insists that "craft loyalties and craft traditions cannot be written off only as obstacles to the development of class identity." (171) Whereas this may have been true up until the 1880s, thereafter craft and class tended more to reinforce than to counteract one another, thus producing a socialist industrial trade unionism in a labour movement based upon skilled workers. (5)

Neufeld provides no definitive explanations of what appears to have been a German peculiarity — the importance of socialist industrial unionism in a labour movement based upon skilled workers. Certainly the "class consciousness" of German metal industrialists was one undeniably important factor; employers in the German metal industry were clearly willing to use aggressive tactics (mass lock-outs, for example) in order to fight trade unionism, but these often bitter conflicts only promoted the "unification of employers and workers into organised blocs." (173)

Like a number of other recent studies of German labour history, Neufeld's book also shows that, "the role of the state must be seen as one of the most important factors leading to the creation of a united and fairly radical socialist movement in Germany." (171) For much of the 19th century, the state's role in the process of class formation was often blatantly negative; working-class political identity was a response to political repression. After the French Revolution and the Revolutions of 1848, German and Bavarian ruling groups were, Neufeld argues, paranoid over

the dangers of political radicalism and revolutionary conspiracy. (169) Predictably, Nuremberg's skilled metalworkers broke with the liberalism of their employers and embraced Social Democracy at a relative early point.

Although Neufeld succeeds admirably in establishing the importance of craft traditions for the formation of working-class identity in Germany, his findings are perhaps not quite as original as he suggests; both French and German labour historians have increasingly paid attention to the artisan origins of 19th-century working-class consciousness. It is more of a problem that Neufeld largely ignores the fact that by constructing its "class-interest" and "identities" around the central image and ideal of the skilled male industrial worker, the 19th-century labour movement ignored, excluded, or dismissed other types of workers — women, the unskilled, the unorganized, the rough and unrespectable, but also the Catholic and the foreign worker. The historically specific "language of class" formulated by the German social-democratic labour movement was an impressive achievement; it produced a sense of collective identity and unity of purpose among skilled workers who might otherwise have remained much more divided from one another. But the particular form of class identity which emerged in late 19th-century Germany also had limiting effects. By constructing an imagined "other" whose alleged "backwardness" appeared to explain the labour movement's failure to win the loyalty of the entire working class, skilled, male, protestant, socialist, and German workers amplified the differences and increased the distances between themselves and other workers in Germany.

Bernard Bellon's study of the automobile workers at the Daimler Motor Company shows that here, as in Nuremberg "skilled labor remained central to the production process in virtually all branches of the industrial use of metals." (Neufeld, 168) Indeed, there was very little that was Fordist about the Daimler motor company, except, perhaps, its authoritarian labour relations. The Detroit automobile giant had already become the pre-eminent symbol of mass production and "Americanism" before World War I. But well into the 1930s, production at Daimler, as in much of the German automobile industry, remained "labor intensive and conservative." At Daimler "Mass production came ... only with the construction of tens of thousands of airplane motors ... during the First World War, and left once again quickly in its wake." (14) German automobile producers made cars for an elite, not a mass, clientele — a source of pride and prestige for the workers (*Deutsche Qualitatsarbeit*) as well as for the bosses, but also a considerable structural weakness in the German industry. The German automobile industry's failure to open up mass consumer markets meant that pre-Fordist divisions of labour, work patterns, and attitudes persisted at Daimler well into the 1930s. Despite some pre-war intrusions of new technology and de-skilling, a worker whose father was a Social Democrat and a master at Untertuerkheim after 1907 could still describe an almost artisanal relationship between the men and the work: "They loved their work. They also knew for whom they were building the car." (45)

As in Nuremberg, "craft consciousness" produced a strong commitment to trade unionism and Social Democracy; by 1906, 68 per cent of the 2,200 workers employed at Daimler were members of the DMV — a rate of organization at least as high as that in the northern Bavarian city. Workers and manages fought over work-rules, piece rates, and over-time, but Bellon concludes that Daimler's workers managed to win recognition from the firm and carve out a sphere of influence over the labour process in the last years before the war.

This relatively happy compromise was upset by World War I, when DMG became Germany's largest supplier of airplane motors. Total war created a new demand that made possible "economies of scale unlike anything ever seen before in Untertuerkheim." (88) The wartime transition to mass war production required new machinery and new workers. By the end of the war, Daimler had expanded its workforce to more than 20,000 making the company one of south Germany's industrial giants. (91,100) Symbolic of the dramatic wartime changes at Daimler was the presence of several thousand women in an industry which before the war had employed scarcely any female wage labour. But these were not permanent changes: "Economies of scale guaranteed by the state, not a revolution in the production processes, made possible huge profits at Daimler." (91) With the war's end, the profitable military contracts dried up and Daimler was thrown back on its own devices and on the more limited profits to be made from the luxury automobile market. This prospect made the company particulary unreceptive to the post-war grievances and demands of a work-force radicalized by the experiences and deprivations of the war. During the German Revolution, the workers on the Daimler shop floor increasingly moved to the radical left (USP/Spartacist/KPD). But this post-war radicalism was less a reflection of the wartime restructuring of the Daimler work force than of the growing alienation of the pre-war backbone of the labour movement — the male, skilled "labor aristocrats" — from their more moderate Social Democratic leaders outside the plant. The new, unskilled "mass workers," introduced into the plant during the war, played a subordinate role in post-war struggles; indeed, many of them, especially the women, were no longer working at Daimler, the first victims of the post-war "demobilization."

The spasms of radicalism that gripped Daimler's workers after the war fused economic struggles within the plant with political actions in the broader public sphere — workers fought for better working conditions and for job control but also protested against the Kapp *Putsch* and the new income tax passed by the *Reichstag* in the summer of 1920. The radical challenge at Daimler came to a head but also to an abrupt end in 1920 with a lockout of more than 9,000 employees, in response to a communist-led movement to fight the new income tax. A general strike of workers in the Stuttgart area could not weaken the employers' and the state's resolve to put an end to the post-war working-class challenge. And the Daimler management eagerly seized this opportunity to restructure its work force and recast the balance of power within the factory. As one company director put it, "The firm wants to have law and order ...." The guiding principle of the new, streamlined DMG

which emerged from the 1920 crisis was "With far fewer personnel, produce more; save and save ...." (190) "Trimming the fat" at Daimler, of course, included the expulsion of young radicals, Communists, and independent socialists. Older, more skilled, more reliable workers were allowed to remain. After 1920, Daimler, was able to proceed "with more law and order and with more seriousness" at least in part because the radical left had been deprived of its base on the shop floor. (201-2)

As early as 1919, new divisions of labour (*Gruppenfabrikation*), which broke down the older communities of workers, "atomized" the work force, and gave management greater direct control over the labour process, were introduced into some of Daimler's workshops. In the mid-1920s, this reorganization of work was extended to other parts of the enterprise. Between 1925 and 1928, the rationalization movement in the German auto industry aided Daimler's efforts at disciplining its workforce. An American-style assembly line was introduced and the pace of work intensified, although full-blown Fordism seems to have come to Daimler only with the Nazi military buildup in the late 1930s.

The Nazis destroyed the trade unions and working-class parties that represented Daimler's workers. But did Nazism manage to secure for Daimler the docile and productive labour force that the company had sought ever since the Revolution? Bellon has not been able to uncover a great deal of evidence about the attitudes and responses of workers towards the Nazi regime. Outright resistance to Nazism seems to have been quite rare. The Nazis brutally crushed open protest and stifled dissent. But did this mean that Daimler's workers quietly grumbled their way through the war until they could once again openly speak their minds after 1945? Or was Nazism able to win at least some measure of support and approval from the workers at Daimler, as it appears to have done elsewhere in Germany? Recent research has suggested that it is not always easy to draw sharp lines between the "victims" and the "villains" (*Opfer* and *Täter*) in Nazi Germany. A Ruhr mineworker who opposed the Nazi in 1933, might have become a "racially privileged" foreman supervising "sub-human" Russian POWs by 1943.

Bellon ends his book with a discussion of Daimler's exploitation of slave labourers — Russians, Jews, and other concentration camp inmates — during World War II. He is quite rightly indignant about this most dismal chapter of the company's history as well as about its refusal to allow him access to the relevant documents until it was too late to make thorough use of them for this book. Bellon's outrage at the cynical exploitation of slave labour by German industry during World War II does not, however, appear to be widely shared by most Germans. There has been no systematic *Wiedergutmachung* for *Zwangsarbeiter*. In the past two years, since German unification, the "foreigner problem" has again assumed a prominent place in public discourse. The appearance of an expanded English translation of Ulrich Herbert's altogether excellent study thus provides a much-needed historical perspective on the contemporary discussions which are all too often conducted as if foreign labour has only been a "problem" in German history since the 1960s. Herbert points out, however, that foreign labour has been an important element of

the modern "German" work force, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, for at least the last hundred years. And real or imagined memories of earlier experiences with foreign workers have deeply influenced, indeed, distorted popular German perceptions of the "problem" of foreign labour from the early 20th century to the present.

Herbert skilfully weaves together the complex strands of the history of foreign labour in Germany; he presents the statistical and economic realities, and compares them with the different, often conflicting policies and motives of employers and state authorities, the perceptions and responses of the "host" German population, including those of the German labour movement and, not least, the experiences and reactions of the foreign workers themselves. Although he wants to "historicize" contemporary discussion of foreign labour, Herbert is careful not to present any simplistic arguments about "continuity in the employment of foreign labor, uninterrupted and characterized solely by a change in its respective forms." (5) Although earlier experiences with foreign labour, especially during World War I, certainly created a fund of knowledge and practice upon which the Nazis could draw, the ruthless Nazi exploitation of slave labour was not simply a continuation of these previous experiments.

Herbert's story begins with the years 1880 to 1914, when the employment of foreign labour and the debate on foreign workers first began to assume a modern shape. Wilhelmine Germany employed workers from all over Europe, but Polish workers were the most significant contingent and appeared to constitute the most important political and cultural threat. Herbert reconstructs the conflicts between German employers, particularly those in the eastern countryside who needed Polish workers to meet their growing labour shortages, and the state authorities, egged on by German nationalists, who were fearful of *Überfremdung* (foreign infiltration) and "Polonization." The compromise that emerged established policies for the employment of foreign workers "that wilfully ignored standards achieved in German social legislation." Polish workers were admitted only as temporary or "seasonal laborers," under quite restrictive conditions. While working in Germany, foreign labourers had to submit to special legal regulations which deprived them of most of the rights allowed to "native" Germans. By 1907, the government had constructed a "comprehensive regulation of the working and living conditions of foreign Poles in Prussia" (34) which was meant to shield German culture and the German *Volk* from the danger of "pollution" by "inferior" Poles. But the strict legal controls applied to Polish workers also gave employers a continuous supply of "cheap, docile, and undemanding Polish farm labor." (26) Foreign workers had to apply for identification cards at one of the thirty-nine border offices of the German Labor Exchange where, generally without their knowledge or agreement, they would be assigned to individual employers. Once in Germany, foreign workers could be deported if they attempted to change jobs without their employer's permission; but "A lack of enthusiasm for work was [also] regarded as a breach of contract; it [too] led to being fired and deported ...." (36) The police held a copy of

each work permit in their files so that they could track down foreign workers who left their jobs and deport any foreign labourers without a valid permit.

This framework of institutionalized discrimination against Polish workers created a moral climate in which "poor treatment — indeed, even physical maltreatment — of Poles was not viewed as something out of the ordinary." (42) The ever-present threat of deportation and their own lack of organizational resources made it difficult for Polish workers to engage in collective protest against these abuses. But individual workers did quit their jobs in search of better conditions at another farm or factory. Employers who needed additional labour had few scruples against hiring "undocumented" workers and it was always possible to get a new work permit under a false name at the next office of the Agency for Farm Workers. Indeed, "breach of contract developed into a mass phenomenon." (43)

The use of foreign labour had a contradictory impact on the German rural population in the East. Competition between German and Polish workers did depress general wage levels, often encouraging German workers to seek a better life in Berlin or the industrial boomtowns of the *Ruhrgebiet.* But the German workers who remained in agriculture could achieve a modest social and economic advancement by working as regular, year round farm-hands or as the foreman who supervised seasonal foreign labourers. The legal discrimination against foreign workers also confirmed and encouraged popular prejudice against the Poles, already seen by many Germans as "backward, culturally lower, of racially inferior stock." (45)

The German labour movement found it difficult to deal with the foreign labour question. The Social Democratic party was ideologically committed to internationalism. But the trade unions were worried about "unfair competition" from cheaper foreign workers. Rank-and-file German workers saw foreigners as "wage-depressers" and as strike-breakers and called upon their leaders "to adopt a purely German policy toward workers. Above all else, the interests of the *German* workers had to be preserved." (71) Had the trade unions been more successful in organizing foreign workers, they might have resisted a descent into chauvinism. Serious attempts were made to organize both Polish and Italian workers but with negligible results, a reflection, above all, of the fact that most foreigners regarded their stay in Germany as temporary. (72)

During World War I, Germany suffered staggering front-line losses; but it also captured some 2.5 million POWs who were increasingly forced to work for the German war effort in industry and agriculture. Russian and Polish civilian workers, who before 1914 had been required periodically to leave Germany, were now forced to stay in the country and their movements and work habits were subjected to harsh controls. Thousands of Belgians were more or less forcibly deported to work in Germany industry.

This transition to forced labour was "a fundamentally new departure." But it was disguised by the pre-war traditions of discrimination and control directed, in particular, against the Poles. To many Germans, forced labour practices in World

War I seemed no more than the "toughening and tightening of regulations due to war, and therefore justified." (116) These (false) memories of forced labour during World War I in turn helped to desensitize many Germans to the Nazis' barbaric exploitation of forced labour 25 years later.

World War I also demonstrated the limitations and contradictions of forced labour policies. The foreign workers in wartime Germany complained about their poor conditions, refused to work, and fled their jobs. Public protests in occupied Poland and Belgium against the treatment of foreign labour hindered German authorities' attempts to recruit more workers from these areas. And, though foreign workers were paid low or even no wages at all, employers discovered that forced labour could be quite costly. Poor treatment and bad working conditions encouraged foreign workers to run away; to prevent their escape, extensive security measures were required which, however, only further reduced the foreign worker's willingness to work. German officials therefore began to talk about enhancing incentives and improving the legal status of foreign workers. But Government plans to close the economic and legal gap between foreign and German workers, if implemented, would only have made forced labour more costly and even less attractive to German employers. The experience of World War I seemed to suggest that forced labour could not really replace free market labour to any significant extent unless the state was prepared to act in a far more ruthless fashion toward foreigners than was possible in the Wilhelmine monarchy, even in wartime.

The gains made by the labour movement as a consequence of the German Revolution made foreign labour less attractive to employers than it had been during the *Kaiserreich*. Under Weimar labour law, foreigners were now to be paid "according to agreed union wage scales in order to prevent downward pressure on wages." (123) But the government regulation and control of foreign labour was also expanded and centralized during the Weimar years as an indirect result of welfare state organization of the labour market. The priority of domestic labour over foreign labour was now anchored in law, a principle which continued to guide the foreign labour policies of the Federal Republic after 1945.

The demobilization of the German army at the end of the war reduced the demand for foreign labour. And the mass unemployment created by the Great Depression drastically slashed the numbers of foreigners who could find work in Germany. By the time the Nazis came to power in 1933, foreign labour was of only marginal importance to the German economy. Until 1939, the numbers of foreign workers in Germany remained low, a sign of the Nazis racial prejudices and their commitment to economic autarky.

But after the war began, the Nazis faced a growing labour shortage. Unwilling to mobilize German women for industrial war production, the Nazi regime had no alternative but to turn increasingly to the forced labour of foreigners. Yet the influx of millions of Russian POWs, Poles, and other, supposedly "inferior," nationalities into wartime Germany, threatened to become a racial nightmare. To ensure that politically and racially "dangerous" contacts between Aryan Germans and the more

than 7.5 million foreign workers who were in Germany by the end of the war would be kept to a minimum, the Nazis set up a draconian system of racial apartheid.

The conditions under which forced labour was performed during World War II were extremely brutal, often amounting to "annihilation by work," malnourishment, and mistreatment. (144) But Herbert is careful not to confuse the treatment of forced labour with the fate of the European Jews. Indeed, he shows that the decision in favour of a massive deployment of foreign workers and POWs in the *Reich*, especially the *Russeneinsatz* in the autumn of 1941, eliminated any lingering "economic" considerations that might have been raised as objections to the implementation of the "Final Solution"; Jews could now be murdered *en masse* precisely because they were *not* needed to perform slave labour for the *Reich*. But the racism of the Nazi regime did allow forced labour to be exploited with no particular concern for the health or the lives of the coerced workers. Although German employers were motivated more by profit than by the radical racism to be found in Nazi circles, they exhibited a callous indifference to the fate of forced labourers whose lives were quite simply regarded as being expendable!

The living and working conditions of the foreign workers, indeed their ultimate prospects for survival, depended heavily upon their precise location within the complicated racial hierarchy invented by the Nazis. Diet, housing, type and intensity of work were all determined by the forced labourer's relative racial "worthiness" in Nazi eyes. Gender supplemented these racial classifications. Roughly equal numbers of women were brought as forced labourers from the occupied eastern territories, primarily to provide sex for the male forced labourers, whose presence in the *Reich* threatened the chastity of German women and the "purity" of the German race. The women workers from the east received lower wages than the men, were forced to endure harsh working conditions, and were, in addition, sexually exploited by both their male colleagues and their German overseers. If they became pregnant, their children were removed to an institution where they might simply be starved to death.

But Gestapo and SS terror did not prevent all the foreign workers in wartime Germany from attempting to resist the brutal conditions forced upon them. Foreign workers traded illegally on the black market to improve their diet. Others loafed on the job. Some attempted to escape. Political resistance activities were less common, but especially after the German defeats on the eastern front in the winter of 1942/43, Soviet antifascists began to form resistance cells, the most important of which, the Fraternal Cooperation of Prisoners of War, managed to set up contacts in numerous camps for Soviet prisoners of war and civilian labourers.

Herbert's conclusions challenge Bellon's suggestion that Daimler's use of slave labour in World War II "marked the low point in the brutal deterioration of the business's increasingly instrumental attitude towards those working in its factories, a downward spiral which had begun a quarter century before ...." (247) Slave labour in Nazi Germany had its roots in a specific, separate tradition of discrimination against foreign workers in which even German workers participated

to some degree. Herbert points out that most Germans did not even question the presence of forced labour in Germany, or their own position of racial privilege over these foreigners. (191)

In 1945, Germany was in ruins. Yet Herbert points out that allied bombing was far more destructive of the residential areas of German cities than of industrial production sites. The devastation of the German transportation network, coupled with some political decisions made by the Allies, disguised the fact that the productive capacities of German industry, considerably expanded by the Nazi war effort, were still largely intact. After the 1948 currency reform in the three western zones and the inauguration of the Marshall Plan, German industry faced a labour shortage. But between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, the West German labour market could count upon a steady flow of expellees from the formerly German territories in the east (*Ostvertriebene*), who were followed, until the construction of the wall in 1961, by East Germans who wanted to leave the DDR; "it was they who filled the staggering manpower shortages that had arisen, in effect replacing the ranks of foreign labor." (195) The distrust and hostility directed against "foreigners" in the past could quite easily be transferred to the *Ostvertriebene* as well.

But this latest wave of migrants was really quite different from those that preceded or followed it; ethnically German, speaking the same language as the indigenous population, and with no real hope of returning to their original homelands, these Germans from the East were able to integrate into West German society. The successful assimilation of the *Ostvertriebene* produced a "rupture in historical continuity and popular perception in dealing with foreign workers" which distorted the collective memory of the Nazi past and made it "possible to resume recruitment and employment of large numbers of foreign workers a decade and a half after the end of the war relatively unencumbered by misgivings about its implications." (201-2) When the German and Italian governments signed an agreement on the recruitment of foreign labour in 1955, some federal German states still had relatively high unemployment rates. But in other regions, there were labour shortages. West German employers and state officials argued that foreign labour was the best, indeed the only way to respond quickly to these short-term regional labour demands, because domestic German labour was too immobile. Continued housing shortages made it difficult for German workers to move from areas with high unemployment, such as Schleswig-Holstein, to regions, such as the Ruhr, where additional workers were badly needed. But foreign workers, who came without their families to Germany, could be housed in temporary hostels. Moreover, the German trade unions opposed overtime, and "family policy" considerations made an expansion of female employment undesirable.

After the East Germans put up the wall in 1961, foreign workers increasingly replaced the lost labour migration from the DDR. At this early stage, the use of foreign labour appeared to have few disadvantages. Foreign workers intended to return home and measured their lives in Germany by the much-lower standards of

their homelands. There was the added advantage that foreign workers could simply be sent back home during periods of economic downturn, like the 1966/67 recession. Finally, the German government could also represent the foreign labour agreements it signed with Turkey (1961), Portugal (1964), and Yugoslavia (1968) as "a bit of development aid for southern European countries" (213) which reduced their unemployment rates, improved their balance of payments, and raised the skills and qualifications of their work forces.

Yet the experiences of two neighboring countries, Switzerland and France, had already shown the difficulties that accompanied a growing reliance on foreign labour. The creation of "a subproletariat consisting largely of low-skilled laborers formed among the guest work force" (217) allowed inefficient enterprises with a low rate of profitability to stay in business and retarded the technological upgrading or elimination of many jobs. The presence of increasing numbers of foreign workers in Switzerland produced fears of foreign infiltration and hostile reactions from the domestic population. But until the mid-1960s, Swiss experience was largely ignored in the German Federal Republic; then, the growth of the right-radical NPD (German National Party), signalled the emergence of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* as an important political issue. However, fears of *Überfremdung* did not play as significant a role in the Federal Republic as in Switzerland. Outbreaks of popular hostility toward foreigners erupted in the 1966/67 recession. But the economy bounced back quickly and most Germans continued to enjoy their privileged position vis-à-vis the foreigners and to look upon the guest worker simply "as a symptom of ... newfound affluence — like color TV and pedestrian malls." (227)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the numbers of foreign workers in Germany rose steadily, reaching a peak of almost three million in 1973. Foreigners still held the same less-skilled positions in the economy "involving especially heavy, dirty, dangerous, or generally unpopular kinds of work." (23) But foreign workers now stayed longer in Germany and more often sent for their dependents. The numbers of foreign women working in Germany increased. By 1974, foreigners accounted for 6.7 per cent of the West German population; but 17.3 per cent of all live births in the Federal Republic were children of foreign parents. "Guest workers" had started to become immigrants.

But staying longer in Germany did not bring these foreign workers significant upward occupational mobility. By 1980, foreigners still worked primarily in the unskilled or semiskilled, more dangerous, and physically demanding jobs. Unemployment rates among foreign workers have also tended to increase and are now often higher than among the German work force. Low-skilled and semi-skilled foreign workers are also heavily concentrated in those branches of German industry, such as steel and metal manufacture, construction, and textiles that have been most severely affected by structural crises and structural unemployment. Many foreign workers face the gloomy prospect of permanent unemployment and welfare dependency. (242)

Nor are the prospects for the children of these foreign workers much brighter. Foreign young people are affected by unemployment at a higher rate than their German counterparts. Moreover, government educational policies, which have attempted to keep open the increasingly fictional possibility of a return to the homeland for the second generation, have produced "a generation of bilingual illiterates, fluent in neither the language of their parents nor that of their German classmates at school." (243) Foreign children who come as young teenagers to Germany experience the greatest difficulties. Herbert suggests that the problems facing these young foreigners in the Federal Republic are virtually insoluble and he is not particularly surprised that the crime rate among this group is especially high.

Government policy toward foreign workers and their families in Germany has been highly contradictory, often, in fact, Herbert contends, creating, rather than solving, many of the social problems that have become increasingly severe in the past two decades. Above all, Herbert faults the persistent refusal of post-war governments and policy makers to treat foreign workers as human beings and not just as factors of production to be imported or expelled as the needs of the German economy required.

Herbert concludes with a topical post-script. By 1990, when the English translation of his book was published, the radical right-wing *Republikaner* had managed to ride a new wave of xenophobia in the elections for both the West Berlin Senate and the European Parliament. Ironically, this new outburst of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* was levelled not only at foreign *Gastarbeiter* or asylum seekers but also at the "ethnic German" *Aussiedler* who are leaving the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe in increasing numbers. In 1992, more than a year and a half after German unification, xenophobic sentiments have become progressively more raucous and violent. Hostels for the asylum seekers have been firebombed, Vietnamese and other foreign "guest workers" in the former DDR have been viciously attacked and beaten on the streets by neo-Nazi skinheads, gangs of Turkish and German youths fight in the streets of Berlin. Among both government and opposition politicians, a consensus appears to be forming that the presence of so many foreigners in Germany is the real problem, rather than the hatred directed at foreigners. The provisions for political asylum contained in the *Grundgesetz* may well soon be amended.

Herbert's study cautions us against seeing the current wave of hostility to foreigners in Germany as only a regrettable but temporary aberration, an expression of the anxiety and disorientation experienced by inhabitants of the former DDR which will, however, disappear once the "Ossies" begin to enjoy the full benefits of West German capitalism. Indeed, Herbert offers a more discouraging conclusion; discrimination against foreigners has been a "normal" element of both official policy and popular attitudes since the late 19th-century:

> the history of dealing with foreign nationals in this country has been chiefly a history of efforts to prevent the permanent settlement of foreigners and to define and regulate their stay as *temporary* — solely for one's own benefit, based more on *Volkstum* — political or economic criteria, depending on the state of the economy. The effects of this tradition have been deeply ingrained in the imagination and mentality of the West German population. (257)

Although Germany is already *de facto* a "land of immigrants," it appears that the last two, admittedly difficult years have made it even harder for most Germans to accept this reality.

Herbert's book shows that we can not exclude non-German workers from our discussions of the working-class in Germany. Ute Daniel and Karen Hagemann do the same for women. Indeed, these two books issue an important, joint challenge to the representations of the German working-class constructed by the labour movement in the 19th-century and subsequently reproduced by many labour historians. By making wage labour the badge of class membership, 19th-century labour movements ignored, excluded, or dismissed other forms of work, particularly the unwaged reproductive labour of working-class wives and mothers. Male workers argued that even women who worked in industry were not permanently committed to wage labour and to the working-class cause. But trade unions and socialist parties failed to recognize that women had different work identities and, as *both* workers and mothers, had different class interests than those of working-class men.

Ute Daniel's impressive book on working-class women in World War I and Karen Hagemann's exhaustive study of women in the Weimar Republic both show that before, during, and after World War I, the majority of German women did not work for a wage outside the household. When they did, they were usually forced to shoulder a double burden of wage and reproductive labour which involved them in difficult negotiations and compromises between the demands of their jobs and the needs of their children and families.

Between 1914 and 1918, the highly visible entrance of women into previously "male" jobs convinced contemporaries that the demands of "total war" had produced dramatic changes in the patterns of female employment. Ute Daniel's careful analysis of employment statistics demonstrates, however, that the overall labour force participation of women did not increase dramatically during the war years, but continued, instead, to follow pre-war trends. Daniel argues that there were two major reasons why civil and military authorities failed to mobilize women *en masse* for the war effort. First: women were less than enthusiastic about working in the armaments industry; because war-work was clearly "for the duration only" it offered no real prospect of permanent economic advancement. Some of the women already employed in the textile industry or in domestic service when the war began did move from these jobs into the metalworking and chemical industries so crucial to the war effort. But most working-class women preferred to live on

unemployment benefits, the support payments made to military dependents by the state, or income earned from domestic out-work, which allowed women to combine waged and reproductive labour. The desperate shortages that developed as the war dragged on made it even more difficult for women to work outside the household as they now were forced to devote large amounts of time and energy to the increasingly difficult task of feeding and clothing their families.

Second: the policy makers were themselves ambivalent about mobilizing women for the war effort. They feared that a full-scale recruitment of women into war industry would disrupt "normal" family life and confuse traditional gender relations. Pro-natalists warned that the reproductive capacities of German women must be protected so that Germany could replace the millions of lives lost at the front. Moral authorities worried that children would be neglected and that the norms of sexual difference could be dangerously weakened when women worked in "men's jobs." To address these anxieties, the wartime employment of women was surrounded with innovative welfare measures. Factory nurseries looked after the children of female war workers. Social workers (*Fabrikpflege*) helped women with their problems in the workplace and at home. By relieving women of the full weight of the "double burden" of wage and reproductive labour, these welfare measures helped to attract women to the armaments industry.

But social policy also gave the state new opportunities to "discipline" women and their children. The military and civil authorities acted as surrogates for the male authority figures — fathers, teachers, and police — whose absence at the front appeared to threaten the proper socialization of working-class youth. Working-class children were subjected to new disciplinary measures, including an abortive attempt to force underage munitions workers to save a portion of their earnings, rather than squandering it on "wasteful" pleasures (*Jugendsparzwang*).

The state also tried to police sexual behavior. Because the war separated millions of husbands and wives, sexual life was displaced into a more dangerous realm outside the family. If women engaged in extra-marital sex they were branded as traitors who undermined the fighting spirit of the men at the front, especially if the women slept with POWs. State authorities might even instruct the "morals police" (*Sittenpolizei*) to treat promiscuous *Kriegerfrauen* as prostitutes. But this, "specific connection of sexuality and patriotism was applied exclusively to women, and not, however to the soldiers and officers in the battle zones," (268) for whom officially sanctioned brothels were set up as an encouragement to continue fighting for the Fatherland.

The state's multiple intrusions into the "generative and socializing realm of familial reproduction" (152) produced an intensification of

> the relationship between "the" family and "the" state ... the significance of the family as factor with which state action had to reckon increased at the very same time that women and their families became increasingly prepared to see themselves and independent actors vis-à-vis the state. This structural and mental intensification of the relationship between state

and authority both led in the same direction so that the instances ... of conflicts of the most varied sorts increased. (266)

The basic source of these conflicts was the obvious contradiction between the state's increased claims upon the family and its utter failure to ensure the working-class family's material survival. The state's inability to prevent shortages of food and other basic necessities, forced working-class families to resume productive functions not performed within the household since the 19th-century. This return to a "semi-subsistence economy" frequently involved women and their children in non-monetary, sometimes illegal, survival activities — from "hamstering," or trading on the black-market, to the pilferage of coal and other necessities. But unlike the authorities who saw in this behaviour only the effects of "disorderly family relationships," Daniel detects "quite the reverse, namely the functioning of familial socialisation under the special conditions of wartime." (269)

Daniel also suggests that behaviour identified by the authorities as symptoms of "family breakdown" should instead be seen as the withdrawal of popular support for the continuation of a hopeless war. The wartime decline of the birthrate was, for example, not only the result of the physical separation of men and women during the war but a kind of "birth-strike" by women who refused to bring more children into a world "in which female children appeared only to be destined for starvation and male children for mass death." (267)

Women's struggles for the economic survival of their families generated an "alternative public sphere" (*Gegenöffentlichkeit*, 241) which "irrevocably destroyed the wartime societal consensus between rulers and ruled." (232) In the constant waiting lines and crowds produced by wartime conditions a "network of informal communication" circulated rumours and jokes about the authorities' chaotic and ineffectual attempts to regulate the food supply that had a more corrosive effect upon the government's legitimacy than radical political propaganda. (Example: "Why has a *Reich* office for the distribution of snow not been set up? The snow would immediately disappear.") Women also filled their letters to the men at the front with details of "the difficulties and the sacrifices of their and their children's everyday lives ... inner-familial communication thus became one of the sources of subversive attitudes that was most feared by the authorities." (268) Neither government censorship nor official propaganda campaigns, exhorting the home front to patriotic sacrifice and promising eventual victory, could halt the spread of mass disaffection that eventually produced the political collapse of 1918.

Daniel's book is a major contribution to our understanding of the conditions that made the German Revolution possible. Her analysis of the "politicizing of everyday life" is an important corrective to conventional approaches which focus too narrowly upon the formal politics of the labour movement. But her discussion of the relationship between this informal "politics of everyday life" and more formal political processes is less satisfying. Other political agencies, such as the churches, the unions, the parties, and the employers, are largely missing from

Daniel's account or receive only a rather schematic treatment. It should, however, be possible to bring Daniel's unusual insights about women's political agency together with the growing body of knowledge of trade union politics and shop-floor militancy to construct a more comprehensive discussion of working-class politicization than either approach can achieve by itself.

Daniel warns against "retrospective idealisation" (257) of women's wartime protest. She argues, indeed, that the female "protest potential" generated by the war was not capable of lasting beyond it. The re-assertion of formal political processes and organizations during the Revolution and the Weimar Republic gave the initiative back to the men. But Daniel thinks that women were, to some extent, also silenced by the limitations of their own political perspectives. She characterizes "female protest" as essentially "short-sighted" and transitory which "ended abruptly ... with this or that concrete evil." (275) During the war, women came to oppose the war and the ruling circles responsible for it. But with the war's end women's protest lacked a clear object. Yet it would be surprising if the new political identities and assertiveness exhibited by women during the war simply evaporated after 1918. The war was certainly a period of extreme hardship, but the peace that followed it hardly brought a swift return to "normalcy." Revolution, inflation, the rise of Nazism, and the onset of the Great Depression made the Weimar Republic itself a period of permanent crisis to which women responded with food riots during the inflation, with a mass campaign against the restriction of abortion by the infamous paragraph #218, and with welfare protests and rent strikes during the Depression. Moreover, the enfranchisement of women in 1919 presented new opportunities for more formal kinds of female political action.

In the 1920s the image of "die neue Frau" (young, working, single, and sexually liberated) became the focus of conservative fears of the "dissolution of the family" as well as progressive hopes for the political, economic, and cultural "emancipation" of women. The Weimar Republic did give women substantial new opportunities. In addition to the equal legal citizenship inscribed in the Weimar constitution, women could expect to benefit from improved educational and occupational opportunities, and from the housing and welfare programmes promoted by the Weimar welfare state. Weimar also produced a cultural climate that promoted the "emancipation of the body" and the separation of sexuality from reproduction. Using an impressive range of archival and published materials, as well as oral history interviews, Karen Hagemann shows, however, that the real lives of German working-class women differed substantially from the largely imagined existence of "die neue Frau."

Indeed, strong continuities connected the lives and experiences of Weimar women to those of their Wilhelmine mothers. The same pattern of qualitative change in the employment of women combined with quantitative continuity which Daniel detects in the war years continued after 1918 as well. When demobilization squeezed women out of the traditionally "male" metal industries, younger women moved into new forms of work (as sales-clerks, shop-assistants, or as unskilled

assembly line workers) rather than returning to domestic service or the textile industry. But the percentages of women employed remained, at about one-third, roughly the same after 1918 as it had been before 1914. And, those who worked generally did not earn enough to support their own independent households.

For the great majority of women (some two-thirds) wage labour was a temporary and transitional activity; women's "workplace" remained the household and the family. The pro-natalist preoccupations of Weimar governments and social policy experts focused attention upon the difficult conditions under which working-class women performed this reproductive labour. A massive housing crisis, widespread unemployment, and the legal restriction of birth control and abortion made it extremely difficult for the majority of working-class women to achieve the much-discussed "modernisation" and "rationalisation" of family life that would produce the comfortable and "respectable" life of the *Kleinfamilie*. And the unreconstructed paternalism of even the most politically "enlightened" Social Democratic men continued to stand in the way of the egalitarian "partnership marriage" (*kameradschaftliche Ehe*) which the Social Democratic movement held out as the modern ideal. Many working-class women in Hamburg, but especially those who were married to poorly paid, unskilled, or casual labourers had to continue to deal with the everyday problems of large families, poor and overcrowded housing conditions, unemployment and, sometimes, physical abuse from their husbands. Hagemann concludes that family life during the Weimar Republic contributed little to the promotion of a female sense of self-worth. Working almost exclusively, day in and day out, for the needs of others, women seldom had the opportunity to fulfil their own needs or desires.

Moreover, the intrusions of the German state into working-class families which had produced so much friction between women and the authorities did not cease with the war's end. The wartime "crisis of the family" forced state authorities to attach a new importance and value to household labour. Yet, "the revalorization of house-work in no way [produced] a comparable revaluation of the housewife, but rather a ... characterization of women as chronically underqualified reproductive labor power." (Daniel, 273)

During the Weimar Republic, the representation of motherhood as a "profession," requiring a "scientific knowledge" of child psychology, household management, health, and welfare was used to claim improvements in the status and material conditions of wives and mothers. But at the same time, official attempts to "rationalise" and "modernise" reproductive behavior produced, as Hagemann puts it, a "therapeutic siege" (*fürsorgerliche Belagerung*) of the working-class family that required working-class women to conform to the dictates of a "knowledge" whose benefits (for the mother, if not for the child) were often far from obvious:

> Most working-class women were sceptical about the recommendations made by 'modern infant-care.' The behaviour proposed to them was foreign. It contradicted their human feelings, made greater demands on their labour-power and their nerves and, in addition, cost

> more money ... They experienced the social worker's home visits as a burdensome form of surveillance ... The reduction of work which family planning and birth control had achieved, was again increased by the increased demands of (modern) child care. (213)

The double burden of domestic/reproductive labour and waged work made it very difficult for most women to be politically active. Even committed SPD males were seldom prepared to assume a share of domestic labour. Most men continued to believe that politics was "men's business (*Männersache*), an opinion shared by many older women as well. Consequently, the women who were most active in the Weimar Social Democratic movement were either older, with grown children, or younger, single, and not yet burdened with family responsibilities. Women were largely excluded from the leadership ranks and segregated into predominantly female 'ghettos,' such as the social-democratic welfare organization, *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*.

Marxist theory saw wage labour as the road to female emancipation. But in the early 1920s, socialist women suggested that Marxist orthodoxy should be revised to reflect the fact that it was the family, not the workplace, that acted as the primary instance of politicization for most working-class women. Women "produced" human beings (*Menschenökonomie*), not commodities. Their reproductive labour in the household assigned them the spheres of public policy that most directly affected the working-class family. According to the tenets of this "*geschlechtsspezifische Emanzipationsstrategie*" socialist women's political activity was a form of *organisierte Mütterlichkeit*, a natural outgrowth of women's informal social networks and a kind of female mutual self-help. While this new "emancipatory strategy" recognised and affirmed the importance of the "reproductive" sphere in the lives of most working-class women, it did not challenge and, indeed, often simply reinforced the existing sexual division of labour in both the "private" and "public spheres." And this sexual division of political life also reproduced traditional masculine stereotypes concerning the inferiority and incapacity of women.

In the mid-1920s, however, younger women, trained in the more radical egalitarianism of the youth movement, along with some of the older women on the left-wing of the Social Democratic movement began to demand a fundamental transformation of gender relations. They formulated a new theory of the "special class position of women" which addressed women's dual identities as members of both a class and of a gender. Although this new approach enjoyed some success in Hamburg, it did not triumph at the national level. Weimar Social Democracy continued to be largely a "men's movement" representing "male" interests. Women were viewed and treated as "second-class citizens" whose votes were important to the party but whose gendered needs deserved no special consideration.

Although Hagemann attempts to examine the conditions and experiences of all of Hamburg's working-class women during the 1920s, when she looks at the connection between "everyday life" and political behaviour, her focus narrows to

a smaller group of Social Democratic female activists. Hamburg Communists are barely discussed, nor is there a consistent attempt to compare and contrast the position of women in both the Social Democratic and Communist political milieux. Hagemann admits that both men and women left the Social Democratic party in droves when the expectations raised by the German Revolution became the disappointing realities of "everyday life" in the Weimar Republic. She contends, however, that although men turned further left towards the KPD, women were more likely to retreat altogether from organised politics. Yet it is hard to believe that some disillusioned working-class women did not also find their way into the KPD and it would certainly be useful to know how the histories and experiences of female Communist activists differed from those of their SPD counterparts and why some working-class women voted Communist rather than Social Democratic.

But participation in the organized labour movement, whether Social Democratic or Communist, may not be the *only* measure of women's political activity. Hagemann sees women's formal political action as an outgrowth of their informal social networks and structures of communication (*Frauennetze*). Women's political activity was often a non-ideological form of practical self-help. Yet Hagemann does not pay much attention to the informal "politics of everyday life" and the other types of collective action — food riots, rent strikes, collective resistance to evictions — which also drew upon the solidarities constructed by women in the neighbourhood.

What, in conclusion, can these five new books tells us about the possibilities of writing German labour history in the future? The limitations and the dangers of defining the working-class solely in terms of the organized labour movement or in terms of the performance of wage-labour should by now be quite apparent. Future work in German labour history will have to pay attention to the "reproductive" as well as to the "productive" spheres and it will have to take into account the informal "politics of everyday life" as well as the more traditional types of organized and formal political action. The necessity of "gendering" working-class history is self-evident, although this should mean more than simply writing about female as well as male workers. At a deeper level, "gendering" working-class history requires an examination of the ways in which working-class interests and identities have been constructed historically with reference to notions of sexual difference and opposition. Nor is the construction of a gendered "other" the only way in which notions of difference helped to created the identity and interests of the German working-class. Nineteenth and twentieth-century "representations of class" also predicated real or imagined differences between "German" workers and ethnic/national "others." If German labour historians are to continue to lay claim to a "collective subject," they must find ways to write about the working-class that no longer merely reproduce the exclusions and oppositions embedded in the German labour movement's own "language of class."