Labor history certainly has not been a favorite topic recently among German scholars. During the last fifteen years there has been a remarkable shift from working-class history to an interest in other classes and groups, particularly the bourgeoisie, as evidenced by a current voluminous project in Bielefeld. Several women historians are committed to studying the history of women; other researchers are analyzing social minorities or the history of professions. Another trend can be seen in historians “occupying” the traditional topics of other disciplines such as architecture and city planning, art and literature, or sport and the mass media. German unification offers new opportunities for analyzing East German history by using newly available sources. Nevertheless, a range of new and interesting books on workers’ history recently has appeared in Germany.

During the past years some remarkable compendiums on labor history and the workers’ movement have been published. Especially noteworthy is the project “Geschichte der Arbeiter und der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts.” While the first three volumes, dealing with the history of the workers’ movement in the twenties, appeared some years ago, the studies of Jürgen Kocka, Gerhard Ritter and Klaus Tenfelde on the nineteenth century are quite recent. Kocka searches for the original sociocultural roots of the workers’ movement in the late eighteenth century, a period when the lower classes were neither “estate” (Stand) nor “class” but a mixture of both. Kocka’s second volume describes how the various groups of workers grew together slowly, although the experiences of the groups differed considerably. Laudably, Kocka integrates the experiences and values of individuals and groups in his analysis, but in doing so he concentrates solely on “work” and “profession.” This conception is the consequence of the assumption that the formation of the working class was primarily based on gainful employment. This basic assumption excludes all those who were not gainfully employed, especially housewives, and does not consider the dense social networks in workers’ neighborhoods in industrializing towns. Moreover, Kocka does not consider the separation of workplace from home and family, one of the most important social and cultural developments of industrialization.
Questions thus arise about how many female laborers worked away from home, how the gendering of industrial labor was accomplished, and what made the working-class movement male. Although it is a historiographic masterpiece, Kocka himself admits that his book sticks to conventional conceptual patterns.

Whereas Kocka's two volumes cover the period to 1875, Ritter and Tenfelde describe the situation of workers in the *Deutsches Kaiserreich*. Their concept is broader than Kocka's; their volumes deal with economic development, political processes, different social classes, labor markets, work in industry and handicraft, workers' income and expenditures, and workers' social life and status in state and society. Committed to the general principles of modern social history, the authors describe the permanent changes in the working class and finally characterize this changing status as the "workers' class in transition." They focus on workers' integration into industrialized society on the one hand and workers as a nonintegrated class in a very authoritarian state on the other.

A new textbook on the history of trade unions by Michael Schneider is very useful. (See the review of the English-language edition in this issue of ILWCH.) The history of German unions has been a history of success in the fields of organization, social policy, and political democracy, but there have been shadows, too. Schneider reminds readers of the unions' policy in 1914 and 1933 as well as of the fact that poverty and disadvantage, especially for women, have not yet been eliminated. Moreover, Schneider's history of the unions demonstrates that in periods of economic depression the unions' past achievements have been questioned again and again.

Two collections of articles also should be mentioned. A good review of current research is offered by Tenfelde, who edited "Arbeiter im 20. Jahrhundert." The book contains papers from a conference intended to promote research on the twentieth-century history of workers and labor, a subject neglected for a long time. The other notable collection of articles is two volumes on the history of the workers' movement edited by Arno Herzig and Günter Trautmann.5 The parts that deal with the early history of the workers' movement in the 1860s are especially stimulating in comparison with many older studies.

Two books have been written recently on the history of strikes: Karl Ditt and Dagmar Kift's study of the great Kaiserreich strike in 1889 and Friedhelm Boll's comprehensive history of the strikes in the second half of the nineteenth century, in which he compares the German patterns of strikes with those in some other countries, such as France and Great Britain. Boll's methodological and theoretical reflections, combined with his long-term empirical research, make this book an outstanding achievement. Strike waves, such as the one around 1890, are regarded as periods of societal innovation; for example, the collection of social statistics and social research were stimulated by strike experiences. These innovations were
due to a recognition that strikes belong to the “normal” consequences of industrialization and therefore had to be accepted.

Although a spate of studies on female labor history recently has appeared, it does not make up for German backwardness in this field. In 1991 a study was published on the “social costs of industrialization” for women between 1870 and 1914. The author, Marlene Ellerkamp, looks at female, often “double-burdened,” textile workers in Bremen. She discovers that their rate of illness was higher than that of men due to a whole set of causes including poor work conditions, nourishment, and living standards. In another study of female textile workers, Kathleen Canning reevaluates the relationship of women to their work in mills during the late nineteenth century. She describes typical forms of female workplace culture that “allowed for both accommodation and resistance to the factory regime.” According to Canning, women identified more intensively with their work than usually is pointed out in the literature on that subject. Although this identification with work should not be overgeneralized (Canning’s interpretation corresponds only in part to the written statements of the female textile workers themselves in the twenties), her results give an idea of the variety of relations between women and their work and lead to questioning any cliché related to this topic. Furthermore, it has taken an American researcher to consider the relations between gender and German class formation. Canning seeks “to uncover the presence of women and to argue for the relevance of gender at each level of class formation.” She emphasizes the conflictual meanings of “class,” exploring it as an identity and ideology “that was shaped as women and men assigned and contested the meaning of class.” This methodological approach makes gender visible where it otherwise has remained concealed.

Female work in rural areas in the twentieth century, hardly analyzed up to now, is the subject of Helma Meier-Kaienburg’s account of female agricultural workers, female workers in rural canning factories, and the so-called Spargelmädchen in the region of Hanover during the 1920s and 30s. The author discusses both the patriarchal structures of daily life and the various attempts of the women to create their own sphere. After 1933 The Nazis tried to attract women through new “cultural” offers which were most successful in the rural factories.

Meier-Kaienburg’s account directly leads us to a third recent research area: the Nazis and workers. Some studies stress the trends of economic rationalization during the Nazi period and the consequences, which can be seen in the diminishing cohesion among workers. So-called social rationalization (soziale Rationalisierung) receives special attention. Carola Sachse’s book on Siemens shows how the Deutsche Arbeitsfront at one firm contributed to the firm’s social policy. As a consequence of these “reforms” the firm’s atmosphere changed insofar as various groups of employees were “united” into an alleged “firm’s Volksgemeinschaft,” which was in fact a collection of individuals fragmented by oppressive measures. Sachse looks
Foreign Editor's Report: Germany

at the Third Reich's modernization efforts, describing the improvements for most Germans in the areas of work hygiene, welfare, protection of mothers, and youth work. Her work enables us more easily to understand the support of many workers for the Nazis.

Wolfgang Zollitsch also stresses the effects of national socialist integration, although class boundaries, as is well known, were not really lessened. Similar findings are presented by Alf Lüdtke. Committed to reconstructing workers' experiences and workers' "ways of life," Lüdtke emphasizes the positive impacts of symbols, for example, the "honour of work" (Ehre der Arbeit), which strengthened the integration of workers into the national socialist system. In his account Martin Rüther argues that the process of desolidarization of the workers was primarily due to the negative effect of the Great Depression, especially unemployment, and not to Nazi politics. In any case, Klaus-Jürg Siegfried's book on foreign forced labor and concentration camp workers shows how deeply the desolidarization stemming from the Great Depression and the infiltration of Nazi racial ideas finally affected many German workers. The separation of German workers from "slaves" is to be seen as one side of a coin whose obverse is the common cause between the Nazis and companies such as Volkswagen.

Although the history of workers' movements seems to have lost its relevance for public discourse and therefore booksellers, recognition of the importance of this topic has remained among scholars, although the interest of most has shifted from the discussion of socialist ideas and concepts to the analyses of "real" developments.

A comprehensive collection of various articles on the Social Democratic party (SPD) during the Deutsches Kaiserreich edited by Gerhard A. Ritter appeared in 1990. The volume contains articles on votes for the SPD in various German states, and on the party's organization, its social structures, and its cultural efforts. Elfi Pracht's study of the relationship between the SPD and parliamentarism in the Kaiserrich might be seen as a useful supplement to Ritter's volume.

Research has been carried out on selected towns in that period. Karl Heinrich Pohl presents many convincing examples for the reform character of the Munich SPD. However, he leaves unanswered why Munich—in spite of its reform-oriented SPD and its relatively integrated society in the prewar period—became one of the centers of the revolution in 1918–19. In her account on Hamburg, Helga Kutz-Bauer presents another type of social democracy that divided legalists and reformists from radicals. The author's explanation for the split focuses on socioeconomic aspects. Manfred Faust writes an account of the socialist and Christian workers' movements during World War I in Cologne and reconstructs their common activities, seen by the author as necessary due to the war situation. The book is a corrective to former studies on the split of the workers' movement during the war.
A remarkable study on women's policy has been written by Christine Eifert. Dealing with the social-democratic Arbeiterwohlfahrt since 1919, her argument reconstructs the concept developed at that time by the women themselves: If women did welfare work they would later gain access to more influential political spheres. This political strategy, however, did not succeed; the Arbeiterwohlfahrt, which was very successful in organizing social self-help, did not lead women into relevant arenas of politics.

Another topic of current discussion is workers' voting behavior in the politically decisive years before 1933. Falter and other researchers show that a considerable number of male and female workers voted for Hitler. Although the workers among Nazi party (NSDAP) voters were underrepresented, they were numerous enough so that they can no longer be overlooked. Presumably, many of them were not embedded in social-democratic, Catholic, or communist social milieus. Martin Rüther confirms this assumption partly with his study on workers in Cologne, where the Nazis had no chance of infiltrating the Catholic and social-democratic milieus. For the communist milieus, Klaus-Michael Mallmann's forthcoming article is especially relevant. He stresses that there were no strict lines of separation; many communists lived side by side with social democrats and, according to Mallmann, there were various links between social democrats and communists in the neighborhoods.

One of the most important studies of political workers' culture is Inge Marßolek's collection of articles on May Day celebrations. Especially remarkable is her attempt to analyze not only the "real" history of May 1st as a day of resistance and celebration, but also its language of symbols, which draws our attention to the ambiguities and contradictions in the manner in which the unions represented their past, their hopes for the future, and their identity as a movement of and for emancipation.

Wolfram Pyta legitimizes the political role of the SPD during the last years of the Weimar Republic. With the concept of defensive democracy (wehrhafte Demokratie) the social democrats were supposed to have found the right weapon against the NSDAP. According to Pyta, the core problem was that the government, the military, and the law did not support the SPD's fight against the enemies of the republic. Pyta does not analyze the relationship between social democrats and communists as an Achilles heel of their antifascism, which was often the focus of studies in the 1970s. Instead he looks more at "the others"—the bourgeois political groups. Bernd Rother, who has written a political history of the SPD in Brunswick during the Weimar Republic, also argues that the early success of the NSDAP in Brunswick was not due to the relatively strong position of the Brunswick left-wing socialists and their radical democratic strategy, but rather to the failure of the bourgeoisie. Legitimizing the policy of left-wing social democrats, Rother moves away from the main tendency of current SPD historiography, which is better represented by the collection of articles edited by Helga Grebing and Klaus Kinner. In this volume,
social, democrat, socialist, and communist interpretations of fascism in Germany and some other European countries are reconsidered. The volume shows that the SPD did not lack the correct analysis of national socialism as the 1970s literature often claimed; at best it was unable to transform its recognitions into effective political practice. Another study on political conceptions is Mario Keßler's book on anti-Semitism, Zionism, and socialism. The book tries to reconstruct the dramatic development of the socialist movement from originally opposing anti-Semitism and being a proponent of Zionism at about the turn of the century up to the anti-Jewish campaign led by Stalin in the 1930s.

Lastly, another new book deals with the role of the SPD in negotiations on the basic law of the Federal Republic. The author, Michael Antoni, works out the shift between the original SPD concept of the law and the final version presented by the party in the Parliamentary Council. Evidently, the SPD gave up the idea of an economic and social constitution. Some other studies deal with the refoudning of the SPD in the post-war federal states. While the reestablishment of the SPD in Rhineland-Palatinate has been seriously researched by Katrin Kusch, Edgar Wolfrum has reconstructed the relationship between the French policy of occupation and the newly founded Social Democratic party in southwest Germany. According to Wolfrum, there were some peculiarities, one of which was the discussion of a united socialist party, which lasted longer than in the other western zones. Moreover, in the Southwest the SPD was more federalistic and less nationalistic than Schumacher's SPD in the Northwest. In connection with Lower Saxony the biography of Kubel should be mentioned. Kubel was one of the most ambitious ministers of finance before he became governor (Ministerpräsident) of Lower Saxony in 1970. A “key politician” of the fifties and sixties, his biography contains much information on the politics of Lower Saxony of that time.

The history of the unions in the period since the foundation of the Federal Republic has been a point of major interest. Some new, voluminous editions of sources with informative introductions will decisively aid research work on this period. The collection of articles edited by Hans-Otto Hemmer and Kurt Thomas Schmitz is a remarkably comprehensive study of unions in the Federal Republic. According to the authors, the history of the unions in the FRG should at least help to explain the serious problems unions have faced during the last years and will be facing in the future: economic depression, strong world market competition, industrial automation, structural long-term unemployment, women’s demands for equality, immigration problems, and the challenges of German unification and European union, as well as ecological issues.

While the interest in studies on labor and politics is a traditional research area, interest in milieu studies is more recent. It has been stimulated by the historiography of women and voters, insofar as “class,” “labor,” and “politics” have not been sufficient to explain women’s ex-
periences and voters' decisions. One of the most intensive studies of a neighborhood is Stephan Bleek's book, which deals with the Westend in Munich during the late nineteenth century.\footnote{40} The proletarian neighborhood of Westend was a consequence of social segregation resulting from an urbanized mobile society. Bleek analyzes the migration into and from the neighborhood. The inhabitants of Westend highly identified themselves with their neighborhood; they determined the everyday culture of the area. The author unfortunately neglects the important role of women in this process.

One of the few studies of proletarian fathers has been written by Heidi Rosenbaum.\footnote{41} The author, already well known through previous studies on the nineteenth-century family, interviewed several families from Linden, a suburb of Hanover. According to Rosenbaum, fathers were more committed to their children than has been assumed in the literature up to now. This commitment, however, presupposed that mothers guaranteed the fundamental basis of the children's upbringing so that the fathers themselves could limit their contribution to supplying the "extras." Rosenbaum's study strengthens the recognition of the longue durée of social and cultural processes: The roots of the present type of "fatherly fathers" must evidently be traced back to previous decades.

While Rosenbaum focuses on proletarian fathers, Ute Daniel and Karen Hagemann's remarkable studies consider women's lives.\footnote{42} Daniel reconstructs the living and working conditions for women during World War I. Worsening conditions led to considerable tensions between state authorities and proletarian women who felt responsible for the sufficient nourishment of their families. The war conditions forced many women to break the law by entering the black market or by hoarding. Women had to think for themselves and to act more independently than before the war.

While Daniel analyzes proletarian women during the war, Hagemann considers social-democratic proletarian mothers in Hamburg during the 1920s.\footnote{43} This study, based on written sources as well as on oral history, strongly concretizes our knowledge of women's lives at that time. In spite of the many new experiences outside their homes during World War I, women's lives continued to be centered on their homes. That often meant a triple burden as housewives, mothers, and employees. Although these women were far from representing the model of the new woman (Neue Frau), the enticements of "modern times" expanded their desires and strengthened their ideas of a "good life." The women tried to make up for their marginality in the SPD by building up a social network of their own, in which co-ops (Konsumvereine) played an important role. Hagemann concentrates her study on women in social-democratic circles; there is still a lack of studies on other milieus, especially the Catholic proletarian one.\footnote{44}

While Hagemann works with both written and oral sources, Lutz Niethammer, Alexander von Plato, and Dorothee Wierling's work is based solely on interviews carried out in East Germany before 1989.\footnote{45} According
to the interviewers, people tended to identify themselves with their society because of their positively experienced everyday social cohesion, while policy and politics were seen as an unavoidable framework to which people had to adapt.46

Mass and popular culture, leisure time, living culture, and sport are topics that are becoming fashionable at present.47 During the last years of the GDR, Dietrich Mühlfeld’s research group from Humboldt University in East Berlin was committed to the reconstruction of the history of workers’ lifestyles.48 Mühlfeld’s group distanced itself from the Frankfurt School interpretation as well as from the idea of a socialist regulation of popular culture and interpreted historical mass phenomena of the twenties as cultural successors of the previous *Volkskultur*, as consequences of modernization, and as means of cultural individualization and democratization.49

Besides commercial mass culture, the topic “living culture,” particularly in the twenties, has been examined in recent years.50 The state-subsidized social flats of the twenties have come to be regarded as models for modern living: Healthy flats with a lot of light, well equipped, with an inside toilet, a kitchen, and bathroom of their own were constructed as the counterpart of the older type of proletarian flats, which were unhygienic and not self-contained. The new flats demanded “adequate” behavior: A socially disciplined attitude, more commitment to the (few) children’s upbringing, a modern austere “good taste” free of Wilhelminian ornamentation—even without pictures on the wall—rationalized and modernly equipped households, led by “professional” housewives. Although generally the workers’ strata could not directly profit from the subsidized housing program, as the rents were too high, they were prepared for such a lifestyle by architects, exhibitions, housing advisors, trade unions, and the media, all of which provided the workers with models. The goal of these was to show how people could break away from the old proletarian way of life, how attractive modern, non-class-oriented life could be, and what the corresponding demands and norms were.

In recent years there has been a discussion on the relevance of workers’ cultural efforts in the twenties. W. L. Guttsman stresses the unique achievements of the workers’ movement in expanding various cultural clubs at that time:

As far as the SPD was concerned we find that in the new political and social climate some of the energy which had previously been devoted to the fight for political and legal emancipation was now devoted to the expansion of workers’ cultural activities. These certainly came to the fullest expansion in these years.51

The issue of the workers’ cultural movement, however, is not concerned with this evaluation but rather with the question of its relevance for the entire working class in that period. While Peter Löschke and Franz Walter
tend to overestimate its relevance to the total workers’ strata and deny that the cultural clubs faced a permanent process of weakening. Hartmann Wunderer, Guttsman, James Wickham, and Dietrich Mühlberg confirm its qualitative relevance but limit its quantitative reach. In particular, commercial mass culture can be seen as a counterattraction to many workers, especially the female and young who were both only in part integrated in the workers’-movement clubs and preferred participating in commercial mass culture.

Two studies give an interesting view of workers’ daily cultural life in the fifties. The first, written by East German scholar Ines Merkel, was published soon after German unification. Merkel’s historiographical merit consists in her analysis of the two images of women which characterized the GDR of the fifties (and later). Tabloids, which serve as her sources, on the one hand show some features of women’s emancipation, especially in the field of professional life, but on the other hand, they helped maintain the traditional roles of women in the family and the home. Many pictures and their original captions, as well as popular articles written in the fifties, illustrate a special type of GDR petty embourgeoisement of workers, which is worth analyzing more intensively in its societal framework.

A counterpart of Merkel’s study is Kaspar Maase’s book on rock-and-roll culture and the proletarian Halbstarkenkultur in the Federal Republic of the late fifties and early sixties. Maase stresses the Americanization of a part of proletarian youth. His main thesis is that American popular culture broke up West German bourgeois culture, which was oriented to classic and traditional values of elitist education and displayed many petty bourgeois features in daily life. Instead, American popular culture gave German culture a good portion of vulgarization and informality, which, needless to say, did not occur in the GDR at that time.

While the nineteenth century was the focus of studies on working-class history for a long time, recently published accounts show an increasing interest in the history of workers in this century. Furthermore, during the last fifteen years the main accent of research has shifted from the workers’ movement and parties to the history of the workers themselves, focusing on work as well as on daily life. Studies of the workers’ cultural movement have aroused great interest. Studies on gender topics sadly are rare and, in general, are written by female historians, while most male historians still are not interested in the theoretically and methodologically new approaches the concepts of gender offer. If they write on female workers they do so in a methodologically conventional way, for example, by just adding a chapter on a female workers’ group to the research. This situation reflects the marginality of historical gender studies in German universities.

Studies of workers’ everyday life are enriching our recognition of working-class history. In such studies workers are considered as complete human beings. This means connecting daily life and politics and, moreover, no longer paying sole attention to the area of work but also including the
fields of housing, living, mass culture, symbols, language, housework, consumption, and leisure time. These topics will attract more historians in future.

The studies on the history of the SPD and the unions can be seen as a successful attempt to defend that history against the criticism of the party and the unions voiced by left-wing historians during the 1970s. Simultaneously, the grand old social-democratic movement is being confronted more than before with new historiographic challenges: Namely, the fact that various groups—women, foreigners, young people, the homeless, the unemployed—have not or have not sufficiently been included in the workers’ movement. It is a bitter truth that solidarity, the great slogan of the workers’ movement, has not included everyone.

Nevertheless, one of the presumably forthcoming issues will concern how far the SPD and the unions have to turn away from the core principles of their own history in order to succeed in the future “battles” for voters, who, in fact, have increasingly detached themselves from traditional social organizations and traditional workers’ culture and are tending to become swing voters (Wechselwähler) more than ever before. Is it possible that the SPD and the unions can modernize their organizations and productively take up the various sociopolitical challenges of our time without giving up—or, better, by expanding—some of the proven principles of their political, social, and cultural history?56

NOTES

The text presents only a selection of published studies and concentrates especially on new publications since 1990. In general, studies on East German workers are not included, because only a few have been published since unification (although many studies can be expected in the next few years). Inge Marßolek and Jutta Schwarzkopf have contributed to this article with suggestions and advice. For translation help I very cordially thank Gisela Johnson.


18. There is only one journal in Germany that regularly carries articles on the history of the workers’ movement, the *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz für die Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung,* published in Berlin. A new journal, *Werkstatt Geschichte,* published in Hamburg, is committed to everyday history, especially of common people (kleine Leute).


46. The theoretical and methodological fundament of everyday experience is discussed in the volume of articles edited by Alf Lüdtke, Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen (Frankfurt am Main, 1989).


48. The Mühlberg group did not survive the German unification.
49. See the periodical *Mitteilungen aus der kulturwissenschaftlichen Forschung* 15 (1992).
54. Ina Merkel, . . . und Du, *Frau an der Werkbank* (Berlin, 1990). The book is a mixture of distance toward capitalist society on the one hand, and of criticism as well as some empathy for the “lost” GDR on the other; it can be seen as a contemporary source of the “in-between feeling” during the period of unification.