

Abstracts

Jon Lawrence, Workers' testimony and the sociological reification of the manual / non-manual distinction in 1960s Britain

The discussion that follows uses interview transcripts from Goldthorpe and Lockwood's classic "Affluent Worker" study to explore a range of issues that can shed light on similarities and differences in the lives of white- and blue-collar workers in 1960s Britain. Although the original study stressed the fundamental differences in the life experiences of manual and non-manual (male) workers, it did concede that processes of "normative convergence" might be reducing those differences, especially outside work. Returning to workers' original testimony, and particularly to the under-used non-manual sample, allows us to explore the issue of "convergence" more fully than was attempted in the original study. Many non-manual workers possessed strong family and life-course connections to (manual) working-class life, indeed many saw themselves as working class. Most embraced a very similar understanding of class and class hierarchy to shop-floor workers, identifying themselves as part of a large mass of "ordinary workers" who constituted the great bulk of the population. Clerical workers in the lowest paid occupations were especially likely to see class in these terms. It is suggested that the tendency to highlight differences rather than similarities in class experience subsequently weakened the scope for a broad-based politics organized around "working-class" interests, especially given the sharp deindustrialization of the 1970s and 1980s.

Frido Wenten, Gewerkschaftsreformen in China – Segen oder Fluch? Kontroversen zu Tarifverhandlungen und „zellulärem“ Aktivismus

Revisiting institutional changes in South China after the strike wave of 2010, the author criticizes the advocacy of an emulation of “Western,” “representative” labor organizations in China. Having overemphasized the differences between the two cases, the debate has remained silent on the pitfalls of the “Western” model. Rather than contrasting sharply, “Western” unions and the reform-oriented *All-China Federation of Trade Unions* (ACFTU) share a productivist outlook: the idea that workers’ demands and agency must not endanger profitability. Similarly, union and collective bargaining reforms in South China have reproduced effects known from the West, namely constraints on workers’ agency through formal, professionalized bargaining procedures, and through boundary drawing between legal and illegal forms of action. In contrast, a dysfunctional ACFTU appears to have been an advantage for Chinese workers, who embraced a largely successful strategy of disruptions of the status quo. The author suggests to discard the idea of a “Western” union model in China and to engage in a more open debate on alternative routes for labor.

Ralf Hoffrogge, Der Sommer des Nationalbolschewismus? Die Stellung der KPD-Linken zu Ruhrkampf und ihre Kritik am „Schlageter-Kurs“ von 1923

The connection between Communism, Nationalism, and Anti-Semitism has been discussed widely, both in historical scholarship and political debate. In the German context, an episode in the Summer of 1923, where KPD politician Ruth Fisher discussed in a public event with fascist students and adopted to their language of

“Jewish Capital,” is often quoted as key-evidence that the German Communist Party (KPD) had nationalist leanings that did not exclude anti-Semitism. Fischer’s appearance was indeed part of the so-called “Schlageter Kurs,” designed by Comintern strategist Karl Radek to win over sympathizers of the nationalist right for the communist cause—or at least to “neutralize” the emerging fascist movement in Germany. While it is accepted in scholarship that this strategy was a short-lived episode and had been abandoned as early as September 1923, it is taken for granted that the whole KPD followed the “Schlageter-Kurs.” This essay for the first time reconstructs the oppositional voices, arguing that in 1923 the German Communist Party was deeply divided around the issue of nationalism. By presenting a short collective biography of the Berlin KPD leadership, it is also argued that this leadership constituted a network of workers and intellectuals in which many of the latter were from Jewish background.

Gerhard Hanloser, *Die Rote Fabne* und der Antisemitismus. Olaf Kistenmachers Präsentation tatsächlicher und vermeintlicher antijüdischer Aussagen in der KPD-Tageszeitung

The text criticizes the dissertation by the historian Olaf Kistenmacher (Hamburg) which analyzes anti-Semitic notions in the German Communist Party’s (KPD) organ *Rote Fabne* (Red Flag). The reviewer agrees with Kistenmacher that the KPD used anti-Semitic slogans and thought patterns, especially for purposes of agitation. Due to methodological premises, however, the intention of such notions is not illuminated; instead, attempts by the KPD to counteract anti-Semitism by means of propagandistic simplifications of the class relation, which are easy to decipher, are themselves described as anti-Semitic. Kistenmacher thus exaggerates the KPD’s anti-Semitism and furthermore unconvincingly presents it

as a source of the post-68 New Left's anti-Zionism which he again simply portrays as anti-Semitism. In this manner, the book displays numerous commonplaces of the so-called anti-German milieu which drastically overstates the problem of anti-Semitism within the (German) left.

Gruppe Blauer Montag, „Flüchtlingskrise“ und autoritäre Integration. Zu einigen Aspekten der Reorganisation staatlicher Kontrollpolitiken

This article discusses the turbulences created by the so-called “refugee crisis” in Hamburg, Germany. It contains an analysis of strategies of the local state to immediately handle the “crisis” in terms of accommodation and other basic forms of support. It furthermore assesses the local consequences of a combination of anti-refugee laws and integration politics, which was developed by central government to tackle the crisis. Finally, the text proposes perspectives for political interventions into the local situation, with the aim to combine protests against racist politics with class struggle in general.

Basidemokratische Linke Göttingen, Arbeit um jeden Preis. Das „Integrationsgesetz“ soll Kontrolle und Verwertbarkeit migrantischer Arbeitskraft verbessern

In July 2016 the German parliament passed a so-called integration law (*Integrationsgesetz*). Although barely contested by social movements, this law is so far the climax of efforts to incorporate a selected part of the refugees into the labor market. While some changes might seem positive at first glance, a closer look reveals that social and political rights are only granted to those that are willing and able to be exploited in waged labor. As a consequence,

the *Integrationsgesetz* follows a workfare paradigm, and radicalizes the forms of regulation by repression developed by the so-called red-green government in the first half of the 2000s. Its most important feature is the linkage between the willingness to accept bad working conditions and the permission to stay. As the text shows, the opening of the labor market and the persistence of a very restrictive border regime do not constitute a contradiction. Nevertheless, the attempts to mobilize refugees as part of the workforce are also the approval of the collapse of older strategies to keep them out of the country.

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Blauer Montag, Hamburg, exists since 1990. Activism and analysis of labor unrest, social politics, and migration.

Basisdemokratische Linke, a radical left group, Göttingen, promotes and organizes social struggles, among others, on housing and migration: [<https://www.inventati.org/blgoe/>].