

# Confrontation, Class Consciousness, and the Labor Process

STUDIES IN  
PROLETARIAN CLASS FORMATION

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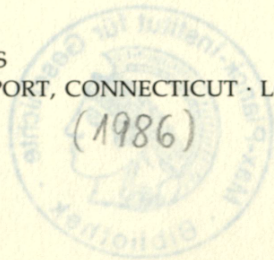
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## 4

# Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay: *Eigensinn* and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900

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**Alf Luedtke**

The analysis of everyday life signifies the efforts to explore and to reconstruct the daily processes of production, reproduction, and transformation of social relations. My emphasis is on the mode of life, that is to say, those social practices by which modes of production become daily reality. The approach owes much to E.P. Thompson's classic, *The Making of the English Working Class*, in which the focus is on "class as a relationship, not as a thing."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, subsequent research inspired by this book has left important questions unanswered. First, does this kind of history represent anything more than a revival of simple historicism—now labeled reconstruction of experience? What, after all, dignifies those very moments of experience<sup>2</sup> that foster objections against demands from authority or stimulate the struggle for transforming class and power relations? The second question is whether the analysis of daily life necessarily excludes politics? This, however, may be turned around: what, after all, are politics in the context of actual daily practices?<sup>3</sup>

To pose the issue in this way is to question the conventional bipolar model that situates politics in what Thompson calls the field-of-force of domination. It seems to me that, even when it is focused on experiences, this model of politics fails to transcend the conventional historian's perspective, which is, after all, the perspective of the victor. Clearly, the new attention to popular movements and their socio-cultural practices overcomes traditional boundaries. These studies attempt to explore the realms of what appears to be peculiar and sometimes bizarre utterances, or in other cases the silent behaviour of those who have become objects of the research. Ironically enough, however, simultaneous hindsight is applied,

at least when what are termed the political qualities are to be considered (in Thompson's case, for example).<sup>4</sup>

The point is not that contexts are to be depicted, that the interrelationships and ambiguities of pre-existing as well as of newly constituted social practices should be explained and understood. Instead, the enterprise goes wrong in its implicit assumption that the investigator and his objects are meeting on equal terms, as if the logic of the subject under study would be derived from a universal and ahistorical political rationality. The impact of the investigator's interests, of his codes of perception and interpretation, is not considered. Above all, there is neglect of the structure of the very scenario, which is nothing but an imposition by the active researcher trying to interrogate passive objects. Even more favored are the results, as we latecomers assess them. Either acceptance of domination or resistance to it is stressed instead of the potentialities which were at stake in a given situation.

I would like to start with this very last point, that is to say, try to use our limited sources for a more participatory observation. But, to be sure, going near and looking closely, even if possible, is no definite solution: it does not make those under study, in this case factory workers in the late nineteenth century, familiar to us.<sup>5</sup> But I hope to show in this paper that the reconstruction of work processes and of cash-earnings, of legal and illegal breaks, of articulation of needs, anxieties, and longings in physically violent horseplay should enable a specific understanding of particular workers' lives and politics. Notions and characteristics of the context can be derived from contemporary reports given by outsiders, or perhaps even by participant observers, as well as from memoirs of those involved, but also from evidence which was produced (almost) without any intention of fostering good (or bad) remembrance, such as wage-lists or factory regulations. In the latter case more than economic reconnaissance is possible. Irregularities of the work process, as far as they become visible in machine accounts or wage-lists, may be analyzed as specific methods of reappropriation or self-will of those on the scene.

Thus, abstract labels come into question. One understands that industrial work is more than "real subsumption of labor under capital," that it is not understood by referring to seemingly mechanical work and time discipline. Therefore, certainly analytical as well as interpretive understanding is useful—after all, it will be the chief viable path for historical reconstruction. But we have to be aware that these efforts to open any possible window on the reasons and motives of those involved still constitute the interrogation of objects. Even decoding does not span the gulf between us. Instead, the use of our limited sources for a second look, for the historian's participatory observation, perhaps enables us to accept that the others may seem even more like strangers when we try to understand them.

## MACHINE CONSTRUCTION CIRCA 1900

The place is a machine construction factory in Chemnitz-Saxony, the year is 1890. One department of this factory manufactures machine tools, the other builds spinning machines. After having overcome the slump of 1886–87, the economic cycle is still on the upward swing, and both departments are busy filling their orders.

Paul Göhre was a young Protestant minister who lived and labored for six weeks with the workers of the machine tool department. Apparently he revealed casually, or at least did not consciously disguise his profession. He stayed as a “participant observer” with the roughly 120 smiths, drillers, filers, and especially turners, who worked together in one workshop. Their work day began at 6:00 AM and ended 12 hours later; almost 11 of these hours were scheduled as actual work time.<sup>6</sup> Within this twelve hour period *one* twenty-minute coffee break and a one-hour lunch break were allowed.

One year later, Göhre published a book containing his observations and impressions, and summed up his carefully detailed account of the work day as follows:

It is no trifle to stay for eleven hours together with 120 men in one hot room which is filled with oily, greasy fumes, the workers' exhalation, and with coal and metal dust. Factory work is exhausting not primarily because of the heavy work-load and the toilsome motions of arms and hands which are required; more important is this living together, breathing together, sweating together of so many people, the permanent squeaking and droning noise, the continuous standing hour after hour almost on the same spot.<sup>7</sup>

Certainly this is a very different picture than the one given by photographs taken in the factories of the time, which show almost nothing of those daily experiences Göhre described. Instead, factory photographs are staged, reflecting the photographer's image of what factory work should look like—the activity of attentive, concentrated, and clean workers in a well organized workshop, no breaks or interruptions, and no exhaustion at all. But even if one relies on reports of the kind Göhre offered, one still must, of course, deduce the strange and mixed feelings that presumably disturbed this young theologian who, after all, not only was a newcomer to the shop, but also an invader coming from the higher-level world of academia and, even worse (concerning the anticipated feelings of his temporary workmates) from the pulpit. Not less important, one has to consider that Göhre voluntarily exposed himself to the demands and the toil of factory work, while most of his mates had no choice. In order to sustain themselves and their families, industrialized wage work was a sheer necessity of their daily life. To be sure, those

divergent class positions and experiences would structure the perceptions of the familiar and the alien in the factories. What Göhre assessed as utterly depressing or coarse might be part of the workers' most common daily routines; workers would neither worry about them nor mention them at all.

Göhre's recollections, however, are very illuminating, for in order to accomplish his self-imposed mission to not confront workers' "atheism" but to raise their interest in religion, he chose not to rush in as a "visitor," but to undertake an ethnographic journey into the unknown territory, as it were, of the factories. The detailed descriptions of earnings, diets, behaviour, recruitment, and especially the work process itself, give abundant proof of this.

Göhre was hired as a handyman with the drillers and, particularly, the turners. They operated lathes and machines that were driven by steam-engines via transmission belts and clutches. In terms of workers' control, their work process differed from that of other groups within the shop.<sup>8</sup> The casters, moulders, and smiths prepared and produced the basic parts and operated tools as well as the finished pieces almost completely by hand. They thereby translated a given construction scheme according to their immediate, but experienced, assessment of the work process into the guiding of helpers and the handling of both tools and finished pieces. The same applied to the fitters and mechanics, who assembled the manufactured parts and finished the products. The drillers' task was the opposite. They usually worked according to a routinized, repetitious job, and had almost no opportunity to operate the tools themselves or to guide the final piece independently, according to their assessment of how best to perform any given task.

The turners, however, had to perform a kind of semi-manual labor. Their task was to give each piece its precise shape; therefore, they had to cut notches and to turn threads or screw-joints. To be sure, they did not operate their tools directly by hand, but, similar to the almost artisan-like work of the moulders or fitters, they prepared and adjusted the machine, and during the turning of the piece which was to be worked, they intervened, sometimes by hand, especially to file the piece to its final polish. The preparation of the lathe was relatively time-consuming. In order to achieve the optimal speed during the turning process, the gears had to be adjusted and calculated (using fractional arithmetic) and each time composed anew. The slug then had to be centered; sometimes it became necessary to put it onto the lathe and trim some splinters by hand-filing. After having started the lathe (or more precisely, after connecting it to the transmission-shaft of the workshop), the turner had to switch to a mostly passive watchfulness, simultaneously having an eye on the transmission belt and the clutch, the speed of the lathe, and the

part of the lathe that carried the cutting or turning tool. The turners had to employ and develop skills involving manual dexterity, knowledge of the good and bad points of the worked metals, experience with the speeds and gears of the transmission belts, and of "their," that is, the factory's lathe or even two or three lathes that they had to operate. Sometimes they had to be able to read a blueprint and to translate its figures and symbols into the mechanics of the lathe. Clearly, their task was multifaceted, requiring not only experience but a kind of continuous activity (or, at least attentiveness). Of course, these skills and qualifications mostly were acquired on the job—contrary to some of the other groups in the workshop, particularly the smiths (most of them had served the legally recognized three years of apprenticeship). As for the turners, former wood-turners were often recruited. Such was the case of Moritz Theodor Wilhelm Bromme, for example, whose autobiography parallels Göhre's report of the shop floor, but gives a true participant's account of what it was like to work as a turner.<sup>9</sup> Bromme worked from 1898 until the early part of the twentieth century in a machine construction factory in Gera, about 100 kilometers west of Chemnitz.

Turners perceived themselves to be *the* crucial group within the workforce able to carry out the supervisor's admonition "to be productive."<sup>10</sup> This overwhelming acceptance of the productivity goal of the factory system and of those who mainly profited from its operation was not achieved simply by physical enforcement or by some simple manipulation of these workers. There are two additional factors one must consider. First, one must analyze the control of the work process (or lack of it) and the related self-esteem. Second, it is necessary to consider whether this self-perception might rely on a material equivalent and expression.

From the very beginning of machine production in the 1830s in Germany,<sup>11</sup> and until at least 1910–14, the turners ranked among the best paid machine construction workers in the country.<sup>12</sup> They, together with the miners, were at the top of the wage scale in the late 1870s, and ranked with the iron and steel workers after 1908. The figures Göhre gave as weekly earnings, from 1890, show turners earning 20 to 30 Deutschmarks weekly *if* they were mostly or completely paid in piece rates.<sup>13</sup> (We will see later that the assumption that piece-work was the common wage and payment system after the 1870s is faulty.) It should be noted that wage rates did not strictly favor the craftsmen-like workers against the unskilled ones. Instead, Göhre points out that the smiths or mechanics, most of them being formally trained, got 15 to 20 Deutschmarks per week, while fitters, who likewise were formally trained, got 22 to 28—these being paid time wages. Simultaneously, workers who were trained on the job got remarkably higher wages, like drillers (30 Deutschmarks) or planers and turners (between 20 and 30)—all of these

being paid piece rates. Handymen and day laborers, like Göhre himself, were of course at the bottom of the scale. However, they could come close to the smiths or mechanics, earning up to 15 Deutschmarks.

Concerning the degree of control they had in the work process, the self-esteem and the status given them by the fellow workers, as well as in wage rates, the turners were typical of the top layers of machine construction workers. They belonged to the minority of factory workers who were relatively "well off," materially *and* symbolically. At least in these terms they were members of Hobsbawm's labor aristocrats.<sup>14</sup>

While these characteristics are more or less common for almost all machine construction workers, the status of the turners also depended on a peculiarity of their work process. In their branch, they were the only ones who operated machines and still performed a relatively individualized (or at least self-controlled) labor. The organization of their work at the same time stimulated and enforced competition with fellow turners at surrounding lathes, and also made possible the confirmation of one's calculative abilities and manual dexterity. In contrast to "traditional" artisanal workers such as smiths or moulders, the turners could demonstrate to themselves and to others their skill and experience even while controlling "modern" machinery.

What I have done so far is to give a relatively static view of what it would have been like to work as a turner or, more generally, as a machine construction worker in a late nineteenth-century factory. To expand the scope I will add some aspects of the life cycle, at this point avoiding, however, the complex intertwinings of work and non-work, of the productive and reproductive spheres. In other words, the life-course of males and females, the problem of domestic settings, of family structures and relationships are only mentioned here, but not elaborated.

Those machine construction workers who had been born after about 1855 might well have experienced a relative security of employment in this "leading sector" of the industrial economy. They could have experienced an increase in real wages, which would have been quite unexpected, including a precipitous jump of more than 25 percent between 1872 and 1874, followed by a stagnation that lasted until the mid-1880s and a moderate increase after that (this being the general trend for the Reich).<sup>15</sup> This increase in money earnings was accompanied only by a comparatively slight increase in the cost of living, at least until about 1900. In general these trends may not have caused, but surely allowed for a considerable degree of movement among employers.

Hermann Enters, not a turner but a journeyman mechanic who served a regular apprenticeship in the region's domestic metalwork industry in the Wupper Valley, discussed in his memoirs frequent changes of workplaces during the boom phase of the early 1870s, when he was in his early twenties and unmarried.<sup>16</sup> He worked at the famous Krupp works,

as well as at smaller factories in Barmen, looking for a combination of high wages and satisfying work. With Krupp, he got piece-work, but had to do only a very limited number of tasks connected with the turning of gun barrels, and had been rigidly controlled. In Barmen he got a time wage, a lower amount of cash, but he could work completely independently as a repair mechanic. He switched back and forth twice, finding no solution to his dilemma.

To be sure, in some parts of the machine construction sector, workers also could have experienced devaluation of skills at the same time that they experienced control over the work process. At least in the relatively standardized production of bicycles and sewing-machines, the range of different tasks was limited, offering no prospects for further training on the job. This may have been the reason for the comparatively high turnover rate in these factories.<sup>17</sup> From the mid-1880s on, more than 70 percent—in 1890 even 86.3 percent—of the workers of the sewing-machine factory of Thomas Calsow in Bielefeld/Westphalia left within the first 12 months after entrance, including almost all of those under age 25.

But even more important than the mobility of workers who stayed (or tried to stay) in the same line of work is the fact that not all of the machine construction workers or turners had or looked for a permanent career in those occupations. Bromme, who had had half a dozen jobs before he got on-the-job training as a wood-turner, perhaps is not typical; but at least his case indicates that different patterns might have existed, and that even a relative permanence of occupation was not a general feature with the workers in this sector. In contrast, for example, records from the mechanical workshops of the Gutehoffnungshütte, GHH, Oberhausen Rhineland, show that in the early 1870s more than 30 percent of their workforce consisted of fathers and sons, uncles and nephews.<sup>18</sup> In any case, the assumption of any typical life-course and accompanying experiences or of a lifelong or even inherited career as a skilled machine construction worker, seems to be dubious.

## UNCERTAINTIES OF THE WORK EXPERIENCE

The long-term figures, as well as the more qualitative accounts of machine construction workers, especially of the turners, stress the relative *homogeneity* of the group's experience and of their daily practices. They also assume a basically *steady* development geared towards a better standard of living, more generally toward socio-economic improvement in terms of a more respectable daily reproduction. And equally, the notion of labor aristocracy, already mentioned—although reluctantly even if it is used analytically—seems to be fostered by this implicit meaning.

It is important, if perhaps only secondarily so, that machine construc-

tion workers were not simply conservative reformists. It is true that they, or their trade union representatives, did not strive for big strikes and did not participate very actively in the pre-war *Massenstreik* debate by the organized labor movement, but they never became "traitors" to the workers' struggles before 1914 or to the mass movements that became visible in the strikes of 1917 (and more so in the subsequent two years). Instead the turners, at least in Berlin, triggered off-shop-floor activity that combined their immediate interest in high wages and improved working conditions with their disapproval of the government's war policies since the very first days of World War I.<sup>19</sup> What is important in this circumstance is that the accounts of their resistance against both labor leaders and the state still suggests the picture of a homogeneous group, perceiving and acting according to a *consistent* set of standards and preferences. These were the men who one of their most active fellow workers and comrades, Richar Müller, characterized in 1924 as stressing "cool and matter-of-fact calculations of success and failure," bound for systematically organized political movements.<sup>20</sup>

All of these divergent, partly contradictory assessments of the political attitudes and actions of machine construction workers, and especially of turners, insist to a significant degree on their *consistency* and *homogeneity*. This implication is as strong as to seem to be unquestioned. Accordingly, occupational structures, qualification levels, or migration rates—in other words, formal characteristics—are accentuated, and the different groups that might be examined on this level are taken as entities. We never are able to unfold multifaceted, even contradictory, experiences and practices. We should take a second look.

Let us still consider the turners. Contemporary observations such as Göhre's, and more recent writings as well, somehow assume implicitly or explicitly that since the early 1870s the work and wage systems generally were based on piece-work. But some brief remarks in Bromme's memoirs may raise some doubts. He recalls shifting several times between piece- and time-work.<sup>21</sup> Bromme concedes that he preferred piece-work and requested this type of work from the master; instead of coming home with 13 to 15 Deutschmarks on Saturday night, he could expect 20 or more Marks each week. Of course, it is obvious that Bromme was harnessed by a "cash nexus," by the daily necessity of assuring his and his family's survival. By "speeding up" at the lathe he matched the capitalists' (as well as their middle-men's) interests. More important, here is the *simultaneity* of both systems of work payment. According to Bromme's report, the proportions of which products were paid according to which system could be switched back and forth based on the calculations of the managers and masters.

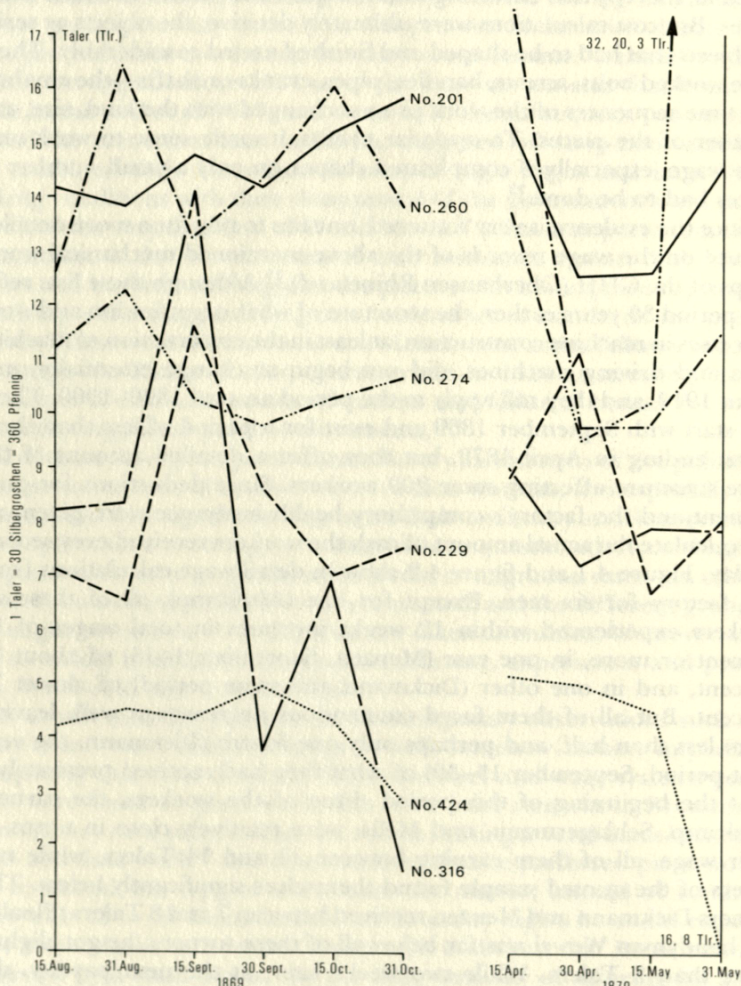
At least in part, their calculations were determined by disciplinary

reason—to punish or, as in the case of Bromme, to stimulate individual workers, thereby also enforcing internal splits and fissions between workmates. But cost calculations were ultimately decisive; the objects or series of objects that had to be shaped and finished varied considerably. There were worked bolts, screws, handles, pipes, cranks or shafts—the rhythms and time sequences of the work process changed with the kind, size, and number of the pieces. To optimize profits, it made sense to work on a time wage, especially if complicated shapes on only a small number of pieces had to be done.<sup>22</sup>

Since the evidence is very scattered, one has to rely for a more detailed picture on the wage records of the above-mentioned mechanical workshops of the GHH (Oberhausen Rhineland).<sup>23</sup> Although these lists refer to a period 30 years earlier, the structure of work organization and work processes in machine construction, at least in the construction of machine tools and driving machines, did not begin to change essentially until about 1910, and they still apply to the period around 1890–1900. These lists start with September 1869 and exist for a period of less than three years, ending in April 1872, but they offer a detailed account of the wage structure affecting some 200 workers. Since deductions for punishment and the factory's compulsory health insurance were given, we can calculate the actual amount of cash the workers received every second Friday. Figure 4.1 and figure 4.2 show in detail wage calculations from this factory for six men. Except for one (Altekamp), all of these six workers experienced within 12 weeks increases in total wages of 50 percent or more, in one case (Menzen, September 1–15) of about 80 percent, and in one other (Dickmann, the same period) of almost 70 percent. But all of them faced tremendous decreases as well, leaving them less than half, and perhaps only one-fourth (Dickmann, the very next period, September 15–30) of what they had received previously.

At the beginning of this period three of the workers, the turners Altekamp, Schlagermann, and Melis, were relatively close in terms of their wage, all of them earning between 11 and 14 Talers, while two others of the quoted sample found themselves significantly below. The turners Dickmann and Menzen received between 7 and 8 Talers. Finally, the handyman Wewel was far below all of these turners; he got slightly more than 3 Talers. While two weeks later, at the next payday, the discrepancies had increased, after another two weeks (September 15) just the reverse could be observed. In the middle of September the wages of all five turners can almost be depicted as a cluster, the distances having become relatively narrow, not more than about one Taler between each of them. Again, only one pay day later the picture had changed completely. The wages of one of the turners (Dickmann) had dropped to less than a quarter of what he had earned two weeks before. Simulta-

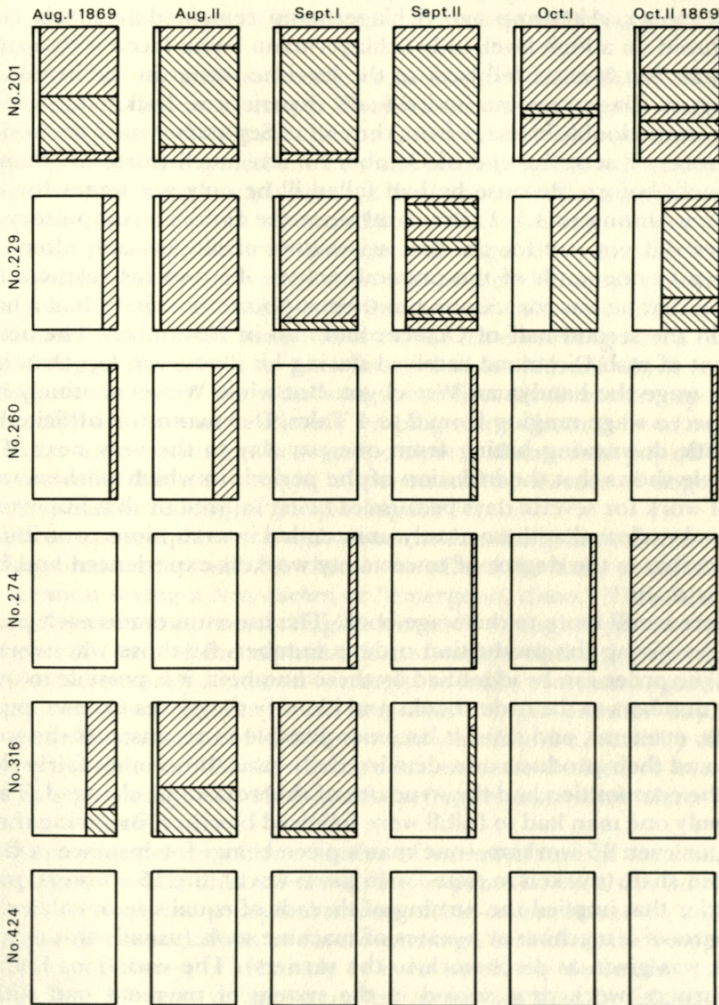
Figure 4.1 Variation of Wages



Random sample of the wage list  
(in total including between 218 and 234 names)

No. of the list	name	job
201	Altekamp	turner
229	Menzen	turner
260	Schlagermann	turner
274	Melis	turner
316	Dickmann	turner
424	Wewel	handy-man

Figure 4.2 Piece- and Time-Wages: Simultaneity and Proportions



The blank spaces represent the proportion of wage which was earned on an hourly basis (*time-wage*) the cross-hatched spaces represent the proportion which was earned on a *piece-wage* basis. The sub-segments of the piece-wage spaces stand for the different 'piece-numbers' worked by each worker; their size indicates the relative amount which they contributed to the piece-wage of the worker.

neously, Altekamp and Schlagermann, on the one hand, and Melis and Menzen on the other, found themselves almost on the same respective levels but the distance between the pairs now was more than 5 Talers.

In October, Altekamp and Schlagermann remained relatively close and stayed on a high level, only Schlagermann being faced with a small decrease. But Menzel fell back to the level he was at in the beginning of August. To pursue one individual's experiences, Dickmann for example could double his wage from the end of September until the middle of October. But at the end of October he was much worse off than in the weeks before. Because he had fallen ill he only got wages for two days, amounting to 1.2 Talers. And since the factory's compulsory insurance did not pay for the first seven days of illness—and after that only up to one-tenth of the previous wages—he and his relatives (assuming that he was contributing to their support) must have had a hard time in the second half of October and also in November. The actual amount of cash Dickmann received during his illness was less than half of the wage the handyman Wewel got. But while Wewel routinely had to expect a wage ranging from 2 to 4 Tales, Dickmann was afflicted by a drastic downswing hitting from one pay day to the very next. This example shows that the inclusion of the periods in which workers were out of work for several days because of being injured or ill is important, and makes clear that these mostly unintended interruptions contributed remarkably to the degree of uncertainty workers experienced and had to bear daily.

There is still more to this wage book. The list enumerates each piece-work by giving the production order's number. As those who worked to fill the order can be identified by these numbers, it is possible to trace these numbers to the order books and identify the pieces (screws, pipes, cranks, etcetera), and thus, it becomes possible to reconstruct the work units and their products on a detailed daily basis. It becomes fairly clear that the composition and the structure of the work units changed. Tasks that only one man had to fulfill were followed by others involving three, nine, or even 15 workers—one man's piece being, for instance, a complicated shaft (worked in time- or in piece-work), the 15 workers' piece an order that implied the turning of threads of equal size or caliber for the parts of a machine or a series of machine tools (usually this type of order was given as piece-work to the turners). The variations both in the turners' work process and in the system of payment had further implications. The often incalculable shifts affected daily relationships with workmates, as well as the actual amount of cash that was to be expected on pay day.

A preliminary conclusion from this attempt to read wage lists should emphasize the variations not only of tasks but also among the forms and degree of cooperation with fellow workers. Yet it was not only the pieces

that had to be worked and the work units themselves varied.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously two different wage forms were used and, most important, the actual amount of cash one could expect displayed extreme differences and quick changes, partly due to the permanent and ubiquitous danger of injuries.

These daily or at least weekly variations strongly influenced the experiences of those concerned. They interfered with and even contradicted the imposed demands of the factories' time and work discipline. The variations also generated a certain sense of isolation, even between those working next to each other at the lathe or drilling machine. Since the actual wage was not made public by the superiors—at pay day the workers gathered, but everyone got his wage in a covered box—the knowledge of those individual variations required discussion, which was not possible without mutual trust. But this mutuality was simultaneously undermined. For speaking frankly to the mate working next to oneself could trigger his efforts to get a better deal for himself which could be to the detriment of the man who spoke first (as Bromme reports repeatedly). In the end, cautiously keeping some distance from one's co-workers and hesitating to become too close to them could pay off better. Even a collective action might be penetrated by a sense of ongoing intimate hostility among all the participants.

These ups and downs in cash amounts drastically limited one's ability to buy bread, beer, milk, or cheese—to afford the daily necessities, not to mention saving a *Notgroschen* or "emergency dime." Thus, the "cash nexus" remained extremely fragile. Ironically enough, a process that was supposedly part of the capitalization of social relationships in general was in fact severely hindered—namely, to make everyone a participant in the consumer market in the long run. Or, put another way, these incalculable variations of cash flow could stimulate the creativity of those concerned. How could they make their own the desired or even desperately needed goods? How could they appropriate their share by the means available to them?

These experiences of unevenness of variation and of incalculability must have directly affected the ability to plan for even the immediate future. Perhaps our analytical notion of life-course has to be adjusted. Perhaps the expectations of future earnings, including the recognition of old-age poverty, of relatively or even absolutely decreasing cash income after 45 years of age, were less important than people today assume. If this were so, it might have been because the middle-aged and older workers experienced relatively higher cash earnings in the 1890s and after 1900 than they could have expected on the basis of prior extrapolations from the earnings their fathers, uncles, or other "older workers" had received during their working lives. This experience on the job and that in the consumer market may be seen to have shaped

the workers' families' *perception of time*, a conceptualization that imposed on them a special mode of understanding throughout their lives.

### THE CONCEPT OF *EIGENSINN*

Uncertainties, inconsistencies, and discontinuities in the tasks and wages moulded workers' experience in general, and those of machine-construction workers and turners specifically. While it is important to stress this in criticizing straightforward notions of "unilinear" experiences and attitudes of workers, still it does not give a complete picture. As mentioned above, workers not only operated their tools and machines, not only cooperated sometimes in different ways, but also lived together for many hours. These aspects of cohabitation, of cooperating with and having physical contact with each other, were a reaction in certain ways to these uncertainties.

Let us begin again with a quotation from the "participant observer" Göhre: "The cooperation at work led to continuous and frequent contact and immediate exchange. These were especially lively between workers of the same age, between immediate colleagues and people of the same work-group, and under the same foreman. Almost unintentionally these contacts became close and intimate. Every occasion to chat or engage in conversation was used."<sup>25</sup> Göhre recalled that the topics included news of new workmates and events within the factory, on other floors or in other shops, plans for the coming weekend and, most important, the well-being of their children. From time to time, as Göhre put it, "serious" issues also were raised, including "religious, economic, [and] political topics as well as matters of education."

It seems, however, that the non-verbal exchanges and physical contacts were most important. Göhre noted:

More than anything else these people teased one another, scuffled and tussled—indulged in horseplay, where and whenever it seemed possible. People looked for friends, and acquaintances; clay was thrown at someone who passed by, the slip-knot of his apron was untied from behind, the plank of a seat was pulled away while a fellow-worker took a break, someone's way was blocked unexpectedly or they "pulled someone's leg." But, to be sure, especially favored among older workers at the end of the week was another form of horse-play: "beard-polish." Shaving was a once-a-week affair, a common practice among workers, and was performed usually Saturday night or Sunday morning. By the end of the week, the worker whose beard had grown in would grab the head of a chap with more tender cheeks, lips, and chin, and would rub his face against the youth's face, a process which of course had a quite painful result. Before the victim realized just what had happened to him, the wrong-doer had already disappeared. Even less pleasant was another practical joke, which I—fortunately enough—had to experience only once. A worker is leaning against a post, taking

a break, for no particular reason two of his co-workers recognize him, a look of understanding passes between them—and one of them approaches the leaning one from behind, claps him tight with his arms while the other takes the face of the immobilized victim in his black, dirty hands and slowly pulls his moustache to either side, pressing his thumbs against the face of the harassed workmate. This joke is, as I can testify, very painful. . . . Among those who knew one [an]other nobody was excepted. Even age made no difference.<sup>26</sup>

This gives a very vivid account of intense and continual non-verbal social exchange between those who worked and at least partly lived together.

These brief interludes of interaction were carried out especially by means of body contact, including physical violence. The struggle for control of one's own body, which was simultaneously the demonstration of manual dexterity and physical skill as well as the cultivation and preservation of social relationships, required obvious physical force, at least between males in this period of industrial capitalism in the late nineteenth century. Of course, in these interactions the participants also expressed and reaffirmed the social hierarchy and displayed "typical" male behavior.<sup>27</sup> Basically at stake, however, was reciprocal appreciation, recognition, and encouragement—next time the victim was likely to be one of the other "players." Everybody on the shop floor knew that the victimization was general and not individual. Simultaneously these interactions can be read as reconfirmation of experiences that all participants shared—being bound tight, fixed on the spot, being marked and made dirty—in other words, being exposed to external manipulations whose authors, at least temporarily, were beyond control of the victims. Therefore, violent physicality in this context might have been one moment of the endeavour "to-be-let-alone" and "to-be-with-oneself-and-the-others." To put it differently, these interactions and expressions were not meant primarily as direct resistance to demands "from above"; instead, they expressed a space of their own—*Eigensinn*<sup>28</sup> (self-will or self-reliance).

However, this form of social intercourse did not occur in the officially conceded breaks. Rather, the workers expropriated bits of the time formally designated as working time. They made it their own by frequently neglecting or breaking the imposed time schedule. Their chatting with each other, their walking around and, not the least, their repeated horseplay—these were illegal breaks.

In contrast, the legal breaks were used intensively for physical replenishment.<sup>29</sup> During breakfast and lunch breaks Göhre observed a certain wordless camaraderie. The rustling of a newspaper page being turned, or the passing on of a newspaper section complemented the sounds of eating. The workers, as Göhre reports, sat "relaxed and silent beside one another."<sup>30</sup> These breaks very literally consisted of repro-

ductive activity, the laborious replenishment of one's own strength for the following hours at the workbench, at the drilling and milling machines, and at the lathes. More theoretically, these breaks were *reproductive* work; they fit the demands of the factory system. Breakfast and lunch breaks were scheduled as well as used for physical recuperation; they were directly tied to the needs of survival. Of course, they also contained short moments of being together.

Illegal breaks were different. Here workers broke with the demands and constraints of the factory system as well as with the toil of labor and reproduction. Their activities were not at all generally influenced by any intention of being resistant; nevertheless, their breaking with time schedules or disciplinary regulations partly affected the factories' work process or order. Certainly, resistance was at stake with the silent reappropriation of some minutes by starting late in the morning, by cleaning the machines while they were still running, washing themselves, and leaving the workplace a little earlier than was allowed by the factory regulations. Quiet and primarily individualistic withdrawal, and also literal disappearance happened even more frequently. Workers took a nap before they got a new order or a missing part, or even more frequently one or another disappeared to use—without any hurry—the lavatory. These reappropriations and withdrawals interfered, of course, with the owners' and supervisors' efforts to devote the entire operational time to the production of commodities, not to waste a second. The ever-more detailed new editions of the factory regulations mirror how far the workers' silent transgressions were perceived as resistance.

*Eigensinn* was something else again. *Eigensinn* was expressed and reaffirmed by walking around and talking, by momentarily slipping away or day-dreaming, but primarily by reciprocal body contact and horseplay—in short it was “being-with-oneself” and “being-with-the-others.” Thereby workers neglected, but mostly did not directly interfere with the ongoing work process or with the factory's regularity as it was conceived by management.

Illegal breaks, to be sure, were multifaceted and ambivalent situations. Resistance could be and was practiced then, sometimes even displayed. But simultaneously, and even more intensely, these were moments of actively taking distance not only from capital's domination at the workplace, but also from fighting or resisting the restrictions of one's own needs and interests—immediate joyful “depense”<sup>31</sup> (expenditure of time on the spot) without any calculation of effects or outcomes. The workers then were with themselves by actively neglecting the consequences of their social intercourse, at least for some minutes, or perhaps only seconds.

They interacted on their own terms, albeit temporarily. Although body contact seems to be the most common language of this social intercourse, *Eigensinn* also was expressed verbally, sometimes even conspicuously, in

speech. The workmates who time and again tried “to-be-with-themselves” called each other by their first names and addressed each other by the familiar, almost familial, “du.” By so doing they signaled mutual respect and, even more, brotherhood. Also articulated was the distinctiveness of one’s own peer group and the otherness of the rest demarcated; all of “them” were addressed by the distant, formal “Sie.”<sup>32</sup> While other workers with whom one did not have permanent or frequent contact mostly did not seem to care, or were used to it and practiced the same thing, the masters and supervisors (but not the foremen) demanded the more formal usage. They heard an appropriate submissiveness and distance; for the workers, the familiar hierarchy of school, church, and military service<sup>33</sup> was invoked.

*Eigensinn* happened in isolated, though in constantly repeated, reappropriated moments, in which the workers created, articulated, expressed, and fulfilled needs. In the factory, these needs were blocked or suppressed by the disciplining regularities of work orders, factory regulations and organization, by the constant danger of being under the surveillance<sup>34</sup> of supervisors, masters, and foremen and, above all, being encircled by a tall concrete factory wall. The meaning and the function of the moments of *Eigensinn* were at least twofold—workers could be alone as well as with the others. By interacting on their own terms they could keep at a distance the constraints of the factory as well as those of the struggle for survival. Simultaneously, capabilities for individual or collective action on the shop floor could be developed. This was the case when masters or foremen put forth the usage of “du,” offending the workers especially by the implied connotation of the father-child relationship (children were generally addressed as “du”).<sup>35</sup> Workers answered or shouted back “du” instead of the expected “sie” or sometimes did not hear at all. This was also the case when workers, who usually seemed to be acting separately and fought on an individualistic basis, quickly found a collective basis, when they forced management to allow cleaning of the lathes during the work time, as occurred in Bromme’s factory.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the boundaries between *Eigensinn* and calculated resistance remained blurred and fluid. *Eigensinn* was different from pursuing one’s interests; it was not identical to strategically optimizing the effectiveness of behaviour. In order to keep or even to improve one’s wage it might have been wise to act collectively—for example, to combine demonstrative obedience and silent sabotage at the workplace or to go on strike. Instead, *Eigensinn* practices circumvented, even neglected, any calculation of risk-taking. *Eigensinn* could be part of those collective efforts. But simultaneously and primarily *Eigensinn* expressed needs of both the group and the individuals; it articulated longings and desires as well as anxieties. Therefore, *Eigensinn* activities constituted a distinct experience of au-

tonomy as well as of collectivity, perhaps even of homogeneity. In its double meaning *Eigensinn* signified and expressed the peculiarities of workers' politics—"being-with-oneself" and "being-with-the-others."

Now it is necessary to add another facet, but one that does not fit easily into the basically harmonious and joyful picture that Göhre's recollections suggest. Handwritten accounts of several retired *Arbeiteretzeranen* workers from the Gutehoffnungshütte (taken in 1939 at the suggestion of a manager of the company) not only reported anecdotes on horseplay, but also complained about the frequent theft of tools in the mechanical workshops.<sup>37</sup> At that time in the mid-1880s the tools were owned by the workers.

Horseplay or evoking of power and of social distinctions by "du" expressed needs and simultaneously reappropriated time or space, for some moments at least. These practices were a mixture of claims against the supervisors' demands maintaining customary rights and of striving for the humanity of the individual and his comrades. More importantly, they did not seriously hurt those comrades. Stealing others' tools was the contrary. The tools that the workers owned were not significant to them in the sense of bourgeois property. Instead, they were meaningful as basic means in the daily struggle for survival. At the same time tools symbolized one's dexterity and skill. They had become part of the owner's products and stood for his productive labour as well as for their products. By using his tools he could remember those products which, by now, had been appropriated by the factory's bosses or anonymous buyers. In many respects the victim could not do without his tools.

Leaving aside the possibility that the differences between the shop floors of GHH and the factories at Chemnitz or Gera may have been because of the regional aspects of the workers' lives or different characteristics of the production processes, this stealing suggests that daily practices included many divergent, even contradictory aspects. *Eigensinn* or "self-will" was and remained ambivalent. Distancing oneself from demands of the supervisors and from the constraints of the work process without directly fighting them could imply not only individualistic, but even hostile neglect of one's own workmates.

### **EIGENSINN AND PRIVATE POLITICS**

I have discussed above in some detail the turners' work processes, payment systems and variations of actual wages, and especially their horseplay and *Eigensinn*. These illustrations should show how the mode of production was becoming real for the people concerned. After all, economic cycles and factory regulations exist only on the paper of analysts or supervisors, and behind the backs of the people.

No societal process becomes part of daily interaction and (re)production unless it is experienced in terms which are meaningful (i.e., as an opportunity for a wage increase). In theoretical terms, the mode of production and the mode of domination are reconstituted by the perceptions and interpretations, and the actions and expressions of those concerned,<sup>38</sup> in this case by the practices of male machine construction workers. Or to put the theoretical point a bit differently, the reciprocity of objective and subjective moments makes possible societal reproduction as well as societal transformation. To grasp the fullness of this vital point requires a perspective that does not measure significance and meaning against socio-economic position, or vice versa. Only from such a perspective can one begin to discern contradictions in society, and with them the potential for alternatives to become reality. To give proper attention to the ambiguities of forms of domination and societal intercourse it is necessary *not* to reduce them to their apparently most elementary degree. Only by investigating the complexities and the intertwining of their contradictory moments can the meanings as well as the functions of daily practices be unfolded and no longer count as mere peripheral phenomena. Attempts to fragment historical and societal processes into separate dimensions cannot do justice to the interrelatedness of concrete situations; they only obscure the synchronism<sup>39</sup> that inevitably characterizes practice—the acceptance of constraints, as well as disobedience to them, and a very distinct and distanced *Eigensinn*.

This brief discussion should indicate that I am aware of some of the problems which are assembled under the somewhat awkward notion of culturalism. There is, however, a second and equally serious point. The question of politics figures even more prominently in the examination of everyday life. To use one of the terms in use on this battlefield, what about romanticism? Isn't this search for *Eigensinn* just another example of the attempt to escape from the hard political questions, from the seemingly ubiquitous relationships of domination and resistance?

"Politics" traditionally refers to the formulation, achievement, and sustained organization of collective interests. Generally this is considered political, especially when it capitalizes on and solidifies, or when it confronts, prevailing norms, societal patterns of distribution, or patterns of state domination. Any other forms of expression that do not meet these criteria generally are said to be private. In contrast, I would like to argue for a perspective that views the articulation and assertion of individual needs as political behaviour, particularly for those directly concerned.

The point, then, is to expand the focus on the political beyond strategic and calculated action. In the perspective of strategic calculation, most of the ensemble constituted by emotional expressions and symbolic meanings is split off. However, it is precisely these that create from ideal

types individuals and groups who not only respond but act, sometimes determinedly and consistently, sometimes contradictorily and even inconsistently.

To put this more concretely, these turners and other machine construction workers participated only reluctantly in the "free" (socialist) *Deutscher Metallarbeiterverband* (DMV), the metal workers' trade union which was founded in 1891, a year after the repressive anti-socialist law of 1878 had expired. Except of those workers in big cities such as Berlin, on the average, three out of four workers stayed outside this effort to organize socio-economic interest, and the membership rate in the Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (SPD) was even considerably lower, as figures from Berlin show.<sup>40</sup> To be precise, from the late 1890s, most machine construction workers joined the DMV, but most of them also let it go after one or two years (i.e., they never showed up again, never paid any fee after the first months and thereby accepted that they would be scratched from the union's list).<sup>41</sup> In other words, participation in the organizations that claimed to be the only tool to satisfy the workers' economic and political interests remained very limited. (However, after 1900 the participation still added up to one of the highest rates of union membership, matched only by the dockers and the construction workers or those workers in artisanal trades, such as the glove-makers.) But spectacular collective action was not the machine construction workers' style. In contrast to the miners, construction workers, and even the much-less-organized textile workers, not to mention the printers or brewers, the machine construction workers almost never went on strike. However, this does not imply that these workers were inactive or apathetic.<sup>42</sup> They pursued direct interests, sometimes even militantly, on the shop-floor level (as illustrated above), they reappropriated time and material resources, such as metal chips or residues, and tools (as already mentioned). They also expressed their hopes and longings, anxieties and fears—they practiced *Eigensinn*. In any case, they participated actively in the distribution and in the redistribution of resources and of "life-chances" (Max Weber); that is, they behaved and acted politically.

Concerning what may be considered political in the daily life of "immediate producers" (Karl Marx), I believe we can make two points on the basis of this material:

1) Workers neither pursue individual wages and survival in a strictly instrumental sense, nor do they act politically in the sense of striving for a change in the mode of production.<sup>43</sup> This distinction follows an inappropriate one-dimensional model of politics, and it fails to grasp the ambiguities, intertwinings, and contradictions of interest and *Eigensinn*, as well as their synchronism. What is overlooked here, and elsewhere, is the mode of life of those concerned.

2) At least in more developed industrial capitalist societies, divergent, perhaps separate and even contradictory political arenas can be discerned. However, the politicizing of the private by interconnected assertions of interests, needs, and *Eigensinn* in face-to-face relations is misread if it is taken as "privitization of politics." The daily politics of the time do not show a tendency for depoliticizing. On the contrary, they reveal various forms of redistribution of material and emotional resources, as well as of life-time and life-chances. Such forms implicitly relativized the arena of formal politics, especially regulating and redistributing on the central or national level. In other words, state-centered politics were put into perspective by the self-willed politics of the so called dominated.

In the context of their daily politics, material interests and individual needs, social obligations and *Eigensinn* were not to be stripped apart or split up; they did not fall into neat boxes analysts are too easily prepared to use. "Material" and "symbolic capital" (Pierre Bourdieu)<sup>44</sup> were not directly interchangeable: the silver watch of one's late father was never pawned;<sup>45</sup> the humiliating "du" used by supervisors was not more easily accepted when real wages went up (which was the general trend from the 1870s to the 1890s and perhaps even into the early 1900s).

The ideal of "respectability" has to be reconsidered. This notion, shared by both men and women, was neither a pale reflection of petty-bourgeois dreams and idylls, nor some distorted form of class-consciousness. Instead, it was a standard with different distinct notions and experiences. It nurtured the efforts of the workers to earn one's living,<sup>46</sup> but it never was or could be disconnected from daily uncertainties and insecurities, from anxieties or hopes and dreams for a better future. Thus, endeavours to survive by illegal means—the unlawful appropriation of food, coal, or wood—were not perceived primarily as disgraceful or non-respectable. (The common practice of pilfering as it is reported from the Hamburg docks indicates this clearly).<sup>47</sup> Success in terms of survival, of material and social improvement, fostered that demonstrative pride that became visible in encounters with neighbors and workmates, as well as with, as Marx put it, "commissioned and noncommissioned officers" in the workshops or in the streets or in the inns.

These daily politics were in no way fixated on resistance, on any determined stance against demands, constraints, or open repression. Simultaneously, again and again, a self-will or *Eigensinn* as tenacious as it was effortless, could be detected in associations with colleagues, friends, and relatives, most often in peer groups of sports or drinking buddies (for the men), in *Kaffee Klatsches* for the women. Always the point was the chance to be only with and for oneself. Interference by or threats from the rulers, or their agents, from policemen, superintendents, or foremen were then literally far away, and could—for a time—be forgotten.

In these efforts to ensure physical survival, as well as in the stabilization of one's own person and one's own worth, victory perpetually coexisted with defeat—at work, inside and outside of the family. From the permanent risks, however, resulted an attitude of skeptical caution, especially in the face of offers and unreasonable demands that exceeded immediate experience.

In terms of the politicization of private life, it must be recognized that interference from above was part of the private mode of life of the workers and their families. Rigorous enforcement of order in the factory, on the streets, or in schools and offices constituted the daily experiences of children, youngsters, and adults alike.<sup>48</sup> These experiences with the physical violence of the state and of private dominators were interconnected with a form of violence “from above” that masked itself in the way it worked—“*violence douce*.”<sup>49</sup> Government policies that strove for physical as well as mental cleanliness or for education were enforced consistently by the police or by the threat of police intervention. Vagrants were chased and arrested; “mad” people were increasingly detained in special institutions;<sup>50</sup> compulsory education was enforced by the police, at least in the towns and cities. Of decisive importance was the simultaneous match of these standards of cleanliness and education to the immediate interests and needs of those concerned. To be clean and to become educated, after all, could open up a real prospect for a better life. If this were so, the question of whether a specific (perhaps “bourgeois”) type of cleanliness or of education was pursued might rest for a while. In any case, the whole range of interferences should or could contribute to a politicizing of the private. Unknown to them, the administered, trained, or agitated people were drawn into the realm of formally organized pursuit of interest. Politicizing of the private actually functioned as politicizing from above. Contrary to any self-willed politicizing of those concerned, these processes could smooth the reconciliation of unsatisfied and antagonistic interests and needs. Those concerned responded on their own by erasing, in their terms, through refusals and in self-willed action any division between private and political.

But the significance of the politics of daily life should not blur problems yet unsolved. Parallel to the politicizing of the private, one can see the separation of broad and diffuse masses from the centralized politics of the dominating classes as well as of the official opposition by the SPD. Preliminary evidence for this separation can be found, at least after 1906, in the less steady and slower increase in membership figures for the nationwide socialist organizations.<sup>51</sup> Even more important were unorganized movements such as those that surfaced in January 1906, in the midst of an SPD demonstration in Hamburg,<sup>52</sup> or in September 1910 in Berlin-Moabit.<sup>53</sup> The latter riots were triggered by rapidly increasing food prices. In both instances so-called “disorderly people,” most being

casual labourers and the unemployed, went from demonstrating to ransacking and plundering, in which not even "revolutionary discipline" was displayed. SPD and labor-union functionaries did not disagree with state authorities: in unison they harshly condemned such mob rioting.

The impression of an increasing separation between political arenas is enhanced by the lack of any self-mobilization of the masses after 1890; demanding such new official politics as colonial imperialism or naval armament remained restricted to petty-bourgeois public opinion and organizations. It is very dubious whether industrial workers or proletarian masses in general participated in these efforts at all.

This separation between the political arenas becomes obvious in spectacular, though fatal, examples, two of which are of particular prominence and importance. First, there was the peaceful, sometimes even enthusiastic, march into the imperial war in August 1914 by masses of workers<sup>54</sup> who, until that very moment, had participated in strikes or at least seemed to be ready for some form of resistance to dominant policy patterns. Second, there was the acceptance of fascism in 1933 and thereafter by the large majority of the proletarian masses.<sup>55</sup>

For the workers, first of all, the separation of political arenas mirrored the practices and stereotyped expectations of their party leaders. The hierarchical organization of the internal party processes, and even more their public appearances, underline this. When the party mobilized its adherents, their demonstrations all too quickly paralleled military parades.<sup>56</sup> The use value of marching in a row and of keeping up with the front rank man seems to be overwhelmed by the surplus value of this military way of structuring and organizing huge masses. Such military practices infiltrated the very notion of alternative societal organizations developed by party functionaries, but even more by rank and file members in their daily practices. There was a military terminology congruent with this—the "revolutionary army" or the "battalions of the revolution" were kept "marching" in the written or spoken rhetoric of the party establishment.<sup>57</sup> Also, public speeches were conceived and performed as monologues. The speakers faced the crowd, but the crowd's role was to listen, not to argue. In the case of mass rallies, it is not clear whether the people in the back could even hear the speaker. The "happening" and the scenario, therefore, the being-together with comrades and sympathetic mates, may have become much more important and meaningful than understanding the text of the distant and distanced speaker.

More generally, such events may put into question the notion of "zig-zag-loyalty,"<sup>58</sup> which has been employed to describe the simultaneous giving of loyal support to the party of the proletariat as well as the nation-state, the Imperial Reich. In fact, the term "zig-zag-loyalty" was coined to grasp the double allegiance such as appeared in the display of portraits of August Bebel and Ferdinand Lassalle alongside those of Field Mar-

shall Helmut von Moltke and Chancellor Otto Bismarck, a feature that Bromme reported in his own parents' flat. Perhaps there was only a very limited sense of loyalty at all, one corresponding to a massive disinterestedness in any sort of formal and state-centered politics.

## CONCLUSION

If one wishes to avoid simple moralization, the analytic differentiation between the political arenas is unavoidable. For investigative purposes, in societies of developed-industrial capitalism the distinction between private and *Eigensinn* politics on the one hand, and state-centered or formal politics on the other is in no way obsolete. But the analyst should be aware that the emphasis then is on the surmised function rather than on the perspective of those concerned. To be sure, the separation of political arenas was functional for the protection of existing positions and structures of domination. This applied not only to the dominators, and their shifting alliances,<sup>59</sup> but also to the leaders of opposition organizations, such as the SPD of 1914.

To understand the uses dominating groups made of the separation of the political arenas, we must consider their strategies, which included labor leaders. In this way, the current forms of hegemony in the society may be discerned more clearly. The latter concerns the process of unspoken permeation of society as a whole with cultural and ideological patterns, which cause dependence to appear as necessary or irrevocable. The bourgeois-classical education, as it was imitated by the educational efforts of the labor movement, contained within itself multifaceted tendencies of accommodation to the dominant culture.<sup>60</sup> To be more precise, included should be the broad spectrum of progressive advice and training for an improved home economy, especially for preserving food, for the well-being of clean and disciplined children and housewives alike, but also efforts for reducing work hours of young workers and female workers by law and administrative control. All of these incentives implicitly backed not only bourgeois but patriarchal structures. Nevertheless, they were stimulated by humanitarian motives that did not impinge on practice. Instructors behaved rudely and seemed to like authoritarian treatment of disciples. Above all, there remained or even developed a notion that was much closer to home for wage workers in daily (re)production—the demand for a just wage. The structure of wage work itself was no longer debatable!

But this is only one side of the coin. Demonstrative silence of the proletarian masses in state and organizational politics often corresponded to political sensibility and militancy, indeed to active self-will, in the factory or the office, in the tenement house and on the street. Even more, expressions and articulations of the dependent and domi-

nated stated the mode in which they interconnected politics, private sphere, and *Eigensinn*. If one looks closely, what becomes visible is not separation, but a seamless simultaneity of private small joys in the daily practices. Involved was an alternative vision of what life should be like, for oneself and for all mankind. The fact that they ignored the arena of state and party politics does not mean that the dependent and dominated did not have any concept of alternative political organization for society; rather, such concepts remained close to peculiarly private and self-willed politics. More concretely, the answers of miners, and textile and metal workers to a questionnaire sent out in 1910 by a theologian who strove and agitated for social reform, Adolf Levenstein, are revealing. One of the questions asked about their hopes or wishes for the future. Many of the responding 5,040 workers expressed the wish to "eat as much as I want," to own a microscope, and at the same time to see the "godly spark" or, at least, the "prevention of war" spread throughout the world.<sup>61</sup>

The socialist political organizations of the time did not recognize this problem. At best, it became part of the technical or tactical question "how to approach people to make them party or union members?" It is typical, therefore, that a trade union's guideline for visits to the homes of possible candidates for membership emphasized the use of the "du"<sup>62</sup>—as if the term automatically would invoke the richness of experiences and connotations of those whom one tried to recruit, as if the simple use of this meaningful symbol would bridge the gap between their self-willed politics and the union's bureaucratic politics. The workers' organizations measured distinct and deviant needs only according to whether they would fit their notion of class consciousness, and would support organizational strength. They never took seriously the simultaneity of interests and *Eigensinn*, the peculiarity of workers' politics.

## NOTES

This is the revised version of a paper which I presented to the Davis Center Seminar, Princeton University, April 2, 1982.

As is common with academic work, this paper owes much to discussions with other people. Here, I want to thank my colleagues at the Davis Center, especially Rhys Isaac. His stimulating remarks and, not the least, patient support in polishing the English-language version, helped me considerably. Of course, I still am responsible for all of the deficiencies and shortcomings.

I also would like to mention helpful suggestions and critiques by participants of seminars at the History Departments of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; The John Hopkins University, Baltimore; SUNY, Buffalo; North Carolina State University, Raleigh; Stanford University; University of Oregon, Eugene; New York University.

1. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 11.

2. This is especially the point made by E. Genovese and E. Fox-Genovese (in their critique of social-anthropologically informed approaches), "The Political Crisis of Social History: a Marxian Perspective," in *Journal of Social History* 10 (1976/77), p. 205–20. Directly criticizing what he—in my opinion inappropriately—perceives as sheer "culturalism," R. Johnson has put forward a critique of Thompson's work along these lines: "Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History," in *History Workshop Journal* No. 6 (1978), pp. 79–100 (cf. the clash at the History Workshop of Nov. 1979, see pp. 386–96, 396–406 in R. Samuel ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* [London, 1981]).

3. Cf. for the German historiography which stresses everyday-life analysis the critique by G. Eley and K. Nield, "Why Does Social History Ignore Politics?" in *Social History* 5 (1980), pp. 249–71, especially 264ff. See also J. Kocka, "Klassen oder Kultur? Durchbrüche und Sackgassen in der Arbeitergeschichte," in *Merkur* 36 (1982), pp. 955–65.

4. Or, to refer to a German case: When the "failure" of the revolutionary movements of 1918–20 is considered, this "either-or" characterizes even the writing of sensitive authors of the grassroot activities, such as E. Lucas; cf. E. Lucas, *Zwei Formen von Radikalismus in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt, 1976).

5. The related problems are pinned down, or opened up in a stimulating article by K. Dwyer, "On the Dialogic of Field Work," in *Dialectical Anthropology* 2 (1977), pp. 143–51. I owe this reference to my colleague at the Davis Center, Elizabeth Traube (Chicago).

6. P. Göhre, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter und Handwerksbursche* (Leipzig, 1891), p. 29.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

8. For the work process cf. D. Lande, "Arbeits- und Lohnverhältnisse in der Berliner Maschinenindustrie zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts." In: *Auslese und Anpassung der Arbeiterschaft in der Elektroindustrie, Buchdruckerei, Feinmechanik und Maschinenindustrie*, (Schriften des Vereins f. Socialpolitik 134/2 (Leipzig 1910), pp. 306–498, 354ff. E. Barth, "Entwicklungslinien der deutschen Maschinenbauindustrie von 1870 bis 1914," (Berlin/DDR 1973), pp. 51f., 83ff., 91ff., 113ff. More generally focusing on distinctive features of turners' work: H. Popitz et al., *Technik und Industrie-arbeit* (Tübingen, 1957), p. 130ff. Göhre: *ibid.*, pp. 45ff., esp. 50f.

The equipment of mid-19th century machine construction workshops is described by A. Schröter and W. Becker, *Die deutsche Maschinenbauindustrie in der Industriellen Revolution* (Berlin/DDR 1962), p. 85ff.; concerning the 1870s see W. Rensch, *Handwerker und Lohnarbeiter in der frühen Arbeiterbewegung* (Göttingen, 1980), p. 147ff. E. Barth, *Entwicklungslinien der deutschen Maschinenbauindustrie von 1870–1914* (Berlin/DDR, 1973), esp. pp. 83ff., 91ff.

For the assessment of "control" of the work process cf. D. Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the 19th Century," in D. Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (London, 1979), pp. 9–31.

9. M.T.W. Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte eines modernen Fabrikarbeiters* (Frankfurt, 1971; reprint, 1st ed. 1905), p. 243.

10. Ibid.; R. Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik* (Berlin, 1974; reprint, 1st ed. 1924), p. 13f.

11. A. Schröter and W. Becker, *Die deutsche Maschinen/bauindustrie*. pp. 76ff., 236ff.

12. A.V. Desai, *Real Wages in Germany 1891–1913* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 108–110.

13. Göhre, p. 13f.

14. E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain," in P.N. Stearns, D.J. Walkowitz eds., *Workers in the Industrial Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1974), p. 139. The discussion on (English) labour aristocracy has become vigorous again, loaded (perhaps overburdened) by the problem of "hegemony" (in the Gramscian meaning); cf. recently H.F. Moorhouse, "History, Sociology and the Quiescence of the British Working Class: A Reply to Reid," in *Social History* 4 (1979), pp. 481–90; and "Response" by Reid, pp. 491–93.

15. Cf. Desai.

16. H. Enters, *Die kleine mühselige Welt des jungen Hermann Enters. Erinnerungen eines Amerika-Auswanderers an das frühindustrielle Wuppertal*, 3d ed., (Wuppertal, 1979; 1st ed., 1970), p. 69ff.

17. K. Ditt, "Technologischer Wandel und Strukturveränderung der Fabrikarbeiterschaft in Bielefeld 1860–1914," in W. Conze, U. Engelhardt (eds.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 237–61, 255ff.

18. Historisches Archiv der Gutehoffnungshütte (H. A. GHH) 2121/3; 2121/5; 2121/7.

19. Cf. R. Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik* (Berlin, 1924).

20. Ibid., p. 131.

21. Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte*, p. 251f.

22. The comparison of order books and wage lists of the GHH, 1870, supports this point.

23. H.A. GHH 2121/3; 2121/5; 2121/7.

24. Deviations of the workers' productivity during the work day as well as during the work week were measured (by taking the factories' output figures) in some textile mills in the early 1900s by Marie Bernays; but I should add that she was interested in contributing to the achievement, as she put it, of a more steady and regular flow of production, informed, as it were, by efforts in the manner of Taylor; cf. M. Bernays, *Untersuchungen über die Schwankungen der Arbeitsintensität während der Arbeitswoche und während der Arbeitstages. Ein Beitrag zur Psychophysik der Textilarbeit* (Leipzig, 1911).

25. Göhre, p. 76f.

26. Göhre, p. 77f.

27. For the general importance of this dimension cf. P. Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, 2 ed. (New York 1981), esp. p. 43ff.

28. The term which is introduced here is derived from a passage of "thick description," as it were, which the popular philosopher Charles Garve published in the 1790s. He was commenting on dependent peasants in Silesia, their gestures and behavior toward the lord. Part of this piece reads:

Part or even a consequence of their [i.e., the peasants] being insidious is a certain "Eigensinn," which makes the peasant distinct when he is embarrassed or when some prejudice

has become deep-rooted in him. . . . As his body and his limbs get stiff the same happens apparently with his soul.

He, consequently, gets deaf to all propositions which are made to him. . . . Judges . . . know such persons whose stubbornness is due either to their blindness or to determined malice. Sometimes entire communities are obsessed by such cheating spirit. They come close to mad people who are obsessed by an *ideam fixam* which cannot be removed either by evidence or by giving counter-reasons. . . . Nothing else raises stronger antipathies against peasants. What, after all, is more difficult for the superior to stand than if those who are subject to him do not listen to him? What may infuriate a sensible person more when even that utmost explicitness and clarity, with all its power of truth, does not move the slightest the mind of those whom he wants to lead back to duty and order?" (Cf. Charles Garve, "Über den Charakter gegen die Regierung, in Ders.: *Popularphilosophische Schriften*, Bd. 2, [Stuttgart, K. Wölfel, 1974], pp. 799–1026, 859f.)

But one should also keep in mind that the term in German is colloquially used to describe (and implicitly criticize) childish behaviour, which, at least for "reasonable" adults, by this very term is labeled as "irrational." See for the use in the late eighteenth and during the nineteenth century also Ad. Freiherr von Knigge, *Über den Umgang mit Menschen*, 14th ed. (Hannover, 1865, first ed., 1788), p. 86ff. Knigge employs the term to characterize a kind of behaviour which nowadays is usually perceived as "stubborn." I owe this reference to Arnd Bohm.

I hope that it becomes clear that I try to use the notion in a somewhat different way, especially not negating the legitimacy of *Eigensinn*.

29. Cf. Alf Luedtke, "Arbeitsbeginn, Arbeitspausen, Arbeitsende," in G. Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp. 95–122.

30. Göhre, p. 29ff.

31. G. Bataille, "Der Begriff der Verausgabung," in G. Bataille, *Das theoretische Werk*, vol. I (München, 1975), pp. 9–31.

32. Göhre, pp. 79, 81. C.f. the recollection of Wenzel Holec, a Bohemian digger and brickmaker: the use of "Sie" was fined in the local (socialist) workers' association; W. Holec, *Lebensgang eines deutsch-tschechischen Handarbeiters* (Jena, 1909), p. 215.

33. For the latter see the precise account the agrarian labourer Franz Rehbein gave of his military service in the 1880s. F. Rehbein, *Das Leben eines Landarbeiters* (Jena, 1911), pp. 153–93.

34. For this aspect cf. Luedtke, "Arbeitsbeginn . . ." and especially M. Perrot, "The Three Ages of Industrial Discipline in 19th Century France," in J. M. Merriman, ed., *Consciousness and Class Experience in 19th Century Europe* (New York, London, 1979), pp. 149–68. Perrot "spells out" M. Foucault's thesis on "discipline" as the core mechanism of "modern" efforts "pour surveiller et punir"; see M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris, 1975). For the stages of management's efforts to increase control over the actual work process cf. R. Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the 20th Century* (New York, 1979).

35. Cf. some evidence from the late 1860s given by U. Englehardt, *Nur vereinigt sind wir stark*, Vol. I (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 93f.

36. Bromme, *Lebengeschichte*, p. 290f.

37. H.A. GHH 40016/9 (esp. Fishedick).

38. Cf. L. Hack, et al., "Klassenlage und Interessenorientierung," in *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* I (1972), pp. 15–30, 24f.

39. The notion of "synchronism" refers to Ernst Bloch's—the Marxist philosopher—concept of the "Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen" (perhaps: synchronism of asynchronities), involving the different, but parallel use of old and new symbols and sets of meanings which informed people's (political) orientation in the 1920s/30s, at least in Germany. According to Bloch's view this was exploited by Nazi ideology and activism but not recognized at all by Marxist analysts or (SPD or KPD) "left" political leaders; cf. E. Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 2d ed. (1st 1932/36) (Frankfurt, 1962).

40. See the figures given by D. Fricke: *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1869–1914* (Berlin/DDR 1976), pp. 718f., 731.

The participation in the "yellow" "Gewerksverein" and in the Christian trade union is only to be mentioned at this point. Apparently the "yellow" organization had at least some attraction for the group which is under consideration here from the 1860s until the early 1890s. More in detail: U. Engelhardt: *Nur vereinigt . . .*, vol. 2, ch. 14, p. 967ff. The "yellow" organizations were revitalized by some leading figures of the big corporations around 1905/06. But these "Werkvereine" (trade associations) remained, even though dropping by far, below 5 percent of the socialist trade union's membership until 1914; see K.-J. Mattheier: *Die Gelben, Nationale Arbeiter zwischen Wirtschaftsfrieden und Streik* (Düsseldorf 1973). In comparison with the rapid increase of the socialist union's membership until 1905/06, and a more moderate increase thereafter, the Christian union movement decreased in the last years before 1914 (not only in relative but also in absolute numbers); cf. M. Schneider: *Die christlichen Gewerkschaften 1894–1933* (Bonn, 1982) esp. p. 767ff. But, of course, variations according to regional circumstances and branches have to be taken into consideration; see Schneider, pp. 221ff., 290ff.

41. K. Schönhoven, *Expansion und Konzentration. Studien zur Entwicklung der Freien Gewerkschaften im Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1890–1914* (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 143ff., 190ff.

42. See D. Geary, "Identifying Militarism: the Assessment of Working-class Attitudes towards State and Society," in R.J. Evans, ed., *The German Working Class 1888–1933* (London/Totowa, N.J., 1982), pp. 220–46, 233ff.; E. Lucas, *Zwei Formen . . .*, p. 147.

43. Concerning the political struggle under the conditions of the Kaiserreich's "Half-absolutist pseudo-constitutionalism" see H.-U. Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918* 2 ed. (Göttingen, 1975), p. 63.

44. Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis (auf der ethnologischen Grundlage der kabyllischen Gesellschaft)* (Frankfurt, 1976 [1972]), p. 335ff.

45. Of course, this point would need more elaboration and further evidence, but cf. H. Schomerus, *Die Arbeiter der Maschinenfabrik Esslingen* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 244.

46. Even the labor aristocrats had to rely on extra earnings to feed their families. A statistic of Chemnitz indicates that in 1900, 58, or 8 percent, of the "skilled metal workers" could not feed a household of two adults and three children (the figures for construction workers and for textile workers were 81, 6 percent). Not only unpaid domestic labour, but also women's wage work and wage work for children, as soon as possible, remained a basic economic need for sustaining one family; cf. H. Rosenbaum, *Formen der Familie* (Frankfurt,

1982), p. 399 (and further evidence there); cf. also K. Tenfelde, "Arbeiterhaushalt und Arbeiterbewegung 1850–1914," in *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationcn f. Unterricht u. Studium* (SOWI) 6 (1977), p. 106ff. It should be mentioned, however, that the males themselves tried to get extra earnings. At least Göhre points out that one of his workmates made wood-cuttings on Sunday mornings and sold them by sending his children to local fairs, and played the fiddle at local dances; somebody else, a former tailor, tailored late at night, a driller worked as coachman on Sunday afternoons, worked as a smith, and as a waiter almost every night in a workers' pub—and all of them tried to get overtime. But only a few usually got a chance depending upon the masters' mood and interests; see Göhre, *Drei Monate*, p. 15.

More generally, the complex problem of family income and especially of old-age poverty has been depicted and analyzed in a study which relies on material of the Ruhr region; see H. Reif, "Soziale Lage und Erfahrungen des alternden Fabrikarbeiters in der Schwerindustrie des westlichen Ruhrgebiets während der Hochindustrialisierung," in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 23 (1982), pp. 1–94.

47. M. Grüttner, "Working-class Crime and the Labour Movement; Pilfering in the Hamburg Docks, 1888–1923," in R. J. Evans, ed., *The German Working Class*, pp. 54–79.

48. For the public practices, especially the "chasing of socialists," see K. Saul, *Staat, Industrie, Arbeiterbewegung im Kaiserreich* (Düsseldorf, 1974).

49. Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Theorie der Praxis*, p. 364ff.

50. D. Blasius, "Bürgerliche Gesellschaft und bürgerliche Angste: Die Irren in der Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *SOWI* 8 (1979), pp. 88–94.

51. Cf. not only the nationwide figures (see D. Fricke and K. Schönhoven) but also case studies, such as M. Nolan, *Social Democracy and Society: Working-class Radicalism in Düsseldorf 1890–1920* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 182ff., 232ff. (focusing on the years after 1907).

52. R. J. Evans, "'Red Wednesday' in Hamburg: Social Democrats, Police and Lumpenproletariat in the Suffrage Disturbance of 17 January 1906," in *Social History* 4 (1979), pp. 1–31.

53. H. Bleiber, "Die Moabiter Unruhen 1910," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3 (1955), pp. 173–211.

54. The present state of insight, still being rather preliminary, is discussed by F. Boll, *Frieden ohne Revolution? Friedensstrategien der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vom Erfurter Programm 1891 bis zur Revolution 1918* (Bonn, 1980), p. 110ff.

55. Of course this is a multifaceted problem. But one should draw upon E. Fromm, *Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches*, ed. W. BonB. (Stuttgart, 1980); *Deutschlandberichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (SOPADE), 1934–1940* (Frankfurt, 1979).

56. Cf. the proud notation the social-democrat Düsseldorf "Volkszeitung" gave of the May day parade of 1903: "Many a bourgeois made a bewildered face as he saw the lively Reds parade by like a brigade of soldiers," quoted by M. Nolan, *Social Democracy*, p. 138. The reporter of the May day parade in Solingen, 1903, wrote of the development of the proletarian movement towards a "proletarian army" which had been made visible by the parade; cf. P. Friedemann, "Feste und Feiern im rheinischwestfälischen Industriegebiet 1890–1914," in G. Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp. 161–85, 167.

57. Cf. for instance J. Dietzgen's article "Dass der Sozialist kein Monarchist sein kann," *Der Volksstaat* (Aug. 13, 1873), quoted by C. Stephan, "*Genossen, wir dürfen uns nicht von der Geduld hinreifen lassen!*" (Frankfurt, 1977), pp. 282–93, 290f. A systematic content analysis by W. Liebknecht of even more of Bebel's speeches—and of those of other leaders or speakers—is not yet finished.

58. H. Bausinger, "Verbürgerlichung—Folgen eines Interpretations," in G. Wiegmann, ed., *Kultureller Wandell im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1973), pp. 24–49. In a different but parallel way my skepticism concerning the "loyalty" thesis applies to the widely debated notion of "negative integration," as it was set forth by G. Roth and D. Groh; instead, I tend to stress active non-integration, or better: *Eigensinn* (see D. Groh, *Negative Integration und revolüt. Attentismus* (Frankfurt, 1973).

59. See for this D. Abraham, "Corporatist Compromise and the Re-Emergence of the Labor/Capital-Conflict in Weimar Germany," in *Political Power and Social Theory* 2 (1981), pp. 59–109 (which includes an analysis of the Kaiserreich patterns).

60. Cf. the material (on Austrian workers) which is discussed by D. Lange-wiesche, *Zur Freizeit des Arbeiters* (Stuttgart, 1979). For German workers, see M. Nolan, *Social Democracy*, pp. 126–45; D. Langewiesche, and K. Schönhoven, "Arbeiterbibliotheken und Arbeiterlektüre im Wilhelminischen Deutschland," in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1976), pp. 135–204; H. Lüdtke, "Von der 'literarischen Suppenküche' zur Bildungsanstalt der Nation," in *Buch und Bibliothek* 3 (1979), pp. 409–26.

61. A. Levenstein, *Die Arbeiterfrage* (München, 1912), (the reference is to the sections which give the quotations of the replies of machine construction workers).

62. K. Schönhoven, *Expansion*, p. 212f.; the guideline was published in 1908.

## INTRODUCTION

### Capitalist Accumulation in South African Agriculture

During the "phase of transition" (ca. 1834–1870), the hybrid form of production that emerged in the South African interior (the reproduction of traditional, semi-subsistent, mainly self-sufficient, to the laws of notions of commodity production and accumulation but not necessarily under the laws of capitalist accumulation proper) thus "promoted" the "artificial" forms of capital did not exhaust the complete range of history-generous class forces in the countryside, but concentrated the dynamic which in the process of establishing the capitalist world-system in the accumulation of capital proper in the countryside.