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Vernon Lidtke: A Tribute

Gary D. Stark
Lawrence D. Stokes

ON 9 October 2001 Vernon Lidtke delivered his valedictory lecture at The Johns Hopkins University on the topic of “Die Abstrakten,” a left-wing group of artists in Germany during the Weimar Republic.¹ With this address before an appreciative audience comprising students, colleagues, and friends, Vernon concluded almost forty years of a distinguished scholarly career in the field of modern European and German history. In his scholarship Vernon is most widely identified with the study of the German labor movement in general and especially the Social Democratic Party, on which subjects he has thus far published two major books along with numerous journal articles and chapters.² His formal retirement from academic life was also marked a few months earlier by a testimonial dinner held in Baltimore and attended by a large proportion of the twenty-five doctoral graduates whose dissertations he had supervised over more than three decades at Johns Hopkins. On both occasions he was fondly remembered as an accomplished historian, an inspiring teacher, and a generous mentor. In this and the four essays that follow, some of his former students wish also to commemorate Vernon’s scholarly and teaching career.

Vernon L. Lidtke was born in South Dakota in 1930, but his devout Mennonite family and he moved to Oregon when he was seven. After graduating from high school, in 1948 he entered the University of Oregon. He intended to major in music; however, he soon discovered he lacked the ear for it. As he also came to question his religious faith, he enrolled in humanities and social science courses that would help him grapple with his theological concerns. Deciding that history was the best means of understanding Christianity within a broader context, Vernon became a history major and worked closely with Quirinus Breen, a scholar of Renaissance humanism and its relation to the Christian Reformation. While an undergraduate Vernon also studied German

1. A revised version of this lecture is printed in *Central European History* 37, no. 1, (2004): 41–90.

2. These are listed below.

and obtained a high school teaching certificate. He entered the History M.A. program at the University of Oregon planning to concentrate on the Italian Renaissance. After investigating the historiography of the Elizabethan period, Vernon became especially interested in the ideas of R. G. Collingwood; his Master's thesis examined "R. G. Collingwood and the Reaction to Historical Scientism." While completing his degree he taught history and social science at a high school in Riddle, Oregon.

Gordon Wright, then at the University of Oregon, encouraged Vernon to enroll in the doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley, and study with Raymond Sontag. Since Sontag thought what he called the "mushy" fields of intellectual and cultural history were not well suited for dissertations, Vernon worked with him primarily on diplomatic topics. He read extensively—though without much enthusiasm—in European diplomatic history, particularly the German Foreign Ministry files of the Bismarck era. A growing concern with social issues and Marxism led him to the German Social Democrats and to Carl Schorske's pathbreaking book on that party.³ After exploring German socialist literature, he decided for his dissertation to investigate the intellectual and political development of Social Democracy from 1875 to 1890. With a Fulbright graduate student research fellowship, he spent 1959–1960 in Amsterdam working in the International Institute for Social History, which held the party's archives.

After completing his Ph.D. in 1962, Vernon was hired (initially as a temporary replacement for Norman Rich, then on leave) at Michigan State University. He reached the rank of Associate Professor there and then moved to The Johns Hopkins University in 1968, where he taught until his retirement and also served as department chair (1975–1979). During his career Vernon has been a Fellow of the Historische Kommission zu Berlin (1974), Princeton's Davis Center for Historical Studies (1974–1975), the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (1987–1988), and the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen (1996), as well as a Visiting Scholar at the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin (1986, 1991, 1994).

As a productive scholar, Vernon Lidtke has made important contributions to many of the principal lines of inquiry regarding working-class culture and the socialist labor movement in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany: the formation of the working class and its relation to the bourgeoisie; the nature and importance of working class culture and workers' associations as well as their ambivalent relationship with the dominant culture (and with socially-conscious middle-class artists in particular); the evolution of the Social Democratic Party's political policies and (increasingly Marxist) ideology, together with the

3. *German Social Democracy 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955).

persistent incongruity between its revolutionary rhetoric and its reformist practices; the growing estrangement of working-class (sub-) culture and of social democracy from the German political, social, and cultural systems; and the extent to which the socialist labor movement represented a destabilizing or a “negatively integrated” mediating and stabilizing force in the German Empire.⁴

Vernon was initially attracted to the subject of the formation of independent working-class political organizations, specifically the early political and ideological history of the Social Democratic Party. His well-received first book *The Outlawed Party* (1966), which drew heavily on the unpublished correspondence of its leaders, examined the Social Democrats’ adaptation, survival, and growth during its “heroic epoch” under the anti-Socialist law and the lasting changes to the movement resulting from this repression. Like much of European socialism in the nineteenth century, German socialists became increasingly estranged from liberal parliamentary democracy. Although compelled for practical and tactical reasons to focus their efforts on parliamentary activity and the legislative process between 1878 and 1890, party leaders remained deeply ambivalent about parliamentarism and the prospects of democratic reform in Germany.

As one example of the party’s ambivalent position, Vernon examined closely how it grappled in the 1880s with the problem of how to respond to “State Socialism,” Bismarck’s efforts to nationalize or establish a state monopoly over certain economic sectors and to implement social welfare measures for the workers.⁵ While many party leaders were strongly attracted to these policies, the party was also officially committed to intransigent opposition to the chancellor and his oppressive government. Although a compromise was found that allowed the party to endorse the state-sponsored social and economic program in principle yet reject it for not going far enough, the appeal of State Socialism nevertheless remained strong among non-Marxist reformists in the party and emerged with new strength after the party was freed from its outlawed status.

Since publishing *The Outlawed Party* Vernon has devoted much of his attention to the role of voluntary associations and the extent to which they provided the basis for a working-class culture. He notes that although Marx saw little prospect for the proletariat developing its own distinct culture, Engels was more optimistic about this potential. In a historiographical essay Vernon has compared the different approaches taken by scholars in the study of workers’ educational, musical, religious, and leisure time activities in Germany and England.⁶

4. For his own historiographical assessment of these issues see his “The Socialist Labor Movement” (1996).

5. “German Social Democracy and German State Socialism, 1876–1884” (1964) and *The Outlawed Party*, chap. 6.

6. “Engels über Proletariat und Kultur” (1971) and “Recent Literature on Workers’ Culture in Germany and England” (1986).

He has been particularly interested in how such associations served as a social network for German workers, providing them with interoccupational bonds and a sociocultural milieu (he is reluctant to call it a “subculture”) that promoted class consciousness and offered a socialist alternative to the dominant culture and society, from which workers were increasingly estranged. As one of the major factors that often determined the social identity of workers, membership in socialist educational, recreational, and cultural associations offered a substitute for those predominantly middle-class institutions, such as churches, in which socialists were no longer involved, and these groups functioned as an alternative to bourgeois organizations that workers avoided because of ideological reasons or class differences. Such agitational groups benefited workers by transmitting to them aspects of the dominant culture, especially practical and theoretical knowledge, but adapting it (through selection, commentary, or reworking) to workers’ needs and circumstances. These cultural associations also offered talented but uneducated workers an opportunity and supportive environment to develop their artistic abilities.⁷

In *The Alternative Culture* (1985) Vernon illuminated the complex role of this social and cultural milieu within the Social Democratic labor movement and the relationships of that environment with the rest of German society. Although it lacked ideological coherence and was often shaped more by workers’ indigenous habits and preferences than by Marxism, this internally diverse milieu was held together by occupational identification, class awareness, sociability, secular rituals, symbolism, a broad but vague sense of ideology, and the hostility of nonsocialist German society. The labor movement’s various associations drew working-class bystanders into its ranks and, by an ongoing process of selection, absorption, and adaptation, imitated much of the rest of modern Germany, thereby carrying over into the Social Democratic movement many traditions from bourgeois culture. Yet, it was also a world unto itself that offered a distinct and radical alternative to the existing norms and arrangements of Imperial Germany. Drawing its intellectual and artistic substance from what Social Democrats viewed as the best and most progressive elements of European culture, the movement sustained its ties to numerous segments of German society and cultural traditions while providing a genuine alternative that appealed not only to workers, but also to many others who took seriously the broad humanism of the socialist movement. However, Vernon concludes, because socialist leaders and theoreticians assumed (like Marx) that members of the working class had first to learn and assimilate progressive elements of bourgeois culture before they could build a real worker’s culture of their own, Social Democratic workers failed to create a truly new and unique culture based on the life experiences of the proletariat (as Engels thought was possible.)

7. “Die kulturelle Bedeutung der Arbeitervereine” (1973).

Vernon has looked particularly closely at two areas — religion and music—in which socialists were estranged from mainstream German culture and created alternatives to it. In “Social Class and Secularization in Imperial Germany: The Working Classes” (1980) he explored workers’ alienation from Germany’s institutionalized religious culture. The dynamics of secularization among the working classes shared many features with the secularization of other social groups. While urban workers and others in the lower classes were more deeply alienated from institutional Christianity, like most Germans they retained some religious components in their lives. Although social democracy was seldom the primary cause of workers’ religious alienation, it did provide a secular substitute for religion and an environment that appealed to and helped sustain spiritually those who were alienated from Christianity. Vernon further illuminates the socialist movement’s complex connection with Christianity and its eventual imitation of certain religious modes of thought in “August Bebel and German Social Democracy’s Relation to the Christian Churches” (1966). Bebel, who popularized socialism among German workers, became alienated from his early religious beliefs and in the 1870s joined many other Social Democrats in a militant atheistic campaign against Christianity. For both practical and theoretical reasons, however, in the 1880s the party moderated its antireligious stance and returned to its earlier policy of treating the issue of religion as “a private matter” secondary to the goals of economic and political emancipation. At the same time, Bebel began emphasizing parallels between Christianity and socialism; with his unshakable belief in the impending triumph of the latter and descriptions of a socialist “Paradise on Earth,” he came to resemble a religious disciple and preacher. By providing workers with a popular synthesis between Christian traditions and socialism, social democracy satisfied some of the religious needs and longings that traditional Christianity no longer could.

Music and song was another sphere in which German workers generated their own alternative customs. In “Lieder der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, 1864–1914” (1979) and *The Alternative Culture* (1985) Vernon examined the political, social, ceremonial, and propagandistic functions of mass and of strike songs within the German labor movement, showing how both texts and melodies helped define the contours of Social Democratic political culture. Although melodies were drawn heavily from mainstream German musical culture, especially from early nineteenth-century patriotic songs, the texts sought to awaken in workers a distinct political consciousness, to promote feelings of solidarity, class-consciousness, and a unique identity separate from the rest of German society. While the total repertoire of socialist songs increased substantially over the five decades, the canon of songs that were most popular and that reappeared continually on various programs changed little. Initially serving to introduce workers to new concepts and outlooks and to symbolize workers’ separation from the larger society, those songs later functioned more to reaffirm

ideological continuities and to stabilize and preserve the movement and its outlook.

The labor movement's ambivalent relationship with sympathetic, socially conscious middle-class literary and visual artists has also intrigued Vernon. The party's social and cultural isolation meant that it failed to attract more than a handful of intellectuals, writers, and artists to the Social Democratic cause. Exploring the collaboration between socialists and the naturalist literary school in the 1880s and early 1890s,⁸ Vernon showed that although naturalists and socialists were like siblings who shared many intellectual, social, philosophical, ethical, and methodological assumptions about modern life, and although many naturalist writers wished to cooperate with the socialists in endeavors of mutual interest, the Social Democrats were surprisingly unreceptive toward such overtures. Deep-seated suspicion toward nonparty intellectuals and a supreme confidence in Marxist theory caused Social Democratic leaders to hold at a distance any intellectuals or artists who were not willing to adapt themselves to the party's thinking and to reject those, like the naturalists, who wanted to cooperate without also relinquishing their intellectual autonomy. Before 1914, Social Democratic theory provided little room for intellectual exploration outside its confines, and few German intellectuals were content with the subordinate role demanded of them by the party.

In assessing whether or not social democracy represented a stabilizing and mediating force in Imperial Germany, Vernon considers the integrationist model inadequate. While many aspects of the labor movement were positively integrated into the larger society, it was still a destabilizing, truly subversive force that genuinely threatened the imperial system, although not necessarily through overt revolutionary political action. For socialists presented a radical alternative to existing norms and arrangements in German society and culture; conservatives correctly perceived that the Social Democratic path, based on radically different principles, was a threat to their way of life and their social control. "The fact that nonsocialist Germans were very much aware that the labor movement was creating a world of its own, that it had a special social-cultural milieu, lent credence to the fear that social democracy represented a profound danger to nearly every aspect of life in Imperial Germany. All of these threatening realities tend to be discounted by interpretations that rest on integrationist sociology or use the 'negative integration' formula."⁹

In the 1980s, Vernon suggested a general model of class formation in Germany that could explain why some wage-earning workers did not become part of a socially conscious working class or participate in its organizations and

8. "Naturalism and Socialism in Germany" (1974).

9. *The Alternative Culture*, 9.

actions.¹⁰ He saw the first component of working-class formation as the creation of increasing numbers of dependent wage earners with similar conditions of work by changes in production induced by expanding capitalism and industrialization. In the next stage, these wage earners show an awareness of their shared economic condition, developing formal or informal social linkages and acting with others like them while displaying evidence of social identity (although their working-class consciousness did not exclude other kinds of consciousness or loyalties). Economic variables (changes within industrial capitalism), cultural (popular traditions and social customs), and political ones (the exercise of power and attempts to acquire or gain access to power), and perhaps also gender, advanced or hindered working-class formation, resulting in different and uneven patterns of class structure in different settings. This produced not a single, unified German working class before the war, but rather multiple working classes, each with its own internal cohesion and unwilling to identify completely with other workers. German workers and burghers had relatively few relationships and contacts, their antagonistic economic interests made conflict inevitable, and there were few areas (except for the bourgeois popular educational movement) that served as mediating points between members of these two classes.

Although the focus of most of his work has been on the period before the First World War, Vernon has also been interested in working-class musical culture, socially radical art, and left-wing politics after 1914. The songs of the pre-war labor movement remained popular with both Social Democrats and Communists in the Weimar era, as Vernon demonstrated in his "Songs and Politics: An Exploratory Essay on Arbeiterlieder in the Weimar Republic" (1974), although differences between the two parties on musical matters became increasingly evident by the mid-1920s. Social Democrats were less willing than Communists to place political considerations above musical excellence. Through autonomous Communist-oriented singing organizations, the KPD made more explicit use of songs and other music in its propaganda efforts and proved far more articulate and energetic in exploiting songs to communicate ideas. Communists' songs exhibited a more dynamic spirit, were more agitational, propagandistic, and ideological, and the composers affiliated with the KPD appear to have been more committed to developing innovative musical styles appropriate for a radical working-class movement.

Vernon shows, however, that both Socialists and Communists lagged far behind National Socialism in exploiting music for political purposes.¹¹ While

10. "Burghers, Workers, and Problems of Class Relationships 1870 to 1914: Germany in Comparative Perspective" (1986); see also his review essay "The Formation of the Working Class in Germany" (1980).

11. "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany" (1982).

the socialists of the Left used songs to promote working-class solidarity, Nazi political songs and participatory singing combined this communalism with a fanatical emotionalism. Before 1933, songs were an integral part of Nazi political struggles (as they had been with the pre-1914 Social Democrats), but the Nazis readily and gladly borrowed their melodies and texts from a far wider range of familiar musical and political sources — including from the repertory of the SPD and Communists. After 1933, an explosion of new political songs took place as their function shifted from calling attention to the party and recruiting members for it to socializing Germans into the new Third Reich, to indoctrination, and mobilizing support for Hitler's expansionist ambitions.

The troubled, uneasy relation between modernist artists and the rigid ideological demands of left-wing German parties that Vernon noted in the imperial era continued in the Weimar period and has been the subject of his more recent work. For an exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art he wrote about the broader cultural, social, and political milieus in Germany from which avant-garde artists such as Oskar Schlemmer emerged.¹² In "Museen und die zeitgenössische Kunst in der Weimarer Republik" (1993), Vernon examined the role of museum directors and curators in promoting modern art after the First World War. "Museum modernists" faced a number of difficult problems and issues: the lack of financial resources in a time of economic crisis and depression; how to establish better relations with private art collectors and influential "friends"; whether museums should use their scarce resources to commission modern art and run the risk that the finished product might alienate the public and even supporters; deciding what guidelines should be used in judging the aesthetic quality of modern works and which pieces should be acquired; and how the museum should relate to the left-wing political orientations of socially-engaged and critical artists. Although individually they handled these issues in different ways, collectively the large number of modernist directors in Germany played a decisive role in opening museums to the works of German expressionism and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. They showed far less interest, however, in abstractionist, constructivist, or surrealist works, perhaps because these latter avant-garde movements appeared to be less "patriotic" and German. As Vernon's most recent essay on *Die Abstrakten* demonstrates, while "museum modernists" may have rejected these abstract artists for their left-wing political orientation, the Communist movement was hostile to their aesthetic principles. Whether examining the artistic, political, ideological, or socio-cultural dimensions of social radicalism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth century Germany, Vernon Lidtke's scholarship has substantially added to our knowledge

12. "Twentieth-Century Germany: The Cultural, Social, and Political Context of the Work of Oscar Schlemmer" (1986).

of the nature and contours of working-class agency in German history during that time.

As a teacher and mentor Vernon Lidtke has influenced numerous students, undergraduates and graduates alike. These roles have been formally recognized by his reception of two prestigious awards: that for "Excellence in Teaching" from Johns Hopkins in 1997 and two years later the American Historical Association's "Eugene Asher Distinguished Teaching Award." The latter, jointly sponsored with the Society for History Education and named for a longtime advocate of history teaching, commends "an inspiring teacher whose pedagogical techniques and mastery of subject matter make a lasting impression and substantial difference to students of history." Vernon's citation describes him as a model teacher-scholar, one genuinely devoted to creative teaching and sensitive to the different needs of his students. His emphasis upon active, participatory learning with student presentations, class discussion, and extensive reflective writing went well beyond the traditional format of lectures, examinations, and term papers; his syllabi were said to demonstrate "resourceful and innovative conceptualizations" of both content and pedagogy.¹³ In his own statement on teaching submitted to the Asher Award Committee Vernon pointed out the virtue he had learned over the years in listening to what students had to say in the classroom, in constantly acquiring and introducing new themes and areas of knowledge and in team teaching.

Besides an overall introduction to European history from 1850 to the present, and surveys of modern German politics, society, and culture, the titles of undergraduate courses he was offering by the end of his career are indicative of his breadth of interests. They included ones on "Art and Politics in Twentieth Century Europe" (in collaboration with his colleague, Professor Jeffrey Brooks), on "Modernism and Traditionalism during the Wilhelmine and Weimar Periods," on "The Culture of Austria and Vienna," and a colloquium on "Intellectuals and the Third Reich." Among the lectures he delivered with fervor and excitement was a "classic" on the Dada movement; Vernon's ebullient personality made for many animated conversations and exuberant lectures. And this passion conveyed itself to students.

For his graduate seminars, in addition to one on "Comparative European History" that appealed especially to students in American and other non-German fields, Vernon alternated yearly between an emphasis upon the cultural-intellectual and the social-political history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany. The former analyzed original texts by thinkers ranging from Schiller, Hegel, and Feuerbach (and "sometimes Marx, but less so because

13. *Perspectives: Newsmagazine of the American Historical Profession* 38, no. 3 (2000): 31.

students had read him”) through Wagner, Nietzsche, Tonnies, Simmel, and Max Weber, to Carl Schmitt. The other group included, at different times, topics such as “German History from Below” (that is, *Alltagsgeschichte*) as well as extended discussions of the socialist labor movement, popular education and literacy, the social history of music, demographic changes, the churches and society, the debate on the causes of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, and, more recently, eugenics and racial hygiene, the professions, criminality, and sexuality in modern Germany. Vernon’s former doctoral students fondly remember, along with his characteristic willingness to help them when they served as his teaching assistants, his subtle yet probing questioning of their own research as well as the rigorous and engaging atmosphere of the seminars, the genuine interest he took (and continues to take) in their academic success, and his generous devotion of time and energy to their dissertation projects. These have covered a remarkable range of topics, another reflection of Vernon’s intellectual catholicity and his readiness to accommodate the scholarly ambitions of each individual student.

Besides those of the contributors to this issue, several other Ph.D. (and even one M.A.) theses that Vernon supervised have subsequently been published in whole or in part.¹⁴ His own writing has served as a model for that of his students who recall his patience and enthusiasm in reading their work — even when he had inherited them from other faculty members who had left the Hopkins staff. Caring and approachable, warm and sincere, thoughtful and gentle: Vernon’s behavior as a mentor has been a guide, too, in the relations of his former students with a new generation of students. He not only on occasion held his seminar at his home, with refreshments in the middle, but also happily socialized with students on the baseball fields and elsewhere. Vernon and Doris graciously hosted barbeques, buffet dinners, and holiday parties for them

14. See Gregory W. Pedlow, *The Survival of the Prussian Nobility 1770–1870* (Princeton, 1988); Michael J. Neufeld, *The Skilled Metalworkers of Nuremberg: Craft and Class in the Industrial Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1989); John R. Wilson, *Seedbed of Protest: Social Structure and Radical Politics in Ettlingen, Grand Duchy of Baden, 1815–1850* (New York, 1992); Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford, 1994); William Bowman, *Priest and Parish in Vienna, 1780 to 1880* (Boston, 1999); Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka’s Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley, 2000); and Anja Baumhoff, *The Gendered World of the Bauhaus: The Politics of Power at the Weimar Republic’s Premier Art Institute* (Frankfurt, 2001); also Lawrence D. Stokes, “The German People and the Destruction of the European Jews,” *Central European History* 6 (1973): 167–91; Dirk Bönker, “Maritime Aufrüstung zwischen Partei- und Weltpolitik: Schlachtfloottenbau in Deutschland und den USA urn die Jahrhundertwende,” in *Zwei Wege in die Moderne: Aspekte der deutschamerikanischen Beziehungen vor und im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Jürgen Heideking and Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase (Trier, 1998), 231–59; Oliver Liang, “The Biology of Morality: Criminal Biology in Bavaria 1924–1933,” in *Criminals and their Scientists*, ed. Richard Wetzell (Cambridge, 2002); and Judd Stitzel, “Konsumpolitik zwischen ‘Sortimentslücken’ und ‘Überplanbeständen’ in der DDR der 1950er Jahre,” in *Vor dem Mauerbau: Politik und Gesellschaft in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre*, ed. Dierk Hoffmann, Michael Schwartz, and Hermann Wentker (Munich, forthcoming).

“which made all of us feel as though we belonged to more than a strictly intellectual community.” In short, “a truly outstanding teacher and person.”¹⁵

Vernon’s legacy to the historical profession in the United States comprises, in addition to his scholarly publications and teaching experience, the decision to donate much of his personal library to Gettysburg College. That institution now possesses a “Vernon L. Lidtke German History Collection” for the use of future generations of students and instructors.¹⁶ This seems an appropriate conclusion to a career that has benefited all those who have chosen or will someday choose to study the history of modern Germany.

The essays collected here in honor of Vernon, while representing the diverse interests of his students, all deal primarily with the period of German history (from 1860 to 1933) and several of the issues that have most concerned him: working-class culture; the ways groups like the Social Democrats have constructed their own within a larger German identity; the application of the law and state policy to define membership in or exclusion from the German national community; and the use of the literary, musical, and visual arts to achieve political, especially working-class goals. Nancy Reagan reviews the substantial body of recent literature on the question of German national identity. German identity and an imagined German community in the latter half of the nineteenth century was constructed through local voluntary associations, sports, rituals and ceremonies, and the use of art, music, and poetry — the same means Social Democrats employed to create their own distinct alternative culture. Law, especially citizenship law, also played a significant role in defining national identity, just as it did in isolating the Social Democrats in the imperial era. There has been much debate about whether the empire, which outlawed and persecuted social democracy, was or was not a *Rechtsstaat* with a genuine rule of law. Kenneth Ledford, looking more closely at imperial legal and judicial structures, and in particular at the ways administrative law courts did and did not protect the individual rights of socialists, Poles, Danes, and other Prussian citizens, explores the complexities and ambiguities of the rule of law in the Second Reich. In a wide-ranging review of recent scholarship on gender and women’s history, Kathleen Canning discusses how the field of labor history has been engendered and rewritten, with the traditional concept of “class” being redefined and displaced by a contemporary focus on social citizenship rights within the welfare state, especially as that which emerged in the First World War and Weimar Republic. Finally, Raymond Sun examines Catholic workers and their culture in the later Weimar years, specifically how labor leaders used increasingly radical literary, poetic, and visual images, as well as class, gender, and

15. We appreciate the memories provided by Kathleen Canning, William Rice, William Bowman, Judd Stützel, and Cameron Munter.

16. See its web page <http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/donors/lidtke/>

religious appeals, in an attempt to maintain the identity of the Catholic working-class movement in the face of the radical threats from both Communists on the left and National Socialists on the right.

Taken together these essays provide insights into several central topics in German historiography.

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