

The Multinational Working Class? Political Activism and Labour Migration in West Germany During the 1960s and 1970s

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Abstract

This article looks at the migration policy of the trade unions as well as the political activism of migrants in West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. It argues that migrants' political activities have been rather neglected in historiography, because the research has followed the governmental view on migration which has led to an unnecessarily rigid analysis of migrants' individual motivations to emigrate and ignored their demands. Through several instances of migrant protest and self-organization, the article emphasizes the importance of migrants' political activism for the social history of the Federal Republic. Ultimately the idea of integration in historiography is discarded as a discourse that covers the migrants' precise demands for equal rights.

Keywords

autonomy of migration, migration, political activism, social movement, trade unions, West Germany

Nobody will deny the huge impact migration has had on West German society. The permanent residence of foreign workers, who were both expected to be, and often even thought of themselves as being, temporarily in Germany, forced a rethinking of the concepts of German identity, culture and nation. Even though this process is not finished yet and probably never will be, it is not possible to understand its genealogy without regarding the articulated needs and demands of migrants in West Germany. The political activity of and for migrants in West Germany

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during the 1960s and 1970s has, until now, featured only on the fringes of histories of this period. This article places migrants' political activism in its rightful place: at the centre of West German history. Not only the residency, which could be seen as a resistance to federal government's migration policy itself, but also migrants' political activity challenged the society and its self perception. This will be shown through an examination of self-organization and protests involving migrant communities. An exploration of the narrow focus – both contemporaneous and historiographical – will show the extent to which migrants have failed to be recognized as political subjects. Following on from this, the migration policy of the Confederation of German trade unions (DGB) will be analysed. The role of the DGB in this period is of importance due to their claim of being the first organization to represent migrants.¹ The unions themselves had, especially since the late 1960s, decisive influence on migration policy through their collaboration in government's working committees and their decisive role on the labour market. The policy of the preferential employment of native German workers ('*Inländerprimat*') was supported by the German trade unions and had a huge impact on migrants. The extent to which a consistent multinational working class was able to exist in this context will be questioned. Analysis of the three international trade union conferences on migration will clarify the extent to which the trade unions' claim of being internationalist in nature was challenged by their support of the '*Inländerprimat*'. European and north-African trade unions that were impacted by immigration or emigration were to meet three times during the 1970s to establish and coordinate policy. Their divergent views on migration and international solidarity came to light in the course of these meetings.

The focus of the second half of this article will be the multifaceted political activities of migrants. Most migrant protests in the early years of residency in the Federal Republic tended to focus – arguably as a result of exile – on condemnation of the political regimes in the migrants' countries of origin.² These early

1 For the relation between migrants and the trade unions in West Germany see for example O. Trede, 'Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration, Gewerkschaften und "Gastarbeiter" in der Bundesrepublik in den 1950er bis 1970er Jahren', in J. Oltmer, A. Kreienbrink and C. Sanz Diaz (eds) *Das 'Gastarbeiter'-System. Arbeitsmigration und ihre Folgen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Westeuropa* (München 2012), 183–97; in comparison with the Trade Unions in Great Britain: O. Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration. Gewerkschaften und Migration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Großbritannien von den 1950er bis in die 1970er Jahre', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cologne (2009); H. Kamalak and U. Altun, *Arbeitsmigration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit den Folgen sowie der gewerkschaftlichen Haltung* (Berlin 2006); A. Treichler, *Arbeitsmigration und Gewerkschaften, Das Problem der sozialen Ungleichheit in internationalen Maßstab und die Rolle der Gewerkschaften bei der Regulation transnationaler Migrationen ...* (Münster 1998); P. Kühne et al. (eds), *Gewerkschaften und Einwanderung, Eine kritische Zwischenbilanz* (Köln 1994); U. Holl, *Gäste oder Arbeiter? Der DGB und die ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, in U. Holl (ed.) *Die vierte Partei? Zur Politik des DGB* (Köln 1981), 115–56; P. Kühne, 'Wende gewerkschaftlicher Ausländerpolitik? Der DGB und die ausländischen Arbeiter', *Kritik, Zeitschrift für sozialistische Diskussion*, 27 (1981), 44–62; B.E. Schmitter, 'Trade Unions and immigration politics in West Germany and Switzerland', *Politics & Society*, 10 (1981), 317–34.

2 On exiles in West Germany from the Mediterranean regimes see, for example, D. Zaptcioğlu, *Türken und Deutsche, Nachdenken über eine Freundschaft* (Frankfurt am Main 2005); T. Lagaris, 'Griechische Flüchtlinge in West-, Mittel-, Nord- und Südeuropa während der Militärdiktatur 1967–1974',

attempts at self-organization were viewed by the leaders of trade unions with suspicion. This was also the case in relation to self-organization in a migrant-organized parliament, when such institutions began to look beyond issues in their home countries. Various examples of protests and organization make this abundantly clear. To complete the picture it is necessary to give an account of the migrants' wildcat strikes in the context of the DGB and individual employers' policies on migration. This article will conclude with an examination of migrant self-organization outwith the factories and trade unions, which were often backed by transnational political movements.

Historical research into West German migration began in the 1980s. Three of these early attempts wrote of 100 years of German migration history. Knuth Dohse wrote a political economy of migration in Germany in which he emphasized the role of the resident and work permit in social and economic control.³ Klaus Bade, who, in the 1990s, founded the 'Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies' (IMIS), demonstrated his concept of 'social-historical migration studies' with his work on Germany's development from a country of emigration to a country of immigration.⁴ 'Social-historical migration studies', according to Bade, should be an interdisciplinary subject, with a focus on demographic, economic and social processes in both the country of origin and of immigration. Bade was particularly interested in the relationship between population growth and the labour market. Ulrich Herbert carried out a further study which focused on the First and Second World Wars and established the differences between voluntary and forced migration.⁵ According to Herbert, current migration policy can only be properly understood when the history of its developments are also understood.

The first study which focused specifically on the Federal Republic's immigration policy was written by Siegfried Bethlehem.⁶ His question as to how the state tries to control and operate migration was novel in the context of the 1980s. Bethlehem has been original in the sense of having been the first to write anything close to a precise analysis of statistics, laws and governmental agreements in relation to migration in West Germany.

in K. Bade et al. (eds), *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa. Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (München/Paderborn 2007), 612–15; Migrants also used German radio broadcasting for 'guest workers' to agitate against the South-European dictatorships. This led to several political scandals: R. Sala, *Fremde Worte, Medien für 'Gastarbeiter' in der Bundesrepublik im Spannungsfeld von Außen- und Sozialpolitik* (Paderborn 2011).

3 K. Dohse, *Ausländische Arbeiter und bürgerlicher Staat: Genese und Funktion von staatlicher Ausländerpolitik und Ausländerrecht; vom Kaiserreich bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Königstein im Tessin 1981).

4 K.J. Bade, *Vom Auswanderungsland zum Einwanderungsland?, Deutschland 1880–1980* (Berlin 1983).

5 U. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980, Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* (Berlin 1986); in the following quoted after the new and completed edition: U. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland, Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge* (München 2001).

6 S. Bethlehem, *Heimatvertreibung, DDR-Flucht, Gastarbeiterzuwanderung. Wanderungsströme und Wanderungspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart 1982).

The preoccupation with migration in Germany's postwar history has increased since the second half of the 1990s.⁷ Dietrich Steinert was among the first to study the previously unavailable archival material. His investigation of the exchange of correspondence between West Germany and the recruitment countries suggests the assumption that the establishment of recruitment agreements followed the conventions of foreign policy and diplomacy.⁸ Heike Knortz recently lent support to this assumption.⁹

During the last decade historical migration studies have undoubtedly been enriched with detailed research concerning nationality, gender and individual localities as well as comprehensive comparative studies.¹⁰ Despite this, most previous studies are united in the fact that they have largely disregarded the political activity of migrants. Behind scholars' tendency to concentrate on political and economic history lie problematic assumptions of historical migration research in Germany. The popular narrative is that the 'guest workers' had come to West Germany with the aim of earning as much money as they could in the shortest possible time and had little interest in altering political conditions in the country in which they worked.¹¹ Furthermore, it has been claimed that political mobilization was

7 See, for example: M.G. Behrendt and S. Saris (eds), *Zur Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration*. (Hildesheim 1995); T. Bauer and K.F. Zimmermann, 'Gastarbeiter und Wirtschaftsentwicklung im Nachkriegsdeutschland', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 2 (1996), 73–108; J. Motte et al. (eds), *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik – 50 Jahre Einwanderung, Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main 1999); A focus on Germany's migration history was taken in the historical journals: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 44 (2002) and 1999, *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte* (2002).

8 J.D. Steinert, *Migration und Politik, Westdeutschland-Europa – Übersee, 1945 – 1961* (Osnabrück 1995).

9 H. Knortz, *Diplomatische Tauschgeschäfte, 'Gastarbeiter' in der westdeutschen Diplomatie und Beschäftigungspolitik 1953 – 1973* (Köln 2008).

10 On female labour migrants see: M. Mattes, 'Gastarbeiterinnen' in der Bundesrepublik, *Anwerbspolitik, Migration und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main 2005); on migration from Italy see: R. Sala, 'Die Nation in der Fremde, Zuwanderer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und nationale Herkunft aus Italien', *IMIS-Beiträge*, 29 (2006), 99–102; R. Sala, 'Vom 'Fremdarbeiter' zum 'Gastarbeiter', Die Anwerbung italienischer Arbeitskräfte für die deutsche Wirtschaft 1938–1973', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 55 (2007), 93–120; Y. Rieker, 'Ein Stück Heimat findet man ja immer', *Die italienische Einwanderung in der Bundesrepublik* (Essen 2003); on migration from Turkey see: A. Eryilmaz and M. Jamin (eds), *Fremde Heimat, Eine Geschichte der Einwanderung aus der Türkei* (Essen 1998); M. Jamin, 'Fremde Heimat. Zur Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration aus der Türkei', in Motte et al., *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik*, 145–64; K. Hunn, 'Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück ...' *Die Geschichte der türkischen 'Gastarbeiter' in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen 2005); on migration from Spain see: C. Sanz Diaz 'Illegale', 'Halblegale', 'Gastarbeiter', *Die irreguläre Migration aus Spanien in die Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Kontext der deutsch-spanischen Beziehungen 1960 – 1973* (Berlin 2010); for a local approach, see, for example: F. Dunkel and G. Stramaglia-Faggion, 'Für 50 Mark ein Italiener' *Zur Geschichte der Gastarbeiter in München* (München 2000). New approaches emphasize that on a local level migration policy was more divergent and dependent on the relative autonomous actions of the migrants: P. Zölls et al., 'Tulbeck 12, Das Münchner Migrationsregime: Eine endlose Geschichte von Autonomie und Kontrolle', in S. Hess et al. (eds) *Crossing Munich, Beiträge zur Migration aus Kunst, Wissenschaft und Aktivismus* (München 2009), 60–65; S. Lanz, 'Der lange Schatten der Kulturation, Städtische Einwanderungspolitiken am Beispiel Berlin', in lit. cit. 66–9; an impressive comparison of the migration policy and debates on migration in West Germany and Great Britain was made by Karen Schönwälder, in *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität, Politische Entscheidungen und öffentliche Debatten in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren* (Essen 2001).

11 Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980*, 212.

bound by the pre-existing communication structures and never connected disparate ethnic groups.¹² In light of the creation of communal ‘Foreigner-Councils’ (*Ausländerbeiräte*) in the 1970s and the continuous work of trade unions which led partly to relatively autonomous organizational structures emerging within the trade unions – such as Youth and Women’s groups – this preconception requires review.

The failure to recognize the continuity of political activism among migrants has, traditionally, formed the basis of migration studies in Germany. Even though recent studies do not deny and partly also describe migrants’ political activities within and outside the trade unions, most publications describe migration as the movement of a population from one country to another; dependent on a variety of push- and pull-factors and concentrate on the political and economic history of the West German migration regime.¹³ A government’s attempts to control migration tend to be the first point of reference for historians.¹⁴ It is for this reason that governmental categorizations of migrants tend to be adopted in historical literature. This adaptation of governmental categorizations and linear understanding of migration from one country to another became most obvious with the first *Encyclopaedia of Migration in Europe*.¹⁵ Due to its length, this work can be seen as a lexicon, which historians ought to recognize when using it in future studies of migration history. Nevertheless a review of the content shows that at no point does the work break with the belief in grouping migrants according to the concept of legal status and origin. This approach leads for instance to the dilemma, that the *Encyclopaedia* contains an article about refugees fleeing from the Greek military Junta after 1967 as well as one about the labour migration from Greece, but both articles ignore Greek labour activism in exile against the Junta.¹⁶

In using this unnecessarily rigid analysis, historians have been limited in the extent to which they are able to delve into the circumstances regarding migrants’ individual legal status. After all, a ‘*Gastarbeiter*’ (guest worker) and an ‘*Asylbewerber*’ (asylum seeker) differ only in their ability to obtain access to work and residency and not in their motivation to migrate. This idea has been highlighted recently by Serhat Karakayali: ‘Categories, provided by the standing

12 D. Rucht and W. Heitmeyer, ‘Mobilisierungen von und für Migranten’, in R. Roth and D. Rucht (eds), *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945, Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main 2008), 573–92, here: 575.

13 In particular the following historical studies do respond to labour activism and political action among migrants: Trede, ‘Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration’; Hunn, ‘*Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück ...*’; Mattes, ‘*Gastarbeiterinnen in der Bundesrepublik*’; B. Sonnenberger, *Nationale Migrationspolitik und regionale Erfahrung. Die Anfänge der Arbeitsmigration in Südhessen (1955 – 1967)* (Darmstadt 2003).

14 Also criticizing this rigid approach of historical migration studies is W.A. Pojmann (ed.), *Migration and activism in Europe since 1945* (New York, NY 2008), 16.

15 Bade et al., *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa*.

16 T. Lagaris, ‘Griechische Flüchtlinge in West-, Mittel-, Nord- und Südeuropa’, in *ibid.* 608–12; H. Vermeulen, ‘Griechische Arbeitswanderer in West-, Mittel- und Nordeuropa seit den 1950er Jahren (Beispiele Deutschland und die Niederlande)’, in *ibid.* 604–8.

orders of nation-state, simply reflect the technique of governing and have only limited descriptive character, such as in the case of the emigration from the south-European post-war dictatorships'.¹⁷ Harald Kleinschmidt also criticizes the tendency to adopt governmental categorizations in historical research. In writing the history of migration, it is important to include a critical historiography of the pervasive terminology which seems to have become unquestioningly used to describe the migration process.¹⁸

The application of governmental categorizations and definitions of migration assumes indirectly that the government institutions responsible for migration did operate – and continue to operate – as intended. Historical experience however shows the opposite to be true. Migration policies have – on more than one occasion – failed due to migrants' resistance. In West Germany in particular, the long-held anti-immigration policy and slogan of: 'Germany is not a country of immigration' failed, because migrants weren't as governable and controllable as political programs assumed.¹⁹ As Karin Schönwälder recognizes, the dynamics of migration undermined the governmental claim of migration control.²⁰ Migrants were and still are continuously following their own projects of mobility by inventing new routes and strategies and also by adapting themselves to the current migration regime. Migrants must therefore no longer be viewed as simply the objects of migration history, but instead seen as its active subjects. A consideration of issues including the organized invisibility of frontier crossing, or the open confrontation of campaigns, strikes and demonstrations, are important in developing fuller understanding of migration history.

In English-language scholarship, this agency of migrants seems to be more self-evident. Ruth Mandel, for instance, asserts that 'a more nuanced understanding of the immigrant population might view Turkish Germans less as ghettoized victims than creative players whose skills may be transferred across boundaries – geographic, political, or cultural'.²¹ Jennifer Miller shows the migrant's creative potential, defiance, and active resistance against the German migration regime by analyzing migrants' everyday lives.²² Significantly, she refers not only to sources collected in state-run archives, but emphasizes oral history and archives 'from below'. In such studies migrants become subjects in the sense of having played

17 S. Karakayali, *Gespenster der Migration, Zur Genealogie illegaler Einwanderung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bielefeld 2008), 98 (translation by the author).

18 H. Kleinschmidt, *Menschen in Bewegung, Inhalte und Ziele historischer Migrationsforschung* (Göttingen 2002), 212.

19 The inability of the government to get migrants to return to their countries of origin is described in K.J. Bade and M. Bommes, 'Migration im "Nicht-Einwanderungsland"', in K.J. Bade and R. Münz (eds) *Migrationsreport 2000, Fakten – Analysen – Perspektiven* (Frankfurt am Main 2000), 163–204.

20 K. Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität, Politische Entscheidungen und öffentliche Debatten in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren* (Essen 2001), 450.

21 R.E. Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties, Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany* (Durham 2008), 312.

22 J.A. Miller, 'Postwar Negotiations: The First Generation of Turkish "Guest Workers" in West Germany, 1961–1973', PhD dissertation, State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick (2008).

an active role in migration history. Despite this, it is important for historians to acknowledge the fact that migrants are also subjected to the political conditions which continuously categorize them as such.²³

Locating historical sources which adequately reflect migrants' subjectivity is challenging. This could be seen to reflect migrants' aforementioned organized invisibility. More convincingly, however, is the reality of state-run archives tending to hold only sources which reflect official governmental categorizations of migrants. Furthermore, the self-organized archives of social movements only rarely collected material relating to migrants' struggles. In order to uncover migrants as historical subjects it is therefore also necessary to read the available sources against the grain of official West German migration history. Broader oral history studies about those directly involved in West German migration would undoubtedly enrich the future writing of a neglected piece of Germany's recent history.

There are, however, a rare few, more recent, publications which break with the tradition of migration studies and place the political activity of migrants at the centre of their research. A study published in 1981 identified foreign workers as 'an emerging political force'.²⁴ Mark Miller refers to numerous, even if not very detailed, instances of politically active migrants. It is surprising, in this writer's opinion, that it took more than two decades of migration studies for an examination of migrant politics to emerge. With an edited volume about migration and activism by Wendy Pojmann, the idea that political activities of migrants had decisive influence on migration history was revisited.²⁵ Quinn Slobodian's contribution shows that the German 68-movement was much more affected by 'Dissident Guests' – students from African and Asian countries, who brought the ideas of radical Anti-Imperialism from their experience of anti-colonial struggles: '... it was not the students of Berkeley or the American South but the students of Africa and Asia who first led West German students to take a public, political role...'.²⁶ In the German research landscape Niels Seibert comes to the same conclusion by analysing the origins and developments of an agile internationalist and antiracist movement.²⁷

Even though migration of students to the FRG had very different preconditions to labour migration, connections and transitions between these two groups existed. By seeking new channels of opposition at first, the student shaped New Left began to criticize West German migration policy. It was none other than the famous

23 M. Bojadžijev, 'Geschichte der Migration neu schreiben, Erkundungen und Entdeckungen jenseits der Grenzen nationaler Geschichtsschreibung', in Hess et al., *Crossing Munich*, 102–5.

24 M.J. Miller, *Foreign Workers in Western Europe, An Emerging Political Force* (New York, NY 1981).

25 W.A. Pojmann (ed.), *Migration and Activism in Europe since 1945* (New York, NY 2008).

26 Q. Slobodian, 'Dissident Guests, Afro-Asian Students and Transnational Activism in the West German Protest Movement', in Pojmann (ed.), *Migration and Activism in Europe since 1945*, 33–55, here 48; See also Q. Slobodian, *Foreign Front, Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC 2012).

27 N. Seibert, *Vergessene Proteste, Internationalismus und Antirassismus 1964–1983* (Münster 2008).

student leader Rudi Dutschke who in 1968 advocated agitation among foreign workers especially.²⁸ Fulfilling this call often was only possible through the help of foreign students. The ‘dissident guests’ therefore build one of the few bridges between university and factory struggles in West German history. Furthermore, students in the FRG – foreigners and natives – often switched between academic life and factory experience. Due to the shortage of labour it was easy to get employed in the industry, which was, since 1968, an explicit strategy of the New Left to get in touch with workers and agitate them for class struggle.²⁹ For some migrants factory work was an economic necessity to finance their academic studies.³⁰

The connection between social movements and the labour activism during the 1960s and 1970s in general has been set out by Peter Birke.³¹ He shows with numerous examples the relevance of wildcat strikes to change labour conditions and production processes. Many of these wildcat strikes were mainly triggered by migrants and ignited student activists’ interest – some of whom were migrants themselves. In a few cases it is even possible to speak of these students inside and outside the factories as having played a decisive role in the development of migrants’ political organization.

Only one published monograph is explicitly confined to the ‘struggles of migration’.³² Through different instances of multinational shop- and neighbourhood-groups Manuela Bojadžijev puts forward the convincing argument that mobilization of migrants has often been central to the development of broader political activism in the FRG.

A broader understanding of political activity, which includes the cultural contribution made by migrants, provides Rita Chin with the subject of her study about the West German public debates on the ‘Guest Worker’ question. She is convinced that ‘the ideological work of writing and representing alternative conceptions of the nation... was absolutely crucial for initiating critical dialogue on the place of labor migrants in postwar German society’.³³ The cultural production can indeed be seen as a political project intervening in the upcoming debates about a multicultural Germany. Besides earlier Italian-language attempts of self-representation, Rita Chin sees the more prominent appearance

28 R. Dutschke, *Die Geschichtlichen Bedingungen für den internationalen Emanzipationskampf (Speech on the International Vietnam-Congress February 1968)*, printed in R. Dutschke, *Geschichte ist machbar, Texte über das herrschende Falsche und die Radikalität des Friedens* (Berlin 1991), 105–21, here 114.

29 For a review and discussion of these experiences see: J.O. Arps, *Frühschicht, Linke Fabrikintervention in den 70er Jahren* (Hamburg 2011).

30 Such as Greek students who were active against the dictatorship. The Greek Consulates often removed their passports and blocked bank transfers from their families.

31 P. Birke, *Wilde Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder, Arbeitskämpfe, Gewerkschaften und soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik und Dänemark* (Frankfurt am Main 2007).

32 M. Bojadžijev, *Die windige Internationale, Rassismus und Kämpfe der Migration* (Münster 2008).

33 R.C.-K. Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge and New York 2007), 23.

of German-language ‘guest-worker-literature’ – such as Aras Ören’s *Berlin Triologie*³⁴ – at the critical juncture of the early 1970s when large numbers of foreign workers had started to protest against stratification of skills and wages along ethnic lines.³⁵ A deeper analysis of this interrelation of migrants’ political protest and ideological work would provide an important addition. The aim of this article is to show the multifaceted forms of protest migrant workers developed in the context of German trade unions’ migration policy.

In the early 1970s, as the DGB looked back on the previous 15 years of trade union policies on migration, they appeared to have suffered from historical amnesia, in as much as they seemed to have forgotten their initial aversion to the employment of foreign workers. The consistent line in the position papers and recommendations was that:

after the years of economic recovery, more than ten million refugees and displaced persons had been incorporated into the work force... 1955, the then much-needed arrangement for the employment of foreign mobile workers came – for the first time not without and not against the labour unions.³⁶

Trade union concerns and reservations seem to have been suppressed during the boom years as a result of the obvious benefits of the employment of foreign workers. In stark contrast to the consequent – somewhat disingenuous – saga invented by the trade unions was a DGB declaration of 1955, which reacted to the government’s plan to agree with Italy on a recruitment contract:

The union movement is largely internationalist in their thinking and acting... The unions have never made a secret of the fact that their willingness to accept free movement of labour force in Europe is restricted to that extent, as at first the highest possible full employment in our own country must be secured... One therefore must come to believe, that at least for the foreseeable future, the commitment of foreign workers in Germany is not required.³⁷

This statement clearly expressed that, as far as the unions were concerned, there was no need to open up the labour market. In addition, the declaration pointed out the contradictions between the claims the trade unions made in relation to being internationalist and their advocacy of a nationally organized working class.

34 A. Ören, *Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstraße*, trans. H. Achmend Schmiede and J. Schenk (Berlin 1973); A. Ören, *Der kurze Traum aus Kagithane*, trans. A. Schmiede and J. Theobaldy (Berlin 1974); A. Ören, *Die Fremde ist auch ein Haus*, trans. G. Kraft (Berlin 1980).

35 Chin, *The Guest Worker Question* (2007), 64.

36 M. Diamant, ‘Bemerkungen zur sozialen und rechtlichen Lage ausländischer Arbeitnehmer’, *Studentische Politik*, 1 (1970), 44 [Translation and accentuation by the author].

37 DGB’s Statement about the question of foreign workforce, send in the program of the north-west German Broadcast ‘Aus der Welt der Arbeit’ Hamburg 4 December 1954, in extracts printed in: ‘Eine Stellungnahme des DGB’, *Die Quelle*, 6 (1955), 37 [Translation by the author].

The first recruitment agreement in 1955 had been achieved without the influence of the trade unions and had in fact been enacted against their will. The trade unions' advocacy of greater control upon migrants' entry to West Germany was also notable by its absence.³⁸ Also after the first recruitment trade unions were very sceptical about the need for foreign labour and stressed continuously that a bettering of work conditions and salary would pull enough native Germans from other regions or hidden reserves (for example unemployed housewives).³⁹

The realization of the need to employ foreign workers did not come until many years later, when the benefits – for the unions – of labour migration became more obvious. The metalworkers' union declared in 1966 that the recruitment of foreign workers was necessary for continued economic growth and full employment.⁴⁰ It was clear that a reduction in working hours would not be possible without the opening-up of the labour market.⁴¹ This was due to the huge demand for workers at the time. Also German businesses were unable to use migrants to reduce opposition during trade disputes, because foreign workers usually showed solidarity with their native German counterparts during labour disputes, and the trade unions realized this fact.⁴² Furthermore, many German workers consequently benefited from training courses which were made available as a result of the so-called '*Unterschichtung*' by migrants. The migration sociologist Friedrich Heckmann calculated in 1981 that from 1960 to 1970, 2.3 million native German workers rose from blue- to white-collar positions.⁴³ This change was due, largely, to the de facto position migrant workers adopted. Migrants, in contrast to native German workers, were concentrated in low-paid and manual occupations. Even if the trade unions never really lost their primary concerns of recruitment the benefits for the German economy seemed to prevail.⁴⁴

During the first half of the 1960s the federal government and the trade associations attempted to halt a further reduction in working hours. To this end, they attempted to play off native German workers' resentments against foreign workers by highlighting that Germans working one hour of overtime per week would reduce the recruitment of foreign workers by about 500,000.⁴⁵ The climax of this campaign was a protest strike of more than 5000 workers in Baden-Württemberg which was triggered by a headline in the tabloid press. The BILD used a speech by the trade organizations' president as an opportunity to employ the headline: 'Guest

38 Trede 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration', 54.

39 Ibid., 60.

40 I.G. Metall (ed.), *Die Ausländerwelle und die Gewerkschaften* (Frankfurt 1966), quoted in S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (Oxford 1973), 129.

41 H.-W. Schmuhl, *Arbeitsmarktpolitik und Arbeitsverwaltung in Deutschland 1871–2002. Zwischen Fürsorge, Hoheit und Markt* (Nürnberg 2003), 440.

42 I.G. Metall (ed.), *Geschäftsbericht 1962/1964* (1965), 95.

43 F. Heckmann, *Die Bundesrepublik – ein Einwanderungsland? Zur Soziologie der Gastarbeiterbevölkerung als Einwanderungsminorität* (Stuttgart 1981), 169f.

44 Trede, 'Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration' (2012), 186.

45 Cf. H. Anagnostidis, 'Gewerkschaften und Ausländerbeschäftigung', in E. Klee (ed.), *Gastarbeiter, Analysen und Berichte* (Frankfurt am Main 1972), 110.

Workers more industrious than German Workers?’⁴⁶ German workers were afraid that migration would create wage pressure and employers would prefer to recruit migrants than to hire native Germans.⁴⁷ The Metal-Workers Union (*IG Metall*) rapidly pacified this strike and assuaged the fears by highlighting the equality which could be achieved through industrial and social law and pointing out both groups’ common opponent.⁴⁸

With the arrival of the millionth migrant in 1964 it became clear that the West German working-class had become multinational. The German trade unions and their native German members undoubtedly benefited from migration. Even though the functional split was obvious at the time, the unions were able to avoid more serious ethnic conflicts by appealing to class consciousness and solidarity.⁴⁹ During the 1960s, on the one hand unity of the working class was proven in several trade conflicts, such as the strike of the metal workers in Baden-Württemberg in 1963, while on the other hand migrants also protested and initiated wildcat strikes when they felt injustice. Several wildcat strikes in the mining industry and a famous strike of Italians at Volkswagen in Wolfsburg testify to migrants’ early labour activism.⁵⁰

Despite guaranteed equality through industrial and social law, clear differences between German and foreign workers existed. Migrants tended to occupy lower economic positions and tended to be situated at the bottom of the management hierarchy with most migrants being classified in the lowest income groups.⁵¹ This was often the case even if their skills and occupations would otherwise have meant they were in a higher income bracket. In addition, migrant workers were in a precarious position legally; due to the laws which applied specifically to foreigners (*Ausländerrecht*). The laws regarding the issuing of residency and work permits were subject to interpretation and the right to political activity was also restricted.⁵² For a long time the unions were simply unable to cope with the unique legal status of foreign workers.⁵³ When, in 1965, the Aliens Act replaced the Aliens Police

46 Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980*, 223.

47 For a detailed description about the so called BILD-Strike, its background and public opinion see, Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität* (2001), 170–8; More extensively on the trade unions’ stance in this situation see: Trede, ‘Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration’ (2009), 115–7.

48 Schlagzeile löst Unruhe aus, Metallarbeiter verschiedener Betriebe legten die Arbeit nieder, *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* (2 April 1966); *Metall* (Newspaper of IG Metall), 7 (5 April 1966), 1.

49 Oliver Trede emphasizes that the delegates to trade unions’ conferences never made racist statements and the unions campaigned a lot against xenophobia among workers, but letters to the unions’ press showed the racist stance of many members. Trede, ‘Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration’ (2012), 190.

50 In particular in spring 1962 in several mines foreigners went on strike. Cf.: Archive for Social Movements (Bochum), Archive of the Miners’ union IGBE 13797 (Collection of press material); On the strike at Wolfsburg in 1962 cf.: Hedwig Richter/Ralf Richter, ‘Zum Streik der italienischen Arbeitsmigranten im Volkswagenwerk Wolfsburg 1962’, in *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (2008) 7, 72–88; Birke, *Wilde Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder*, 117f.

51 For the position of migrants in the plant hierarchy see: S. Geiselberger, *Schwarzbuch Ausländische Arbeiter* (Frankfurt am Main 1973), 71–9.

52 Dohse, *Ausländische Arbeiter und bürgerlicher Staat*, 292f.

53 For the later criticism of the trade unions see: Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (ed), ‘Ausländergesetz ’65 – Alternativentwurf ’70, Kritik und Reform’, *Studentische Politik*, 1 (1970);

Regulation of 1938, the unions were again to be noted for their lack of advice or interest. The sweeping clause: ‘a residence authorisation can be granted, if the foreigner’s presence does not affect the interests of the Federal Republic’, and the incorporation of a clause which made it possible to interdict political activity for foreigners completely intensified the precarious status of migrants.⁵⁴ The story of the trade unions at this time was therefore one of indifference to the fate of migrant workers. The result of their indifference was the legal division between native and migrant workers – the perpetuation of a divided working class.⁵⁵

Although the trade unions repeatedly stressed that foreign workers showed solidarity in collective campaigns and in many cases became members of the unions, the economic disruption in 1967 proved that the trade unions stuck to the aforementioned policy of preferential treatment of native German workers at the expense of migrants through the so-called ‘*Inländerprimat*’. Unemployment levels during the crisis were disproportionately higher among migrants than native German workers. The precarious employment and legal status of foreign workers gave German workers a distinct advantage: the role of migrant workers as an economic buffer had apparently been proven. The DGB expressly endorsed this idea in a meeting with delegations of Italian unions.⁵⁶

Also the DGB’s demand in 1973 for a stop to foreign recruiting must be considered in the context of the ‘*Inländerprimat*’.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the DGB realized that some migrants would decide to settle permanently in West Germany. The DGB therefore justified their demand to stop recruitment from abroad by arguing that it would not only protect German workers, but would ease the pressure on existing migrant workers from further migration and consequent labour market competition. Heinz Richter formulated this argument as follows:

This demand [for a stop to recruitment] wasn’t and isn’t for the German Trade Union Confederation a rejection of his policies, a positive stand on the employment of foreign workers, but a protection for those foreign workers who are already employed in the Federal Republic. If we would recruit more foreign workers, although foreign

‘Forderungen des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes zur Reform des Ausländerrechts’, decision of the DGB’s federal executive board from 6 February 1973 (Düsseldorf 1973); Trede, ‘Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration’ (2009), 222–7.

54 K. Schönwälder, ‘Ist nur Liberalisierung Fortschritt? Zur Entstehung des ersten Ausländergesetzes der Bundesrepublik’, in Motte et al., *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik* (1999), 127–44, here 134f.

55 K. Dohse, ‘Staatliche Disposition über ausländische Arbeiter – Aufrechterhaltung einer gespaltenen Arbeiterschaft’, in *Jahrbuch für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*, 6 (1977) 187–220.

56 At the meeting at 4 April were delegations of DGB and the Italian Unions CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori) and UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro); Rieker, ‘*Ein Stück Heimat findet man ja immer*’, 79; Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD) 5/DGAZ 186.

57 For the political history of the recruitment stop see: U. Herbert and K. Hunn, ‘Gastarbeiter und Gastarbeiterpolitik in der Bundesrepublik, Vom Beginn der offiziellen Anwerbung bis zum Anwerbestopp (1955–1973)’, in A. Schildt et al. (eds) *Dynamische Zeiten, Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg 2000), 273–310, here: 308; M. Berlinghoff, ‘Der europäische Anwerbestopp’, in Oltmer et al., *Das ‘Gastarbeiter’-System*, 149–64.

workers may become unemployed, these new foreign workers would possibly jeopardize the jobs of these, who are already in our workforce.⁵⁸

The *'Inländerprimat'* was arguably only effective in relation to German workers. After 1973 also the unions pushed for a strict verification of the employment centres if migrants could be replaced with natives.⁵⁹ Despite this, it was profoundly difficult to remove the residency and work permits of migrant workers who had been employed in West Germany for more than five years. The DGB thus extended the *'Inländerprimat'* to encompass migrants who were already resident in West Germany. This was due in no small measure to the vast reduction in the number of trade union members during the first half of the 1960s. Migrant workers had therefore become increasingly important to the unions and some unions recorded a considerable increase in the number of new members from the migrant communities.

The general level of organization of foreign workers in the DGB unions doubled from about 15 per cent in 1965⁶⁰ to about 30 per cent in 1970.⁶¹ This was only slightly below the levels among German workers.⁶² The industrial unions – which experienced the biggest increase in the numbers of foreign workers they represented – achieved significant results even earlier. A prominent example of this is the miners' union IGBE which included 25 per cent of migrant workers in their membership in 1963.⁶³ The unions were thus forced to compromise on their formulation of the *'Inländerprimat'* in order not to risk the mass exodus of migrant workers. The loss in membership numbers would have also been considerable for the unions. Furthermore, the migrants also tended to work in sectors which were susceptible to labour disputes and were therefore important in the negotiating process.⁶⁴

In addition to such tactical considerations, the trade unions came to the conclusion – in the late 1960s – that the employment of migrants could not be considered as a short-term phenomenon and that existing discrimination had to be eliminated. During the federal congress in Munich in 1969 the DGB called on the government to 'do everything possible to prevent discrimination against foreign colleagues, resulting from the Aliens Act'.⁶⁵ Indeed, in 1973 the DGB published a

58 H. Richter, 'DGB und Ausländerbeschäftigung', *Gewerkschaftlichen Monatshefte*, 1 (1974), 40 [Translation by the author].

59 Trede, 'Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration' (2012), 192f.

60 Circular letter DGB department organization, Düsseldorf 6 July 1966, 2, AdsD 5/DGAZ 320.

61 K. Schönhoven and H. Weber (eds), executed by W.r von Kieseritzky, *Der deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund 1964–1969* (Bonn 2006), 16.

62 Migrants were mostly employed as unskilled workers. In general the level of organization amongst all unskilled workers in Germany was much higher. Therefore the high percentages are biased. For more information about the rate of unionization amongst migrants see Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration' (2009), 343–5.

63 Member statistics on foreign workers, AdsD 5/DGAZ 320.

64 Geiselberger, *Schwarzbuch Ausländische Arbeiter*, loc. cit.

65 Protocol of the DGB's 8th Official National Congress in Munich, 18–23 May 1969 (Düsseldorf 1969), proposal 436, 395.

call for a reform of the Aliens Act. The biggest criticism was that the issuing of residence permits was up to administrative discretion and the rights of migrants to political activity was limited.⁶⁶ Crucially however, this criticism did not include a rejection of the *'Inländerprimat'* or a call to abolish the need for a link between the residency and employment permits.

This position was most poignantly articulated in the debates that took place during the international trade union conferences on migration. Delegates from trade union federations in Europe and North Africa met on three separate occasions during the 1970s in order to agree on the issues surrounding migration. The Yugoslavian and Italian unions, as non-aligned organizations, took the initiative. Even those trade unions with which the DGB had traditionally refused to cooperate, due to their militant and communist orientation, were involved in the discussions. Trade unionists from 23 organizations and both world-federations – International Confederation of Free Unions and World Federation of Trade Unions – came together at the first meeting, which was held in Belgrade in 1972. The media reported that this congress had failed to achieve anything like its full potential. The achievement of the first congress was a joint communiqué containing no concrete aims. The DGB was particularly hostile to the demands made by some trade unions for the free movement of workers in Europe.⁶⁷ Hans Tigges of the chemical-, paper- and ceramic-workers union commented on the ambition of the Swedish Federation of trade unions for the rapid naturalization of immigrants with the words: 'This view is actually contrary to the opinion of the German unions, which represented at this conference the position that in principle the employment of foreign workers in the FRG should be of long-term, even if permanent, but temporary'.⁶⁸

The DGB therefore changed its position to the advocacy of the permanent employment of migrants which ought nonetheless to be a temporary solution. The idea that migrants by the majority would return to their countries of origin had evidently not yet been completely abandoned by the DGB's officials.⁶⁹ The permanent employment of migrants should not lead to a real immigration, not to mention a naturalization.

The second conference was held in Istanbul in 1973 and received significantly less media attention than the first. From Spain and Portugal only delegates of the exile organizations could take part; the Greek delegate, who was travelling from Germany, was refused entry and the Turkish union *Türk-Is* impinged on the participation of the concurrent more radical union *DISK*. The meeting was mainly affected by the opposition of the DGB to the Italian and

66 'Forderungen des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes zur Reform des Ausländerrechts', decision of the DGB's federal executive board from 6th February 1973 (Düsseldorf 1973).

67 Report of Hans Tigges about Trade Union Conference of immigration and emigration countries from 24 to 26 April 1972 in Belgrade; AdSD 5/DGAI 477.

68 loc. cit. [Translation by the author].

69 M. Kontos, *Verbandsstrategien zur Ausländerbeschäftigung in der Bundesrepublik, Eine Analyse der Integrationsstrategien der Unternehmerverbände und Gewerkschaften gegenüber den ausländischen Arbeitern* (Königstein Tessin 1983), 208.

French unions. While the DGB wanted to discuss some practical suggestions, the Italian and French unionists considered agreements on basic positions on migration as more important.⁷⁰ Again, there were no concrete results. The *Vorwärts*⁷¹ reported that the DGB delegation blocked a proposal of the Swedish delegation, which demanded the implementation of lessons of the local language during working hours.⁷²

After the second meeting the DGB decided to avoid an institutionalization of these meetings and the German unions agreed to hold the third meeting in Germany.⁷³ The 1976 meeting in Stuttgart was to be the last meeting of its kind. Notably this was after the federal government had decided to stop the recruitment of foreign workers in 1973. At this meeting more than all the others, the Turkish trade union federation expressed considerable criticism of the DGB's policy:

When it comes to their own workers, the unions fight like lions. In doing so they are strongly supported by our workers. This has strengthened the combat force of the unions in the hosting countries. But if it's about the rights of foreign workers, they don't champion enough.⁷⁴

A final meeting of the preparatory committee could not come to agreement as to where the next meeting ought to take place. The DGB stated that they felt a further meeting was unnecessary and it did not, in the end, take place. It instead sought to focus on the implementation of the jointly developed recommendations and suggestions. Indeed, the international activities of the DGB with respect to labour migration shifted before the Stuttgart meeting to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) founded in 1973.⁷⁵ In June 1974 the ICFTU held a meeting in Geneva on the working and living conditions of migrant workers and the ETUC installed a committee for migratory labour at its second conference in 1976 in London. Changes to the position of the German trade unions never were a result of this collaboration. Especially during the second half of the 1970s the trade unions in Germany had little opposition to the migration policy of the federal government or European institutions. The DGB often made a rhetorical connection between the recruitment policy and development assistance and international solidarity. In

70 K. Manfrass, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik und den einzelnen Herkunftsländern im Zeichen der Arbeitskräftewanderung. Das Entstehen neuer Beziehungsstrukturen im staatlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bereich', in R. Lohrmann and K. Manfrass (ed.) *Ausländerbeschäftigung und internationale Politik, Zur Analyse transnationaler Sozialprozesse* (München 1974), 253–335, here 312.

71 Paper of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).

72 E. Rondholz, 'Ausländische Arbeitnehmer, Ungelöste Probleme, Es fehlt noch an gewerkschaftlicher Zusammenarbeit', *VORWÄRTS*, 22 (November 1973).

73 Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration' (2009), 371.

74 K. Dohse, 'Ausländerpolitik der europäischen Gewerkschaften, Eine Analyse der 3. Konferenz von Gewerkschaften aus Europa und dem Maghreb zu Fragen der Migration', *Journal G*, 7/8 (1976), 25.

75 Oliver Trede assumes that the Stuttgart meeting in 1976 was the last one of this kind. Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration' (2009), 371.

reality labour migration did not lead to effective international collaboration of trade unions which would have been more than an exchange of union representatives.

Even if the unions' strategies in relation to migration policy are judged to be ambiguous, it has nonetheless become generally accepted that the Aliens Act led to a functional split within the trade unions, with German workers in permanent employment receiving full protection against dismissal on the one hand, and foreign workers with temporary contracts and fewer rights on the other. The unions were concerned that this division would lead to the separate organization of migrants. The establishment of foreign workers' associations and the activities of 'guest worker alliances' were therefore closely monitored and sometimes challenged. It was hoped that the organizational integration of migrants would counteract such efforts. The idea of giving the specific interests of foreign workers a dedicated space within the trade unions was not seriously considered.⁷⁶ This was not the case until in 1983 *IG Metall* became the first union to treat migrant workers as a semi-autonomous group in the same way as young people and women had traditionally been accommodated within the trade unions.⁷⁷

Soon after arriving in West Germany, some migrants attempted to develop self-organized associations outside – but not in opposition to – the unions. In 1966 there were already more than 60 associations of Turkish workers. Altogether these associations had around 20,000 members.⁷⁸ One of the earliest attempts by migrants to become organized was the *Unione Emigrati in Germania* (UEG) with about 1800 members.⁷⁹ The UEG was founded by a Secretary of the *Unione Italiana del Lavoro* (UIL) Andrea Maspoli who was in Germany at the time. The UEG convened an Emigration Parliament in Stuttgart in April of 1964. This approach of self-organization and self-help was at first warmly welcomed and supported by the local *IG Metall* and DGB functionaries. This cordiality did not last however. The President of the 'Parliament' was vocal in his criticism of the alienation debates and immigration restrictions in Switzerland and sent greetings to the so-called 'Free Colonies' of immigrants in Switzerland. The strong influence of the Italian Communist Party on the Free Colonies cast a different light – from the point of view of the DGB – on the Emigration Parliament.⁸⁰ Heinz Richter of the national board of the DGB and Ruggero Ravenna of the UIL agreed that the UIL

76 M. Nikolinakos formulated this idea of a migrant self-organization within the trade unions in 1974. Although his Marxist criticism and suggestions were published in the monthly union-journal the leaders didn't take it into consideration. M. Nikolinakos, 'Integration als Gleichberechtigung. Eine Kritik von Integrations-Konzepten aus marxistischer Sicht', *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, 1 (1974), 20–7.

77 S. Cinar, 'Die Ausländerpolitik der bundesdeutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung', in S. Özkara (ed.) *Türkische Migranten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Stellungnahme der türkischen Wissenschaftler, Intellektuellen, Lehrer, Gewerkschafter und Sozialberater zu Ausländerfragen und Ausländerpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main 1988), 75–89, here: 78.

78 Hunn, 'Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück...', 148.

79 Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration' (2009), 138.

80 For the founding documents and the DGB's correspondence concerning the immigration parliament in Stuttgart see: AdSd 5/DGAZ 36.

would not, as demanded by Richter, dissociate itself sharply from the Emigration Parliament but express its concerns, and continuously monitor the activities of its secretary Maspoli in Germany.⁸¹

The DGB even took action in the case of a club for foreign workers in Germany (VAAD). The club saw itself as apolitical. The VAAD organized language courses and aimed to provide financial support to families who had suffered bereavement. Of particular note was the nine month notice period which members had to give in order to leave the association as well as the high membership costs of DM3.5 per week. These conditions were the main reasons that the VAAD was not considered a potential rival to the existing unions. Nevertheless a DGB functionary from Munich declared in a letter to the Federal Executive Board: 'A vacuum for this clearly exists, because we are not doing much in this area or rather can not do much because of the lack of funds. That we do more would be very, very important'.⁸² To learn more about the club and to find ways to attack it, the DGB sought 'trustworthy Spaniards' to join the club and report back.⁸³

The trade unions had a general suspicion at this time that the political activities of the migrants had been infiltrated by communists. This reaction differed in part when the activities were against the homeland regimes of the migrants, rather than an involvement in German politics. Action against Spanish and Portuguese regimes as well as against the Greek military junta was appreciated by West German unions. The unions undoubtedly supported this action because some of the leading functionaries within them had survived German fascism in exile themselves or even had fought during the Spanish Civil War. The most prominent example of this was Max Diamant, who worked in Spain for an exile office of the Socialist Workers Party (SAP) – a splinter organization of the Social-Democratic-Party – before he went into exile in Mexico. In 1961 he was entrusted with the development and management of the Office of Foreign Workers in the organization department of the Federal Executive Board of *IG Metall*.⁸⁴

For the migrants, the unions were often an effective defence against oppression by the West German state. The political activity of migrants was threatened by the Aliens Act and trade union mobilizations against the regimes of the migrants' countries of origin were only rarely combated with repression. The positioning of the unions in this regard was, however, ambivalent. While on the one hand political actions were welcomed and supported by the foreign-language publications, rallies and demonstrations, concerns were raised about the militancy of some migrants and sometimes there was a lack of solidarity with the migrants. This

81 Memo of a conversation about the UEG between colleagues Ravenna, Kirschen, Diamant, Viola, Richter, de Haan, 6. July 1965, AdsD 5/DGAZ 36.

82 Letter Ludwig Koch (DGB-Kreis München) to Dept. Organization (Düsseldorf), 22 July 1965, AdsD 5/DGAZ 576.

83 Ibid.

84 M. Scharrer, 'Max Diamant – Erzählte Lebensgeschichte', *Neue Gesellschaft, Frankfurter Hefte*, 9 (Bonn September 1988), 805–14.

ambivalence is shown through the example of the Spanish community in Remscheid.⁸⁵

The district secretary of the Remscheid DGB prevented Spanish migrants – from Remscheid, Cologne and Wuppertal – from travelling to an unregistered demonstration outside the Spanish Consulate in Düsseldorf. The mobilization to support students in Spain who were striking for the right to freedom of association. Only 400 people ended up attending the demonstration in February 1965. The next day the Spanish Cultural Centre and three apartments belonging to Spaniards were raided by Remscheid police. In addition, several Spaniards were arrested and questioned. The DGB's national board denied legal assistance for its Spanish members because those concerned had obviously been 'communist agents'. The district secretary disagreed with this view and wrote that, 'the Spanish colleagues in the main are indifferent people, who are not least through our Spanish publications riled at the current Spanish regime and still cannot differentiate between communism and socialism'. The national board countered that there were also some Germans who could not yet differentiate on this issue.⁸⁶

The political orientations of migrants in exile did not threaten the unions in any way. Despite this, the migrants' actions were viewed as an avenue through which the more militant, communist elements might be able to infiltrate the West German trade union movement. Therefore the DGB initiated a study on the 'infiltration of foreign guest-workers'. Even though the study summarized in 1965, that 'activities of radical political groups among the guest workers don't endanger Germany's security seriously', a general suspicion within the trade unions couldn't be eliminated.⁸⁷ Nevertheless migrants also gained a strong and important ally in the German trade unions in their struggle against the oppressive regimes in their countries of origin.⁸⁸

As the length of migrants' residency increased, so too did their capacity to fight for changes in living and working conditions in West Germany. Various wildcat strikes in the early 1970s addressed the issues of the '*Unterschichtung*' and of the migrants' special role in the production process head-on. In Munich in 1972, Italian workers at BMW went on strike in an attempt to be promoted to jobs at a level for which

85 For the following: Archive-stock 4 E 85 Werner Böwing, Archive of DOMiD Cologne (Dokumentationsstelle und Museum der Migration nach Deutschland e.V.).

86 Ibid.

87 'Infiltration ausländischer Gastarbeiter in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland'; AdsD 5/DGAI000012; Also after the Infiltration Report the offices of the trade unions' executive boards collected information about non-union activities and organizations of migrants. Cf. Trede, 'Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration' (2009), 242f.

88 The trade unions organized frequent rallies, demonstrations and educational seminars opposing the autocratic regimes in Spain, Portugal and Greece, and the May Days of the DGB were always visited by groups of migrant workers, who used the demonstrations to agitate against their homeland regimes. See: S. Goeke, "'Wir nehmen unsere Sache jetzt selbst in die Hand", Von protestierenden Gästen und multinationalen Revolutionär/innen', in Z.S. Pfeifer (ed.) *Auf den Barrikaden, Proteste in München seit 1945* (München 2011), 117–26; H. Anagnostidis, 'Gewerkschaften und Ausländerbeschäftigung', in E. Klett (ed.) *Gastarbeiter, Analysen und Berichte* (Frankfurt am Main 1972), 104–37, here 114.

their year-long training in Pisa had prepared them. As an act of solidarity with the entire workforce, they also demanded a paid break of 20 minutes a day and an increase in pay of DM1. Despite this move towards solidarity, the Italian workers were not supported and were dismissed even with the support of the workers' council. The trade unionists also shared no sympathy with the demands of the strikers. In contrast to the policy they had adopted, the trade union issued a statement in response to the charge that they did not take care of migrants' needs, '... that this might be right regarding the group of the striking Italians. For they did not become members of the union and the IG Metalls' task isn't the problem solving of non-unionized workers'.⁸⁹

A further example of a workers' council refusing to protect migrants – a union which counted the majority of migrants among its membership – was the strike at the Ford factory in Cologne in 1973. This uprising is perhaps the most well known immigrant uprising in history of the Federal Republic. It was triggered by the dismissal of more than 300 Turkish workers, who consistently returned to work late after their vacation. With a unionization rate of 90 per cent among Turkish workers in the factory and 500 elected foreign shop stewards, only three of the 25 full-time shop stewards had a foreign passport.⁹⁰ The works council elections in 1972 showed the strained relationship between the unionized works' council and the foreign workers. Nearly 46 per cent of the votes were for lists not set up by *IG Metall*, although at that time, nearly 70 per cent of employees were members of *IG Metall*. A list with a single candidate, the Turkish worker Özbacsi, received 31 per cent of the vote. Arguing Özbacsi would not have the necessary knowledge and did not have sufficient language skills, his appointment as a full-timer was refused by the other council members.⁹¹

The wildcat strike ended with the violent storming of the factory by police, which was supported by German shop stewards. Several workers were sacked or gave notice 'voluntarily'. In its first public comments *IG Metall* blamed radical, left-wing agitation for the violence. Shortly after the strike, the conference of the permanent German–Turkish trade union commission issued a statement in which they blamed the management of the Ford plant for the violence.⁹²

A strike at Pierburg in Neuss broke out under completely different circumstances several days before the strike in Cologne. Mainly foreign women went on strike over the discriminative practice of grouping women into so-called light wage categories. Since 1970 the staff had demanded the abolition of the light wage categories I and II which were indeed created to keep female wage categories, even though it was against the constitution. With strike actions in 1970 the staff of Pierburg (mainly female foreign workers) achieved the abolition of light wage category I and a promise from the management to abolish the second. After three years the management didn't fulfil this promise and the workers went on

89 Works meeting 7 August 1972, BMW-Archive, File 1532,1, 'Betriebsversammlungen 1971–1973'.

90 Hunn, 'Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück...', 257.

91 Türken-Streik: Faden gerissen, *Der Spiegel*, 37 (1973), 30.

92 Loc. cit.

strike again in June and finally in August 1973.⁹³ The last strike took place in the context of simultaneous strikes by mostly German female workers for equal pay in the AEG and telephone manufacturing companies (*Deutsche Telefonwerke*).⁹⁴ Despite the unofficial character of these strikes *IG Metall* declared its solidarity with the strikers and the strike was successful in achieving its aims. The workers even received pay for the four days they were on strike. As Jennifer Miller noted, the Pierburg Strike ‘revolutionized wages in West Germany’.⁹⁵ The foreign women were the first and most effective who struggled against the wage discrimination of women in the young republic – a fact which counters many stereotypes about Mediterranean women.

The willingness of the workers’ councils and shop stewards to deal with the demands and interests of foreign colleagues was far from uniform in application. In some cases German workers’ councils stood firmly behind the claims of migrants; in others they reacted with incomprehension and defamation. Despite the oppressive elements of the Aliens Act, strike action in 1973 was characterized by migrant action and, as Jennifer Miller pointed out, ‘it is possible that foreign workers’ labour activism also promoted the end of recruitment in 1973’.⁹⁶ Even though the strikes had very different results, they posed enormous challenges to West German society and to the trade unions in particular.⁹⁷

At the beginning of the 1970s the number of migrant protests outside the workplace increased, despite of or – perhaps more accurately – especially against the Aliens Act. The idea of a parliament for migrants resurfaced in 1971 with communal ‘guest-worker parliaments’ which demanded a political voting right for migrants and in some cases tried to advise the communal government in questions concerning the foreign population.⁹⁸ While the media was initially highly sympathetic of these approaches the trade unions couldn’t reconcile to a communal, much less a federal, voting right for migrants and stressed that in their opinion these ‘parliaments’ mainly were constructions of the German radical left.⁹⁹ Even if these approaches didn’t endure much longer than a few months, they laid the institutional and personal foundations of the later official communal advisory boards for foreigners.

In Frankfurt foreigners squatted in empty houses together with German students and workers in 1970 and 1971. It was also the migrants who introduced the

93 J.A. Miller, ‘Postwar Negotiations’ (2008), 160f.

94 Gruppe Internationaler Marxisten (ed.), *Pierburg* (without location 1974), 110; Birke Wilde *Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder*, 297.

95 J.A. Miller, ‘Postwar Negotiations’ (2008), 160.

96 *Ibid.*, 181.

97 Redaktionskollektiv ‘express’ (ed.), *Spontane Streiks 1973, Krise der Gewerkschaftspolitik* (Offenbach 1974); E. Hildebrandt and W. Olle, *Ihr Kampf ist unser Kampf, Ursachen, Verlauf und Perspektiven der Ausländerstreiks 1973 in der BRD* (Offenbach 1973); G. Kosack and S. Castles, ‘Gewerkschaften und ausländische Arbeitnehmer’, in O. Jacobi et al. (eds) *Gewerkschaften und Klassenkampf, Kritisches Jahrbuch 1974* (Frankfurt am Main 1974), 176–90.

98 Trede, ‘Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulierung und Integration’ (2009), 245f.

99 M. Kontos, *Verbandsstrategien zur Ausländerbeschäftigung in der Bundesrepublik. Eine Analyse der Integrationsstrategien der Unternehmerverbände und Gewerkschaften gegenüber den ausländischen Arbeitern* (Königstein/Ts. 1983), 182f.

rent-strike in Germany in the summer of 1971 by refusing to pay rents that were more than 10 per cent of their wages.¹⁰⁰ Thereby the political action of migrants again built the important context for social struggles in Germany: the consequent squatting and connected riots in Frankfurt's Westend.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, the nationwide protests against the reduction of child benefit for migrant families in 1974 developed – in many cities – into a radical, democratic movement, which also demanded voting rights for migrants. These issues were fought out with the influence of the trade unions and had a much wider, societal impact. The protagonists of this movement were in part explicitly against a usurpation of protests by other organizations. A Turkish member of the Munich Child Benefit Committee put it this way: 'We now take our cause into our own hands. We do not want to be discriminated and thrown away any more'.¹⁰²

The claim for equality and civil rights outlined in these protest movements confronted the West German government with new challenges. At the same time migration caused an international exchange between the extra-parliamentary movements of Europe. For example the Italian group *Lotta Continua* had close contact with the West-German *Sponti*-scene.¹⁰³ In several cities such as Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg and West-Berlin, German branches of the operaist group were founded. These Italian groups often criticized the approach of German students in terms of their agitation of workers. The Munich group '*Arbeitersache*' (workers' cause), which emerged from the '68s' grass roots workers groups, looked at this exchange as a form of liberation. In a later review of the political work of the '*Arbeitersache*' the activists highlighted that *Lotta Continua* mainly brought:

positive moments. For example, that policy means to integrate the life-context; that one can live, celebrate, sing and not only discuss with the workers In many questions the LC [Lotta Continua] was the decisive forward striving moment for us.¹⁰⁴

The tangible achievements made by migrants from the late 1960s onwards would have seemed unthinkable to migrants in Germany at the beginning of the 1960s. Their main achievement was the establishment of extra-parliamentary activities in the context of the restrictive Aliens Act, which allowed the authorities to interdict political activity of foreigners. For the unions it seemed to be certain that the intervention of the multinational operational groups were actually triggered by operational labour disputes. This has been ignored by research in retrospect

100 Seibert, *Vergessene Proteste*, 134.

101 Bojadžijev, *Die windige Internationale* (2008), 206.

102 C. Schneider, Eine Einsparung die teuer werden kann, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8 November 1974), 3.

103 The Spontis were a political activist movement in West-Germany in the 1970s and '80s. They supported spontaneous struggles of the workers. In many cases their thoughts were linked to the operaist left of Italy.

104 Gruppe Arbeitersache (ed.), *Was wir brauchen müssen wir uns nehmen, Multinationale Betriebs- und Regionsarbeit der Gruppe Arbeitersache München* (München 1973), 58.

often as misjudgement.¹⁰⁵ Further investigation of political activity by and for migrants at the workplace and community levels promises – in this regard – a re-evaluation of the official, arguably disingenuous, history presented by the trade unions.

In many communities the de facto immigration and the consequent demands for equal rights of migrants resulted in the establishment of advisory boards for foreigners. At the beginning of the 1970s, the unions founded internal working committees for foreign workers, where Germans and foreigners met. However, these working committees and advisory boards had no right to create policy, but had a role to play in providing suggestions to the official policy makers. As the demands for electoral rights and a better representation of interests for migrants accumulated in the early 1970s, these advisory boards must also be seen as an attempt to pacify migrant struggles.

In writings and demands about the situation of foreign workers – which the unions had published since the early 1970s – improvements in the living conditions of migrants were a central focus. However, instead of working towards an elimination of the special status of foreigners, the unions were obsessed with the paradigm of integration; a paradigm which continues to create confusion and conflict today. Manuela Bojadžijev identifies the beginning of the use of an inflationary form of the word ‘integration’ and an increase in the acceptability of ‘integration’ as a necessary force with the period dealt with in this essay. Collective demands of migrants for equal rights were restyled to individual acclimatisation capacity.¹⁰⁶

All too often historical migration research chooses such a perspective of integration. The history of migration in Germany therefore appears as a mixture of more or less successful stories of assimilation. The categorizations of migrant workers, asylum seekers and family reunification resulting from the claim of the state to make migration manageable and governable are incorporated uncritically into the modern historical perspective. Through this process, the story of how the history of migration – of migrants’ self-empowerment, acquirement, resistive practices of entry and exit, and political demands – is lost. Migration should instead begin to be understood as an event occurring far upstream and migration policy as its consequence. Migration policy often fails to accommodate both migrants’ adaptability and resistance to the policies intended to control them. Government attempts to control and manage migration often lead to results which are neither beneficial for migrants or society more generally. Migrants’ practices of self-integration, appropriation of space and formulation of claims must move from the fringes of historical research and become the focus of migration studies. The error

105 Birke, *Wilde Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder*, 328.

106 M. Bojadžijev: ‘Es geht immer darum zu sagen, die kollektiven Ansprüche, die in diesen Streiks ... erhoben werden...dass diese kollektiven Forderungen umgemünzt werden in individuelle Anpassungsleistungen ... Und der Integrationsdiskurs verschleiert das völlig’, quoted by P. Kessen, *Und dann haben sie aufgehört zu arbeiten, Eine alternative Integrationsgeschichte*, radio-feature Deutschlandfunk, 17 January 2009, available at: <http://www.dradio.de/df/sendungen/dasfeature/1038641/> (accessed 5 April 2012)

of ignoring the demands made by migrants – as articulated through their protests and resistance to government policies – no longer has a place in migration history.

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Biographical Note

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