Joining the Histories of Labor and Security: Class Formation, Negative Integration, and State Security in Britain and Germany[1]

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"'Firmly grant and firmly refuse' – only in this way will we be able to navigate happily through the Scylla and Charybdis of the social question."[2] This was the recommendation of the liberal daily newspaper *Der Hamburgische Correspondent* on April 25, 1890, in anticipation of May 1. On this date, workers' demonstrations were expected in the German Empire for the first time since the expiration of the Anti-Socialism Act. The fact that the labor movement was now allowed to become politically active again aroused fears in large sections of the middle classes. These fears were reflected in the anxious anticipation of May Day. The article went on: "Those wishes and demands of the working class that are justified" should be "fully recognized," but demands that would endanger economic life should be "opposed resolutely and unbendingly." Here, as in many other sources from the late nineteenth century, the social question was conceptualized as a security problem. By referring to the two sea monsters of Greek mythology, between which seafarers had to navigate, the author presented the situation as highly dangerous. He implied that

1 This article is the result of a research project based at the "Dynamics of Security" Collaborative Research Center at the Universities of Giessen and Marburg and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

2 "Der 1. Mai und die Arbeitgeber speciell in Hamburg," *Hamburgischer Correspondent,* August 25, 1890.

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the choice of course to be taken, given the social question, left no room for negotiation since even a slight deviation to one side or the other would lead to disaster.

Security semantics are ubiquitous in political discourse. Perhaps for this very reason, they have long gone unnoticed in historical research. The history of security has been established as a historiographical field only since the turn of the millennium.[3] This recent turn to a history of security is due to a shift in the understanding of the term. Until the 1990s, security was narrowly defined as state security. Since then, however, the concept of security has broadened in both politics and scholarship. In the field of political science, the so-called Copenhagen School of critical security studies around Ole Waever was groundbreaking.[4] Scholars of the Copenhagen School have devoted themselves to the analysis of so-called "securitization," i.e., the process by which a phenomenon becomes a security problem or, more precisely, is made into one. Critical security studies emphasize the constructed character of (in)security. Such an understanding can be adapted to the field of historiography.[5] For historians, it is particularly relevant that security, defined as the perceived freedom from existential threats, is understood to be a historically and culturally changeable concept.

If we consider security a historically changeable construct, it cannot be restricted to the nation state but should also refer to several other collectives. This extension of the notion of security to other types of collectives is useful because security is often intimately linked to the formation of a collective.[6] The nation state is certainly the most prominent example of how security goals are an important incentive for community building. However, we should consider it as one among many types of what we might call a "security community." The prerequisite is a certain degree of consensus warranting group cohesion. If a perceived threat is meant to be translated into collaborative security action, a collective binding force is necessary. This binding force is the agreement on what is

3 See Eckart Conze, *Geschichte der Sicherheit: Entwicklung–Themen–Perspektiven*, (Göttingen, 2017).

4 For example, Ole Waever, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York, 1995), 46–86; C.A.S.E. Collective, "Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Network Manifesto," *Security Dialogue* 37 (2006): 443–487.

5 See, for example, Eckart Conze, "Securitization: Gegenwartsdiagnose oder historischer Analyseansatz?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012): 453–467; Christoph Kampmann and Ulrich Niggemann, introduction to *Sicherheit in der Frühen Neuzeit: Norm, Praxis, Repräsentation* (Cologne, 2013), 12–27; Beatrice de Graaf and Cornel Zwierlein, "Historicizing Security – Entering the Conspiracy Dispositive," *Historical Social Research* 38 (2013): 46–64; Cornel Zwierlein, "Sicherheitsgeschichte: Ein neues Feld der Geschichtswissenschaften," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012): 365–386.

6 Conze, *Geschichte der Sicherheit*, 150–159; Christine Krüger, *Die Scylla und Charybdis der Sozialen Frage: Urbane Sicherheitsentwürfe in Hamburg und London (1880–1900)* (Bonn, 2022).

to be defined as a threat and how to respond to it. Such an agreement is usually created through recourse to culturally traditional patterns of interpretation and action. When these conditions apply, we can speak of a "security culture."[7]

Understood in this way, the history of security can shed new light on fields of investigation that have been the subject of early labor historiography. This can be illustrated using the example of the formation of the working class in a historical period when its integration into the nation was fiercely contested. Not least because it had to respond to these exclusionary tendencies, the working class can be considered a security community with a specific security culture. There are other good reasons for such an approach. The traditional definition of the working class through economic criteria has long dominated research on labor history, and it can be argued that security is closely related to the economic situation. However, it would be wrong to consider security a mere dependent variable. The labor movement complained not only about the widening gap in wealth but also about a pronounced imbalance in terms of security. Indeed, the most important demands of the labor movement can all be understood as demands for greater security. The emergence of class consciousness is due in large part to the fact that workers increasingly perceived the multiple insecurities that characterized their everyday lives as structurally conditioned. Thus, they no longer understood these elements as individual safety matters but as security problems that concerned the working class as a whole. This realization was the basis for the workers' efforts to organize and develop a common policy of interests.

If we consider the working class, or more specifically, the labor movement, a security community, the most challenging task for our research is to assess its relationship to the broader security community of the nation state. Although the working class formed its own security community, it also remained part of the nation state, even if its actual political integration was disputed. Both had molded different security

7 See Christopher Daase, "Sicherheitskultur: Ein Konzept zur interdisziplinären Erforschung politischen und sozialen Wandels," *Sicherheit und Frieden* 29 (2011): 59–139.

cultures and favored different and often contradictory security strategies.

All over Europe, this situation generated some ambiguity for the working class. This ambiguity has become a topic of historiographical research since the 1970s. In Germany, for example, the observation that the working class in general and the labor movement, in particular, were not politically and socially integrated into the German Empire prompted historians to use the term "negative integration" to describe the position of social democracy.[8] Although the situation of the working class had improved in economic terms, its members were still denied full political rights. Furthermore, political decision-makers and large cohorts of the bourgeoisie labeled social democracy as "foes of the fatherland," i.e., not only excluded from the security community but also seen as a serious threat to it. Some historians, such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler, emphasized the deliberate nature of this "negative integration," which, in their opinion, aimed at achieving the political unification of the German Empire at the expense of the working class and other marginalized groups.[9]

In this view, the mechanism of "negative integration" corresponds approximately to what critical security studies calls today "securitization." Consequently, the questions currently discussed by security scholars can broaden our understanding of negative integration. Critical security scholarship stresses that securitization is rarely uncontested.[10] Competing or opposing security concepts frequently lead to ambiguities or conflicts. Therefore, historians have to analyze the conditions that were necessary for the historical actors to reach a consensus on what to define as a security problem and which security strategy to choose. Such a consensus often meets resistance. Therefore, in historiography, it is appropriate to also examine how different security definitions and strategies interact with each other. Furthermore, we need to understand how discussions on security issues impact inclusion and exclusion processes and community building.

8 Dieter Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1973), 36–39.

9 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Kaiserreich 1871–1918*, (Göttingen, 1973), 96–100.

10 Holger Stritzel and Sean C Chang, "Securitization and Counter-Securitization in Afghanistan," *Security Dialogue* 46 (2015): 548–567.

My aim is to analyze the role that the dynamics of security played for the working class in the last decades of the nineteenth century. To achieve this goal, this essay compares two major strikes: the London dock strike of 1889, which involved 100,000 workers and lasted four weeks, and the Hamburg dock strike of 1896/97, where 16,000 workers walked off the job for two and a half months.[11] In London and Hamburg alike, many contemporaries perceived these strikes as major threats to security.[12] However, the course and outcome of both strikes differed considerably: the London strike was settled successfully, while the Hamburg strike ended in defeat for the strikers. The comparative approach enhances our understanding of security dynamics because it shows that although class conflict was a European if not global phenomenon, its features could vary considerably according to differing national or regional security cultures.

The security concept and security strategies of the working class will be analyzed in two steps that focus on two seemingly contradictory strategies of the labor movement. The first section analyses the role of security for the working class. The second section outlines the workers' struggle for integration into the national security community, whereas the third one focuses on how the labor movement tried to influence security culture through threats.

I. (In-)security and the Making of the Working Class

The perception of dock strikes in London and Hamburg as major security threats reflects the middle class's perspective. For the working class, however, they can be described, rather, as risks that they consciously chose to take. The strikers took this risk in response to their precarious security. The walkouts clearly illustrate that the workers perceived the specific dangers of their daily lives as collective security concerns and thus considered themselves a security community. We can see this from the example of two important topics that ran through their strike discourse. First, a prominent topic

11 For the London strike, see John Lovell, *Stevedores and Dockers: A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870–1914*, (London, 1969); Terry McCarthy, ed., *The Great Dock Strike 1889: The Story of the Labour Movement's First Great Victory* (London, 1988). For the Hamburg strike, see Hans-Joachim Bieber, "Der Hamburger Hafenarbeiterstreik 1896/97," in *Arbeiter in Hamburg Unterschichten, Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung seit dem ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Arno Herzig et al. (Hamburg, 1983), 229–246; Hans-Joachim Bieber, "Der Streik der Hamburger Hafenarbeiter 1896/97 und die Haltung des Senats," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 64 (1978): 91–148; Michael Grüttner, *Arbeitswelt an der Wasserkante: Sozialgeschichte der Hamburger Hafenarbeiter 1886–1914*, (Göttingen, 1984), 165–175. For a more detailed comparison of both strikes see Krüger, *Die Scylla und Charybdis der Sozialen Frage*.

12 Krüger, *Die Scylla und Charybdis der Sozialen Frage*, 51–59.

in the discourse of dockworkers, especially in Hamburg, was the dangers of port work.[13] Whether the dockworkers had to lift heavy loads from cranes as stevedores and transport them over narrow slippery footbridges, or inhale poisonous gases as boiler cleaners, the risks to health and life were high. The socialist newspaper *Hamburger Echo* complained in November 1896: "In the columns of our newspapers we find short but telling notes about the accidents from port work every day . . . The dockworker is never sure whether he will return to his family in good health. How often is the breadwinner of the family brought home dead or mutilated with the laconic report that he had been the victim of an industrial accident?"[14]

The following month, the *Hamburger Echo* argued that "the occupation of a dockworker" is "associated with everlasting dangers and the number of accidents is very high, even much higher in percentage than that of the building trade associations."[15] We can see here that the increasing use of statistics, which provided information about variations in life expectancy, provided visible evidence of the fact that port workers were prone to specific risks.[16] Thus, they contributed to strengthening the national perspective on social security. By comparing workers' everyday dangers to the national average, the nation was held responsible. The workers claimed membership in the national security community.

Generally, the dangers of port work attracted more attention in the Hamburg strike than in the London strike. Perhaps this was due to the discussions surrounding the Accident Insurance Act passed by the German Reichstag in 1884. German accident insurance did provide some coverage for workers, but the recognition of occupational accidents was difficult to obtain, and any payments provided by the insurance were usually not sufficient for subsistence.[17] Moreover, workers were not primarily concerned with compensation payments, but rather, with better accident prevention. Therefore, the strikers in Hamburg not only demanded higher wages but also safer working conditions and the introduction of a port inspector who would have the responsibility of implementing safety provisions.[18]

13 *Hamburger Echo*, November 29, 1896; citations to this and other Hamburg newspapers can be found in Hamburger Zeitungen Digital (https://zeitungen.sub.uni-hamburg.de/), the online newspaper portal of the Hamburg State Library. On workplace accidents, see Julia Moses, *The First Modern Risk: Workplace Accidents and the Origins of European Social States* (Cambridge, UK, 2018).

14 *Hamburger Echo*, November 29, 1896.

15 *Hamburger Echo*, December 31, 1896.

16 See Christine G. Krüger, "The Social Scientist as Security Actor," *Journal of Modern European History* 20 (2022): 258–273.

17 Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918*, vol. 1, *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich, 1998), 350.

18 *Protokolle der Senats-Commission für die Prüfung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Hamburger Hafen über die Vernehmung von Arbeitgebern und Arbeitnehmern* (Hamburg, 1898), 38, 44.

Figure 1. The plight of their children was one of the security issues presented by the workers. Drawing of a striker holding a straw doll of a starving child, in a strike procession in London, published in *London Illustrated News*, September 7, 1889.

Second, strikers in both cities argued that the precariousness of port work made higher wages necessary to ensure their subsistence even during periods of unemployment. The work in the port was largely done by casual laborers. When and with what regularity they found employment depended on the business cycle and the weather. They had to live in constant uncertainty as to whether their earnings would suffice to support their families.[19] The London *Times,* which sympathized with the strikers in the first weeks of the walkout, emphasized this point: "It is this utter uncertainty of employment which renders the casual dock laborer's earnings so scanty."[20] This precariousness was a group-specific problem that was, as the strikers emphasized, a structural problem. This meant that individual solutions were no adequate answer, and remedies could be found only at the structural level.

There is no doubt that the workers perceived the insecurity they were living in as a pressing problem. But strategic reasons could also be an incentive to raise security arguments, for example because of their high degree of persuasive power. This can be observed when we analyze how the strikers referred to other values. The values of justice and fairness also played a central role in their argumentation. They were

19 *Hamburger Echo*, November 29, 1896; *The Times* (London), August 29, 1889.

20 *The Times*, August 29, 1889.

concerned with asserting their right to codetermination. However, we can gauge the importance of security considerations when we examine how they relate to other values in strikers' discourse. Security and justice, for instance, could be closely intertwined. The question raised by a journalist in the *Hamburger Echo* illustrated this well: "Shouldn't it be taken for granted that such dangerous, such unsafe work should also be well rewarded?"[21] To underline this demand for justice, he continued setting the dangers of everyday working life against the safe existence of an entrepreneur: "Should only *those* reap something who never shed a drop of sweat, or should also *those* be paid a little better who have to do all the work at the risk of their lives and health?"

Likewise, security and honor or freedom could go hand in hand. The *Hamburger Echo*, for example, emphasized that workers' recognition as equal partners in negotiations was necessary to preserve their "human dignity" and prevent them from being treated like "will-less slaves."[22] Laborers not only invoked the value of dignity with such arguments but also the value of freedom. These, however, were not played off against the value of security. The threat to dignity and freedom could also be presented as an existential threat and thus, as a security matter. It is no coincidence that the strike leaders chose this strategy at just the moment when the strikers' defeat in Hamburg began to loom and their hopes for an improvement in the economic situation were dashed. In this situation, the *Hamburger Echo* hoped for a mobilizing effect when it wrote: "The employers' association wants no more and no less than to humiliate the dockworkers, to beat them to the ground so that for years to come every stirring of self-confidence, of man's dignity, will be stifled in them . . . Out of a self-confident, capable labor force one wants to form a slave crowd, one wants to press them down by the naked policy of force to a level where every will of their own, every striving for improvement of their own situation is excluded."[23] To avert this danger, the strike leaders demanded the continuation of the strike: "Struggle to the utmost!"[24]

21 *Hamburger Echo*, November 29, 1896.

22 "Die Protzenhaftigkeit des Unternehmerthums," *Hamburger Echo*, December 8, 1896.

23 *Hamburger Echo*, December 4, 1896.

24 Ibid.

Such reasoning illustrates that there is not necessarily a fundamental tension between security and other values. This can also be explained in the context of community building: If we understand larger security communities as "imagined communities," it follows that for the existence of such a collective not only a threat aimed at physical destruction can be perceived as existential but also a threat to those cohesive forces that hold the collective together, and thus, as a rule, to certain value systems.[25] The value of solidarity illustrates this well: without a strong belief in solidarity, it would hardly be possible to mobilize for a strike.[26] In addition, values that are sometimes explicitly set in opposition to the value of security, such as freedom, justice, or honor, can play a central role in the self-image of a certain collective. Thus, it can be perceived as an existential security threat if they appear to be in danger.[27]

II. (In-)security and the Struggle for Integration

If security arguments are emphasized here, that is not to say that security was always paramount in all workers' demands. However, it is undeniable that it had enormous significance. This might be partly due to strategic reasons. Work stoppages were a risk that could end in a fiasco for strikers. The consequences of the unsuccessful Hamburg strike illustrate this clearly: for many strikers, job prospects subsequently deteriorated. Workers, for example, who had been employed in relatively well-paid and secure positions at the Hamburg municipal quay but had nevertheless stopped work out of solidarity were not allowed to return to their old jobs after the strike. Similarly, in the following years, the Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft shipping company (HAPAG) systematically promoted only those workers to foremen who had not participated in the strike.[28] To organize a strike in the face of such a risk, a high level of mobilization was required. Security arguments were a means to achieve this level and could counterbalance the risk.

25 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2016).

26 Dietmar Süß and Cornelius Torp, *Solidarität: Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Corona-Krise* (Bonn, 2021), 25–46.

27 For a more detailed discussion of this see Christine G. Krüger, "Risky Housing: Squatting in the 1970s and Early 1980s," in *Places of Risk – Sites of Modernity: Cultures of Security and Risk since the 1970s*, ed. Martin Geyer (New York, 2023), 108–227.

28 Grüttner, *Arbeitswelt an der Wasserkante*, 173.

There is another reason why security arguments had considerable weight in the discourse of strikers. Undoubtedly, not only shared security interests but also the demands for more agency and justice contributed to strengthening class consciousness and uniting the workforce as a collective. Invoking the value of security, however, had different implications than invoking the values of freedom, justice, or equality. Whereas the latter appealed primarily to the collective of workers, the reference to security concerns had advantages when it came to motivating political decision-makers to act. First, it was significant that security issues implied a particularly high degree of urgency. Second, the fact that the preservation of security belonged to the central tasks of the state was undisputed; indeed, people considered it its raison d'être. In contrast, the question of whether social welfare also belonged to the purview of the state remained highly controversial in the late nineteenth century. Likewise, the democratic principles from which the rights of codetermination were derived were extremely disputed.

By uniting in protest, the workers not only formed a security community but also expressed the conviction that the precariousness of their living conditions had structural origins. Such a view differed from the traditional interpretation propagated for a long time by the church and the ruling class, which saw poverty as God-given and essentially an individual problem.[29] In this framing, many believed that the poor were usually responsible for their situation themselves since they did not know how to manage their income, wasted their money on alcohol, or were *arbeitsscheu* (literally: work-shy; that is, indolent) and for this reason did not earn enough.[30] In countering this view, the strikers and also the unemployed in London who repeatedly stressed that their hardship was due to structural causes were defining themselves as part of the wider society or nation state – a security community whose task they saw as changing their situation. Underlining the social connection between the classes, they appealed to the willingness of the bourgeois elites to show solidarity with other sections of society.

29 Ewald Frie, "Armut und Armenpolitik im langen 19. Jahrhundert: Preußen im europäischen Vergleich," *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte* 20 (2010): 55–71.

30 James S. Roberts, *Drink, Temperance and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (London, 1984), 55–82; for Hamburg: Ulrich Wyrwa, *Branntwein und "echtes Bier": Die Trinkkultur und Hamburger Arbeiter im 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1990), 221–229.

Workers' spokespersons were aware that appeals to social responsibility often fell on deaf ears. In his account of the Hamburg port strike, published in 1897, Carl Legien, one of Hamburg's Social Democratic Reichstag deputies, wrote: "Complaining about injustice and deprivation is an effort in vain in our society. This society in which the most ruthless interest groups prevail is not sentimental enough to pay attention to these complaints, for example, out of pity."[31] Accordingly, it appeared necessary to increase the pressure in other ways. Referring to security proved to be a forceful means. Therefore, the strike leaders made strong efforts to show that the insecurity in which workers lived was a threat not only to themselves but also to the middle classes. By highlighting the shared threat, they were able to underline their common membership in a single security community. Such an argument appeared to be more effective than a mere appeal for simple solidarity.

In Hamburg, the strikers used this strategy to persuade the state authorities to stop an influx of new workers. To this end, they characterized the strikebreakers as a threat to the Hanseatic city: the recruitment of foreign workers attracted an uneducated *Lumpenproletariat*. This warning became particularly virulent when, after the strike had lasted a few days, the Hamburg shipowners announced that they would bring 1,000 Italian workers into the city to replace the workers on strike.[32] The mass recruitment of Italians remained a mere threat. However, in the course of the strike, 2,000–3,000 "scabs" or "blacklegs" (non-union replacement workers) were indeed hired. Many of them came from abroad, including Poles, Italians, Asians, and Africans.[33]

The dangers that supposedly emanated from foreign strikebreakers immediately became a central issue at strike meetings and in the workers' press. There was a unanimous conviction that the hygiene, moral, and educational standards of blacklegs recruited from abroad were significantly inferior to their own. An influx of more workers, it was

31 Carl Legien, *Der Streik der Hafenarbeiter und Seeleute in Hamburg-Altona*, (Hamburg, 1897), 90.

32 G. H. Blohm, "Zum Strike der Schauerleute," *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, November 24, 1896.

33 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7119; file 331-3 S 7123.

thought, would not only increase unemployment and poverty after the strike but also cause crime rates to soar.[34] Even more serious was the fear that they would bring in epidemics. In 1892, only four years before the strike, a devastating cholera epidemic had hit the Hanseatic city and claimed more than 8,000 lives.[35] A police report on a strike meeting noted that a speaker had greatly agitated the audience by recalling this epidemic, which he believed had been "brought in by people less inclined to cleanliness." To this, he attached a clear call to action to those in power: "Now that it is being highlighted again, we workers have the right to ask the authorities to interdict the introduction of such people."[36]

During the Hamburg strike, the securitization of foreign blacklegs was framed by a considerably more emotional discourse than positive references to strike supporters from abroad, for example, when signs of transnational solidarity were praised. This may suggest that the hope of belonging to the national security community was more pronounced than that of a strong international organization of the workforce. The situation was somewhat different in London, however. There were several reasons for this difference: most importantly, in London, the strike was not endangered by strikebreakers from abroad; on the contrary, donations from Australian workers contributed significantly to its financing. Apart from that, the hope for state intervention might have been more pronounced in Hamburg. Indeed, one of the most important goals that the securitization of strikebreakers was supposed to serve was to get the state to intervene. For while many contemporaries regarded labor disputes as the private affairs of workers and employers, and state interference was, therefore, controversial, the defense against epidemics traditionally belonged to the remit of the state, which was not questioned in principle. Indeed, the Hamburg Senate did not remain inactive. It spoke out against the rumored "1,000 Italians" and reacted to safety appeals by monitoring hygiene standards in the accommodations allotted to strikebreakers.[37] However, no further steps were taken to control or ban the influx of blacklegs in general, as the strikers demanded.

34 See, for example, "Hamburger Neuigkeiten: Der Streik der Hafenarbeiter," *Hamburger Echo*, November 25, 1896; Police Officer Thomas, "Bericht über Versammlung der Werftarbeiter," November 27, 1896, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 331-3 S 7095; Police Officer Baumann, "Bericht über die Mitglieder-Versammlung des Verbandes der Hafenarbeiter und Speicherarbeiter," November 27, 1896, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7095.

35 Richard J. Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830–1910*, (Oxford, 1987)

36 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7125.

37 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7907.

By dramatizing the dangers that supposedly emanated from the recruitment of strikebreakers, the strikers also intended to send another message: they tried to portray the Hamburg workers as harmless, i.e., as less dangerous than the blacklegs who had moved in. By dressing up the danger along national and ethnic lines, they reiterated central categories of difference that were widely uncontested among contemporaries. Furthermore, in this way, they claimed a share in the urban or national community from which they excluded the strikebreakers. Because the strikers were convinced that it was the strikebreakers who had violated the socialist ideal of international solidarity, the nationalism they themselves displayed here apparently did not come into conflict with this ideal. At least they did not reflect on it in this context.

Parts of the bourgeoisie adopted the line of argument followed by the strikers and joined them in securitizing the blacklegs. The *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, for example, warned against alienating dockworkers: "After all, the strike of the dockworkers is always, for the most part, about men who have grown close to Hamburg and cannot be left lying in the street. In this respect, too, it would be disastrous to push the conflict to the extreme."[38]

38 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, November 28, 1896.

The pairing of opposites, precarious, or insecure, vs. secure, was a category of difference by which workers defined themselves as distinct from the bourgeoisie. Appeals to the solidarity of the affluent aimed to soften these differences and thereby create unity. In a slightly different way, the painting of a threat to which the bourgeoisie and the working class were exposed also constructed a security community that encompassed both. The idea behind this was that overcoming class antagonism was useful or even necessary to create security. The security community was imagined to be the nation and its most effective agent the state.

III. "Negative Integration" and the Revolutionary Threat

Some parts of the middle and upper classes agreed with these arguments. Others, however, were reluctant to accept

the working class as part of the national security community. Indeed, it is impossible to understand how strikers tried to achieve their goals without assessing the different and competing positions of the bourgeois public in the face of the social question. Even though many bourgeois contemporaries may have shared the idea that dealing with the labor movement was like steering a course between Scylla and Charybdis, there was by no means unanimous agreement on exactly which course should be followed.[39] During the strikes in Hamburg as well as in London, two strongly opposed bourgeois strategies can be identified. On the one side were those who relied on repressive measures by the state to address social problems. They declared the protesting workers a danger. In this sense, in London as in Hamburg, employers and their supporters portrayed dockworkers' strikes as harbingers of socialist attempts to overthrow the state, thus advocating a policy of negative integration. They demanded strict repressive measures against labor from the state, such as the re-imposition of anti-socialist laws in Hamburg.[40] A different view was held by liberal social reformers, who in Hamburg were most prominently represented by the so-called *Kathedersozialisten*, and in London the Radicals and particularly the Fabians. They saw the greatest social danger not in the strengthening of the labor movement but, rather, in growing class antagonism. Thus, they emphasized labor's participation in the national community. During the strikes, they believed that an intransigent attitude toward nonconformists was dangerous because it would advance social division. Instead of confrontation, they relied on dialogue and conciliation. This position was influential in the public debate during the London strike, whereas only a minority supported it during the Hamburg strike.[41]

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Hamburg strikers had little confidence that they would be able to achieve their own goals by invoking national solidarity. At least this is what we can conclude from their repeated actions to demonstrate

39 See Krüger, *Die Scylla und Charybdis der Socialen Frage*, 50–85, and Christine G. Krüger and Friedrich Lenger, "'A Question of Power and War': Social Conflict in Hamburg and London in the Late 19th Century," in *Conceptualizing Power in Dynamics of Securitization: Beyond State and International System*, ed. Regina Kreide and Andreas Langenohl (Baden-Baden, 2019), 239–265.

40 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, December 19, 1896.

41 Krüger, *Die Scylla und Charybdis der Socialen Frage*, 50–85.

strength and thereby provoke feelings of insecurity among the bourgeoisie and those in power. Labor leaders chose this strategy to arouse feelings of insecurity, for example, when advocating the benefits of organization. Carl Legien, who, as quoted above, stated the ineffectiveness of demands for justice, concluded: "Only when the workers can rely on the power of their organization will they begin to be respected in economic struggles, will there be an inclination to form arbitration tribunals, will the authorities consider whether they should turn ruthlessly against the workers and represent the interests of entrepreneurship."[42]

Some Hamburg strike leaders went further and threatened revolution. "The strike of the dockers is an event that has not yet taken place in Germany. Every one of us is glad that no blood has been shed, as happened almost every time there was a strike 30 years ago. We hope and wish that no blood will flow here either; it will not happen if the workers are not provoked until they finally get angry," warned a speaker at a meeting of the strikers as it was reported by a police spy.[43] With such threats, the labor movement relied on the mobilizing power of feelings of insecurity and sought to create pressure for action.

In London, such warnings had been omnipresent a few years earlier in connection with the so-called West End Riots in February 1886, when unemployed workers took to looting luxury shops.[44] During the London dock strike of 1889, in contrast, we rarely find explicit threats of revolution. However, here too, the strikers ostentatiously demonstrated their force. Throughout the strike, huge strike processions pushed their way from the port through the city center day after day. The longer the strike lasted, the more they grew in number: on August 23, 1889, *The Times* estimated the number of demonstrating workers at over 70,000. The mass of protesters marching in rows of eight resembled a military parade in the eyes of one of its reporters: "And the men marched in that close order and good discipline which betoken resolution and defiance . . .

42 Henry Hyde Champion, *The Great Dock Strike: In London, August 1889* (London, 1890), 26.

43 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Vigilanzbericht, December 1, 1896, file 331-3 S 7905.

44 "Monster Socialist Meeting in Hyde Park," *Reynolds's Newspaper* (London), February 28, 1886, 1. See also *Reynolds's Newspaper*, February 14, 1886; *St. James Gazette* (London), February 9, 1886.

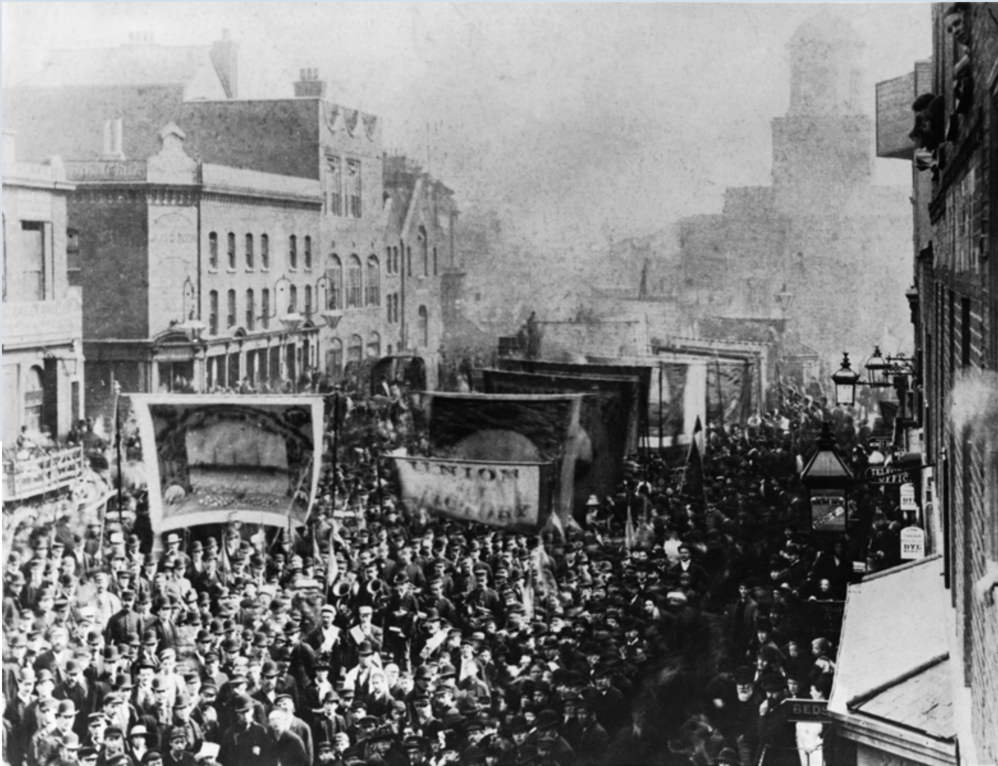

Figure 2. The strike processions during the London Lockout in August 1889 were a demonstration of power that went hand in hand with a latent threat. Source: Bridgeman Images, photographer unknown.

It was a peaceful army on parade. It would not take much, I thought, to convert it into an army in action."[45] The journalist did not specify what kind of army he had in mind: a regular army that went into battle for Great Britain against its enemies or a revolutionary army rebelling against the wealthy.[46]

It cannot be confirmed whether the author intended this ambiguity. What is clear, however, is that it was precisely this mixture of a sense of threat on the one hand and fascination with the discipline observed by the workers on the other that the labor movement wanted to engender among the middle classes with its protest marches. This vividly illustrates the strategy of the labor movement outlined above: strikers relied on evoking fears of revolution with demonstration marches, which were traditionally often associated with violent lower-class protests and, specifically, with the West End Riots.[47] At the same time, however, they tried to use their marches to win

45 *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London), August 24, 1889, 1.

46 Christine Krüger, "Slums und Villenviertel: Städtische Grenzziehungen und Sicherheitsentwürfe in London und Hamburg im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert," *Saeculum* 68 (2018): 37–60.

47 Various newspaper articles show that the memory of the looting of the West End was easily evoked during the strikers' demonstrations, for example *Daily Telegraph*, August 23, 1889; *The Times*, September 2, 1889, 2. See also more generally Thomas Lindenberger, "'Streikexzesse': Zum Sinn und Eigen-Sinn direkter Straßen-Aktionen bei Arbeitskämpfen in Berlin, 1900 bis 1914," *1999. Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 8 (1993): 51–69.

or retain the sympathy of the public. The ambivalence displayed here is ubiquitous in working-class discourse in both cities – and beyond, as Jens-Uwe Guettel's article in this special issue shows.[48] Indeed, the latent threat of revolution was a double-edged sword for the workers: on the one hand, it could be used as a means of pressure to push for reforms, but on the other hand, it could also reduce sympathy and provoke harsh repressive measures. Therefore, threats of revolution were often accompanied by the indication that the time was not yet ripe for revolution, thus leaving open the possibility of timely reforms. For the same reason, the rhetoric of menace was counterbalanced by efforts to portray the workers' movement as harmless. After tumultuous riots following the Hamburg dock strike in February 1897, the workers' press stressed that it was not the honest workers but the *Lumpenproletariat* who were responsible for any violence.[49] A similar strategy had been used after the West End Riots in London in 1886.[50] With this argumentation the strikers aimed to prove their belonging to the urban security community by shifting the boundary between themselves and marginal groups of non-organized workers or criminals.

Earlier historiography criticized the German labor movement for what Dieter Groh called "attentism," i.e., the reluctance to work toward a revolutionary overthrow. Groh interpreted this hesitance and the belief that a revolutionary upheaval was still a long way off as the consequence of "negative integration."[51] With this critical judgment, he followed a variant of the *Sonderweg* thesis, i.e., the interpretation that a fundamental problem of German history was the absence of a revolution. Over the last few decades, however, many historians have contested the teleological implications inherent in this exceptionalism. Thomas Welskopp, for example, argued that the German labor movement's reluctance to strive for revolution was due to a realistic attitude in view of actual power relations.[52] In his view, revolutionary rhetoric served primarily as a threat and thus as a means of exerting pressure.

48 See also Christian Koller, *Streikkultur: Performanzen und Diskurse des Arbeitskampfes im schweizerisch-österreichischen Vergleich (1860–1950)* (Münster, 2009).

49 "Eine regelrechte Revolte," *Hamburger Echo*, May 14, 1890.

50 "The Rioting in London," *Reynolds's Newspaper*, February 14, 1886, 4; "The Riots in the West-End," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, February 9, 1886, 9.

51 Groh, *Negative Integration*, 57–63.

52 Thomas Welskopp, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie programmiert die 'neue Zeit': Die Zukunft der Sozialdemokratie von den Anfängen bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Die Zukunft des 20. Jahrhunderts: Dimensionen einer historischen Zukunftsforschung*, ed. Lucian Hölscher (Frankfurt/M., 2017), 39–59.

The walkouts illustrate this well. The strikers depended on the material support they received from bourgeois circles. As the level of unionization among port workers in both cities was relatively low before the walkouts, the strikers needed donations from solvent sympathizers and, thus, the goodwill of sections of the bourgeois public. In both cities, bourgeois social reformers donated money and food. In London, clergymen and politicians organized large-scale soup kitchens for the wives and children of strikers.[53] In Hamburg, the women's rights activist Lida Gustava Heymann set up a soup kitchen for the strikers' wives and children.[54] In addition, bourgeois social reformers raised a considerable sum of money through a national appeal for donations, enabling the workers to hold out for a few days longer during a critical phase.[55]

When strikers threatened revolution or violence and presented themselves as a danger to the bourgeoisie, this ran counter to the strategy of postulating a cross-class security community. This is also evident in their reaction to the recruitment of strikebreakers, which, at the same time, shows that the strikers, too, could understand the choice of their strategy as a course piloted between the Scylla of losing the strike because of growing numbers of blacklegs and the Charybdis of losing it due to diminishing public support. If the strikers wanted to achieve their goals, they had to work to prevent the mass recruitment of blacklegs. Because dockworkers were largely unskilled and, therefore, easily replaceable, this was even more important to them than in strikes in other labor sectors. In many cases, they first tried to dissuade potential strikebreakers from working by arguing. To do this, they appealed to the solidarity of the working class. However, although the labor press emphasized that such appeals discouraged some unemployed workers from taking on jobs as strikebreakers, many were still happy to have an opportunity to find paid work.[56] In neither of the two cities did work in the port come to a complete standstill. During the Hamburg strike, which extended over the entire winter months, a period when relatively few workers were needed

53 Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Vaughan Nash, *The Story of the Dockers' Strike Told by Two East Londoners* (London, 1890), 97.

54 Grüttner, *Arbeitswelt an der Wasserkante*, 169.

55 Dieter Düding, *Der Nationalsoziale Verein 1896–1903: Der gescheiterte Versuch einer Synthese von Nationalismus, Sozialismus und Liberalismus* (München, 1972), 110.

56 See newspaper excerpt from the *Volks-Zeitung*, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7143.

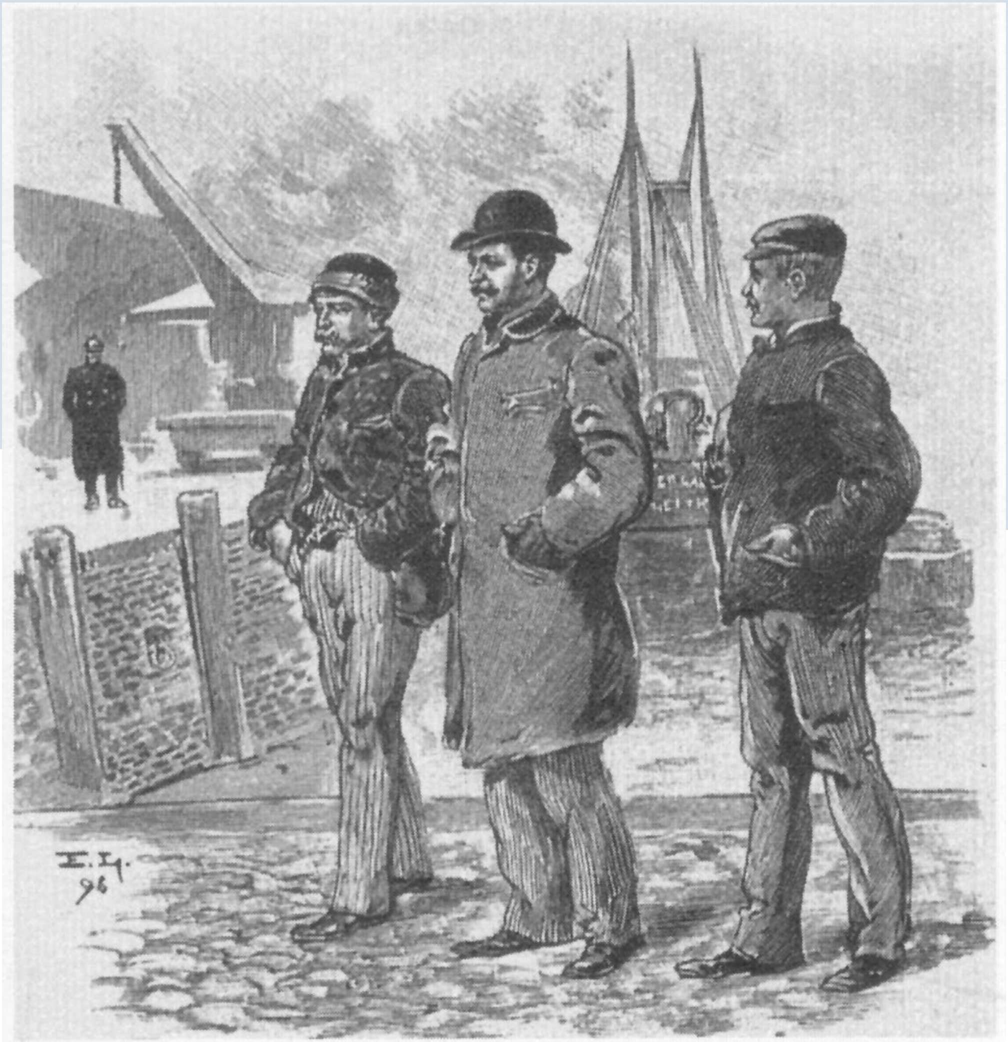

Figure 3. Pickets observed by a policeman in Hamburg 1896. Drawing by Emil Limmer. Source: *Arbeiterbewegung in Hamburg von den Anfängen bis 1945: Katalogbuch zu Ausstellungen des Museums für Hamburgische Geschichte* (Hamburg, 1988), p. 51.

anyway, due to the weather, there were enough hands to cope with the work.

Since the strikers did not achieve the desired success with arguments alone, they often resorted to intimidation through threats of violence in both cities. Sometimes, things did not stop at threats but came to fisticuffs. The actual extent of the violence committed in connection with the strikes is hard to measure because both parties to the dispute simultaneously played up and played down the violence in the public discourse: they accused the other side of violent acts but absolved themselves of them. In both cities, violent clashes between strikers and strikebreakers resulted in several serious injuries. Fists, knives, and revolvers were used, and in

Hamburg, at least one, maybe two, deaths were the result.[57] The strikers were not the first to use violence in every conflict. However, threats and intimidation on their part usually provided the impetus for escalating confrontations. The strikebreakers felt threatened by the strikers and, therefore, often carried weapons with them.[58]

These violent confrontations attracted lively media attention. At strike meetings and in the workers' press, strike leaders therefore repeatedly told their listeners not to get carried away with fights and not to consume alcohol in order to maintain self-control.[59] Violence was often a factor in the success of the strike locally in the streets, but as soon as it became an issue in the media and, thus, in the local and national arenas as well, it worked against the strikers' aims.[60] Another factor was that the pro-employer camp liked to seize on reports of violence by workers to justify demands for a tougher stance against the labor movement.[61] If complaints about violence from strikers multiplied during the strike, this is not to be interpreted solely in terms of the increasing desperation or aggression of the workers. Rather, the growing impatience of employers also played an important role. In London, even the dismayed police chief observed this and complained about how much the employers and their supporters were inflaming violence.[62]

With their strategy, the employers aimed on the one hand to withdraw sympathy from strikers and on the other hand to enforce police protection for strikebreakers. While the London police authority and a wide part of the press remained unimpressed by such efforts, the Hamburg employers were more successful: they prevailed with their interpretation of the strike to such an extent that the initially benevolent mood toward the workers turned, most bourgeois daily newspapers took the side of the employers, and the police also largely complied with their demands. A comprehensive official report published by the police authority after the strike, for example, stated: "The police authority felt obliged in the public interest to counter the terrorism of the strikers, which manifested

57 *Hamburger Echo*, December 12, 1896; February 10, 1897. For a detailed study of the conflicts between strikers and strikebreakers, see Amerigo Caruso, *"Blut und Eisen auch im Inneren": Soziale Konflikte, Massenpolitik und Gewalt in Deutschland vor 1914* (Frankfurt/M., 2021), 107–152.

58 *Hamburger Echo*, January 9, 1897, February 10, 1897.

59 For Hamburg see Staatsarchiv Hamburg, file 331-3 S 7095; for London, see *The Times*, August 26, 1889.

60 Düding, *Der Nationalsoziale Verein*, 109.

61 For example, *Berliner Zeitung*, February 1, 1897.

62 The National Archives (Kew, UK), Home Office Registered Papers, Supplementary, file HO 144/227/A50732.

itself everywhere outside the heavily guarded harbor in gross mistreatment of those willing to work."[63]

The strikers were well aware that violence against strikebreakers had ambivalent effects, and this caused conflict among them. The report of a Hamburg police spy who recounted a pub conversation between three strikers he had overheard illustrates this.[64] The conversation began with a remark by one of the strikers who had encountered two blacklegs and tried to convince them to stop working.[65] This failed, and the striker admitted that "it wouldn't have taken much for him to hit them in the mouth." One of his interlocutors admonished him not to "let himself be carried away to violence." Being violent, strikers would lose "the sympathy of the public," on which they depended "to achieve victory." The second interlocutor confirmed this and said that the employers would only "wait for the violence to escalate." It seemed to him that a more sensible strategy would be "to brand the strikebreakers in other ways," for example, by publishing their names in the newspaper. While the first worker, who had been face to face with the two blacklegs on the street, excluded the media from his considerations, his two interlocutors each did so in a different way: one referred to the strikers' dependence on the bourgeois public. The other feared a change of mood in favor of the employers but also included the press in his considerations when he pleaded for an alternative means of sanction.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the labor movement measured inequality not only in economic or political terms but also in terms of the obvious security gap that distinguished the everyday life of the working class from that of the better-off classes. They argued that the high risk of accidents at work and the insecurity of their income were socially determined. Therefore, they viewed them as a common concern that kept them together in a security community. In this interpretation, an increase in safety

63 Gustav Roscher, *Der Streik der Hamburger Hafenarbeiter 1896/97: Amtliche Darstellung nach den Akten der Abtheilung II (politische und Criminal-Polizei) der Polizei-Behörde Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1897), 78.

64 For the police spies in Hamburg, see the excellent introduction to an edition of some of their reports by Richard Evans, *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich*, ed. Richard Evans (Reinbek, 1989), 7–40.

65 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Vigilanzbericht, December 9, 1896, file 331-3, S 7122.

and security was a central aim of the labor movement. To convince those in power of the urgency of social reforms that would reduce the security gap, they pursued two strategies. On the one hand, they argued that other dangers would arise from the poverty of the workers, which would affect society as a whole: in particular, they predicted a growing likelihood of epidemics and an increase in crime. On the other hand, they warned that workers' discontent would sooner or later erupt into violence.

The comparison between Hamburg and London shows that the London strikers generally relied less heavily on security arguments, but above all were more restrained with threats of radicalization or even revolution. Since they had the support of large sections of the liberal bourgeois public, they aimed to preserve sympathy. Widespread distrust in the efficacy of state intervention in Britain might also be one reason why security arguments were generally less prevalent during the London strike than during the Hamburg strike.

In Hamburg, by contrast, both strategies merged into an ambivalent blend, which simultaneously highlighted common interests with and antagonism towards the bourgeoisie and thus reflected the workers' view of themselves as a distinct class within a larger community. The workers assumed that security could hardly be realized in any other way than in the security community produced by the nation state. Such a conviction may certainly be interpreted as a consequence of their "negative integration." However, if one takes security seriously as a category of analysis and examines security concepts and cultures, the double-edged strategy of the labor movement, which oscillated between threats on the one hand and appeals for sympathy on the other, does not appear as an expression of passivity. Rather, it can also be described as its endeavor to generate pressure to act using a repertoire of methods adapted to a realistic assessment of its agency.

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