

Veronica Blevins  
UCSB History 133B, Prof. Marcuse  
Source Exploration Essay  
March 19, 2019

### **Hamburg Taverns and Undercover Police Surveillance 1892-1914**

Richard Evans, ed., *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich: die Stimmungsberichte der Hamburger politischen Polizei 1892-1914 [Barroom Conversations in Wilhelmine Germany]*. Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989, pp. 234-35, 237-40.

In 1989 Richard Evans published his book, *Kneipengesprache im Kaiserreich: Die Stimmungsberichte der Hamburger Politischen Polizei, 1892-1914*. This book is a collection of police reports that Evans found in the Hamburg Archives under the label “Reports of No Value” (Field, *German History* 1991). Evans selected 348 reports out of the 20,000 that he found and compiled them into this book, keeping them in their original German language. The reports were written between 1892 and 1914 by four undercover German officers in Hamburg. After the outbreak of disease and the increase in Social Democratic influence in Hamburg, the state responded by expanding and restructuring the police force along Prussian lines, and in December 1892 the police instituted a daily surveillance of working-class pubs. The surveillance was done by four policemen, disguised as workers, who went out every day to different pubs and then wrote reports on the conversations they overheard. The purpose of the surveillance was to test whether the public statements and proclaimed purposes of the Social Democrats had any support among the mass of their ordinary members and voters.

The GHDI website provides four reports translated into English by Thomas Dunlap; these reports reflect workers’ thoughts about class antagonisms, state intervention in strikes, strike-breaking, and worker groups and organization. GHDI included these four documents under the section “State and Society” in “Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918” as insightful documentation about policing, society, and socialist behaviors. The greater collection examines other aspects (not only class antagonisms) of various parts of society being discussed by individuals in taverns, including workers’ ideas about women’s movements, Jews, and the Social Democratic party itself. The entire book, in German language only, is available at the Berkeley library as well as the UCLA library. There are six copies listed on Worldcat.

Richard Evans (1947-present) has been a professor at Columbia University, Birkbeck, and Cambridge (Evans, Wordpress). He is a distinguished historian of German history with an impressive list of publications, his most famous perhaps being *Death in Hamburg* which was published in 1987, just a couple years before he published the police reports (Evans, Wordpress). He published *Proletarians and Politics. Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War* the year after he published the reports. The last chapter of this book is devoted to presenting his research on the police reports and explaining why they are significant to historians. Another book of interest is his *Tales from the German Underworld* in which he writes historically shaped fictional stories about people living in the German underworld, from which he drew his research from “legal documents and police files” (Evans, Wordpress). In *Polizei, Politik und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1700-1933*, which Evans co-wrote with Andreas Etges, the two writers cite the police reports as they argue that historiography has largely ignored researching policing matters (Etges and Evans, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 1996).

The published reports have been cited by several writers in order to explore a number of different social topics including research on the German Social Democrats’ activities and ideas prior to World War I, the exploration of policing in imperial German society, the changes in German spy networks throughout the twentieth century, the role of taverns and bars in political mobilization, and the relationship between police and the feminist movement.

### **Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order**

1. Evans, Richard. "A Police Officer Reports on Workers in a Hamburg Tavern (1898-1909)", In *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich [Barroom Conversations in Wilhelmine Germany]*, translated by Thomas Dunlap, German History in Documents and Images, volume 5. Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918. German Historical Institute, Washington, DC. ([http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=770](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=770)).

This is the GHDI source where I was able to access four of the reports from Evans’ collection translated into English by Thomas Dunlap.

2. Levenstein, Adolf. 1912. *Die Arbeiterfrage*. New York: Arno Press.

This book was used by Dennis Sweeney as a comparison to Evan's reports. Levenstein, sent 8000 questionnaires to German Social Democratic Party (SPD) members and trade unionists in Germany in 1907 as a part of his own study of German workers. Sweeney compares Evans' compilation of reports as being similar to Levenstein's collection. Levenstein's book is not available to me, so I will have to rely on Sweeney's review. However, Levenstein's book could be an excellent source to use if one wanted to learn more about the workers' thoughts and to further explore the issues that Evans' reports cover.

3. Evans, Richard J. 1990. *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest, and the Working Class in Germany Before the First World War*. New York: St. Martin's Press. (124-191).

This book is not available in the UCSB library, but is available in the Berkeley, San Diego, and UCR libraries. I borrowed this book from the UC library system. This book was published the year after my source by Richard Evans was published. Evans summarizes the police reports in the last chapter of this book. He explains that after the outbreak of disease and the increase in Social Democratic influence in Hamburg, the state responded by expanding and restructuring the police force along Prussian lines, and in December 1892 the police instituted a daily surveillance of working-class pubs. The surveillance was done by four policemen, disguised as workers, who went out every day and then wrote reports on the conversations they had overheard. The purpose of the surveillance was to test whether the public statements and proclaimed purposes of the Social Democrats had any support among the mass of their ordinary members and voters. In this chapter, Evans describes the content of many of the reports and explains the significance of the conversations and what a historian can learn from the attitudes and behaviors of the working class.

4. Gellately, Robert. 1990. *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (44-66).

This book explores the Gestapo and policing in Germany under the Nazi regime. It is a later date than my source, but I wanted to explore police and state spying policies and practices in Germany a little bit more. In this source, I learned that the spying practices changed under the Nazi regime and relied a lot more on common people informants than

on undercover policemen. The Gestapo divided recruits into three categories; V-persons (agents), G-persons (contacts), and I-persons (reporters). However, it was discovered in one German town after the war, that there were only six Gestapo officials in charge of the informant department, and this small number was likely similar in most towns. The SD and the Kripo also gathered intelligence via informants rather than direct police spying, complicating who had authority over which unlawful acts. It was said that “a number of these officials also (in addition to executing the law) were engaged in pure office work.” This is a very different scene from the time of Evans’ source.

5. Field, F. 1991. "Kneipengesprache im Kaiserreich: Die Stimmungsberichte der Hamburger Politischen Polizei 1892-1914". *German History*. 9 (1): 99-100.

Field mentions that this collection was found by Evans at the Hamburg archives under the label “Reports of No Value”. Evans selected 348 out of the 20,000 that he found; Evans organized them into subject groups. There is mention that there are reports involving women in this collection, but not many. Field adds that Evans also located important illustrations and notes that had previously been unknown, though he does not speak about those additional sources in his review. The book review then turns into a commentary on what Nietzsche would think about current historiography.

6. White, Dan S. *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (1992): 234-35.  
doi:10.2307/2164646.

This review of *Proletarians and Politics* stresses Evans’ emphasis in his book on poor historical research and writing. White writes that Evans focuses most of the book on passing his judgements on the historical research and publication of the day, and then he presents his analysis of the police reports as an example of good research. White writes that the analysis of the reports debunks a lot of the socialist ideology attributed to workers and rather reveals the fluctuating attitudes of Hamburg workers.

7. Hickey, Stephen. *The English Historical Review* 109, no. 432 (1994): 784.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/573055>.

This review summarizes Richard Evans’ publication *Proletarians and Politics*. Hickey writes that Evans’ work begins with a discussion of the German criminal underworld and

how the socialist movement intertwines with it. He also mentions that Evans references his own research to describe socialist women's movements and workers' conversations. Hickey writes that in the final chapter of Evans' *Proletarians and Politics* (which contains six essays) Evans uses the police surveillance reports to describe what workers were talking about in bars.

8. Evans, Richard J., and Andreas Etges. "Polizei, Politik und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1700-1933." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22, no. 4 (1996): 609-28.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40185919>.

This article argues that the working class accepted policing to some extent but held an idea of what the world would be like freed from this constraint. The article also uses my source to claim that historiography has largely ignored researching policing matters. This was published after Evans published the reports, so he had the information available.

9. Lindemann, Mary. *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 4 (2000): 986-88.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3789184>.

This is a book review about Richard Evans' book *Tales from the German Underworld*, published in 1998. Lindemann reports that Evans' book is a "true crime" novel and a "microhistory" that explores crime and punishment in imperial Germany. She writes that Evans' book explores prostitution and other illegal activities in a new light. She claims that he used his research in the archives to explore social dynamics in the German underworld in order to write these stories.

10. Sweeney, Dennis. 2003. "Cultural Practice and Utopian Desire in German Social Democracy: Reading Adolf Levenstein's *Arbeiterfrage* (1912)." *Social History*, v 28, no. 2 (2003): 174-199.

Sweeney references my source to compare its contents to the subject of his paper, Adolf Levenstein, who in 1907 sent 8000 questionnaires to German Social Democratic Party (SPD) members and trade unionists in Germany as a part of his own study of German workers. Sweeney compares Evans' compilation of reports as being similar to Levenstein's collection. Levenstein's book is not available to me, so I will have to rely on Sweeney's review. However, Levenstein's book could be an excellent source to use if

one wanted to learn more about the workers' thoughts and further explore the issues that the reports from my source cover.

11. Jensen, Birgit A. "Bawdy Bodies or Moral Agency? The Struggle for Identity in Working-class Autobiographies of Imperial Germany." *Biography* 28, no. 4 (2005): 534-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23540612>.

Jensen cites Evans' reports to argue that the police existed in all realms of society in order to curtail uprisings. The state became a police state constantly monitoring the workers. This is an exploration of the working class psyche.

12. Lopes, Anne. "Feminisms, Foucault, and the Berlin Women's Movement." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 35, no. 1 (2009): 114-36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41403655>.

Lopes references Evans' reports to argue that the lack of information and text on the women's movement hints that the movement was being seriously oppressed. She says that this material was a rich resource for examining oppression against the women's movement. I am not sure if she means the lack of what was recorded about the movement in the reports, or what was actually recorded about it.

13. Neumann, Franz L., Herbert Marcuse, Otto Kirchheimer, and Raffaele Laudani. 2013. *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany: The Frankfurt School Contribution to the War Effort*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

This book is a collection of secret reports, declassified in 1975-76, from the Central European Section of the Research and Analysis Branch (R&A) of the OSS of the United States. They are a collection of reports written by Jewish-German intellectuals turned immigrants and analysts. The classified reports reflect the analysis of information coming into the American Secret Service and then sent for further analysis by this branch. These intellectuals provided context to events happening in Germany during the Second World War that were influential to US war policy. This book came up in my research because I was looking for more information on German police officers and surveillance practices during later dates than my source. These reports were not useful in explaining policing practices, but they did provide insight into Social Democratic practices in Germany. They

were not that pertinent to my research of Evans' collection or of German police spy networks.

14. Fleiter, Andreas. "Punishment on the Path to Socialism: Socialist Perspectives on Crime and Criminal Justice before World War I." In *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany*, edited by Wetzell Richard F., 56-85. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014. doi:10.2307/j.ctt9qct7p.5. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qct7p.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qct7p.5).

Andreas Fleiter references Evans' work to argue that the "culture of the Socialist workers was not the culture of the workers," meaning that the rhetoric of the workers did not always reflect the same concerns with the state that the party reflected, at least not exactly. The workers were less concerned with political prisoners than the official party was, and though they agreed with the party in the social causes for crime, they tolerated more misdemeanors and immorality than the party did.

15. Westermann, Edward B. 2018. "Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany". *Central European History*. v 51 (n 03): 367-389.  
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/central-european-history/article/drinking-rituals-masculinity-and-mass-murder-in-nazi-germany/4AF5B76252B75E5E9D227B5B4E97630C>.

Westermann researches bar life in imperial Germany and later into the Third Reich in this article. He explores the social norms and rituals found in tavern life and references Evans' work to claim that taverns became associated early on with political parties, especially from the Left, and antisemitic activity as well. He claims that the politization of tavern space became entwined with political rhetoric manifested in acts of public violence. He claims that taverns became the place for political party recruitment and social comradery and encouraged violence and aggression. This article paints the scene that the officers in Evans' work were walking into and also provides insight into why these officers were pursuing taverns as primary places to gather intelligence.

16. Richard Evans. Wordpress. Accessed February 1, 2019. <http://www.richardjevans.com/>

There is a complete list of Evans' published works on his website. There is no further information on the source except its title, publication date, and that there is a digest in

*Proletarians and Politics*. Evans has written extensively on German history, but I paid more attention to the works that he wrote around the same time that he published these reports. One of particular interest is *Proletarians and Politics. Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War*. This was written the year after he published the reports and he references them in this work. Another book of interest is his *Tales from the German Underworld* in which he writes historically fictional tales about people living in the German underworld, and for which he drew on his research from “legal documents and police files.” His website is a wealth of information about himself and his past, current, and planned future research.

17. Hamburg State Archives, “Behörde für Kultur und Medien”, hamburg.de.

(<https://www.hamburg.de/bkm/benutzung/5017640/englisch-benutzung/>)

This is the Hamburg State Archives website. These archives hold the police reports that Richard Evans collected as well as the ones that he did not publish. I cannot access the reports digitally, but the website provides information on how to access documents like the reports at the archive in Hamburg.