

IISH collections: Germany and Central Europe

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Introduction

The IISH collections on Germany and German speaking countries in Central Europe cover the period beginning with the democratic revolutionary movements and early workers' organizations around 1840 to the protest movements in the FRG during the '60s and '70s and the civic movement in the GDR during the '80s. Several classics among the archives reflect the historical impact of German socialist theorists far beyond national borders. The collections include papers of political leaders and theorists, organizational records, printed materials such as periodicals, posters, and brochures from the social movement, as well as photographs and audio materials.

The IISH reference library aims to provide a comprehensive variety of perspectives on the history of Germany and Central Europe since the early modern period.

Special library collections included in the IISH library have widened its scope considerably. These collections include the autonomous movement, alternative economy, ecology, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, as well as the extreme right in modern Germany.

The collections may be accessed in various ways. The [archives index](#) contains individual archival descriptions and a list of all archives by country (browse: Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia (formerly), International Organizations, and Switzerland).

Books, periodicals, and image and audio materials are retrievable via the [library catalogue](#). In addition, the archives index, library catalogue, and other data collections may be consulted via a single [search](#).

Archives

While every archive is unique by definition, the German archival collections at the IISH are truly exceptional. During the Institute's early years, the acquisition of the papers of the labour movement's founding fathers ([Karl Marx](#), [Friedrich Engels](#), and [Moses Hess](#)) laid the basis for its collections. These papers were part of the historical archives of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), purchased in 1938 after a stiff competition between the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute and the IISH. In addition to these impressive names, the collection also includes many others, such as the theorists [Karl Kautsky](#) and [Eduard Bernstein](#) who each contributed in his own way to the Marxism of the [Second International](#).

The IISH and the legal successor of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow

(RGASPI) established an amicable relationship in the early 1990s. As a consequence, microfilm copies from the holdings in Moscow came to Amsterdam. These include the papers of [Clara Zetkin](#) and many important accessions to the archives mentioned in this section. The records of [Sozialistische Monatshefte](#) (Joseph Bloch), seized by the Nazis and then the Soviet Red Army during World War II, were officially returned to their original owner, the IISH, in 2002.

"Western Marxism", which functioned independently of and often in opposition to both communism and social democracy during the interwar period, appears in the collections of [Karl Korsch](#), [Otto Rühle](#) and [Paul Mattick](#) at the IISH. Mattick lived long enough to personify the link between the older Marxist tradition and the Marxist renaissance in Western Europe and the United States during the 1970s.

The archives of [Rosa Luxemburg](#) and [Karl Liebknecht](#) are exquisite but not extensive. The greater part of the Karl Liebknecht papers was deposited in Moscow and can now be consulted in microform at the IISH.

The course of life of German social democracy is very well represented in the archival collections at the IISH. Highlights include the social-democratic movement's role as opposition within the Empire until 1914. The opposition figures in the papers of [August Bebel](#), [Wilhelm Liebknecht](#), [Julius Motteler](#), and [Georg Vollmar](#). [Wilhelm Dittman](#)'s papers relate the split that occurred in the movement during World War I. The papers of [Otto Braun](#), [Wolfgang Heine](#), and [Albert Grzesinski](#) reflect the movement's major role in the Weimar period. The social-democratic movement's part in the resistance during World War II and the emigration is well documented in the [Neu Beginnen](#) and [Paul Hertz](#) collections. After 1945, the SPD became the target of opposition both within and outside the party. The papers of [Wolfgang Abendroth](#) and [Willy Huhn](#) reflect this situation. In addition, an extra-parliamentary protest affected the political establishment. The [Konrad Böhmer](#) and [Kommune I](#) collections consider this aspect.

Prominent in the [anarchist collections](#) at the IISH are the archives of [Gustav Landauer](#), [Max Nettlau](#) and [Rudolf Rocker](#). Rudolf Rocker co-founded both the Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands in 1919 and the syndicalist [International Working Men's Association](#) in 1922. The extensive correspondence in the papers of [Helmut Rüdiger](#) sheds more light on these syndicalist organizations, as Rüdiger worked for both.

Library and Documentation Collections

The IISH reference library documents the social environment and political context in which the German social movement evolved in scientific journals, monographs and dissertations. The publications of the social movement itself, such as periodicals, posters, and leaflets, are available for research on the subject. A wealth of printed material relates to the workers' protest that took

place during industrialization and that figured extensively in literature about the social issue. Very few institutions offer such a comprehensive impression of the crucial final years of the Weimar Republic as the IISH library, which includes *Vorwärts* from the SPD, as well as the *Völkische Beobachter* of the Nazis, the communist *Rote Fahne*, and even the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

The scope of the library collections extends considerably beyond the boundaries of social history. This is thanks to the inclusion of specialized libraries and subject-based collections of books, leaflets, pamphlets, and periodicals.

The vast and impressive library of [Gustav Mayer](#) was purchased in 1937 and contains works from the early German socialists from 1830 to 1848.

More recent accessions are:

- The Archiv der Alternativpresse (ID-Archiv) collected the press of the new social movements in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. This extensive collection contains thousands of periodical titles and various subject files and multimedia materials. Subject files include the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) prisoner Ronald Augustin, Ingrid Strobl, solidarity with prisoners ('Knastarchiv'), and other themes. Documents originating from the ID-Archiv can be found by searching the catalogue under collection code ID.
- A large collection relating to the '[Wende](#)' in 1989 contains circular letters, correspondence, founding manifestos, conference papers and proceedings, programmes, rules, statements, press releases and publications by political organizations and civic movements that came into being in the GDR after September 1989, including Demokratie Jetzt, the Grüne Partei, the Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte, Neues Forum et cetera.
- [Bela Althans](#) was a prominent member of various organizations of the extreme right in Germany in the 1980s. He collected materials dealing with the glorification of Nazism and its protagonists, revisionism, and history written about World War II. More than 2500 books, countless brochures, and several video and audio cassettes from his collection have now been included in the IISH library. These can be found by searching the online catalogue under collection code 'Althans'.

Many archives and collections (the Marx and Kautsky family archives are but two examples) also contain photographs and other audiovisual materials. These have been transferred to the Image and Sound Department. This department houses an impressive collection of rare photos, posters, badges, and audiovisual materials. All these materials may be retrieved through different types of searches in the IISH [library catalogue](#) and/or [search portal](#).

Highlights

Here you will find Web presentations featured previously. These are intended to highlight a special collection, a particular aspect of a collection, or a new

acquisition. Click on this recent example or on one of the other highlights from the list.

[Max Nettlau](#)

In well-informed circles, Max Nettlau was known as the 'Herodotus of Anarchy', the first and greatest historian of the anarchist movement.

Other highlights related to Germany and Central Europe:

[German writers in exile](#) / [The Bernd Althans collection on the Extreme Right in Germany](#) / [Arbeiter Olympiade Art to the People - Gerd Arntz](#) / [Anti Racism Frankfurt \(ID\)](#) / [Communist Manifesto - some special editions](#) / [A chronicle of the labour movement around the world](#) / [How to find flyers and leaflets, etc.](#) / [Karl Kautsky and Kautsky family papers](#) / [Knastarchiv \(ID\)](#) / [Gustav Landauer papers](#) / [Karl Marx portraits](#) / [Marx Engels archives](#) / [Max Nettlau](#) / [Nicaragua Informationsburo Wuppertal](#) / [RAF-archiv Ronald Augustin \(ID\)](#) / [German refugees in Holland 1914-1918](#) / [Grünen protest against American general](#) / [Alexander Stein and Nina Rubinstein](#) / [German craftsman sails with Captain Cook](#)

See also [highlights](#) concerning other collections.

Contact

Please contact the [Reading Room](#) for general information about collections: ask@iisg.nl. You can submit your questions via www.iisg.nl/enquiries.php.

If you would like to have an archive or collection transferred to the IISH, please contact Huub Sanders, accessions at hsa@iisg.nl.

See [Services](#) for information on consulting the collections.

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