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<i>Basic biographical data</i>	
Name:	Walter Nettelbeck
Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):	Georg ; Jan Bur
Date and place of birth:	November 29, 1901, Krefeld (Germany)
Date and place of death:	June 24, 1975, Krefeld (Germany)
Nationality:	German
Occupations, careers, etc.:	Baker, painter, photographer, party organizer, journalist, city councillor
Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:	1933 - 1937

Biographical sketch

Walter Nettelbeck was born into a working-class family in Krefeld on November 29, 1901. After he was an apprentice with a baker he became a painter journeyman and later a photographer and journalist.

Nettelbeck was married twice: in 1948 he married Wilhelmine Marianne Hotes (b. 1913) from whom he was divorced in 1973, and in the same year he married Helene Henriette Reibert (b. 1926). From his first wife he got a daughter, Petra (b. 1951).

In the 1920s Nettelbeck got involved in communist politics: in 1922 he became a member of the *KJVD (Kommunistischer Jugendverband Deutschlands, Communist Youth Federation of Germany)* and 2 years later a member of the *KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, Communist Party of Germany)* for he functioned as a local party leader in Krefeld responsible for agitation and propaganda work. At the end of the 1920s he got a job as photographer with the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (AIZ)*, a popular mass organ of the *KPD* managed by Willi Münzenberg. During 1930-31 he spent one year in the USSR as *AIZ* reporter and photographer. Back to Germany he worked as journalist with *Der Rote Aufbau*, another paper issued by Münzenberg, and with *Neue Montags-Zeitung*. The impressions which he got during his stay in the USSR and the disastrous *KPD* policy during the final phase of the Weimar Republic led him to a more critical position toward the Stalinists; he was expelled from the *KPD* in May 1933 and in October of the same year he affiliated with the Berlin group of the *LO (Linke Opposition der KPD, Bolschewiki-Leninisten – Left Opposition of the KPD, Bolshevik-Leninists)* which had gone underground immediately after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany. Nettelbeck soon became one of the leading and most active members of this illegal group which now was a local branch of the *IKD (Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands, International Communists of Germany)*. However, the veritable leading body of the *IKD* was its *AK (Auslandskomitee, Foreign Committee)* at Paris which had to coordinate the work of the German Trotskyists within the borders of the

Reich as well as in the centres of the emigrants (Prague, Reichenberg, Paris, Zurich, Antwerp, Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm...). Furthermore Nettelbeck represented the German Trotskyists in the leading bodies of the *ICL (International Communist League)*, one of the precursors of the *Fourth International*. Nettelbeck, who sided with the pro-entryist majority when the Berlin group of the *IKD* split in summer 1934, was an eminent liaison man between the *AK* and the illegal *IKD* groups and circles operating in fascist Germany. He was also engaged in getting in contact with other illegally working groups in order to advance a united front of the anti-fascist forces. Furthermore he wrote a lot of articles which appeared under pseudonym in *Unser Wort*, the mouthpiece of the *IKD* produced in Paris and distributed in the *Reich* illegally. In December 1934 Nettelbeck participated in the clandestine conference of the *IKD* at Dietikon (near Zurich, Switzerland) at which a majority of the delegates adopted the new Trotskyist tactical orientation of entryism. In summer 1935 Nettelbeck emigrated from Germany on behalf of the *AK* of the *IKD*, and from September 1935 he settled at Paris charged with the liaison to the illegal circles and groups in the *Reich* and with the (co-)editorship of *Unser Wort*. For a short time Nettelbeck (acting under his pseudonym Jan Bur) was a member of the leadership of the *AK* which became more and more characterized by sharp internal and personal quarrels which eventually ended in the exclusion of Nettelbeck and a few co-thinkers in August 1937. He launched a small paper called *Das Freie Wort* of which, however, only one issue appeared. Its sub-title "Monatsschrift der *IKD*" indicates that his tiny grouplet seemed to consider itself as the 'true' *IKD* or as an external faction of it. However, for a short period Nettelbeck affiliated to the *Gruppe Internationale (Group The International)*, another Paris-based tiny dissident grouplet, inspired and led by the former Zinovievists Ruth Fischer and Arkadij Maslow.

Like a considerable number of German and Austrian immigrants, Nettelbeck was interned in 1939 by French authorities at the outbreak of World War II and was arrested by German authorities in 1940 after France had been conquered by the *Wehrmacht*. He was brought to remand prison in Berlin-Moabit and sentenced to 6 years prison by the notorious *Volksgesichtshof*. At the end of the war he was liberated from a concentration camp by allied armed forces. After some months earning his life as a farmhand he became a member of the first post-war municipal council of Krefeld. He regained German citizenship (which he had been deprived of in 1937) and became a member of the *SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, Social-Democratic Party of Germany)*. From 1946 until his retirement in 1966, Nettelbeck was head of the Department of Social Affairs of the city of Krefeld.. He died in Krefeld on June 24, 1975.

*Selective bibliography*¹

- ***Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets (co-)authored by Nettelbeck***

Cornelius de Greiff : ein Seidenfabrikant, der nach dem Tode seine Mitbürger höchlich überraschte. - Krefeld : Scherpe, 1969. - 255 pp.

Um ein solches Krankenhaus zu finden : zur Geschichte der Städtischen Krankenanstalten in Krefeld. - [Krefeld] : Scherpe, 1971. - 92 pp.

- ***Selective bibliography: Journals (co-)edited by Nettelbeck***

Unser Wort (Prag, later: Paris; later: Antwerpen; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761>

1) TSB item numbers (e.g. <TSB 0716>) refer to Lubitz' *Trotskyist Serials Bibliography*, München [etc.] : Saur, 1993, which is out of print but [available as PDF file](#) within the framework of the *Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet* website. In TSB you can find detailed descriptions of the respective Trotskyist journals, newsletters, bulletins and the like.

- ***Selective bibliography: Journals and bulletins to which Nettelbeck contributed***

Das Freie Wort (Paris) <TSB 0557>

Informationsdienst / Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (Paris) <TSB 0745>

Unser Wort (Prag, later: Paris; later: Antwerpen; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761>

- ***Selective bibliography: Articles about Nettelbeck***

[Anon.]: Nettelbeck, Walter, in: *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933 / Red.: Sybille Claus und Beatrix Schmidt*, Bd.1, München [etc.], 1980, pp. 524-525. [Biographical sketch]

Note: More informations about Nettelbeck are likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works, and articles listed in the relevant chapters of the *Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0183]*, e.g. in chapter [7.5.08](#)

Sidelines

- Nettelbeck was a member of the *Internationaler Guttemplerorden (International Good Templars)*; in 1945 he was co-founder and later president of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Politisch, Rassisch und Religiös Verfolgten (Working Group of Politically, Racially and Religiously Persecutees)*.

*Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2006
last (slightly) rev. June 2016*