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Internationalist Conviction, National Narratives, and Imperial History. A Study of Socialist Commemorative Culture in Austria-Hungary and Spain, 1898-1911

Abstract: This chapter explores the connection between the engagement with (post-)imperial history and internationalism by the labour movement. By looking at the way socialist parties commemorated historical events and analysed imperial history, I explore the different ways in which the tensions between an internationalist creed and national identity was handled by two parties associated with the IInd International. The main argument is that the different ways in which national narratives were appropriated by socialist parties can partially be explained by their attitude to imperial history and their assessment of their (post-)imperial situation. The two case studies are the German-speaking section of the Austrian Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) and their commemoration of the 1848 revolution and the Spanish Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and its commemoration of the Commune of Paris and Dos de Mayo celebrations.

Introduction

But what is the cause, what is the meaning of the state called ‘Austria’? This state, this Austro-Hungarian realm exists because the Habsburg-Lorraine family rules and governs in all its parts; this state exists because of the dynasty and for it. In the face of the dynasty’s means of power, that is of course enough to maintain this state for the dynasty; but God knows, there is little reason to be enthusiastic about this kind of state.¹

1 Friedrich Austerlitz, *Von Schwarzrotgold zu Schwarzgelb. Was die Deutschnationalen waren und was sie sind!* (Wien: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1911), 6: “Aber was ist die Ursache, was ist der Sinn des Staates, den man ‚Oesterreich‘ nennt? Dieser Staat, dieses österreichisch-ungarische Reich besteht, weil die Familie Habsburg-Lothringen in allen seinen Teilen herrscht und regiert; dieser Staat besteht *wegen* der der Dynastie und *für* sie. Das ist, angesichts der Machtmittel der Dynastie, natürlich genug, um diesen Staat für die Dynastie auch weiter zu erhalten; sich aber für diesen so gearteten Staat zu *begeistern*, dazu ist, weiß Gott, wenig Anlaß.” All translations of non-English quotations by the author.

This is how the social democratic journalist Friedrich Austerlitz described the cause and end of the Austrian monarchy: a state, not to unite one people under one banner as, in his words, the French Republic or the German Empire, but a Frankensteinian creature composed of different territories acquired at different points in history by a ruling dynasty that subjugated these territories to bolster its own power. The lack of enthusiasm that the population showed towards the monarchy therefore was absolutely justified in Austerlitz' view. The above-quoted paragraph was written as part of a booklet edited before the elections to the imperial diet of Cisleithania² in 1911, with its obvious aim to attract German nationalist voters to vote for the social democrats rather than the loyalist Christian Social party. Austerlitz heavily leaned into the notion that Austria-Hungary did not serve the need of its peoples but rather perpetuated an anachronistic form of rule that had been forged in a different era and that had become a roadblock for the welfare of its nations.

Austerlitz' attempt to attract voters who had previously sympathised with the German national movement in Austria points at two issues that this chapter seeks to address: first, even though socialists and social democrats presented themselves as internationalists, this did not stop them from trying to appeal to nationalist arguments and narratives. Second, appeals to the nation from the left were often rooted in a denouncement of imperial order and its history. It was often the supposed backwardness of empire that lead internationalists to a more nuanced, sometimes clearly affirmative view of the nation. There already is a wide array of scholarship on the contentious relationship between the internationalism of the labour movement and its integration into national societies.³ Both parties under consideration in this chapter – the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (SDAP) in Austria and the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) in Spain – were part of the Second International, a group of parties and labour unions that considered themselves to be socialist and internationalist. This did not mean, though, that they completely rejected nation-states as such or that nationality did not play a role in their self-image.⁴

² This was a term commonly used to refer to the Austrian part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire from 1867 to 1918.

³ For an overview: Stefan Berger and Angel Smith, eds., *Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity, 1870-1939* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), and John Schwarzmantel, "Nationalism and Socialist Internationalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 635–54.

⁴ Georges Haupt, *Programm und Wirklichkeit: Die internationale Sozialdemokratie vor 1914* (Berlin/ Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), 21–44. Haupt sketches the main core ideas that the different parties could agree on, among them a rejection of anarchism and an acceptance of the federal nature of the International.

In general, recent years have seen a revived interest in the conflictive relationship between internationalism and national sentiment in the labour movement, which has been especially true for both cases under consideration here. The attitude of the Austrian social democrats to the so-called nationality question of the Habsburg monarchy has always attracted a lot of attention, partially because the Austromarxist reform proposals sometimes have been framed as a path not taken that could have stabilised the monarchy.⁵ The organisational aspect of the nationality conflict within the party as well as the broader intellectual context of Marxist nationality debates have been a topic of much debate.⁶ In recent years, the role of constructing a kind of “working-class nationalism”⁷ through narrative strategies has been stressed by Jakub Beneš. He has also argued that while workers’ nationalism didn’t mean giving up on international solidarity and class consciousness, it would be a misnomer to label the social democratic labour movement as a “national indifferent”⁸ agent, a concept proposed by Tara Zahra to capture the various version of non-national identities that still were pervasive in the early twentieth century.

In the Spanish case, the concept of “national indifference” has been taken up lately by Aurelio Martí Bataller to explore the perspective of Spanish socialists on their nation.⁹ Discussions about the development of national consciousness in Spain were for a long time influenced by the hypothesis of a “weak nationalisa-

5 See also Helmut Konrad, “Österreichische Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage im 19. Jahrhundert”, *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburgerstaat*, ed. Wolfgang Maderthaner (Wien: Löcker, 1998), 119–30. For a comprehensive discussion of different reform proposals, see Jana Osterkamp, *Vielfalt ordnen. Das föderale Europa der Habsburgermonarchie, Vormärz bis 1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

6 One of the earliest and still one of the best studies of the multi-national party structure is Hans Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat*, vol. 1, *Das Ringen um die supranationale Integration der zisleithanischen Arbeiterbewegung, 1867-1907* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1963). See also Raimund Löw, *Der Zerfall der „Kleinen Internationalen“: Nationalitätenkonflikte in der Arbeiterbewegung des alten Österreich, 1889-1914* (Wien: Europaverlag, 1984) and Wolfgang Maderthaner, “Austro-Marxism: Mass Culture and Anticipatory Socialism,” in *Culture and Politics in Red Vienna*, ed. Judith Beniston and Robert Vilain (Leeds: Maney, 2006).

7 Jakub S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890-1918* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3.

8 Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities. National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69 (2010): 93–119. For the problems of this concept regarding the labor movement, see Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*, 54–55.

9 Aurelio Martí Bataller, *¿Una nación (indiferente)? Estudios sobre socialismo y nación en España* (Valencia: tirant humanidades, 2020), 11–22.

tion” of the country compared to other European cases, especially France.¹⁰ In recent years, a new appraisal for the different ways in which patriotic or national sentiment could be expressed has led to a correction of this picture. In particular, there is a growing number of research done on the diverse ways of creating a kind of national self-consciousness on the political left.¹¹

I want to add to these ongoing discussions the inclusion of an imperial perspective. The specific ways in which the tension between internationalism and nationalism played out in the labour movement was always prefigured by the engagement with empire and its legacy. For example, a common challenge that both sister parties had to face was the fact that in Austria-Hungary and in Spain national movements often were oppositional movements. They framed themselves as democratic and anti-imperial and used the supposedly imperial character of the state as an argument for their own claims to autonomy or even independence.¹² This illustrates the point that both Spain and Austria-Hungary were experiencing a series of imperial crisis around the year 1900 that made defining an internationalist attitude a complex problem. Following from this, I will argue that the multinational and (post-)imperial character of those polities can add to the understanding of the different ways in which an internationalist conviction could be expressed.

Looking at the engagement of socialist parties with history in general and with nationalist historical narratives is a useful way of exploring socialist attitudes toward nation and empire. The socialist and social democratic parties associated with the Second International shared a common commitment to a better future while at the same time presenting themselves as the most modern and appropriate flag-bearers of working-class interests. As Jakub Beneš has commented in his own study about workers’ nationalism, the drive to bind “past beginnings, a transitional present, and a fulfilling future”¹³ together was something that social

10 The term “weak nationalisation” was introduced by Borja de Riquer i Permanyer and meant to explain the strength of regional nationalisms in Spain as a consequence of the shortcomings of liberal nation-building in nineteenth century Spain; see Borja de Riquer y Permanyer, “La débil nacionalización española del siglo XIX,” *Historia Social* 20 (1994): 97–114. Favourable discussion of this argument, see José Álvarez Junco, *Mater dolorosa: La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001): 534–50; for a critique, see Ferran Archilés, “Una nacionalización no tan débil: Patriotismo local y republicanismo en Castellón, 1891-1910,” *Ayer* 48 (2002): 283–312.

11 See for example the volume Javier Moreno Luzón, ed., *Izquierdas y nacionalismos en la España contemporánea* (Madrid: Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2011).

12 Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, “Nation-Building and Regional Integration. The Case of the Spanish Empire, 1700-1914,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 242.

13 Beneš, *Workers and nationalism*, 5.

democrats and nationalists had in common. Thus, the commemorative practices of the labour movement are a useful way to shed new light on the question where they stood regarding the nation.

On the following pages, I will discuss two local examples to show how the engagement with national and imperial narratives of history influenced the commemorative culture within the socialist/social democratic workers' movement. First, I will explore how Austrian social democrats used the commemoration of the 1848 revolution in Vienna to comment on questions of empire and nationality. Second, I will discuss how the socialists in the Basque province of Biscay changed their attitudes to patriotic commemorations over time. I will argue that both of these developments can only fully be understood by seeing them as a socialist way to grapple with the perceived apogee of the nation as a legitimate source of sovereignty in times of imperial crisis.

The Commemoration of the 1848 Revolution in Vienna

Since their foundation as a party, 13 March held a special place in the calendar of Viennese social democrats.¹⁴ On this day in 1848, a crowd of Viennese citizens gathered in protest in front of the building where the so-called *Landstände* (representatives of aristocratic regional diets) were in session to discuss reform demands. When the cavalry was called in to disperse the crowd, the soldiers opened fire, leaving over a dozen people dead in the street. Hearing the news about this, people in working class quarters of Vienna started to construct barricades. The events caused the Austrian chancellor Prince Metternich to flee the city, making room for a new government that promised to deliver on at least some of the reform demands – it was the beginning of the revolution of 1848.¹⁵

The commemoration of those who died that day in 1848 became one of the most significant events organised by the social democrats in Vienna. At the fiftieth anniversary of the 1848 revolution in 1898 the commemorative services on Vienna's central cemetery attracted 200,000 people.¹⁶ Not all of them were there

¹⁴ For a history of the social democratic commemoration of 1848 from a contemporary, see Franz Schuhmeier, "Aus vergangenen Jahren," *Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung* (VGA). Märzschriften. 1911: 3–4.

¹⁵ A great summary of the events can be found in Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring: Fighting for a New World, 1848-1849* (London: Penguin Books, 2023), 295–306.

¹⁶ "Der Gedenktag der Revolution", *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 14 March 1898, 1–3.

to express their adherence to social democracy; the Viennese *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reported that among the people with their red carnations some participants were seen wearing blue cornflowers – the symbol of German nationalism in Austria. The socialist newspaper was proud to note that the red carnations had outnumbered the corn flower by far.¹⁷ This points to one of the contentious points of the 1848-remembrance. The uprising was appropriated by different political movements and the monument on the central cemetery specifically had been put there by a liberal-dominated city council in the 1864.¹⁸ Therefore, the social democrats had to deal with the fact that the event that they celebrated carried different meanings for other political groups who celebrated it. While the SDAP stressed the importance of working-class agency and class conflict in 1848, the German nationalist movement in Austria saw in 1848 a failed attempt to create a German nation-state that would have included the German-speaking parts of the Austrian empire.¹⁹

The way that social democrats presented the events of 1848 also aimed at bolstering their claim to be the legitimate heirs of the revolutionaries. Starting in 1898, the party published an annual booklet meant to discuss the historical significance of the 1848-revolution from a social democratic perspective which also contained poems, drawings, and short stories on social issues. In these booklets journalists and intellectuals close to the party outlined their interpretation of 1848 as a social upheaval of the lower classes that ended in the betrayal of the insurgents by a cowardly bourgeoisie that eventually welcomed the imperial forces back into the city.²⁰ The Austrian empire was clearly the villain in this version of the story and anything connected to the black-and-yellow colours of the monarchy was written about in a clearly derogatory tone.²¹

The SDAP also used the ceremony to show its own multi-national character. The speakers at the monument on the central cemetery represented the different national branches of Austrian social democracy. In 1898, German, Czech, Polish, Slovenian, and Italian social democrats each held speeches in their own lan-

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Urkunde des Grabes der Märzgefallenen," *Die Presse*, 29 October 1864, 3. For the history of the commemoration see also Wolfgang Häusler, "Noch sind nicht alle Märzen vorbei . . . : Zur politischen Tradition der Wiener Revolution von 1848," *Politik und Gesellschaft im alten und neuen Österreich: Festschrift für Rudolf Neck zum 60. Geburtstag*, vol 1, ed. Isabella Ackerl, Walter Hummelberger and Hans Mommsen (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1981), 93–101.

¹⁹ For the various connotations of the 1848 commemorations see James Kaye and Isabella Matuschek, "A problematic obligation. Commemorating the 1848 revolution in Austria," in *1848. Memory and oblivion in Europe*, ed. Charlotte Tacke (Brüssel et al.: Peter Lang, 2000), 99–122.

²⁰ All of those booklets can be found in VGA. Märzschriften.

²¹ J.K., "Zwei Generationen Klerikalismus in Oesterreich," *VGA. Märzschriften*. 1905: 2.

guage.²² In the days and weeks before the anniversary, social democratic groups in other towns expressed their support for the commemoration, many of them sending delegates to Vienna. In the party newspaper of the bi-national Moravian town Brünn/Brno, the Viennese social democrat Eduard Rieger proclaimed the week before the event that “not only the Viennese, but the whole Austrian proletariat prepares for the holy celebration.”²³ The anniversary was to be an all-Austrian celebration. The kind of internationalism presented here was not meant to be anti-national; instead, the party organised commemorative events explicitly to celebrate its peaceful multi-national character and contrasted this with the chaos and violence that the social democratic press associated with the competing nationalist movements that created violent riots. Specifically, party leaders used the occasion of the anniversary of 1898 to present the social democratic party as an alternative to an empire that was not able to provide a functional framework for multiple nationalities to coexist. Ignacy Daszyński, member of Parliament for the Polish section of the SDAP, said in a speech that year “that this revolutionary party that we are is almost the only state-conserving party with regard to a rational organisation of Austria.”²⁴ He went even further, declaring that “if Austria had one historical mission, then it would be the foundation of a federation of free and equal nations.”²⁵ Claims like this were sometimes interpreted as an offer to the state that the social democratic party could actually become a loyalist party as soon as its political demands would be listened to by the crown.²⁶

Statements like this must be contextualised in the contemporary political situation, however. The year of the fiftieth anniversary was also the year after the Badeni crisis, a conflict about the status of the Czech language in the Bohemian provinces that had led to the demission of Austrian prime minister Count Kasimir Badeni in November 1897 and caused a high level of street violence between German and Czech nationalists well into 1898.²⁷ The social democratic party press

22 “Der Gedenktag der Revolution,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 14 March 1898, 2.

23 Eduard Rieger, “Die Todten von 1848,” *Volksfreund*, 11 March 1898, 2: “Nicht nur das Wiener, nein, das gesamte österreichische Proletariat rüstet zu einer heiligen Feier.”

24 Ignacy Daszyński, *Oesterreich im Gedächtnisjahre der Revolution: Rede von Ignaz Daszynski, gehalten in der Reichsratssitzung vom 29. März 1898* (Wien: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1898), 3: “daß eben diese revolutionäre Partei, die wir sind, in Bezug auf eine vernünftige Organisation von Oesterreich fast die einzige staaterhaltende Partei ist.”

25 Ibid., “Wenn Oesterreich eine geschichtliche Aufgabe hat, so ist es eben die der Gründung eines Föderativbundes der freien und gleichberechtigten Völker.”

26 For example Konrad, “Arbeiterbewegung,” 128.

27 John W. Boyer, “Badeni and the Revolution of 1897,” in *Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte: Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1., ed. Lucile Dreidemy (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015), 69–84.

consistently tried to present social democracy as the responsible force in this conflict, arguing that its members were more able than the middle class to live by civic values such as level-headedness and restraint.²⁸ The self-description as “state-conserving”²⁹ therefore was meant as an attack on nationalists on both sides of the Czech-German conflict and on the imperial institutions that were unfit to provide a framework for peace between the nationalities. It was a critique of the dynasty and nationalists alike and not meant to convey sympathy for imperial institutions.

Another aspect of social democratic 1848 commemorations in Vienna was the tension between the emphasis on the social aspect of the revolution and the prominent role that a German national revolutionary tradition continued to play, especially for the German-speaking section of the SDAP. Songs and poems that referenced 1848 regularly referenced the German framework of the revolution; for example, a famous poem of the German 1848-revolutionary and poet Georg Herwegh became one of the most popular songs on social democratic commemorative services.³⁰ The way in which the history of the 1848 revolution was told repeatedly relied on a narrative that centred German and Hungarian revolutionaries fighting against an anachronistic dynasty that relied on the reactionary impulses of the Slavic rural population to stay in power. For example, the German Bohemian social democrat Josef Hannich wrote in 1898 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of 1848: “The resistance of Germans and Hungarians was broken by that of the Slavs.”³¹ This interpretation of 1848 drew on some already established narratives pushed for example by Friedrich Engels in his writings about 1848. He had argued that a successful revolution should have had the aim of establishing both a German and a Hungarian republic at the expense of the Austrian empire and that this aim was thwarted by the uneducated Slavic peasant population that had let itself become instruments of the Austrian dynasty.³² This narrative showed up frequently in the commemorative booklets of the Viennese social democrats, including by rather famous authors such as Karl Kautsky, who wrote in 1902 that the Slavic people of Austria had behaved as a “reactionary

28 For examples from 1898, see their reactions to nationalist street brawls in “Palacky-Feier,” *Volksfreund*, 17 June 1898, 3–4.

29 See footnote no. 23.

30 For example “Der Gang zum Grabe der Märzgefallenen,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 12 March 1900, 1–2.

31 Josef Hannich, “Die Autonomie der Nationen, nicht die der Königreiche und Länder,” *Volksfreund*, 11 March 1898, 7: “Die Widerstandskraft der Deutschen und Ungarn wurde durch die der Slaven gebrochen.”

32 For a discussion of this see Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur nationalen Frage: Friedrich Engels und das Problem der ‚geschichtslosen‘ Völker* (Berlin: Olle und Wolter, 1974).

mass”³³ in 1848. This sentiment was even echoed by a Czech-language social democratic newspaper, the Vienna-based *Dělnické Listy*; after offering a concise description of the events of 13 March 1848 the paper added a short remark on the history of 1848 in the Bohemian lands that read: “It was the Czechs and the Croats who helped to suppress the revolution in Austria, and the Young Czech democrats still boast about it today. That is why it is difficult to write about the revolution in Bohemia, which was nothing but a counter-revolution.”³⁴

This shows that even in the Czech section of Viennese social democracy accepted the German-centred narrative of the 1848-revolution denouncing the events in the Bohemian lands as counter-revolutionary. In this specific instance, they used this assessment of history to distance themselves from the liberal nationalist Young Czech party. By writing about the 1848 revolution in the Austrian empire in a way as if it had only taken place in Vienna and Hungary and as if the Slavic-majority provinces had been a hotbed of pro-dynastic reaction, the social democratic authors reinforced the notion that there was something inherently progressive to German nationalism in 1848 while the national demands of Slavic people were inherently pro-imperial and therefore historically backward. This aspect of historical writing about 1848 counteracted the intended message that Daszyński tried to convey in his above-quoted speech. The alleged backwardness of the Habsburg monarchy was projected onto its supposedly less-developed nationalities. The German people, according to this interpretation, had been victimised by the empire because their own historical development could have been more progressive if the empire had fallen. This line of interpretation can be found in contributions by a variety of authors over the time under consideration. Karl Höger, one of the most prolific social democrat writers on this topic, considered the Austrian defeat in the German War of 1866 a blessing because it had at least led to some constitutional reforms.³⁵ Austria was also sometimes unfavourably compared to the German empire that despite its authoritarian characteristics was interpreted as the more modern polity.³⁶ The negative assessment of the empire was grounded in the expectation that the German nation, including the German-Austrian working-class, would be better off without the empire. This was also the view of Ludo Moritz Hartmann, a social democrat from Vienna who played an important role in the parties’ efforts for establishing an adult education system in

33 Karl Kautsky, “Die Slaven und die Revolution,” *VGA. Märzschriften*. 1902, 2.

34 “13. března 1848,” *Dělnické Listy*, 10 March 1898, 1: “A Češi to byli s Chorváty, kteří revoluci v Rakousku utloutkat pomohli a ještě podnes se tím mladočestí demokraté chlubí. Proto také je těžko psáti o revoluci v Chechách, která nebyla ničím jiným než protirevoluci.”

35 Karl Höger, “Was haben wir erreicht?,” *VGA. Märzschriften*. 1908, 2–3.

36 “Dem Andenken der Revolution,” *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 12 March 1911, 2–3.

Vienna. In a 1908 talk held in Brünn/Brno he lamented that 1848 had not led to German unification. He explained that the violent suppression of the revolution in Vienna in October 1848 had “severed the thread that still connected Germany with Austria.”³⁷

A more optimistic view of what Austria-Hungary could be for its nations was presented by Otto Bauer in 1907. In the year of the first election to the Imperial diet under equal and general male suffrage, one of the party’s most important intellectuals at that time expressed his conviction that the expansion of voting rights would be followed by a solution to the nationality problem. Bauer claimed that the nationality programme of his party was modelled after the so-called constitution of Kremsier, a constitutional draft made by the imperial diet of 1848 that never had been put into practice. He viewed the revolution as an alternative historical path that could have led to a federation of free nations, a road which was open again, now, in 1907: “Before a decade goes by, our nationality program will be realised and, if not the wording, then at least the idea of the Kremsier draft constitution will be law in Austria.”³⁸

Just as his comrade Hartmann, Bauer tried to present 1848 as a missed opportunity. But contrary to Hartmann, Bauer assumed that the social democrats would have a shot at trying to reform the empire in a way that would make it more appealing to its nations after the suffrage reform. While Hartmann saw a missed chance for a Greater German nation-state in 1848, Otto Bauer stressed the possibility of a reformed multi-national empire. It is difficult to assess which of those interpretations was more popular among the membership at any given time, but it can be established that Bauer had some influence over the way in which the party presented history to its followers. When the social democratic educational journal *Bildungsarbeit* provided a handout for the organisation of 1848-remembrance events in 1910, they recommended one of his articles and listed the constitutional draft of Kremsier as one of the talking points that should be part of a commemorative speech.³⁹ Again, it is interesting to look at a view from the Czech party branch. In the same year Otto Bauer imagined a multi-national feature for Austria, his Czech comrade Antonín Němec contributed an article about the relationship of Czech social democracy with the Czech nation to the social democratic theoretical journal *Der Kampf*. In his contribution, he

37 Ludo Moritz Hartmann, “Das Jahr 1848 und die neue Generation,” *Beilage zu Nr. 99 des Volksfreund vom 11. Dezember 1908*, 1.

38 Otto Bauer, 1848, in *VGA. Märzschriften*. 1907, 7: “Ehe ein Jahrzehnt vergeht, ist unser Nationalitätenprogramm verwirklicht, ist, wenn auch nicht der Wortlaut, so doch die Idee des Kremsierer Verfassungsentwurfes in Oesterreich Gesetz.”

39 See “Arbeiterfeste. Märzfeier,” *Bildungsarbeit* 5 (February 1910): 1.

painted a darker picture of the Austrian empire, claiming that in its younger history, it had acted as a German empire that sought to suppress Czech revolutionary aspirations: "Austria wanted to be and remain a unified German state. [. . .] The fury of persecution was increased to the point of madness."⁴⁰ Therefore, the Czech nation had, in his view, a natural inclination towards socialism and democracy. This assessment of one of the most important leaders of Czech social democracy in Austria shows very clearly that the growing confidence of the Czech party branch vis-à-vis their German Austrian comrades went hand in hand with a new interpretation of history and that stressed the national victimisation of Czechs by the Austrian empire.

The way social democrats interpreted imperial history clearly had an impact on their opinion about what internationalism had to mean. The connections they drew between internationalism and empire were also highly situational. Both Daszyński in 1898 and Bauer in 1907 used references to the perceived state of the empire as arguments for their vision of a multi-national federation, just as Hartmann and Němec used their more pessimistic assessment of Austrian imperial viability to argue for a more nationally centred version of internationalism.

The PSOE in Bilbao between Commune Day and Dos de Mayo

Considering the Spanish case, we see a fundamentally different commemorative calendar. Contrary to their Austrian comrades, the Spanish socialists rejected the participation in celebrations that referenced national revolutionary traditions or the different anniversaries of the Spanish War of Independence.⁴¹ They did not try to give these commemorations a socialist spin like the social democrats of Vienna did with the commemoration of 1848, and also refused to participate in celebrations of Spain's short-lived First Republic. The two main festivities of the Spanish socialist year were the First of May and the proclamation of the Commune of Paris on 18 March 1871. Commemorating the uprising of the Parisian lower classes in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war became an important occa-

⁴⁰ Antonín Němec, "Proletariat, Demokratie und die tschechische Nation," *Der Kampf*, 1 (October 1907): 21: "Oesterreich wollte ein deutscher Einheitsstaat sein und bleiben. [. . .] Die Verfolgungswut wurde bis zum Wahnsinn gesteigert."

⁴¹ Javier Moreno Luzón, "Fighting for National Memory. The Commemoration of the Spanish 'War of Independence' in 1908-1912," *History and Memory* 19 (2007): 68–94.

sion for PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) chapters to convey their internationalist message.

To see how the view on national history developed over time, it is especially instructive to look at the PSOE chapter in Bilbao, the biggest city in the Basque province of Biscay and an early stronghold of Spanish socialism.⁴² Bilbao is also a very fitting example because there, the PSOE had to engage with different options of national identification as the city was also the nucleus of the emerging Basque national movement. Looking at the socialists in Bilbao and the surrounding area, it is clear that the celebration of Commune Day was already a well-established occasion in socialist party chapters by the 1890s.⁴³ In 1905, the Bilbao-based newspaper *La lucha de clases* proudly wrote that each socialist group even in smaller towns spread the knowledge about the Commune: “Every year the number of those in favour of a social regime of justice has increased so considerably [. . .] that today there are thousands in this province, and there are few, very few towns of any working-class importance in which the commemoration of the Commune does not take place.”⁴⁴

With statements like this, the party press treated the spread of Commune Day celebrations as a symbol for the advancement of socialism in general. The commemoration of this historical event was perceived as a duty for local chapters. The typical Commune-celebration consisted of a banquet, a speech explaining the meaning of the event and a couple of performances by socialist choirs, theatre groups, or orchestras.⁴⁵ In their speeches on the subject, the speakers usually removed the Commune of Paris completely from its French context and built it up as a universalist example of working-class revolution. At one of these occasions, the Bilbao-born philosopher Miguel de Unamuno explicitly claimed that the Commune was a legend for the proletariat in all countries and that it was not even important that it had taken place in France.⁴⁶ The celebration of Commune Day became an occasion to convey a type of internationalism that deliberately rejected nationality as a meaningful category and positioned Spanish socialism in an international tradition of working-class uprisings.

42 See Juan Pablo Fusi, “El socialismo vasco, 1886-1984,” in *El socialismo en las nacionalidades y regiones*, ed. Albert Balcells and Santos Juliá (Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 1988), 41–46.

43 “El Aniversario de la Commune,” *La lucha de clases*, 25 March 1899, 2.

44 “La Commune,” *La lucha de clases*, 18 March 1905, 1: “cada año ha ido en tan considerable aumento el número de los partidarios de un régimen social de justicia [. . .] que hoy se cuentan por millares en esta provincia, y son pocos, muy pocos sus pueblos de alguna importancia obrera en que no tenga lugar la conmemoración de la Commune.”

45 For an example, see “Conmemoración de la ‘Commune’,” *La lucha de clases*, 24 March 1900, 2 and “Velada Teatral. Conmemoración de la Commune,” *La lucha de clases*, 10 March 1906, 4.

46 “La Conmemoración de la Commune,” *La lucha de clases*, 26 March 1904, 1.

Interestingly, the very same year that Unamuno gave this speech at Commune Day, the local PSOE chapter also started to participate in a local patriotic commemorative event, a procession on 2 May known under the name of *Dos de Mayo*. This was remarkable because the participation in a patriotic event not only ran counter to the anti-national internationalism expressed in the Commune celebration, but also contradicted earlier statements of the party regarding *Dos de Mayo* festivities. *Dos de Mayo* was – and still is – known in Spain as the day of the Madrid uprising against Napoleon in 1808 and therefore an important patriotic celebration date in Madrid. The date also had a specific local significance in Bilbao because the liberal and republican political groups in the city used it primarily to commemorate the liberal victory in Spain's civil war of 1872–1876, the so-called Third Carlist War. In this war, traditionalist monarchists called Carlists had sought to install their pretender, Prince Carlos, to the throne. The Carlists, which continued to play a role in local politics in the time under consideration, rejected constitutionalism and favoured absolute monarchical rule while also upholding privileges of autonomy in the Basque provinces and Catalonia. Fighting during the Third Carlist War was especially severe around Bilbao and the city had suffered a devastating siege in 1874 until it had been relieved by forces of the liberal government on 2 May 1874. Since then, the more liberal leaning political forces of the city commemorated the *Dos de Mayo* as the day in which the city had been saved and also to connect their local pride with what one Bilbao city council member called “the most glorious memories in the history of the fatherland”⁴⁷ that had taken place on that day, by which he meant the 1808 uprising against Napoleon in Madrid and the bombardment of the Peruvian city Callao by the Spanish Navy in 1866.

The initial socialist attitude towards this celebration consisted of flat-out rejection, as the prevailing view on the Third Carlist War was that it had been a struggle between two factions of the bourgeoisie and that socialists had no business in picking a side in it. The working class, a socialist city council member explained in 1895, would rather celebrate the First of May as the Day of the international solidarity than commemorate “the bloody and futile struggles sustained in the name of a deceitful liberty.”⁴⁸ Both the celebration of Commune Day and the rejection of patriotic *Dos de Mayo* celebrations were meant to show a brand of internationalism that rejected national historical narratives altogether and insisted on a non-national

47 “Acuerdo por el que se aprueba la celebración, 4 April 1894,” ES 48020. Archivo Municipal de Bilbao (AMB), document no. 499221: “recuerdos gloriosísimos de la historia patria.”

48 “Acuerdo por el que se rechaza tomar en consideración una moción presentada por el Sr. Orte,” 3 April 1895. ES 48020 AMB, document no. 500795: “las cruentas é inútiles luchas sostenidas en nombre de una libertad mentida.”

universalist socialist identity, rooted in the admiration of working uprisings exemplified by the Parisian Commune.

The socialist attitude to Dos de Mayo changed significantly, though, after the annual processions became more and more a political rally of liberal and republican forces that, in their own view, defended the democratic traditions of Bilbao against the reactionary threat embodied by Basque nationalism and Spanish conservatism. In 1904, the Bilbao socialists participated in the commemorative service for the defenders of the city, even contributing a wreath dedicated “to the glorious memory of the martyrs who fell fighting for liberty.”⁴⁹ Emilio Felipe, who spoke on behalf of the PSOE chapter of Bilbao, made it clear that the growing threat posed to individual liberty by conservative forces was the main reason why they thought it appropriate to do so.⁵⁰ The Bilbao PSOE chapter participated again in 1905, this time contributing a speech that stressed the common push for laicism that united liberals, republicans, and socialists.⁵¹ In the autumn of the same year, the national congress of the party accepted a proposal that forced local chapters to stop cooperating with republicans and liberals, which is why the Bilbao chapter paused its participation.⁵² In 1910, socialists and republicans resumed their cooperation, this time in concurrence with the nationwide attitude of the PSOE which had entered in an electoral alliance with the republicans.⁵³ How can this changing attitude toward a celebration of the Spanish nation be explained? Why did a party that so fervently insisted on its anti-nationalist stance eventually embrace a form of historical commemoration that clearly celebrated the Spanish nation?

One part to the answer is a common hostility that Spanish republicans and socialists felt towards the growing influence of the Basque nationalist movement. The Basque National Party (*Partido Nacional Vasco*, PNV) emerged as a political contender in the 1890s, claiming to defend the historic freedoms of the Basque country, the so-called *fueros* against the unitarian Spanish state. Its founder Sabino Arana saw the Basque provinces as a territory once conquered by the Spanish crown that had to fight for its independence to keep its national character.⁵⁴

49 “La procesión cívica,” *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 3 May 1904, 1–2: “á la memoria gloriosa de los mártires que sucumbieron luchando por la libertad.”

50 *Ibid.*

51 “La fiesta de la libertad,” *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 2 May 1905, Edición de la tarde, 5.

52 “VII Congreso del Partido Socialista Obrero Español,” in *El Socialista*, 20 Octubre 1905, 1.

53 “La Fiesta del Trabajo y la liberación de Bilbao,” *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 23 April 1910, 1. For the electoral alliance see Antonio Robles Egea, “La conjunción republicano-socialista. Una síntesis de liberalismo y socialismo,” *Ayer* 54 (2004): 97–127.

54 Félix Luengo Teixidor, “Restauración. Identidad, fueros y autonomía: Liberales, republicanos y carlistas en la construcción de la identidad vasca, 1876-1923,” in *La autonomía vasca en la Es-*

The socialist party in Biscay soon became the main antagonist of the Basque National movement. Basque nationalists accused workers who had moved to Bilbao from other parts of Spain of contributing to the destruction of the Basque national character.⁵⁵ The dislike was mutual because the socialist groups in Bilbao frequently ridiculed the Basque nationalists [called “bizcaitarras”] for being backward examples of a property-holding class that depended on the labour of the workers they despised. This created a situation in which the rejection of separatist nationalism became essential for the socialists up to a point where they were eager to embrace Spanish nationalist rhetoric. The historian Antonio Rivera Blanco has pointed out that the signs of identity of Biscayan socialism were Spanish even if they rejected Spanish patriotism.⁵⁶ Identifying with the culture and language of the central state could become a means of distancing oneself from a political movement that was conceived to be oppressive to workers. The growing influence of Basque nationalism on a local level therefore made a rapprochement between liberals, republicans, and socialists around their opposition to regional nationalism more likely. But this is not sufficient to explain the co-existence of a clearly anti-nationalist commemorative culture and the participation in patriotic events. After all, the PSOE’s hostility against Basque nationalism had not led them to embrace this kind of progressive Spanish nationalism in the 1890s.

The decision of the local PSOE to contribute to an important local event of Spanish nationalism has also to be contextualised within the so-called “regenerationist” debates in Spain after 1898. In that year, after suffering a major defeat in the Spanish-American War, Spain lost control of the last parts of its former Asian and American empire: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The end of the Spanish empire, and especially the loss of Cuba, which had been seen as integral part of Spain to that point, led to a heated debate about the supposed decline of Spain and how to repair it. Differing and often conflicting ideas about modernising Spain began to change the political landscape,⁵⁷ while Dos de Mayo celebrations in Bilbao also started to exhibit typical language of regenerationist ideas. In 1903, a contribution in *El Liberal* explained that the defenders of Bilbao in 1874

paña contemporánea, 1808-2008, ed. Luis Castells and Arturo Cajal (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2009), 144–45. Núñez Seixas, *Nation-Building*, 242.

55 Ludger Mees, *The Basque Contention. Ethnicity, Politics, Violence* (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 52–55.

56 Antonio Rivera Blanco, “La Izquierda y la cuestión vasca. Primera parte. 1880-1923. Distancia y confrontación,” *La autonomía vasca en la España contemporánea: 1808-2008*, ed. Luis Castells and Arturo Cajal (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2009), 160–64.

57 José Álvarez Junco, “Historia y mitos nacionales,” in *Ser españoles. Imaginarios nacionalistas en el siglo XX*, ed. Javier Moreno Luzón and Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas (Barcelona: RBA, 2013), 21–56.

had not only fought for Spain but “for liberty, for justice, for progress, for all what the new Spain represents and even for the aspirations of all the civilised world.”⁵⁸ The Dos de Mayo celebrations became an occasion to express a type of post-imperial progressive nationalism aimed at creating a new Spain and insisting that the nation had to be civilised in order to become part of a family of modern European nation-states. Bilbao, as one author in *El Liberal* put it, “was called to nothing less than [to] be the importer of European progress to Spain”⁵⁹ due to its liberal tradition.

At the same time, we also see a new development in Biscayan socialism that has been described by Sara Hidalgo García de Orellán as a change in the “emotional regime” expressed by PSOE members.⁶⁰ She argues that there was a shift in tone among socialists that moved toward seeing the participation in the democratic process as a positive way to push for reform, with the appropriation of regenerationist language used to broaden the socialist agenda. By embracing causes like secular education, laicism, and civic and political rights the PSOE in Bilbao transcended the strictly working-class focused attitude of the first generation of Bilbao socialists during the 1890s.⁶¹ Both of these developments, the shift in Dos de Mayo celebrations towards a very combative liberal nationalism and the shift of the local PSOE towards a broader progressive agenda, were part of a broader discussion of creating a new Spain after the end of empire. The participation in celebrations that centred this kind of view on the nation heavily implied that while the more anti-national stance conveyed in Commune Day celebrations and on First of May continued to be important, at least the Biscay socialists had accepted the Spanish nation as a framework for their political agenda.

The implications of this for the self-image of socialists was significant. The Bilbao socialists took the lead in opening the party up to cooperation with the Republicans and the way they did this also meant adopting a different view of younger Spanish history. Treating the volunteers that had defended Bilbao in 1874 until the army of the central government arrived as heroes meant giving up on

58 Antonio Zozaya, “La mejor grandeza,” *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 2 May 1903, 1: “por la Libertad, por la Justicia, por el Progreso, por todo lo que representa á la España nueva y aun la aspiración de todo el mundo civilizado.”

59 Antonio Viérgol, “Las cosas en su sitio,” *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 2 May 1902, 1: “llamada nada menos que á ser la importadora en España del progreso europeo.”

60 Sara Hidalgo García de Orellán, “The Roots 1909 Republican-Socialist Alliance. Changes in the Class Emotional Regime in 1903 in Biscay,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 62 (2017): 21–23. For an in-depth discussion of the two emotional regimes that underpinned the different attitudes in Biscay socialism, see Sara Hidalgo García de Orellán, *Emociones obreras, política socialista: Movimiento obrero vizcaíno, 1886-1915* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2018), ch. 3 and 4.

61 *Ibid.*, 265–70.

the earlier interpretation of the Third Carlist War as a conflict between bourgeois elites. Celebrating the liberal victory of 1876 also opened the party up to a view of Spanish history where the vital conflicts were fought between the *Dos Españas*, the two Spains, one progressive and secular and the other conservative and clerical, as opposed to the view that the only conflict that mattered was between the proletariat and all other social classes.⁶² The socialists' animosity towards Basque nationalism and their openness to cooperate within a broader secular left-wing coalition led Miguel de Unamuno to insist that they were, in practice, a Spanish patriotic movement. After writing about some of the problems he saw in the "simplistic internationalism" the socialists sometimes expressed, he went on to argue: "But the socialist movement obeys, under teachings that better or worse reflect them, intimate national and local impulses. And here, in Spain, far from being a purely economic movement, it is a cultural movement, anti-catholic, and in Bilbao anti-*bizkaitarra* [against the Basque national movement], that means, Spanish-patriotic."⁶³

What Unamuno argues here was pretty similar to the sentiment expressed by some Austrian socialists like Ignacy Daszyński and Otto Bauer who claimed they could be considered a "state-conserving" power, precisely because of their opposition to radical nationalism. Unamuno saw the internationalist stance of the Bilbao labour movement that was directed against the Basque national movement as a potential force that could keep Spain together, meaning their internationalism could be patriotic in the sense that it could act as an antidote to separatist aspirations. This assertion is not exactly new, as scholars like Antonio Riviera Blanco have already pointed out that the identity of Basque socialist workers was shaped by markers that were heavily *españolista*.⁶⁴ But the Bilbao case shows that this was more than just a cultural preference born out of disdain for the romantic elitist nationalism of the Basque National Party; it was a convergence between two political forces that had previously despised each other on the ground of a common push to regenerate Spain after the end of empire. The discourses surrounding the decline of Spanish imperial might have contributed to the rap-

62 A comprehensive overview of the concept of Two Spains can be found in Santos Juliá: *Historias de las dos Españas* (Madrid: Taurus, 2004).

63 "Conferencia de Unamuno. Aspecto local del Socialismo," *El Liberal (Bilbao)*, 22 September 1908, 1: "Pero el movimiento socialista obedece, por debajo de doctrinas que le reflejan mejor ó peor, á impulsos íntimos nacionales y locales. Y aquí, en España, lejos de ser un movimiento puramente económico, es un movimiento cultural, anti-católica, y en Bilbao anti-*bizkaitarra*, es decir, patriótico español."

64 Antonio Rivera Blanco, "Identidad nacional y obrerismo en España y el País Vasco, 1900-1923," in *Proletarios de todos los países. Socialismo, clase y nación en Europa y España, 1880-1940*, ed. Aurelio Martí Bataller (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2019), 169–83.

prochement between socialists and republicans in two ways: first, indirectly, by invigorating regional nationalisms that in turn made the PSOE with its staunch anti-nationalist stance a potential ally for Spanish republicans and liberals; and second, by creating an intellectual environment where reform movements could come together on the common ground of modernising Spain and turning it in a more modern European nation.

Conclusion

The comparison between the two case studies shows that the connection between the nation and empire is crucial to understand the different ways in which internationalism was put into practice by socialist parties of that time. What internationalism could mean exactly was not only dependent on how socialists in that time approached the phenomenon of the nation but also on how they assessed the viability of a nation-based political order as opposed to supposedly anachronistic empires. A comparative analysis like the one above can therefore help to illuminate the following three aspects.

First, in order to explain the different ways in which the relationship between internationalism and national self-perception was conceptualised in the socialist labour movement, the attitude towards empire and imperial history always has to be considered. The internationalism of Austrian social democrats, while being a sincerely held belief and tradition of the labour movement in Austria, also served as a reaction toward the problems of the Austrian empire. Professing their internationalism also meant presenting an alternative order to the perceived chaos of Austrian political life and the inability of Austrian imperial institutions to deal with them. In the Spanish case, the imperial layer of the national question is less pronounced than in Austria and therefore easier to overlook. The special case of the socialists of Bilbao and their decision to express their adherence to the liberal-progressive kind of Spanish nationalism can only be properly understood if we consider the influence of narratives of imperial decline that were abundant in Spain after 1898.

Second, one of the main reasons that socialist writers, intellectuals, and party officials started to embrace the concept of the nation was the favourable juxtaposition with the perceived decline of an older political order that was associated with empire. The projects of reform and regeneration that the SDAP and the PSOE began to support in the early 1900s had in common a reliance on the nation as source of political legitimacy. In the Austrian case, the way the younger history of Austria was remembered at their commemorative occasions showed a willingness of social democrats to re-formulate the Austrian imperial project on the

basis of its nations as opposed to the principle of dynastical rule and loyalty. In the Spanish case, the different liberal versions of *regeneracionismo*, especially the ones stressing secularism and Europeanisation, became an opportunity for socialists to broaden their own political brand and presenting themselves as the party of a renewed Spain.

Third, the interpretations of history associated with the different views on nation and empire were always connected tightly to expectations of the future. The different views on the correct relationship between socialism and the nation that Otto Bauer, Antonín Němec, and Ludo Moritz Hartmann held can partly be explained by their different assessments about the character and viability of the Austrian empire. In the Spanish case, we see that a genuine engagement with national historical narratives on the part of the socialists began as part of a greater movement to search for the potential historical foundation of a reformed Spain after 1898. This connection between historical interpretation and expected future can help to explain some important differences in the way national narratives were incorporated by the labour movement. For the German-Austrian social democracy, presenting itself as the true heir of a German revolutionary and cultural tradition was an effective way of positioning itself against both imperial rule and radical nationalism, thereby bolstering their project of a multi-national federation as a potential future for Austria-Hungary. For the Spanish socialists on the other hand, it became more important to stress the modernising potential of a Europeanised nation-state to justify their always internally contested alliance with republican parties. In both cases, it was the perceived necessity to transition from an old, backward imperial order to a still uncertain future that led members of the socialist labour movement to embrace and appropriate national historical narratives and made it attractive to frame their own socialist programme in a national framework.

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