

SOLIDARITY IN CRISIS: THE FRENCH, GERMAN, AND ITALIAN SOCIALISTS IN THE FACE OF INTERNATIONAL CRISES AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL (1889-1915)

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The events of summer 1914, which led the French Socialists and the German Social Democrats to support *de facto* the entry into the First World War of their respective countries, have remained engraved in people's memories and have been historically interpreted in two different ways with regard to the new International. First, the Socialist leaders "betrayed" their own supporters. Second, the support for war represents the "failure" of the very spirit of the International; a spirit which was created to strengthen the principles of transnational solidarity within the working class and help it develop common struggles. By the way, these terms – "failure", "betrayal" – were directly used by the Socialist parties' members immediately after the outbreak of the First World War,^[1] prior to being confirmed by historians.^[2]

It is nonetheless necessary to study the life of the Second International, regardless of what happened in 1914,^[3] by reinstating its action against war in the very history of its development, while it was still alive.^[4] From this point of view, one cannot speak of failure; it rather succeeded in creating a common feeling based on a desire to oppose war and the ability to respond to dangerous international situations. Nevertheless, analyzing the reactions of the International, and the different Socialist parties which composed it, in the face of the international diplomatic crises of that time^[5] reveals certain limits.

In order to do this, we adopt a three-stage approach. First, we demonstrate the International's growing ability to get an international visibility by organizing its struggle against war. At the time of its creation, the goal of that institution was not to oppose war. For that matter, the Second International's first congresses paid limited attention to the issues of war and peace, as it can be read in their reports or in the newspaper articles about them. However, this changed over the 1890s. The International's interest in the issues of war and opposition to war began to increase. The Zurich (1893) and London (1896) Congresses already testified of the particular attention paid to these issues. During this last Congress, it was definitely decided that the May Day demonstration would also aim to publicly display the labor movement's opposition to war.

Over time, the International started to implement a wide range of practices which were meant to "create" its internationalism: demonstrations and particular rituals on the occasion of congresses, and a series of publications (leaflets, lampoons, manifestos, and starting from 1909, the reports of the International Socialist Bureau) spread among the countries. We have summarized these phenomena, in reference to the historian Kevin J. Callahan, with the term "demonstration culture". The creation of this demonstration culture is closely connected to the International's opposition to war. The International's different public demonstrations progressively became the expression of an opposition to war and this opposition was their *raison d'être*. As international crises came one after another, the International learned how to react to situations of danger. It better handled the crises' temporality and managed to give an answer to what was happening at the international level.

In the second part of our research, we analyze what was happening on the scale of the Socialist

parties of the three nations. The representatives of the three parties were the protagonists of the birth of an internationalist feeling, apart from what was happening at the level of the International. If we analyze how these debates spread among the three countries, the importance the war and peace issues had in those debates, and how the socialists dealt with them within their countries' borders, it can be observed that internationalism had not been imposed by the International's institutions but that international networks were also being formed at the level of ad hoc exchanges between the Socialist representatives of the different countries.

This study of the two levels of internationalism is vital to show how that internationalism subsequently evolved when the European diplomatic situation was disrupted by international crises – This is what we undertook in the third part of the work.

Various observations are highlighted. The International's capacity to react in the face of crises has a limit: during the 1905 Moroccan crisis, when France or Germany were directly involved in the crises, the International's capacity to react significantly weakened and slowed down. The result is that the Socialist parties of the different countries sometimes harbored doubts on their foreign comrades' attitude in the face of the belligerent actions of their respective governments.

Despite this limit, the International learned over the years how to react to these situations of danger. For example, in 1912, the Basel Congress and the different international meetings which were held almost at the same time in the three countries proved that the International had henceforth learned how to make its voice heard in the opposition to war. This was important to the extent that the International thus showed to governments that, in the event of war, they had to take into account the response capacity of organized socialism. The International then did not fail in its opposition to war. On the contrary, it did very well.

The International followed a double temporality: on one hand, its involvement in the protest against the war, born in the 1890s, grew linearly over the years. On the other hand, the years 1911-1914 constituted a special moment in this development; it constituted its peak, so to speak. During these years, the international socialism stage was constantly scattered of solidarity demonstrations between the socialisms of the different countries, which intended to set up a joint opposition to the danger of war.

Our study focuses on the French, German, and Italian cases. We considered it significant to choose the two parties which had the greatest influence in terms of the number of delegates sent to the International's congresses and initiatives taken in common (manifestos, joint demonstrations) on the international socialism stage. Analyzing Italy enabled us to underscore the importance of France and Germany in the International. Moreover, this analysis also enables us to show that whether or not it was involved in an international crisis did not have any influence in the undertakings the International achieved. Adding Italy in the research necessitates pushing the analyses until 1915, until its entry into war, thus adopting a historical timeline different from those used in the studies on the Second International, which normally end with the beginning of the war in 1914.

In light of these considerations, it then seems that the Second International did not fail: on one hand, it developed around a real defense of peace, which constituted an essential part of its political identity; on the other hand, it can hardly be considered a failure as so many forms of mistrust between national Socialist parties prevented them from becoming closer around a set of concrete actions to avoid war.

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[1] See LÉNINE Vladimir Illitch' Oulianov, *Le socialisme et la guerre*, Paris, Éditions Sociales, 1952 [1915] and KAUTSKY, Karl, *Sozialisten und Krieg: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte des Sozialismus von den Hussiten bis zum Völkerbund*, Prague, Orbis, 1937.

[2] JOLL James, *The Second International, 1889-1914*, London, 1955, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p. 184 ; KRIEGLER, Annie, *Aux origines du communisme français*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1964, p. 31 ; BECKER, Jean-Jacques, "La IIe Internationale et la guerre", in ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE DE ROME (dir.), *Les Internationales et le problème de la guerre au XXe siècle : actes du colloque*,

Rome, École française de Rome, 1984, p. 9-25 ; DROZ Jacques (dir.), *Histoire générale du socialisme*, vol. 2, de 1875 à 1914, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1997, p. 583 ; KRUSE Wolfgang, *Krieg und nationale Integration. Eine Neuinterpretation des sozialdemokratischen Burgfriedenschlusses 1914/15*, Esse, Klartext, 1993, p. 29.

[3] Thus exiting from what the historian William Mulligan calls the “teological tunnel”, cf. MULLIGAN William, *The Origins of First World War*, Cambridge, Paperback, 2010, p. 227. Georges Haupt, in his research on the “missed” Vienna Socialist Conference, urged the historiography to relieve the history of the Second International from this sword of Damocles this presumed failure represents, Cf. HAUPT Georges, *Le congrès manqué : l’Internationale à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, F. Maspero, 1965.

[4] As Arndt Weinrich has pointed out, this is a fairly common trend of the most recent historiography on the origins of war which raises the issue of how 1914 was made possible, rather than why it was possible. Cf. WEINRICH Arndt, “„Großer Krieg“ große Ursachen ? Aktuelle Forschungen zu den Ursachen des Ersten Weltkrieges”, *Sonderdruck aus Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, n° 40, 2013.

[5] The Fashoda Incident (1898), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the first and second Moroccan crises (1905 and 1911), the Italo-Turkish War (1911) and the two Balkan wars (1912-1913).