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A Decade of Research on the Second International: New Insights and Methods

Laura Polexe: *Netzwerke und Freundschaft: Sozialdemokraten in Rumänien, Russland und der Schweiz an der Schwelle zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: V & R, 2011, 270 pp., ISBN: 978-3-89971-807-2 (hardcover).

Sebastian D. Schickl: *Universalismus und Partikularismus: Erfahrungsraum, Erwartungshorizont und Territorialdebatten in der diskursiven Praxis der II. Internationale 1889–1917*, St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2012, 561 pp., ISBN/EAN: 9783861105213.

Pierre Alayrac: *L'Internationale Au Milieu Du Gué: De L'Internationalisme Socialiste Au Congrès de Londres (1896)*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018, 224 pp., ISBN: 978-2-7535-7459-5.

Horst Lademacher: *Die Illusion vom Frieden: Die Zweite Internationale wider den Krieg, 1889–1919*, Münster/New York: Waxmann, 2018, 658 pp., ISBN: 978-3-8309-3840-8 (hardcover).

Elisa Marcobelli: *L'Internationalisme à L'Épreuve Des Crises: La deuxième Internationale et les Socialistes Français, Allemands et Italien (1889–1915)*, Rouen: arbre bleu éditions, 2020, 341 pp., ISBN: 9791090129092.

In 2009, Patrizia Dogliani, one of the foremost scholars of international socialism, published an important essay on the state of historical research in the field of socialism and internationalism, spanning the time from the First International until the collapse of eastern European Communism. Reviewing scholarly production in England, France, Germany, and Italy, Dogliani ascertained that few researchers were engaged in the history of international socialism. With a sense of regret, Dogliani set out to “ask about this strange phenomenon of disappearance.”¹ Whether that was a function of

1 Patrizia Dogliani: Socialisme et international, in: Cahiers Jaurès 191:1 (2009), pp. 11–30, p. 12. Beyond this review, Dogliani has also recently written a book chapter on socialist internationalism: Patrizia Dogliani: The Fate of Socialist Internationalism, in: Glenda Sluga/Patricia Clavin (eds.): Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History, Cambridge 2017, pp. 38–60. After Dogliani's piece, two more insightful historiographical reflections soon

the collapse of Soviet Communism and the sense, as Fukuyama put it, (erroneously in retrospect) the “End of History” had come², or the rise of neo-liberalism or simply preoccupation with new fields of history—race, gender, ethnicity and cultural studies—is unclear. Dogliani was certainly not alone over concern of what the future of labour history might portend.³ Partially in response to the challenge in labour history, Marcel van der Linden successfully spearheaded efforts to globalize working-class history to move scholarship away from its Eurocentric roots.⁴ A decade later since Dogliani’s impactful historiographical synthesis it is worthwhile to reassess her findings, as expressed in her statement: “L’Internationalisme est mort. Vive l’internationalisme!”⁵ To what extent is research on international socialism still rare? Are scholars revisiting old questions and/or offering methodological innovations and new findings? Are there still areas of deficit on the research agenda?

The purpose of this essay is to offer an overview of some recent scholarship on international socialism and some thoughts and reflections on the state of the historiography. The focus here must limit itself to the Second International and monographic studies, yet these findings might parallel research trends on the First International and the Internationals following the First World War.⁶ The main takeaway is that there is indeed renewed interest, albeit somewhat scattered, in international socialism at the time of the Second International and these innovative studies will hopefully pave the way for fruitful scholarly production in the years to come.⁷ Collectively, both in

appeared in the same journal. Gilles Candar: *Socialisme et International(e), Militants et Historiens*, in: *Cahiers Jaurès* 203:1 (2012), pp. 49–61 and Emmanuel Jousse: *Une Histoire de l’Internationale*, in: *Cahiers Jaurès* 2014:2, pp. 11–25.

2 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, 1992.

3 See, for example: Marcel van der Linden (ed.): *The End of Labour History?*, in: *International Review of Social History* 38 (1993) or Jürgen Kocka: *Losses, Gains and Opportunities: Social History Today*, in: *Journal of Social History* 37:1 (2003), pp. 21–28.

4 Karl Heinz Roth (ed.): *On the Road to Global Labour History: A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden* (*Historical Materialism* 148), Chicago/Illinois 2017.

5 Patrizia Dogliani: *Socialisme et international*, in: *Cahiers Jaurès* 191:1 (2009), pp. 11.

6 For updated research on the First International, see Fabrice Bensimon/Quentin Deluermoz/Jeanne Moisan (eds.): “Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth”: *The First International in a Global Perspective* (*Studies in Global Social History* 29), Leiden/Boston 2018. For the Labour and Socialist International through 1960, see: Talbot C. Imlay: *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960*, Oxford 2018. For an insightful overview on the ‘First and Half International’, see: Steven Parfitt: *Constructing the Global History of the Knights of Labor*, in: *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 14:1 (2017), pp. 13–37.

7 Limiting the scope of this review to books, one should not overlook the sizeable number of articles and country-level books that suggest renewed interest in specific aspects of the International. Some examples are: Meral Ugur Cinar/Kursut Cinar (eds.): *The Second International: The Impact of Domestic Factors on International Organization Dysfunction*, in:

historical approach and key findings, this body of literature constitutes a revisionist school to the existing historiography. Highlighting first some aspects of the conventional historiography will help contextualize the exciting research conducted over the past decade.

Most research on the Second International occurred from 1945 until 1989 or during the Cold War.⁸ The three standard synthetic studies appeared at this time. George Douglas Howard Cole's mammoth two-volume work on the Second International examined the ideological positions of socialist thinkers and leaders and national labour and socialist organizations.⁹ In contrast to Cole's encyclopedic work, Julius Braunthal covered the history of the First and Second Internationals together. More than Cole, Braunthal gave a sympathetic account of socialist leaders, parties and ideological confrontation.¹⁰ James Joll's influential book *The Second International, 1889–1914* provided a concise and highly critical account of the Second International, with particular attention on the negative role German socialism and its ideological rigidity ostensibly played in the international socialist movement.¹¹ Similar to Cole and Braunthal, Joll's focus was largely on congress debates and ideological discord: the struggle between Marxists and anarchists, revisionism versus orthodox Marxism, and socialism and nationalism. The strength of Joll's work was spotlighting the national idea in socialist thought and bringing attention to the French-German dynamic of the Socialist International. Alongside these classic accounts, numerous scholars examined the inability of international socialism to prevent the First World War. Although individual studies varied in certain aspects, taken as a whole, most scholarly production during the Cold War tended to be preoccupied with two issues: the so-called 'failure' (or sometimes less harshly expressed collapse) of the International in August 1914 to prevent war and relatedly socialist disunity and weakness.¹² The failure argument boils down to socialists embracing national unity over internationalism in 1914. The

Political Studies 62:3 (2014), pp. 1–17; Marc Mulholland: 'Marxists of Strict Observance'? The Second International, National Defense, and the Question of War, in: *The Historical Journal* 58:2 (2015), pp. 615–649; Marcus Morris: The General Strike as a Weapon of Peace: British Socialists, the Labour Movement, and Debating the Means to Avoid War before 1914, in: *Labour History Review* 83 (2018), pp. 29–53. Morris's article gives a comprehensive list of recent scholarship on English Labor and international politics, note 7.

8 For an in-depth treatment of this literature, refer to Dogliani as cited.

9 George Howard Douglas Cole: *A History of Socialist Thought: The Second International 1889–1914* (volume III, part I and II), 2 vols, London 1956.

10 Julius Braunthal: *Geschichte der Internationale*, Hannover 1961.

11 James Joll: *The Second International, 1889–1914*, London/Boston 1974.

12 I have shared some of these observations—with more detail and exhaustive bibliography—in: *Beyond the Cultural Turn?: Revisiting "Old" Labour History through the Example of the Socialist International*, in: David Mayer/Jürgen Mittag (eds.): *Interventions: The Impact of Labour Movements on Social and Cultural Development*, Leipzig 2013, pp. 149–168.

ideological conflict and weakness argument stresses socialist powerlessness and ineffectiveness in the face of the August 1914 crisis. The predominant focus on ideological conflict also traced the origins of the socialist schism between Social Democrats and Communists after the First World War to the pre-war period. In both cases, historians interpreted the evidence in a teleological fashion in the attempt to explain the collapse and internal fissures of the International.¹³

As a whole, most historiography thus characterized international socialism as a disunited movement rife with ideological discord and dysfunction. Scholars approached the Socialist International from the perspective of what it should have been or what it was lacking or what it 'failed' to be instead of what it really was. There were some exceptions, of course, to these broad-based assumptions. The most systematic and insightful overview of the sources and questions relevant to research on the Second International is Georges Haupt's *La Deuxième Internationale, 1889–1914: Étude critique des sources, Essai bibliographique*¹⁴, which remains essential reading for scholars formulating research questions about international socialism. As Haupt pointed out, August 1914 represented the Damocles sword that hovered over how historians have interpreted international socialism in the era before the Great War. Moira Donald also proposed putting more emphasis on the successes of the Second International, "the Second International should also be remembered as the most successful period of international growth of socialist parties the world has ever seen—truly socialism's golden age".¹⁵ Donald analyzed the vast correspondence between leading socialists—Bebel and Kautsky—at the International Institute of Social History archive to ascertain the scope of exchanges between party leaders within international socialism as well as usage of modern communication technology to disseminate socialist ideas across

- 13 Even Georges Haupt, the most recognized Second International historian and archivist, gives a similar focus in his work: *Socialism and the Great War. The Collapse of the Second International*, Oxford 1972. He moves beyond the Leninist 'betrayal' narrative of August 1914, yet he adds more grist to the mill of institutional failure and ineffectiveness.
- 14 Georges Haupt: *La Deuxième Internationale, 1889–1914: Étude critique des sources, Essai bibliographique*, Paris/Mouton 1964, particularly chapter 4, pp. 62–92. Also refer to the excellent posthumously published essays in: *Georges Haupt: Aspects of International Socialism, 1871–1914: Essays by Georges Haupt (Studies in Modern Capitalism)*, Cambridge 1986. In the 1960s, Haupt stressed the importance of writing an *international* history of socialism (what today we would call transnational) as opposed to a history of international socialism, which *de facto* meant looking at socialist movements through a national lens. Georges Haupt: *Histoire de l'Internationale socialiste ou Histoire internationale du Socialisme? Sur quelques controverses à propos de problèmes de recherche et de méthode*, in: *Le Mouvement social* 41 (October–December 1962), pp. 13–34.
- 15 Moira Donald: *Workers of the World Unite? Exploring the Enigma of the Second International*, in: Martin Geyer/Johannes Paulmann (eds.): *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War*, London 2001, pp. 177–204.

Europe. With respect to the failure of the International in 1914 and the depth of internationalist sentiment among workers, Donald squarely reinforced the classic interpretations of institutional ineptitude of the International *vis-à-vis* the prospect of a European conflagration and national loyalty trumping internationalism.

The traditional historiography is useful in unearthing the real tensions and differences among sections of the Socialist International, yet it does not adequately explain how international socialism was able to emerge as a mass movement in the first place. How did the Socialist International evolve over time in reaction to societal forces? A shift in focus can also benefit from the insights of historical methodologies such as discourse analysis, social movement theory, ethnographic sociology, and networks, hence what is commonly called the ‘cultural turn’. Coupled with transnational history as a corrective to the blinders of ‘methodical nationalism’ or the notion that one can treat national history in isolation¹⁶, such methods allow us to understand how internationalism was practiced in concrete terms at specific congresses and how international socialism operated as a political performance. They also permit reexamination of the International’s response to the First World War by calling into question the overly simplistic binary constructs of national and international identity. In sum, I believe we can now speak of the emergence of a revisionist body of scholarship, which both challenges some of the key claims of older studies and, informed by innovative historical approaches, generates new knowledge on the Second International.

We can discern this shift somewhat in the 1990s with two studies on the Second International. Markus Bürgi’s *Die Anfänge der Zweiten Internationale* is a magisterial account of the formative years of the Second International from the 1880s until the 1893 Zurich congress.¹⁷ While Bürgi emphasized the contested nature of the reconstitution of the International, he employed a transnational perspective to reconstruct the fluid socialist and labour groups involved in this process. Marie-Louise Goergen’s massive doctoral study is groundbreaking in her focus on the multiple levels of relationships between French and German socialists from 1889 to 1914. Goergen endeavored to go beyond “party history” to reconstruct the “sites of encounters” of individual socialists as well as to balance a “history from above” or focus on party leaders

16 For the importance of transnational approaches to labour history, see: Michael P. Hanagan: An Agenda for Transnational Labour History, in: *International Review of Social History* 49: 3 (2004), pp. 455–474. For a valuable overview of the theme of internationalism and social movements in the twentieth century, see: Stefan Berger: The Internationalism of Social Movements: An Introduction, in: *Moving the Social* 55 (2016), pp. 5–16. Also available online at <https://moving-the-social.ub.rub.de/index.php/MTS/article/view/7453/6625> (last accessed 3 February, 2020).

17 Markus Bürgi: *Die Anfänge der Zweiten Internationale: Positionen und Auseinandersetzungen 1889–1893*, Frankfurt/Main 1996.

with a “history from below” or focus on rank-and-file militants.¹⁸ These studies moved beyond the preoccupations of Cold War historiography, even if both Bürgi and Goergen clearly revealed fissures and points of conflict among socialist leaders and their competing organizations. Goergen in particular depicted the Second International’s collapse in 1914 as a long-term process, not a sudden “failure” or abrupt “betrayal” of internationalism as emphasized in the conventional literature.¹⁹

A clear break from the conventional historiography has occurred within the last decade. In 2010 and 2011, shortly after Dogliani’s essay was published, two monographs appeared that make use of cultural studies to reframe our understanding of the Second International. The first book—Kevin J. Callahan *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914*—introduced the expression ‘demonstration culture’ to capture the nature of socialist political performances and activities of the Second International.²⁰ Drawing from the toolkit of cultural studies, Callahan argued that the movement of international socialism prior to the First World War overcame internal disunity and external obstacles by developing mass-based political culture and communication centered on demonstration. Lars T. Lih has suggested that this culture or “permanent campaign” would then inform Bolshevik political culture after 1917.²¹ Callahan identified three types of demonstrations: paper demonstrations (or the socialist press, congress resolutions, manifestos), international socialist congress as a political spectacle, and mass-based international demonstrations or mass meetings. He also drew attention to the need to move beyond the misleading binary construct of nationalism and internationalism in understanding pre-1914 socialist culture, a fixture of the older historiography, which typically juxtaposed nationalism and internationalism as irreconcilable ideologies. Instead, Callahan proposed the term ‘inter-nationalism’ to reflect accurately how most socialists understood the relationship between their national and international identity.

Alongside the book on the Second International’s ‘demonstration culture’, Laura Polexe published a fine study on the *Netzwerke und Freundschaften* of Rumanian, Swiss, and Russian social democrats. Polexe deepened our understanding of how international socialism fostered cohesion among its members and functioned much

18 Marie-Louise Goergen: *Les relations entre socialistes allemands et français à l’époque de la Deuxième Internationale, 1889–1914*, Saint-Denis/Paris 1998, p. 16.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22, p. 847.

20 Kevin J. Callahan: *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914*, Leicester 2010.

21 Lars T. Lih: *Bolshevism and Revolutionary Social Democracy*, in: *Links: International journal of socialist renewal*, June 2012, <http://links.org.au/node/2905> (accessed on 18 November 2019).

like an “imagined community,” a core theme of Callahan’s study.²² Building on the model of Goergen in her analysis of the relations (and relationships) of French and German socialists, Polexe notes poignantly: “The Second International is more than just the history of its congresses or the history of its failure in light of the First World War”.²³ Thus, as with Callahan, the inquiry is much different than investigating the International’s failure, division and collapse. Polexe illuminated the cultural spaces that socialists occupied and the values and language that underpinned those interactions and locations. Overall, Polexe’s study reinforced the findings of *Demonstration Culture* by shifting the focus on the Second International away from ideological discord and provided a concrete answer of how socialists overcame (or at least mitigated) their differences to express socialist internationalism. As Polexe writes, the “networks were of fundamental importance for the development, promotion and existence of the Second International”.²⁴ In sum, Callahan and Polexe revised the standard works on the Socialist International in several important ways. One, they do not start from the vantage point of August 1914. Second, instead of stressing movement discord, they attempted to identify the factors that cemented cohesion within international socialism and allowed it to thrive. Third, the answers they offered—demonstration culture and networks/friendships—relied on the insights of social movement theory and cultural studies.

The usage of cultural studies to shed new light on old topics such as socialism and colonialism²⁵ and to generate new knowledge about the Second International is on full display in Sebastian D. Schickl’s brilliant book *Universalismus und Partikularismus: Erfahrungsraum, Erwartungshorizont und Territorialdebatten in der diskursiven Praxis der II. Internationale 1889–1917*.²⁶ The book draws mainly on the traditional sources of the Second International—congress proceedings, resolutions, International Socialist Bureau conference minutes—and uses them in innovative ways in order to

- 22 Laura Polexe: *Netzwerke und Freundschaft: Sozialdemokraten in Rumänien, Russland und der Schweiz an der Schwelle zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2011, p. 35.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- 25 Schickl’s study fulfills in part a promising research topic introduced by Haupt and Rebérioux in the 1960s with the publication of documents related to the Second International and Asia. Georges Haupt/Madeleine Rebérioux (eds.): *La Deuxième Internationale et l’Orient*, Paris 1967; Georges Haupt/Michael Löwy/Claudie Weill: *Les Marxistes et la question nationale, 1848–1914*, Paris 1974. Recent studies of value include Kevin B. Anderson: *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies*, Chicago 2016 and Richard B. Day/Daniel Gaido (eds.): *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I*, Chicago 2012.
- 26 Sebastian D. Schickl: *Universalismus und Partikularismus: Erfahrungsraum, Erwartungshorizont und Territorialdebatten in der diskursiven Praxis der II. Internationale 1889–1917*, St. Ingbert 2012.

examine the discursive practices of the language of socialist internationalism within the context of debates over ethnic and national minorities and territorial rights around the globe. Schickl deconstructs the key concepts underpinning socialist discourse such as democracy, nation, and self-determination and investigates their inclusive and exclusive meanings when utilized in specific discussions and situations, ranging from the Boer War to the Balkans, Armenia, Palestine, Poland, Alsace-Lorraine and other areas in Asia and Africa.

Essentially, Schickl is concerned with how Western European socialists at the center of the Second International spoke about and represented groups on the margins through a process of othering based on 'superior' European 'culture' and 'civilization'. At the same time, the author explains how minority and ethnic groups on the periphery sought to conform to the hegemonic categories of the center in order to attain greater representation and legitimacy within the international socialist movement. Such interactions were structured through a universalist/particularist dyad, where specific ethnic or territorial interests were couched in Eurocentric universalist concepts like peace, democracy, and nation. Among many fascinating insights, the author illustrates convincingly how these interactions between center and periphery operated in an international/national identification process, so that socialist internationalism was itself a vehicle for creating socialist national organizations and nationalisms. As Schickl succinctly puts it, "the Second International cannot be understood beyond the "nation". Rather, it is important to see both elements in a strict mutually causal relationship".²⁷

Universalismus und Partikularismus ambitiously analyzes socialist discourse across two periods—1889 to 1914 and the First World War until the 1917 planned Stockholm peace conference—to unearth elements of linguistic continuity, discontinuity and changes in meaning in debates over ethnic/national minorities and territorial rights. For example, there was clear continuity before and during the war with respect to the Second International's stance of supporting the creation of an independent Poland, formalized in a resolution at the 1896 London congress. The Second International's discourse evolved in giving more national recognition and rights to ethnic groups on the semi-periphery of Europe within the Ottoman Empire—Armenians, European Jews' claims to statehood in Palestine and the Balkans. Conversely, the opposite trend occurred with respect to European colonies in India, Egypt and Morocco, where European socialists conditioned support for autonomy (independence was off the table) on their level of 'culture' and 'civilization'. In sum, Schickl's research reminds us that the Second International, in spite of its own self-professed ideals of human rights, democracy and support of colonial peoples, was not above the racial and cultural stereotypes and practices inherent in 1900 Western civilization.

27 Ibid., p. 534.

Pierre Alayrac's slim book *L'Internationale Au Milieu Du Gué: De L'Internationalisme Socialiste Au Congrès de Londres (1896)* provides an excellent model of how it is possible to revisit international socialist congresses—the most visible venue of socialist internationalism—with fresh eyes.²⁸ Alayrac positions the 1896 London socialist congress within the broader context of the 'first globalization' as an antidote to 'methodical nationalism' and thus seeks to provide a transnational perspective on congress events. An international socialist congress cannot be understood in isolation because it was reflective of a larger pattern of international exhibitions and associations of the era. Alayrac also puts the spotlight on the practice of socialist internationalism (distinct from ideological debates) at the congress by applying the concept of internationalism proposed by Callahan. To do this, Alayrac also employs the insight of sociologist Michael Billig's term of 'banal (ordinary) nationalism' and convincingly shows how socialist congress practices such as organizing delegations by nation or voting displayed the latent national dimensions embedded deeply within the structures and procedures of the Second International.²⁹ His analysis of the spatial arrangement of the congress hall and the cortege order of the mass demonstration to Hyde Park adds further evidence to complicating the national versus international binary construct prevalent in the conventional historiography. Impressively, Alayrac conducts a sociological analysis of the congress participants drawing on the Durkheim concept of "social morphology".³⁰ In innovative usage of new sources (such as the World Biographical Information System), the author classifies congress attendees into five groups, giving us more differentiated information on the social composition of participants.³¹

The final section of Alayrac's book details how different socialist groups utilized the international socialist congress as a site to gain legitimacy for their own ideological or national views, a theme Schickl explores in great depth in his study on universalism and particularism. Alayrac cautions us not to impose unified categories such as 'national' on congress delegations, which can mask the substantial diversity of ideology and worker organizations within the same delegation. The British and French delegations are the best examples for the 1896 London congress. At the same time, the Inter-

28 Pierre Alayrac: *L'Internationale Au Milieu Du Gué: De L'Internationalisme Socialiste Au Congrès de Londres (1896)*, Rennes 2018.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 61. Michael Billig: *Banal Nationalism*, London 2005. Most recent usage of Billig's concept to labour history is Maarten Van Ginderachter: *The Everyday Nationalism of Workers: A Social History of Modern Belgium*, California 2019.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 93–148.

31 According to Alayrac, these groups consist of the 'pilgrims' of the International, hence the well-known leaders like Bebel, Adler, European socialists (folks like Charles Bonnier who are not party leaders yet play an important role in congress organizations), exiles (hence anarchists), regional leaders and local activists and militants. This hierarchy then is manifested in congress proceedings (and documents) as well, in terms of who speaks at the congress, takes on position as chair of sessions, addresses crowds at rallies, etc. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

national itself was operating as a force for creating ‘national’ parties in its decision to excommunicate anarchists at London. Alayrac does not pursue this point beyond the London congress, yet it is certainly relevant and worthy of further examination. Most obviously, one can point to the 1904 Amsterdam congress, when the International passed a resolution urging party unity among its sections.³² The findings of Alayrac, Schickl and Callahan point to the dynamic interplay at multiple levels—congress resolutions, socialist discourse, performance culture, congress procedures, actions of individual delegations—of how nationalist and internationalist identities were negotiated and fashioned.

Two recent studies take up a common topic of the traditional historiography: namely international socialism and the struggle for peace and against war. Elisa Marcobelli’s 2015 doctoral thesis titled *Internationalisme et crise, la crise de L’Internationale? La deuxième Internationale et les socialistes français, allemands et italien face aux crises diplomatiques internationales (1889–1915)* is soon to appear as a book, while Horst Lademacher’s book *Die Illusion vom Frieden: Die Zweite Internationale wider den Krieg, 1889–1919* came out in 2018. Marcobelli’s research on socialist internationalism and diplomatic crises among French, German and Italian socialists from 1889 to 1915 contributes in several ways to the revisionist thrust of research on the Second International. Conversely, Lademacher’s mammoth tome on the Second International’s fight against war reinforces the main findings of the traditional literature.³³ Similar to other revisionist studies, Marcobelli clarifies her intent not to prejudge the movement of international socialism and its response to the challenge of diplomatic crises from the vantage point of failure or collapse in August 1914. Instead, Marcobelli surveys familiar diplomatic imbroglios from the perspective of the International’s capacity to organize a collective response to international flashpoints. This approach is helpful since Marcobelli shows explicitly what other scholars have implicitly suggested: the International underwent a ‘learning curve’ so that it increased its effectiveness to mo-

32 As a result, after decades of internecine strife, French socialism united in 1905 to establish the Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (SFIO). Until 1914, the International Socialist Bureau, set up in 1901, attempted to bring about party unity in other countries as well, most notably Russia and England.

33 Elisa Marcobelli: *L’internationalisme et crise, la crise de L’Internationale? La deuxième Internationale et les socialistes français, allemands et italien face aux crises diplomatiques internationales (1889–1915)*, doctoral thesis, EHESS, Paris 2015. I am grateful to Dr. Marcobelli for sharing with me an abridged version of her doctoral study, which forms the basis of her recently published book *Elisa Marcobelli: L’Internationalisme à L’Épreuve Des Crises, La deuxième Internationale et les Socialistes Français, Allemands et Italien (1889–1915)*, Rouen 2020. Horst Lademacher: *Die Illusion vom Frieden: Die Zweite Internationale wider den Krieg, 1889–1919*, Münster/New York 2018. Some of my observations about Lademacher’s book have been published as a stand-alone book review in: *Peace & Change*, 45:1 (January 2020), pp. 156–158.

bilize public opinion against the threat of a world war over time. Going beyond the framework of comparative labour history focused on two countries such as Goergen's dissertation, Marcobelli ambitiously includes Italian socialists along with the more densely studied French and German socialist movements.³⁴ According to Marcobelli, a decisive determinant of the success or failure of transnational collaboration between the three movements was whether one of the countries was directly involved in a diplomatic crisis. If so, international coordination was less effective and sporadic such as during the 1905 Moroccan crisis. As a counterpoint to this analysis, Marcobelli highlights the International's reaction to the 1912 First Balkan War, culminating in the 1912 Basel extraordinary international socialist congress.

Paralleling Polexe, Callahan and Alayrac, Marcobelli's study is primarily concerned with the practice of socialist internationalism. The author examines the nexus of French, German and Italian connections at the international socialist congresses as well as national socialist party congresses and campaigns. Thus, Marcobelli examines internationalist engagement in bilateral and on occasion trilateral contexts, when socialist parties opted not to involve the International Socialist Bureau in their efforts to ameliorate the possibility of war. In her description of these exchanges, Marcobelli makes excellent usage of the socialist press to examine the dissemination and impact of socialist ideas and actions in one movement to others. She reveals in broad strokes that the French and German socialist press reported regularly on the activity of the other party, albeit often in ways that reflected their own preoccupations and bias.³⁵ Importantly, Marcobelli shows that the ideal of socialist internationalism in France and Germany went beyond the venue of the international socialist congress, empty rhetoric or the convictions of a handful of polyglot socialist leaders. Indeed, the size and scope of the International's mass-based 'demonstration culture' on display for several international flashpoints until August 1914 reflects the practice of international solidarity among French and German workers.³⁶ The author's analysis of the Italian socialist press suggests the opposite. Its leading organ *Avanti!* confined its coverage mainly to Italian affairs. The International Socialist Bureau was highly critical of Italian socialists

34 The classic work remains Milorad M. Drachkovitch: *Les socialismes français et allemand et le problème de la guerre 1870–1914*, Geneva 1953. Also see the wonderful book by Susan Milner: *The Dilemmas of Internationalism: French Syndicalism and the International Labour Movement, 1900–1914*, New York/Munich 1990 for a nuanced account of French labour and their relationship with the German Free Trade Unions. Unlike the conventional historiography, Milner captures the complexities of national and international sentiment among the French syndicalists.

35 A great example here is Marcobelli's analysis of the reception of Jean Jaurès's *L'Armée Nouvelle* in the German and Italian socialist movement.

36 Marcobelli (as well as Callahan) challenges the claims of Jolyon Howorth: *French Workers and German Workers: The Impossibility of Internationalism, 1900–1914*, in: *European History Quarterly* 15:1 (1985), pp. 71–97.

in their tepid response to the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911. Paradoxically, from the outbreak of the First World War until Italian entry into the conflict in 1915, *Avanti!* expressed optimism in the Socialist International to bring a peaceful resolution to the catastrophe. Both Alayrac and Marcobelli's incorporation of the socialist press as a vital primary source in their research is a good model for future scholars. Such sources would allow researchers to reexamine a plethora of topics on the Second International to complement the corpus of documents like congress proceedings, memoirs, and letters, upon which most of the conventional historiography is based.

Whereas Marcobelli's research forms part of a revisionist historiography in terms of how it approaches the Second International and the year 1914, Horst Lademacher's mammoth study reaffirms the conventional emphasis on the International's failure in its fight against war. Lademacher traces the International's anti-war struggle from its 1889 Paris founding congress until the 1919 Berne conference. This is quite an achievement because the book covers the theme of international socialism and war and peace substantively for the entire period, a rarity since most works on the Second International cover either the pre-war period or the First World War separately. Lademacher also has a fine section on European socialists and the question of colonialism. Paralleling the interpretation of Marcobelli, he shows that the Second International defined itself in large measure in opposition to the threat of a European war, increasingly so from 1905 until the Great War.

The key difference, as the title of Lademacher's book suggests, lies in how one judges socialist peace efforts to counteract war. According to Lademacher, the Second International's campaign for peace was an illusion or self-delusion, ultimately a failure. The author is careful not to reify the 'betrayal' narrative of Lenin in explaining why socialist parties voted for war credits and he incorporates the most recent scholarship on the International's impressive anti-war demonstrations. Even so, Lademacher contends in the final analysis that the International was unable to forge a strong international identity and solidarity, which could have permitted a more unified and effective response to the prospect of European war.³⁷ We see here in operation two prevalent assumptions of the traditional historiography. First, the International had the power and capacity to change the trajectory of the outbreak of the First World War in a meaningful way, and two, the depths of national identity among socialist leaders and European workers made internationalism a hollow ideal. In sum, the author regards the Second International's peace efforts as a chimera. For the claim on the International's ineffectiveness to secure the peace, it is instructive to repeat what Marc Mulholland has said about this interpretation: "The 'helplessness account' is true but

37 Horst Lademacher: Versuch einer Analyse des Versagens—eine Zwischenbilanz, in: Horst Lademacher: Die Illusion vom Frieden: Die Zweite Internationale wider den Krieg, 1889–1919, Münster/New York 2018, ch. B 12, pp. 219–234.

largely trivial. The Second International failed to prevent the First World War, but so too did the chancelleries of Europe.”³⁸ For the contention of European socialism’s dearth of internationalist conviction, it must be considered that most socialists did not find support for national defense and loyalty to the Second International or a belief in nationalism and internationalism as antithetical propositions.³⁹ Much of the International’s anti-war activism, rhetoric and policy options were calculated to inhibit a descent into a larger European conflict by shaping public opinion with warnings of the mass devastation of industrial warfare and the threat of revolution.⁴⁰

The second part of Lademacher’s *magnum opus* tells the story of how most socialist parties rallied to their governments and remained steadfast in their support throughout the war, while a minority in each party opposed the war. At first small and diffuse, opposition grew and took on transnational connections, highlighted by the September 1915 Zimmerwald and April 1916 Kienthal conferences in neutral Switzerland. At the same time, socialists from the Entente countries, Central Powers, and neutral countries made efforts to revitalize the International, ultimately though without success. Mistrust among socialists and the refusal of governments to issue passports prevented a common socialist peace politics from emerging during the First World War. Lademacher does a great job of illustrating the competing conceptions of socialist peace, ranging from Allied socialists insisting on a durable peace as part of a victory over the Central Powers to the Bolsheviks advocating for world revolution as the precondition for any future peace. By 1919, the European Left had effectively split between Social Democrats and Communists and each endeavored to set up a new International to replace the shattered Second International. Even amid war and revolution during the First World War, similar to how the ideal of an International in the 1880s never died when the First International disbanded, socialists across Europe and parts of the globe shared a common conviction of upholding some type of internationalism and giving it an institutional foundation. As both belief, practice and

38 Marc Mulholland: ‘Marxists of Strict Observance’?, p. 618.

39 Lademacher notes how some German socialists like Bebel saw no conflict between nationalism and internationalism, yet he does not extend this insight to reconsider his argument about the failure of socialist peace politics. An important book that illustrates the shared belief in national and international identity is Jakub S. Beneš: *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890–1918*, Oxford 2017. Also refer to Gleb J. Albert: *Das Charisma der Weltrevolution: Revolutionärer Internationalismus in der frühen Sowjetgesellschaft, 1917–1927*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2017 for the early Soviet period.

40 Douglas J. Newton: *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace, 1889–1914*, Oxford 1985; Kevin J. Callahan: *Demonstration Culture*, chapter 8; Marcus Morris: *The General Strike as a Weapon of Peace*.

organization, it is easy to underestimate the importance of socialist internationalism for the European Left from the 1860s until the 1960s.⁴¹

Over the last decade, scholars have greatly enriched our knowledge of international socialism during the Second International. They have generated new insights on the practice of the Second International and have recast familiar topics like the International's campaign against war in a new light. Researchers have applied a variety of innovative methods often drawn from cultural studies or the social sciences and expanded the corpus of sources to deepen our understanding of international socialism. A common theme among most of the books surveyed here is a challenge to the prevailing interpretation of the Second International as 'failure' and 'collapse' or disunity and dysfunction. Instead, the picture painted is more nuanced and complex. International socialism was able to overcome considerable obstacles and internal and national differences to achieve a mass-based movement of transnational dimensions. The depth of internationalist sentiment is broader than a handful of party leaders meeting every few years at international socialist congresses. Nationalist and internationalist aspirations were believed to be congruent for most socialists, not antithetical convictions until August 1914. Several of these studies encompass the pre-war and wartime periods and in turn point towards possible elements of continuity of socialist internationalism with respect to its political culture and discursive practices.

Much remains on the research agenda. It would help to investigate at the local level the extent to which and how socialist internationalism manifested itself.⁴² Would the concept of 'banal' nationalism on the one hand or 'national indifference' on the other inform such research? To move beyond the Second International's Eurocentric approach, which *de facto* often means France, Germany and England, we would benefit from more research on the Second International's footprint in other parts of the globe like South Africa, Argentina, Australia and Japan to expand our knowledge on labour transnationalism.⁴³ Instead of a separate treatment of the Women's Socialist International, it would be useful to integrate greater analysis of the role of women and gender within the Second International.⁴⁴ It is always valuable to revisit 'old' topics

41 Talbot C. Imlay: *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, in particular chapter 2 and 6.

42 A combination of police reports and worker autobiographies might be a good starting point to gather evidence about this. See the books of Beneš and Van Ginderachter as cited for excellent models on how to gather such insight.

43 For example, Lucas Poy's paper: *An Early Experience of Socialist Internationalism in the 'Global South'. The Socialist Party of Argentina during the years of the Second International, 1890–1914*, in: *Cycle de Séminaires, Les Gauches et L'Internationale, The Left and the International Arena*, Paris, 11 April 2019 or Andrew G. Bonnell: *Transnational Socialists? German Social Democrats in Australia before 1914*, in: *Itinerario* 37:1 (2013), pp. 101–113.

44 General histories of the Second International—Cole, Braunthal, Joll—do not mention or treat separately the Women's International, which serves to reify the gendered aspects of international socialism. For thoughtful reflections here, see Marilyn J. Boxer: *Rethinking the*

like socialist ideology or prominent leaders in light of new methods and sources.⁴⁵ Is the claim that the German Social Democrats acted as a ‘hegemonic’ party within the Second International valid? Further examination of the inner-workings of the International Socialist Bureau would be valuable.⁴⁶ Since the works of Cole, Braunthal and Joll, a new synthesis of the Second International integrating the findings of new scholarship or incorporating the period of the Second International into a broader work on socialist internationalism would be most welcome.⁴⁷

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Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept of “Bourgeois Feminism”, in: *American Historical Review* 112:1 (2007), pp. 131–158 and Daniel Gaido/Cintia Frenchia (eds.): “A Clean Break”: Clara Zetkin, the Socialist Women’s Movement, and Feminism, in: *International Critical Thought* 8:2 (2018), pp. 277–303.

- 45 Two prominent leaders of the Second International who would be deserving of a political biography include Camille Huysmans and Victor Adler. Both individuals—and perhaps others—have fallen victim of having operated in ‘small’ countries and thus, the lack of interest in these individuals might reflect the ‘methodological nationalism’ of historians from France, Germany, England and the United States. There are a few biographies of Victor Adler in German, yet they are dated and aside from Julius Braunthal’s book on Friedrich and Victor Adler, not scholarly. Julius Braunthal: *Victor und Friedrich Adler, Zwei Generationen Arbeiterbewegung*, Vienna 1965.
- 46 Andrea Benedetti is currently working on a doctoral study titled *Le Bureau Socialiste International: Instrument de cooperation internationale? (1900–1918)*.
- 47 Moira Donald indicated plans to write a cultural and material history of the Second International about twenty years ago, yet appears not to have followed through on that plan. In contrast, Nicolas Delalande has just published an impressive book on a century of working-class internationalism: Nicolas Delalande: *La Lutte et l’Entraide. L’âge des solidarités ouvrières*, Paris 2019.