

**Nationalism and Neudörfl. An inquiry into the positions of the early Austrian social  
democratic workers' movement towards the so-called national question with an  
emphasis on German nationalism, 1867-1874**

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## **1. Abstract**

On April 6, 1874, the first decidedly internationalist workers' organisation in a multinational state was founded in the Habsburg Empire. For early Austrian social democracy, the adoption of the Neudörfl programme opened a door to use that very internationalism as the driving force behind its own history. But it had to get to this door first, which had more lows than highs. In multiple, partly desperate struggles against the Habsburg state, liberalism, nationalists, capital and itself, a movement emerged that is often omitted from the history of Austrian social democracy today. This historiographic thesis attempts not only to give an insight into the German labour movement and its stances towards the national question within approximately the Gründerzeit (1867-1873) but also discusses it within the frame of the so-called “nationality conflicts” that allegedly preoccupied or even destroyed Austria-Hungary in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2. Author's declaration**

I, the undersigned, Philipp Godwin Neuschmid, candidate for the MA degree in Nationalism Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis titled “Nationalism and Neudörfl. An inquiry into the positions of the early Austrian social democratic workers’ movement towards the so-called national question with an emphasis on German nationalism, 1867-1874” is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography.

I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, June 17, 2025

Philipp Godwin Neuschmid

### 3. Introduction

#### 3.1. Methodology and structure

As a political historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, my method is nothing other than hermeneutics. For this topic, it would have been possible to use one of two types of sources for a master's thesis. Firstly, state sources such as police or intelligence reports, court or civil status records or any other source that can be found in the various public archives. Secondly, sources from "within" such as memoirs, diaries, newspaper articles, books of individual protagonists, pamphlets or other material, digitalised or not. With regard to the topic of this thesis, I have opted for the second option, especially as the two books that report most extensively on the early Austrian workers' movement predominantly use official sources. While Mommsen's book provides a general overview of the relationship between social democracy and the national question, Steiner focuses much more on the early years of the labour movement and was therefore very important for the preparation this thesis. In addition, the works of Konrad, Göhring and Solle are worth mentioning; this also applies to Miersch's study of working-class newspapers, although he does not consider nationalism at all. Finally, Brügel's main work is very detailed out, but over a hundred years old, so it could almost be a source. In general, there is some in this area, but nothing that was written later than the 1970s, and certainly a lot less than in the post-Hainfeld era. As sources, I mostly used either digital copies or those that can be found in the holdings of the *Verein der Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung* in Vienna. However, I also had to buy three or four books, as they would otherwise have been difficult to obtain. This work begins with two rather theoretical chapters in which the so-called "nationality problem" of Austria-Hungary and certain perspectives on it are discussed. Afterwards, there are two chapters on two major upheavals of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Central Europe – industrialisation and liberalisation – both of which were important preconditions for the emergence of a labour movement. Lastly, I will retell and interpret the history of Austrian organised labour in a

systematic rather than chronological, but nonetheless mixed, manner. There are two small points I would like to make, both of a semantic nature. First, for each name of a place in the old Habsburg monarchy, I use the English name if available, but otherwise the German name. The first citation, however, should include the name in the respective national language (or languages) in brackets. Secondly, since I only cite older German sources, some of which differ in grammar from today's standards, I provide the German (transcribed) original in the body text and my English translation in the footnote.



#### 4. The “nationality problem”

No topic is as closely associated with the Dual Monarchy’s collapse as nationalism. According to Oszkár Jászi, a Hungarian politician of the time, the Habsburg state was disintegrated by “centrifugal forces of national particularisms”<sup>17</sup>. As a 19<sup>th</sup>-century anachronism, the Monarchy was doomed to fail – this view was the prevailing opinion among most historians until the 1980s and is still present in popular memory today<sup>18</sup>. Paradoxically, they assumed that all imperial peoples had been fully nationalised by 1900 or 1914, although the nationalists themselves were much more sceptical about the performance of their agitation<sup>19</sup>. In fact, some historians have probably overestimated their role, because these nationalists had in part dominated Austro-Hungarian politics and public discourse in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. Perhaps the best visualisation of the influential nationalist propaganda is the Monarchy’s depiction as a “peoples’ prison” (*Völkerkerker*), which is outlined first in this chapter. It then discusses the shift in thinking about nationalism and its impact on the late Habsburg Empire, which led, among other things, to Habsburg history becoming a “laboratory for creative innovations in historical studies”<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1929), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Pieter Judson, “Die Habsburgermonarchie. Neue Interpretationen“, *Bohemia* 57, no. 1 (2017): 3-11, 3f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pieter M. Judson, “Nationalism and Indifference”, in *Habsburg neu denken. Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, eds. Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2016): 148-155, 150.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Judson, “Interpretationen“, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge, MA, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 11.

#### 4.1. Prison of peoples

“It is the state which makes the nation and not the nation the state”<sup>22</sup>.

“*L'Autriche n'est pas un Etat, c'est un gouvernement*”<sup>23</sup>.

As the quotes suggest, Austria-Hungary pursued a unique path in empire/nation-building compared to the other 19<sup>th</sup>-century European powers, so the argument goes. The Empire was regarded as a fundamentally backward, semi-feudal entity, torn apart by rising nationalisms<sup>24</sup>. Already the liberal nationalists of those days were certain that the great multinational realms such as the Habsburg or Ottoman Empires were remnants of a time long past<sup>25</sup>. According to the inevitable course of history and progress, they thought, the “sick man of Austria”<sup>26</sup> would have to perish<sup>27</sup>. Along these lines, many fin-de-siècle nationalists held the view that the national differences between the Monarchy’s peoples were irreconcilable and that the various nationalities should thus gain the right to organise themselves politically<sup>28</sup>. During the First World War, the image of the Habsburg Empire as a peoples’ prison spread abroad, initially through Czech politicians in exile and the Entente’s war propaganda<sup>29</sup>. Walter Schücking, a liberal politician and jurist from Westphalia, provides, for example, a rather unambiguous account of this notion. In 1908, he wrote:

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<sup>22</sup> Marshal Piłsudski came up with this maxim. Qtd. in Hans Roos, *A History of Modern Poland. From the Foundation of the State in the First World War to the Present Day* (London, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 48.

<sup>23</sup> This claim is ascribed to Aleksandr Mikhaylovich Prince Gorchakov, the Russian ambassador to Austria during the Crimean War. Qtd. in Robert A. Kann, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburger. Geschichte und Ideengehalt der nationalen Bestrebungen vom Vormärz bis zur Auflösung des Reiches im Jahre 1918*, vol. 1: *Das Reich und die Völker*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Graz, Cologne: Verlag Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1964), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Judson, “Interpretationen“, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Robert A. Kann, *Werden und Zerfall des Habsburgerreiches* (Graz/Vienna/Cologne: Styria, 1962), 26.

<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Engels, “Der kranke Mann von Österreich“, *New-York Daily Tribune*, no. 6039 (September 1, 1860), in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, vol. 15, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), 129-132; cf. also Ernst Hanisch, *Der kranke Mann an der Donau. Marx und Engels über Österreich* (Vienna, Munich, Zürich: Europaverlag, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Herbert Matis, “Nationalitätenfrage und Wirtschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie“, *Der Donauraum* 15, no. 3-4 (December 1970): 171-202, 171; Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie*, 2.

“So sollten von den zehn Völkern Österreich-Ungarns nur zwei herrschen, die Deutschen und die Magyaren, die anderen acht wurden zur Aufsaugung bestimmt. Freilich mußte man durch die Sprachenverordnung von 1869 hüben schon den Polen eine relative Autonomie geben, wie es schon 1868 drüben mit den Kroaten geschehen war, aber was übrig blieb an Tschechen, Ruthenen, Rumänen, Slowenen, Serben und Italienern war rechtlos, wobei den in Österreich privilegierten Polen allernädigst die Ruthenen, den in Ungarn privilegierten Kroaten allernädigst die Serben zur nationalen Vergewaltigung überlassen wurden. So gibt es im ganzen in Österreich-Ungarn zwei regierende, zwei mediatisierte und sechs rechtlose Nationen. Mit dieser gänzlich willkürlichen und ungerechten Verfassung der Donaumonarchie von 1867 sind alle ihre inneren Zwistigkeiten erklärt<sup>30</sup>“.

After 1918, nationalists used the idea of a prison of peoples in the various successor states to justify or praise their nation-building processes<sup>31</sup>, but it can also be found to some extent in (older) history books<sup>32</sup>. Nowadays, most historians agree that this depiction is one-sided<sup>33</sup>. Instead, they often provide multicausal explanations for Austria-Hungary’s downfall, including economic problems, political conflicts and the lost war<sup>34</sup>. Outside of the academic sphere, however, many people still tend to believe that national hatred was the primary reason. One cause might be found in today’s widespread fear of ethnonationalism, argues Pieter Judson, which derives from experience with populist agitation, the nationalist mass movements following the Soviet Union’s breakup and memories of the bloody wars of partition in Yugoslavia. Nation and empire are understood as opposites, with one being democratic and the other authoritarian<sup>35</sup>. Robert Kann also points out that the deterministic view of the Dual

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<sup>30</sup> Walther Schücking, *Das Nationalitätenproblem. Eine politische Studie über die Polenfrage und die Zukunft Österreich-Ungarns* (Dresden: Zahn & Jaensch, 1908), 66: trans.: “Thus, of the ten peoples of Austria-Hungary, only two were to rule, the Germans and the Magyars; the other eight were destined to be absorbed. Admittedly, the 1869 language ordinance granted the Poles a relative autonomy, as was already granted to the Croats in 1868, but the remaining Czechs, Ruthenians, Romanians, Slovenes, Serbs and Italians were without rights, whereas the Ruthenians were graciously handed over to the Poles, who were privileged in Austria, and the Serbs to the Croats, who were privileged in Hungary, for national rape. Thus, in Austria-Hungary as a whole, there are two ruling, two mediating and six lawless nations. This utterly arbitrary and unjust 1867 constitution of the Danube Monarchy explains all its internal disputes”.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Judson, “Neue Interpretationen“, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g. Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918. A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, rev. ed. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948), 224-228.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Solomon Wank, “Some Reflections on the Habsburg Empire and Its Legacy in the Nationalities Question”, *Austrian History Yearbook* 28 (1997): 131-146, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 1-3.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Judson, “Neue Interpretationen“, 4 and 6.

Monarchy's unavoidable collapse only works from a present-day perspective. Few would have predicted such an outcome in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and probably no one would have foreseen German or Italian unification at that time<sup>36</sup>. The prison-of-peoples argument, therefore, sounds like a retrospective justification for the existence of a current nation-state or nationalist ideology.

#### 4.2. Nationalist conflict, not nationality conflict

Contrary to the anomaly argument, the emergence of nationalism or rather nationalist movements in the Austrian Empire is comparable to the general European experience in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>37</sup>. Multinationality, multiethnicity and multiculturalism are indeed characteristics of every empire<sup>38</sup>. Since 1526/27, the Kingdoms of Bohemia, Croatia and Hungary were jointly ruled by the Habsburg dynasty, which further strengthened their multiethnic nature<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, all peoples of the Monarchy lived together relatively peacefully. With the exception of religion, major identity-related conflicts were rare over several centuries. As the Habsburg Monarchy was not the European exception many nationalists suggested, it seems suitable to get answers from the “classics” of nationalism studies. According to the modernist school, nations, which are inherently limited and sovereign “imagined political communities”<sup>40</sup>, arose from the long 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, while nationalism is “primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent”<sup>41</sup>. In the context of Austria-Hungary, nationalism is essentially “about politics and political practice, and

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Kann, *Werden*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Miloš Režnik, “Die Habsburgermonarchie – ein Imperium ihrer Völker? Einführende Überlegungen zu „Österreichs Staatsidee“, in *Österreich-Ungarns imperiale Herausforderungen. Nationalismen und Rivalitäten im Habsburgerreich um 1900*, eds. Bernhard Bachinger, Wolfram Dornik and Stephan Lehnstaedt (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2020): 45-66, 48.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Kann, *Werden*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, New York: Verso, 2016), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); cf. also Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 9.

not about cultural authenticity”<sup>42</sup>. Thus, it is more precise to speak of “nationalist conflicts” rather than “nationality conflicts”, because nationalist activists usually fought each other and not entire groups<sup>43</sup>. Considerable parts of the population were even ignorant of nationalist concerns and hardly affected by their agitation in everyday life<sup>44</sup>. In recent historiography, “national indifference” became a fruitful category of analysis, as it has produced a number of studies that reveal, among other things, frequent bilingualism, changes of national affiliation when opportune, or common intermixing of nationalities in late Austria-Hungary<sup>45</sup>. According to further scholarly work, local or religious identities were in some crownlands much more decisive compared to nationalism<sup>46</sup>. As will be seen, this also applies in part to socialism. Nevertheless, the national question was one of, if not the most pressing political issue of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1869, when imperial and royal politics became more democratic, nationalist became “a political phenomenon clothed in the language of culture”<sup>47</sup>. As a result, the “nationality problem” is a specific 19<sup>th</sup>-century political phenomenon that follows a pan-European trend.

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<sup>42</sup> Judson, “Nationalism”, 152.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 271.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Judson, “Nationalism”, 152; *ibid.*,

<sup>45</sup> Cf. i.a. Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the language frontiers of imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY, London: Cornell University Press, 2008); *ibid.*, “Reclaiming Children for the Nation. Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1945”, *Central European History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 501–543. For the concept of “national indifference” cf. Judson, “Nationalism”; also Pieter M. Judson and Tara Zahra, “Introduction”, *Austrian History Yearbook* 43 (2012): 21–27; Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities. National Indifference as a Category of Analysis”, *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. e.g. James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole. Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 273.

## 5. Early socialist voices on the national question

This chapter intends to provide those theoretical considerations that probably influenced the leaders of the very early Austrian social democracy the most. As will be seen, the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as those of Ferdinand Lassalle, had the greatest impact in the first days, while other powerful figures such as Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch did not, as far as I know, take a position on the national question, most likely, because he generally rejected any form of political agitation by the working class and its organisations<sup>48</sup>. For some late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Slavic social democratic parties – the Polish, Ruthenian or Slovenian parties, among others – Mikhail Bakunin’s democratic Pan-Slavism and his views on nationalism also wielded influence, as can be, for example, seen in the Galician programme of 1880<sup>49</sup>. Bakunin was not only Marx and Engels’ biggest rival within the First International, but all three also had very diverging views on the national question<sup>50</sup>. Following a liberal-bourgeois German tradition, Marx and Engels even justified the Austrian Empire’s mere existence as a bulwark under German leadership against Russian Pan-Slavism<sup>51</sup>. As the early Austrian social democracy was basically a German-speaking movement with Czech sections<sup>52</sup>, this chapter focuses on Marxism and Lassalleanism.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Herbert Steiner, *Die Arbeiterbewegung Österreichs 1867-1889. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte von der Gründung des Wiener Arbeiterbildungsvereines bis zum Einigungsparteitag in Hainfeld* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1964), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 241f. and 326.

<sup>50</sup> For a good overview on that dispute cf. Michael Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labour Movement. The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 19-60.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Robert A. Kann, *Das Nationalitätenproblem der Habsburger. Geschichte und Ideengehalt der nationalen Bestrebungen vom Vormärz bis zur Auflösung des Reiches im Jahre 1918*, vol. 2: *Ideen und Pläne zur Reichsreform*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Graz, Cologne: Verlag Hermann Böhlhaus Nachf., 1964), 160.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Konrad, “Nationale Frage”, 121.

## 5.1. Marx and Engels

According to Tom Nairn, “the theory of nationalism represents Marxism’s great historical failure”<sup>53</sup>, while Benedict Anderson says it more cautiously: “nationalism has proven an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory and, precisely for that reason, has been largely elided, rather than confronted”<sup>54</sup>. While that might be true for Marx’s own theory, although contested<sup>55</sup>, Marxism as a school has produced some thinkers for whom nationalism was not an anomaly<sup>56</sup>, above all the Austro-Marxists<sup>57</sup>. For the purposes of this overview, however, it suffices to say that for Marx and Engels, as for many of their contemporaries, the national question was of secondary importance, and they subordinated it to the demand for a social revolution. In accordance with the liberal zeitgeist of the time, they believed that the question would resolve itself – an idea that is already present in Herderian thought. In Marxist terminology, nationalism plays the role of an ideological “superstructure”, which means that it will change as soon as the material circumstances change<sup>58</sup>. In addition, Marx and Engels shared the welcoming of bourgeois nation-states as historical progress with “German idealist philosophy and the liberal laissez-faire teaching”<sup>59</sup>. They also valued the creation of large economic spheres, probably because a working class stronger in numbers increases the chances

<sup>53</sup> Tom Nairn, “The Modern Janus”, *New Left Review* 94, no. 1 (November-December 1975): 3-29, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *Imagined*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> According to N. N. Agrawal, “Marx and Engels have not left any systematic and comprehensive account of their views on the national-colonial question”, while Erica Brenner says that they did examine it with great accuracy. Cf. N. N. Agrawal, “Marx and Engels on the National Question”, *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 16, no. 3 (July-September 1955): 243-276, 243; Erica Benner, *Really Existing Nationalisms. A Post-Communist View of Marx and Engels* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>56</sup> In fact, all Marxists of the Second International – Bauer, Kautsky, Luxemburg and Lenin, among others – contributed heavily to the debate on the national question, which centred around the issues of colonialism and multinationalism. Cf. Forman, *Nationalism*, 11; Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> For a critique of the Austro-Marxists with regard to their nationalist tendencies cf. Carsten Esbach, “Nation und Nationalität im Werk von Karl Renner und Otto Bauer“, in *Nation und Nationenbildung in Österreich-Ungarn, 1848-1938: Prinzipien und Methoden*, eds. Endre Kiss and Justin Stagl (Vienna, Münster: Lit, 2006), 73-85, 84.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 6-14.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Mommsen, “Sozialistische Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage in der Periode der I. und II. Internationale“, *ITH-Tagungsberichte* 10 (1978), qtd. in Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 14.

of revolution<sup>60</sup>. In fact, their approach to nationalism is an obvious example of “naïve cosmopolitanism”. In the 1848 Manifesto of the Communist Party, the two write:

*„Die Kommunisten unterscheiden sich von den übrigen proletarischen Parteien nur dadurch, daß sie [...] in den verschiedenen nationalen Kämpfen der Proletarier die gemeinsamen, von der Nationalität unabhängigen Interessen des gesamten Proletariats hervorheben und zur Geltung bringen [...]. Den Kommunisten ist ferner vorgeworfen worden, sie wollten das Vaterland, die Nationalität abschaffen. Die Arbeiter haben kein Vaterland. [...] Die nationalen Absonderungen und Gegensätze der Völker verschwinden mehr und mehr schon mit der Entwicklung der Bourgeoisie, mit der Handelsfreiheit, dem Weltmarkt, der Gleichförmigkeit der industriellen Produktion und der ihr entsprechenden Lebensverhältnisse<sup>61</sup>“.*

As journalists, the two often expressed their opinions about the Habsburg Empire. To understand them, it is important to realise that only the revolution mattered to them. Consequently, Marx and Engels ranked the European powers according to their revolutionary significance: the United Kingdom as the motherland of the industrial revolution, France as the one of the political revolution, Germany underwent the Hegelian philosophical revolution, and Russia was, negatively seen, the motherland of barbarism and despotism. Austria followed as the laboratory of “nationality problems”<sup>62</sup>. As soon as the 1848/1849 revolution began, however, Engels found these words:

*“Die buntscheckige, zusammengeerbte und zusammengestohlene österreichische Monarchie, dieser organisierte Wirrwarr von zehn Sprachen und Nationen, dies planlose Kompositum der widersprechendsten Sitten und Gesetze, fängt endlich an, auseinanderzufallen“<sup>63</sup>.*

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Konrad, “Nationale Frage”, 120.

<sup>61</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei“ (February 1848), in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Werke*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz, 1977): 459-491, 474 and 479: trans.: “The Communists differ from the other proletarian parties only in that they [...] emphasise and assert the common interests of the entire proletariat in the various national struggles of the proletarians, independent of nationality [...]. The communists have also been accused of wanting to abolish the fatherland, the nationality. The workers have no fatherland. [...] The national separations and antagonisms of peoples are disappearing more and more with the development of the bourgeoisie, with the freedom of trade, the world market, the uniformity of industrial production and the corresponding living conditions”.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Hanisch, *kranke Mann*, 339.

<sup>63</sup> Friedrich Engels, “Der Anfang des Endes in Österreich“, *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung* 8 (January 27, 1848), in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Werke*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz, 1977): 504-510, 504: trans.: “The motley Austrian monarchy, inherited and stolen, this organised chaos of ten languages and nations, this planless compound of the most contradictory customs and laws, is finally beginning to fall apart”.



Another constant within Marx and Engels' thought is Greater Germanism, especially in the revolutionary days. Even as late as 1892, Engels noted in a letter to Victor Adler that Austria's separation from Germany was temporary and only political<sup>64</sup> - a notion that resonated strongly in the Austrian workers' movement among German-speakers<sup>65</sup>. As Greater German views usually concur with anti-Slavic resentments, Engels also drafted a dubious theory of "peoples without history" (*geschichtslose Völker*). Austrian Slavs are essentially peasants without a cultural or industrial tradition, he argued, who adopted all aspects of intellectual culture from the Germans. They have no national history and, therefore, will not have a national future. In the Monarchy, there were two kinds of such peoples. Those, whose national history or customs belonged to the past, were the Czechs, the Slovaks and the Slovenes. On the other hand, there are some Slavic groups who lived outside their "historical territories" such as the Poles, the Serbs or the Ukrainians. Although this concept understandably roused opposition – Ernst Hanisch speaks of the "most sorrowful" piece of the entire oeuvre – it was not meant ethically. Nonetheless, this "theory" displays utter ignorance towards other nations<sup>66</sup>. Summing up, Marx and Engels offered the Austrian workers an interesting medley of revolution at all costs, naïve cosmopolitanism, some internationalism and a pinch of anti-Slavic prejudices. How it was exactly received, however, remains open. While the early Austrian labour movement became largely Marxist<sup>67</sup>, it is unclear whether many of these texts were in circulation or not. As Marx stayed in Vienna in summer 1848 and spoke there to some workers' representatives<sup>68</sup>, at least the manifesto was known among labour leaders.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Hanisch, *krank Mann*, 331.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Hanisch, *krank Mann*, 169-171; also Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur nationalen Frage. Friedrich Engels und das Problem der ,geschichtslosen Völker'* (Berlin: Olle & Wolter, 1979).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. discussion contributions by Herbert Steiner and Leopold Hornik, in Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung, *100 Jahre sozialdemokratischer Parteitag. Neudörfel 1974*, ITH-Tagungsberichte, no. 8 (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1976), 50 and 53; cf. also Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hugo Pepper, "Die frühe österreichische Sozialdemokratie und die Anfänge der Arbeiterkultur", in *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburger-Staat*, ed. Wolfgang Maderthaner (Vienna: Löcker, 1988), 79-99, 80.

## 5.2. Ferdinand Lassalle

Lassalle undoubtedly had a big impact on Austrian social democracy, but in other aspects than the national question. Since 1863, for example, a section of the General German Workers' Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*), which he founded, existed in the North Bohemian town of Asch (Aš)<sup>69</sup>. With the exception of the early dispute between Schultze-Delitzsch's "self-help" and Lassalle's "state help", as will be discussed in Chapter 6.2, Lassalleanism in the Austrian Empire was above all rhetorical. His ideas were emphasised in many speeches, but his political proposals were rarely called for. Alongside views that were based on a different political and economic system<sup>70</sup>, Lassalle propagated a rigorous form of Prussian nationalism that sought not Germany's unification with Austria, but the complete subjugation of the Habsburg Empire<sup>71</sup>. Marx and Engels once characterised Lassalle's nationalism aptly as "royal Prussian government socialism" (*königlich preußischen Regierungssozialismus*)<sup>72</sup>: In 1859, he demanded: "*Oesterreich muß zerfetzt, zerstückt, vernichtet, zermalmt – wir sprechen natürlich hier immer nur von dem Staatsbegriffe Oesterreich – seine Asche muß in alle vier Winde gestreut werden*"<sup>73</sup>. A few years earlier, he also made comments on the conclusion of the 1848/49 revolutions in the Habsburg Monarchy:

*"Oesterreich siegte, indem es den Haß dieser rohen Naturkräfte [the Slavs] gegen seine Kulturvölker [Germans, Italians and Magyars] entflammte und losließ. Es siegte durch die Bajonette der Kroaten und Slavonier; es siegte, indem es den Slaven Oesterreich zu einem slavischen Staate zu machen versprach"*<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Zdeněk Šolle, "Die Sozialdemokratie in der Habsburger Monarchie und die tschechische Frage", *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 6, no. 7 (1966/67): 315-319, 317.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. discussion contribution by Herbert Steiner, Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung, *100 Jahre sozialdemokratischer Parteitag. Neudörfel 1974*, ITH-Tagungsberichte, no. 8 (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1976), 61.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 15-17.

<sup>72</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Erklärung", *Der Social-Demokrat*, no. 29 (March 3, 1865), in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Werke*, vol. 16 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 79.

<sup>73</sup> Ferdinand Lassalle, *Der italienische Krieg und die Aufgabe Preußens. Eine Stimme aus der Demokratie* (Berlin: Duncker, 1859), 30: trans.: "Austria must be torn to shreds, dismembered, destroyed, crushed - we are, of course, only speaking of the state concept of Austria here - its ashes must be scattered into all four winds".

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 10: trans.: "Austria triumphed by inflaming and unleashing the hatred of these brute forces of nature against its cultural peoples. It won through the bayonets of the Croats and Slavonians; it won by promising the Slavs to make Austria their Slavic state".

Unsurprisingly, not many Austrian social democrats, neither Germans nor Czechs, the “brute forces of nature”, endorsed these Lassallean conceptions publicly. Only Heinrich Oberwinder, who was one of the most influential Austrian labour leaders of the early period, defended such positions as well as his Prussian centrism, albeit twelve years after he had been expelled from the Austrian workers’ movement. He described Lassalle’s foreign policy positions as “socialist realpolitik”<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Heinrich Oberwinder, *Sozialismus und Sozialpolitik. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der sozialpolitischen Kämpfe unserer Zeit* (Berlin: Staude, 1887), 35-40.

## 6. Industrialisation efforts

Compared to Belgium, France, Prussia or, first and foremost, the United Kingdom, the process of industrialisation in the Habsburg Empire, with its profound political and socioeconomic changes, took place much later and at a slower pace. In some regions, it gradually began in the quarter-century between 1848 and 1873<sup>76</sup>, although there were some proto-industrial manufactories. In Brunn (Brno), for example, a flourishing textiles industry employed almost 15,000 workers as early as the 1840s, earning the city the name “Manchester of Austria”<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, the first steam engine was used in the Moravian capital’s textiles industry as early as 1815<sup>78</sup>. At least three prerequisites enabled the growth of the Austrian economy from the 1850s onwards and, thus, the emergence of the working class in its modern understanding as the industrial proletariat.

### 6.1. End to feudalism, start to capitalism

For capitalism to rise, the feudal system and especially serfdom have to be overthrown. Hence, the Theresian and Josephine reforms that were already crucial in transforming the monarchy from a medieval entity to a modern state can be regarded as the necessary first step<sup>79</sup>. For example, the 1775 elimination of the domestic tariff barriers between Bohemia, Moravia and the hereditary lands made the region one of the largest free trade areas in Europe at the time<sup>80</sup>. Despite some economic development, such centralisation efforts were drops in the ocean. Austria remained a closed-off and semi-feudal country until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Friedrich Engels once compared the Austrian Empire of the pre-March era (*Vormärz*)

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Eduard März, “Österreich vor dem Neudörfner Parteitag. Die politische und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung von 1848-1874“, *Die Zukunft* 9 (May 1974): 11-18, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 113.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Bauer, *Nationalitätenfrage*, 225.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Peter Pelinka, *Sozialdemokratie in Österreich. Hundert Jahre seit Hainfeld. Die Entwicklung einer Bewegung von Victor Adler bis Franz Vranitzky* (Vienna: hpt-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1988), 11.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. John Komlos, *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Customs Union. Economic Development in Austria-Hungary in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 4.

to the Qing Empire: until March 1848, Austria was “für andere Völker fast ebenso sehr ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln [...] wie China vor dem letzten Kriege mit England”<sup>81</sup>. For the most part, he referred to the strict protective tariffs and administrative barriers that were designed to prevent the influx of foreign goods and ideas<sup>82</sup>. Only in the aftermath of the liberal-democratic revolutions of 1848/1849, initial measures for establishing a capitalist system were slowly taken. In 1851, when Franz Joseph I revoked the so-called Imperial March Constitution, he simultaneously carried out an agrarian reform and freed the serfs. With the emancipation of the peasantry, the last feudal elements were abolished. As a next step, the young emperor initiated a rather ambitious plan of economic, social and cultural renewal. His liberal reforms included the end to guild privileges, the freedoms of property, movement and profession, as well as equality before the law and funding of education, particularly universities. Politically, however, the police state, censorship and the prohibition of political activity were brought back during the Neoabsolutist era<sup>83</sup>. Immediate consequences for the emergence of a free-market economy had the 1855 foundation of the monarchy’s first universal bank, the *k. k. priv. Österreichische Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe* (imperial and royal privileged Austrian Credit Institution for Commerce and Industry), which was able to fund huge infrastructural projects, and the 1859 trade regulation act that ensured legal security on the market<sup>84</sup>. Lastly, Hungary was forced to join the internal customs union in 1851 due to the successful counterinsurgency of the Magyar uprising<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Friedrich Engels, “Revolution und Konterrevolution in Deutschland“, *New-York Daily Tribune* (August 1851-September 1852), in *Karl Marx-Friedrich Engels-Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 5-108, 29: trans.: Austria was “almost as much a closed book for the other nations as China was before the last war with England”.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. März, “Österreich“, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 218f.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. März, “Österreich“, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Komlos, *Habsburg Monarchy*, 5.

## 6.2. Rapid growth

Another important factor was the rapid expansion of the transport system. Interestingly, the Habsburg state was a railway pioneer. As early as 1824, a concession was granted to operate a horse-drawn railway line from Linz to Budweis (Budějovice). It was the first of its kind in the entirety of Europe<sup>86</sup>. Although much was achieved in the 1830s, a severe lack of capital on the part of the Austrian state prevented further progress until the 1850s: the aforementioned Credit Institution and foreign investment were able to provide massive amounts of financial resources for railway constructions<sup>87</sup>. Between 1837 and 1860, 770 miles of track were laid, while during the Gründerzeit (1867-1873), the impressive figure of 1,204 miles was built<sup>88</sup>. The biggest beneficiaries of that very development were certain industries, mainly supplying industries such as mining, iron production or mechanical engineering industries. Funnily enough, this same applies to the beet sugar industry which skyrocketed in the mid-1850s<sup>89</sup>. Furthermore, the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation were intertwined from the outset, leading to exponential population growth in some areas. After the Coalition Wars, the population of the Austrian Empire rose by at least one percent per year over the next thirty years, partly due to increased agricultural productivity in Bohemia and the hereditary lands. Between 1817 and 1848, for instance, the populations of Vienna and Prague grew from approximately 250,000 to 357,000 and 65,000 to 115,000 respectively, while the growth rates of some provincial towns, where economic development was strongest, were even higher: the population of Pest more than quadrupled between the 1780s and the late 1840s – from 22,417 to over 100,000 – and that of Trieste (Trieste, Trst) grew from 43,000 in 1820 to more than 80,000 just twenty years later. Nonetheless, the population growth rates were even higher in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 117.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. März, “Österreich“, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 76.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. März, “Österreich“, 12.

century<sup>90</sup>. In addition, for most of the century, the phenomena of both an urban-rural and an industrial-agrarian divide can be observed. The two megacities of Prague and Vienna evolved a distinct metropolitan culture and became centres of modern capitalism and trade, while by far the majority of urban settlements were still rural administrative towns. With exception of the alpine regions, large estates administered by nobles or clergymen dominated the landscape in the countryside. As great as proto-industrialisation became in some places, Austria-Hungary always remained an agrarian state<sup>91</sup>.

### 6.3. Regional differences

Above all, industrialisation, which really kick-started in the mid-1860s, was characterised by great regional differences that consequently formed the working class along ethnic lines<sup>92</sup>. First, the development in Austria was different from that in Hungary. After the Compromise of 1867, the ruling Magyar nobility not only pursued an anti-industrial policy that greatly hampered industrialisation, but also centralisation, which led to a more similar development. In Cisleithania<sup>93</sup>, however, some crownlands – Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Lower and Upper Austria, and Styria – became heavily industrialised, while others such as Bukovina, Carniola, Dalmatia, Galicia or Tyrol remained more or less agriculturally dominated until the empire's dissolution, mostly due to very bad transport infrastructure. Generally speaking, industrialisation effectively began in the old trade centres like Vienna, several parts of Lower Austria, Graz or Linz, but moved fast to Northern Bohemia. Heavy industries were located predominantly in resource-rich areas. Initially, Styria was the key centre with its iron ore production, but through railway expansion, the rich brown and black coal fields of Bohemia, the Brůx-Dux-Teplitz (Most--Duchcov-Teplice) basin, and Moravia, around Ostrau (Ostrava),

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 112f.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Konrad, "Arbeiterbewegung", 508.

<sup>93</sup> Cisleithania was officially called "The Kingdoms and Lands Represented in the Imperial Assembly".

were soon exploited. At large, Bohemia became the single most industrialised region in Austria-Hungary. On the eve of the First World War, the eventual Sudetenland accounted for 60 percent of the entire metals industries, 75 percent of the chemical industry and large parts of the textiles and consumer goods industries. Its major hubs were Reichenberg (Liberec) and Aussig (Ústí nad Labem). In the predominantly Czech part of Bohemia, Prague, Pilsen (Plzeň) and Kladno (Kladno) are worth mentioning, while Moravia had in Brunn still a flourishing textiles industry<sup>94</sup>. Simultaneously, the workers' movement was slowly emerging in precisely these areas.

Highly industrialised Bohemia illustrates the multinational character that the labour movement had from its beginnings, as it essentially was a German-Czech organisation with regional variations. Prague was the centre of the Czech movement, while Asch and Reichenberg were at first nearly exclusively German<sup>95</sup>. Apart from Germans and Czechs, only a few Slovenes, Italians and, to a much lesser extent, Poles became workers during the first stage of industrialisation. From the outset, the proletariat was therefore divided along ethnic lines. Moreover, most labourers of these nationalities were employed in very specific sectors. A larger number of Slovenes could only be found in Styrian mines, while Italians usually worked in seasonal branches such as railway construction or in brick factories. General factory work, however, was reserved for Czech- and German-speaking workers. Thus, their relationship became the benchmark for how social democracy dealt with the national question<sup>96</sup>. In contrast, nearly all entrepreneurs were German-speaking in the 1860s and 1870s. The later strong Czech banking business (*Živnostenská banka*) only emerged around the turn of the century<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 20-23.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 316.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Konrad, "Arbeiterbewegung", 508.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 19.



Industrialisation was accompanied by an enormous social upheaval that brought far-reaching changes to Austro-Hungarian society. As a group, the Germans, for example, lost their statistical supremacy in the administration and bourgeoisie, because more and more educated Czechs became civil servants, among others. Furthermore, assimilation into German culture proved increasingly unpopular, partly due to the large waves of labour migration that blurred the territorial boundaries between the nationalities, especially in Bohemia. Only then did Prague become a predominantly Czech metropolis. At the time, several nationalist activists tried to exploit the fast-paced situation by stirring up resentment. The spectre of Vienna becoming a Slavic city, for instance, began to increasingly haunt German locals. On the other hand, parts of the non-German bourgeoisie (and some labourers too) became more and more envious of the hegemony of German (and German-Jewish) capital. Ethnic tensions also arose among workers, usually between already organised foremen and those unskilled workers who had just migrated to work in the respective factory. Occasionally, the former saw the latter as wage squeezers or potential strikebreakers<sup>98</sup>. However, the image of the ‘privileged’ German and ‘oppressed’ Czech workers only applied to certain regions such as Northern Bohemia. When Czech workers migrated to non-industrialised parts of the monarchy, they often became foremen, for example in Lower or Upper Austria. Moreover, conflicts between workers only increased in number from the 1880s onwards, as national and social oppression did not necessarily run in parallel<sup>99</sup>. Recapitulating, the industrialisation experience of the Habsburg Empire had some unique features compared to Western European states, including a fragmented domestic market, widespread anti-industrial reservations within the Hungarian or Polish aristocracy, few large businesses and a lack of capital, along with a dominance of small trades<sup>100</sup>. Moreover, Austria-Hungary had no industrial capital – Vienna was only the cultural, political and trade capital –

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 25-33; also Beneš, *Workers*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Konrad, “Nationale Frage“, 122f.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 23.

but many regional industrial centres, which led to a decentralised labour movement with strong local branches<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 19f.

## 7. A liberal Austria

The liberalisation process of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century represents arguably the most important precondition for the emergence of a political labour movement. On the one hand, the liberal state destroyed the old order and, in line with its ideology, propagated political participation for all; on the other hand, it excluded large parts of the population once it gained power, therefore fostering the formation of class consciousness among the proletariat. In essence, the workers' movement constituted itself against the liberal state with liberal help<sup>102</sup>. Consequently, this chapter is dedicated to outline the main lines of liberal development in the Austrian state, focusing if sensible on labour experiences and nationalism.

### 7.1. Springtime of the peoples

During the 1848 revolution, the workers of Budapest, Prague and Vienna appeared for the first time as an independent historical force<sup>103</sup>. In Vienna, they fought alongside enlightened burghers and students, demanding political representation and the freedoms of assembly and the press. However, the alliance was short-lived and broke apart when disgruntled labourers torched factories and looted several grocery shops, presumably enraged by the excessive working hours at that time: 14 for adults, twelve for under fourteen-year-olds, and ten for under twelve-year-olds. In October 1848, when the Viennese democratic resistance clashed with Windisch-Grätz and his troops, the so-called "Mobile Guard" suffered the most casualties. Two thirds of all 360 insurgents killed were workers<sup>104</sup>. Once the upheaval was suppressed and order restored, the organisation process of the working class was severely hampered, if not temporarily over<sup>105</sup>. Nonetheless, the revolutionary years had a positive influence on future developments. In June 1848, a young shoemaker named Friedrich Sander founded the "First

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 13f.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 3.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Pelinka, *Sozialdemokratie*, 12-14.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 3.

Universal Workers' Association" (*Erste Allgemeine Arbeiterverein*) in Vienna. It offered a few social services to its members, such as a labour exchange and medical care, but its main purpose was to educate and entertain the workers. Politically, there were calls for the establishment of educational organisations to be authorised by law, and for a reduction in working hours. For this purpose, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (workers' newspaper) was created, which, given the circumstances, only appeared six times. During his ten-day visit in August 1848, Marx had a talk with some workers' representatives and spoke on one occasion to the association's audience. Soon afterwards, the revolution ended violently, and the Universal Workers' Association was banned by the authorities<sup>106</sup>. Some workers from Vienna and the industrial area of Wiener Neustadt, Lower Austria, even had a share in this development as they garnered thousands of signatures for a petition in summer 1867, hence giving momentum to the resolution of the constitution. As soon as they realised that their future can only be improved in solidarity with their peers, the workers, now many more than just journeymen and helpmates organised in guilds, developed some sort of political initiative<sup>107</sup>.

## 7.2. Reform through lost wars

The history of Austria as a liberal empire is closely tied to lost wars. In the 1850s, the Bach era was characterised by liberal economic, educational and legal reforms, but also by an illiberal attitude towards political participation. Additionally, the diplomatic and financial disaster of the Crimean War (1853-1856) – losing an ally and being on the verge of bankruptcy due to an unnecessary mass mobilisation – did definitely not stabilise the realm. In 1859, war broke out with France and Sardinia-Piemonte, and after humiliating defeats at Magenta and Solferino, the rich Lombard crownland had to be ceded to the French who handed it over to the Piedmontese. As a result, the emperor had to grant a new constitution, the 1861 February Patent which, among

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Pelinka, *Sozialdemokratie*, 13f; Pepper, "Die Arbeiterkultur", 79f.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Pepper, "Arbeiterkultur", 81.

other things, expanded the parliament and revived constitutional life. Two fractions developed, conservative federalists and liberal centrists. The latter slowly took the lead<sup>108</sup>.

In 1866, the Austrian Empire decisively lost the Brothers War against Prussia in the (in)famous Battle of Königgrätz (Hradec Králové) on July 3, 1866. As consequences, Prussia annexed some German minor states such as Hanover or Nassau, thus forming the North German Confederation, while Austria had to withdraw from German affairs – the so-called smaller German solution became reality. In addition, Veneto was lost to the Italians, who had fought alongside the Prussians, and the war also crippled the economic and financial situation of the state. Domestic tensions, especially the long-lasting antagonism with the Hungarian diet, required a solution and Franz Joseph I was forced to act. With the Compromise, the Monarchy was divided into two parts, Austria (Cisleithania) and Hungary (Transleithania), creating the Dual Monarchy. In Cisleithania, the deputies to the Imperial Assembly took advantage of the situation and accomplished the adoption of the 1867 December Constitution<sup>109</sup>. It granted, among other things, the freedoms of association and assembly, which were crucial for the emergence of a social democratic movement.

In order to understand the position of the early Austrian labour movement on the national question, it is essential to consider the overall political context of the Monarchy in the late 1860s. The consequences of the defeat at Königgrätz cannot be overestimated, with regard to both external and internal affairs. For the bulk of the (German-speaking) population, a sense of belonging to the rest of Germany seemed obvious, and the separation of the two German powers was not regarded as final until well into the 1870s. Pan-German memories of 1848 had a lasting effect in Austria, while the First International continued to advocate for a Greater Germany. Unsurprisingly, the workers' movement unconsciously supported national unification at first,

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<sup>108</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 219f.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Bruckmüller, *Geschichte*, 377-383.

especially as it initially aligned itself politically with the liberal bourgeoisie and was heavily influenced by the German Social Democracy<sup>110</sup>.

In Europe, those years were the era of “triumphant bourgeois liberalism” (1830-1880), and in this case, the Austrian Empire is no exception to the rule<sup>111</sup>. The monarchy even becomes a glimmer of hope for Central Europe’s liberals, as Otto von Bismarck, seen as a reactionary hardliner, is at odds with parliament in Prussia at that time<sup>112</sup>. Furthermore, it is also the period, in which nationalism becomes an issue in international politics<sup>113</sup>. Out of many, two examples of early Austrian liberals who expressed their opinion on the matter will be given. Ernst von Schwarzer, Austria’s “ideologue of capitalism”, was the first to propagate nationality along ethnic rather than linguistic lines. While he advocated equality of rights, he simultaneously promoted a form of cultural disparity based on the level of “civilisation” and hence viewed the empire as a collection of ethnically diverse peoples who possessed different levels of civilisation<sup>114</sup>. Due to colonialism, the question of civilisation was very present at this time, but not only liberals, also some social democrats, such as Lassalle, commented on it: The French possess “*dieses Recht des höheren kulturhistorischen Berufs auf Algier, die Engländer auf Indien*”<sup>115</sup>. On the other hand, the inconsistency in the thinking of Adolf Fischhof, an Austrian liberal, is exemplary for many German liberals of the time. Although he was tolerant towards other peoples, he was firmly convinced that German culture and thus politics were superior<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 38; Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 268.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Ernst Bruckmüller, *Österreichische Geschichte. Von der Urgeschichte bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2019), 378.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 40.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 238-241.

<sup>115</sup> Lassalle, *Krieg*, 9: trans.: The French possess “the right of higher cultural-historical profession to [rule over] Algiers, the English to India”.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Sara Lagi, “Adolf Fischhof and the National Question in the Habsburg Empire: A Problem of ‘Trust’ and ‘Collaboration’ amongst the Nationalities of Austria (1869–1885)”, *Trust and Happiness in the History of European Political Thought*, eds. László Kontler and Mark Somos (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 345-368, 347f.

At first glance, the newly appointed liberal “*Bürgerministerium*” (burghers cabinet) initially headed by Prince Karl of Auersperg (1814-1890) (burghers cabinet) awoke the hope of some labourers as first reforms - repeal of the concordat, legalisation of civil marriage, freedom of trade, partial abolition of Metternich’s police state, a general amnesty, and first and foremost, a novel Associations Act - were adopted in their favour. Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie was already content with their first achievements and, therefore, the government did not want to go too far with its reformatory fervour<sup>117</sup>. In addition, they felt, a bit ignorantly, that their popular support was so great that they do not have to build alliances, while the liberal press praised them nonstop. As a result, the implementation of many reforms in the crownlands was delayed due to resistance of some local governors<sup>118</sup>. With this gridlock, the *Bürgerministerium* soon began to fear the rising proletariat of the *Gründerzeit* as well as its demands<sup>119</sup>. Despite their inclusive language, the narrow weltanschauung of the bourgeoisie soon hit the wall, and they used the police, repression and force, alike their predecessors<sup>120</sup>.

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 275-278.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 3

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 288f.

## 8. Emergence of the labour movement

As briefly touched on in the fourth chapter, the very first political labour organisation in Austria, the Universal Workers' Association in Vienna, did not survive the revolutionary year of 1848<sup>121</sup>. Likewise, the uprisings in Budapest and Prague, in which the working class first appeared as an independent political force, ultimately failed<sup>122</sup>, although there had been labour unrest beforehand. In 1844, for example, the workers of the calico manufactories rose up in Prague and some northern Bohemian towns and destroyed the presses. Sometimes described as the vanguard of modern industrial proletariat in Austria, these labourers lost their jobs in the 1850s due to growth in factory production. Industrial workers only came to the fore in larger numbers in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>123</sup>. However, since the most politically advanced part of the workers' movement consisted of artisans<sup>124</sup>, the earliest forms of institutionalised labour should be mentioned too.

### 8.1. Workers' associations

Around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some manufactories already had aid organisations (*Hilfsvereine*) and *Fabrikkassen* (an early health insurance scheme) to help with material difficulties. Founded in 1803, the mutual aid society of the book printers of Linz may have been the first of its kind. If the authorities even suspected agitation, however, such organisations were dissolved or their funds confiscated, because the Catholic Church was ultimately the only institution that was allowed to provide welfare in the Bach years (and before). Neo-absolutism was therefore a time of rapid pauperisation<sup>125</sup>. While the formation of a consumer cooperative (*Konsumgenossenschaft*) was officially prohibited in Vienna in 1852, the first one was approved

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Beneš, *Workers*, 23.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Zdeněk Šolle, "Die Sozialdemokratie in der Habsburger Monarchie und die tschechische Frage", *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 6/7 (1966-1967): 315-390, 315f.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 19.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Hugo Pepper, "Die frühe österreichische Sozialdemokratie und die Anfänge der Arbeiterkultur", in *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburger-Staat*, ed. Wolfgang Maderthaner (Vienna: Löcker, 1988): 79-99, 79f.



in Teesdorf, Lower Austria, in 1856<sup>126</sup>. Further *Hilfsvereine* were set up in Vienna, Prague and elsewhere. This first founding period was generally supported by liberal burghers who propagated workers' self-help through cooperatives (for consumers, producers, and savings and loans) and compromise with employers. The constitutional turmoil at the beginning of the 1860s and the easing of the absolutist regime led to a new phase in working-class political organisation. In 1863, a workers' educational association (*Arbeiterbildungsverein*) was founded in Reichenberg (Liberec) with liberal backing<sup>127</sup>. At the same time, such an endeavour failed in Vienna<sup>128</sup>, albeit one year later, its book printers managed to receive permission for establishing an association dedicated to upskilling<sup>129</sup>.

The first independent political association of Austrian workers was finally made possible by the 1867 Constitution, granting the freedoms of assembly and association. It is worth noting that workers of Vienna and Wiener Neustadt played a significant role in winning these rights, because they garnered thousands of signatures for a petition, giving momentum to the constitution's adoption<sup>130</sup>. From late 1866 onwards, members of various Viennese self-help organisations and provisional Gumpendorf and Schottenfeld workers' committees repeatedly tried to incorporate an independent educational association. Although both the local police and the Lower Austrian prefecture put obstacles in their way – one condition, for example, was the guarantee of an entrepreneur, which evidently no one provided – a permit was granted on November 18, 1867, and the constituent assembly took place on December 8: the “First Universal Viennese Workers' Educational Association” (*Erste Allgemeine Wiener*

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Walter Pollak, *Sozialismus in Österreich. Von der Donaumonarchie bis zur Ära Kreisky* (Vienna, Düsseldorf: Econ, 1979), 32f.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Beneš, *Workers*, 23.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 5.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Pepper, “Arbeiterkultur“, 81; For Wiener Neustadt in particular cf. Sylvia Hahn, “Eifrige Demokraten und organisierte Arbeiter. Wiener Neustadt und die Frühphase der österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung“, in *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburger-Staat*, ed. Wolfgang Maderthaner (Vienna: Löcker, 1988): 7-24, 11.

*Arbeiterbildungsverein*) was, with liberal support once more, established in Gumpendorf<sup>131</sup>, which marks the birth of the social democratic labour movement in Austria<sup>132</sup>.

Throughout the late 1860s, the number of workers' educational organisations that were for the most part political<sup>133</sup> grew constantly in all parts of the Monarchy, from Innsbruck to Pressburg (Pozsony, Bratislava), from Bodenbach (Podmokly) to Triest (Trieste, Trst)<sup>134</sup>. The majority of them, however, were located in the early industrial areas of Bohemia, Moravia, Lower and Upper Austria, Silesia and Styria – in the Hungarian part of the Empire, only Budapest and Temeswar (Temesvár, Timișoara) had an organisation in April 1869<sup>135</sup>. One reason for this varying development can be found in the specific history of early industrialisation in the Habsburg Monarchy: For a long time, the factory industry remained a localised phenomenon that did not arise in large cities but in smaller provincial towns. This led to locally diverse workers' associations with sometimes widely divergent membership figures, and thus also to local labour organisations that differed greatly in strength and development. Although this trend slowly began to change with the onset of the Gründerzeit, it still had considerable repercussions<sup>136</sup>. While the early social democratic workers' movement developed moderately well among Viennese and Bohemian workers, a distinct party organisation did not exist for several more years. Moreover, these early associations did not manage to attract more than a few hundred members. Even the workers' educational association in Gumpendorf never had more than around 5,500 members – the emerging blue-collar masses were initially left out<sup>137</sup>. According to the "Viennese Workers' Calendar" (*Wiener Arbeiterkalender*) of 1873,

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 6. According to Pollak, the permit was granted five days later, on November 23, 1867. Cf. Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 42.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Walter Göhring, *Der Gründungsparteitag der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie. Neudörfel 1874* (Vienna, Munich: Jugend und Volk, 1974), 21; also Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Maderthaner, "Die Entwicklung der Organisationsstruktur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie in Österreich 1889 bis 1913", in *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburger-Staat*, ed. Wolfgang Maderthaner (Vienna: Löcker, 1988): 25-51, 25.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Pepper, "Arbeiterkultur", 81.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 16.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 17 and 19f.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Maderthaner, "Organisationsstruktur", 25.

there were in total 237 workers' associations with 80,309 members, including 51 in Vienna (35,368 members), 36 in Bohemia (11,707), 18 in Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia (9,793), and 37 in Styria (9,848)<sup>138</sup>.

## 8.2. Self-help or state aid

In the 1860s, most of the first workers' organisations, aimed at education or material (self-)help, were supported or even financed by various liberal groups, including influential public officials<sup>139</sup>. The workers' education association in Linz, for example, was founded in 1868 with the help of the local burgomaster<sup>140</sup>. One reason is to be found in a notion characteristic of Austrian liberalism at the time, namely the belief to be on a historic mission to spread grand liberal visions of intellectual and material progress, to spread "culture", defined as a form of social capital accessible through literacy and enabling political and societal participation<sup>141</sup>. For those liberals, "realising liberal goals meant educating fellow citizens"<sup>142</sup>. On the other hand, the liberal Burgher Ministry that took power in 1867 also had a practical interest in either coopting the emerging proletariat or at least preventing rivalry<sup>143</sup>. As a result, many more self-help organisations and consumer cooperatives were established in the years after the Compromise<sup>144</sup>, in addition to the educational associations that sprang up like mushrooms. Not long after the foundation of the Gumpendorf Workers' Educational Association, so-called *Fachsektionen* (also called *Fachvereine*, later *Gewerkschaftsvereine*), the predecessors of trade

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Johann Pabst, ed., *Wiener Arbeiterkalender für das Jahr 1873. Mit Beiträgen von Heinrich Oberwinder, Andreas Scheu, Franz Becker usw.* (Vienna: Verlag von Hugo Gerbers, 1873), VGA-Archiv, 72. Complete statistics: Vienna (51 associations/35,368 members), Lower Austria (28/4,616), Upper Austria (7/922), Salzburg (6/469), Styria (37/9,848), Carinthia (14/1156), Carniola (6/468), Tyrol (5/356), Bohemia (36/11,707), Moravia (21/4,646), Silesia (7/760), Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia (18/9,793), Galicia (1/200). In the calendar, the associations are also organised by industry or function (education, healthcare, etc.).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 289.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 22.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 279.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. ibid., 289f; Herbert Steiner, "Der Neudörfler Parteitag 1874 und der Internationalismus", *Archiv. Mitteilungsblatt des Vereins für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 14, no. 2 (April/June 1974): 25-33, 26.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 4.

unions, were created within the educational labour organisations. Albeit their legal scope of action was limited, even after the right to organise was granted in 1870, they soon spearheaded the economic struggle within the factories<sup>145</sup>. Furthermore, these early trade unions were strongly influenced by German social democracy, which, for example, sent representatives to spread Lassalle's ideas in Austria-Hungary<sup>146</sup>. At first, however, only the bourgeois-liberal orientated associations offered a political organisation option for workers<sup>147</sup>, but they were soon interspersed with social democrats from the *Fachvereine*<sup>148</sup>.

This early divide that ran through the workers' associations can best be explained by their respective guiding principles. At the beginning of the 1860s, there was a debate in Prussia and other German states about how the poor literacy and material conditions of the proletariat could be improved. While the economist and social reformer Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch<sup>149</sup>, supported by the liberal "Progress Party" (*Fortschrittspartei*), advocated self-help for workers without any form of political activism, the "General German Workers' Association" (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*, ADAV), founded in Leipzig, Saxony, in 1863 under the guidance of Lassalle, declared that social and political issues were mutually dependent. Besides self-help, state aid was also necessary. The latter view quickly gained the upper hand among labourers<sup>150</sup>. The Habsburg Empire underwent pretty much the same development, only a little

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. März, "Österreich", 17; also Maderthaner, "Organisationsstruktur", 25.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 17. Heinrich Oberwinder, Hermann Hartung, Johann Most and Heinrich Gehrke, among others, were part of German social democracy before they got involved in Vienna's workers' movement. Cf. Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 38.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Maderthaner, "Organisationsstruktur", 25.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 21. As a rule, the leadership and organisation of the *Fachsektionen* and the educational associations overlapped or were very similar. They worked hand in hand, and both contributed a great amount to the rise of Austrian social democracy. Nevertheless, this thesis does not explicitly focus on the trade unions, because, above all, considerations on the national question were mostly made in the political arm of the labour movement. For a broad overview of the early Austrian trade unions cf. Julius Deutsch, *Geschichte der österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, vol. 1, *Von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1929); for nationalist conflicts within them cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 105-203.

<sup>149</sup> Herrman Schulze came from Delitzsch, an industrial town near Halle (Saale). Cf. Klausjürgen Miersch, *Die Arbeiterpresse der Jahre 1869 bis 1889 als Kampfmittel der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1969), 8.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 40f.

later<sup>151</sup>. A few of the first workers' educational associations were committed to Schulze-Delitzsch's principle of self-help, suggesting that workers could liberate themselves from misery through joint economising and (further) education. Every antagonism to the bourgeois should be prevented, as liberal philanthropists were potential supporters and political allies<sup>152</sup>. In Vienna, a self-help association with the emblematic name "Hermania" was founded in 1865, which was even financially assisted by several government agencies<sup>153</sup>. Although some liberals made great efforts to win over the workers, they were soon replaced by Lassalleans wherever they were initially heading labour organisations<sup>154</sup>. Nevertheless, Lassalle's followers were also careful not to antagonise the liberal middle classes and rejected all forms of class struggle. As they recognised the conflict of interests between burghers and workers, however, they demanded full political and social equality for all citizens from the state<sup>155</sup>.

On December 15, 1867, more than 3,000 workers decided in *Schwenders Kolosseum*, Vienna's biggest entertainment venue, amid thunderous applause to follow Lasalle's faction, albeit there was sparse approval for Schulze-Delitzsch's notions too. Interestingly, many attendees changed their view during the event and, hence, more than a thousand craftsmen joined the Workers' Educational Association. It took, however, a few more months before most Viennese workers (or those who associated themselves with any labour organisation) became Lassalleans, but firstly, the influence of German social democracy was already too strong, and secondly, the principle of state aid aligned much more with their economic and the demand for universal suffrage with their political interests<sup>156</sup>. One of them was Andreas Scheu, who in the beginning supported self-help. He wrote in his memoirs: "*Wer anders sollte den Arbeitern*

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 21f; Pepper, "Arbeiterkultur", 81; Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 4f.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 5.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 42.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Der Gründungsparteitag*, 22.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 6f; also Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 42.

*helfen, wenn nicht sie selbst? Selbst ist der Mann! Jeder ist seines Glückes Schmied*<sup>157</sup>.

Nevertheless, the other side intrigued him, and he attended a meeting of Lassallians in the beer hall *Zobel*. At first, he was not convinced by the lack of individualism within their argumentation, but this changed during a large-scale event in *Universum*, a fair, on January 12, 1868. In the form of a debate, Scheu initially wanted to defend Schultze-Delitzsch with his “*großdeutschen Turnerfäusten*” (Greater German gymnast’s fists)<sup>158</sup>, but was persuaded by the sharper Lassalleian arguments, especially regarding economics. Consequently, he joined their organisation<sup>159</sup>, where he became one its most influential leaders for a time.

In general, a very positive image of Lassalle, namely that he “sacrificed himself” for the working class, helped his success in the Dual Monarchy. In practice, however, the Austrian interpretation of Lassalleianism could differ quite a lot from the original<sup>160</sup>. As a final point on the matter, the shift away from the principle of self-help in favour of Lassalle’s notions did not take place as quickly everywhere in Cisleithania as it did in Vienna. In the Tyrol, for example, Schulze-Delitzsch's ideas still had a substantial influence on the (admittedly small) workers’ movement until the mid-1870s<sup>161</sup> or even longer. In Reutte in the Tyrol, weavers employed by a spinning mill founded a reading association in 1868, which, as it was regarded as “apolitical” by the local authorities, was able to hold its own in the 1870s and more repressive 1880s, similar to the remaining self-help organisations. In the 1890s, nonetheless, they lost their role of stimulating thought and action to the more political trade unions<sup>162</sup>.

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<sup>157</sup> Andreas Scheu, *Umsturzkeime. Erlebnisse eines Kämpfers*, vol. 1, *Kinder-, Lehr- und Wanderjahre* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1923), 130: trans.: “Who else should help the workers if not the workers themselves? The man is himself! Everyone is the architect of his own fortune!”

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 130-134.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 7.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. discussion contribution by Klausjürgen Miersch, in Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung, *100 Jahre sozialdemokratischer Parteitag. Neudörfl 1974*, ITH-Tagungsberichte, no. 8 (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1976), 58.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Pepper, “Arbeiterkultur”, 82f.

### 8.3. Becoming political

As soon as Lassalle's line of thought came out on top, a steady politicisation process of the working class began and the socialist idea gained more and more popularity, in Vienna but soon in the more industrial crownlands too <sup>163</sup>. This was true for Bohemia and Moravia in the late 1860s, with the exception of Prague, where the fledgling workers' movement was not yet socialist. This early difference can be explained, among other things, by the national composition of the respective proletariat: While the vast majority of workers in Reichenberg or Asch was German and therefore Lassallean, its counterpart in Prague was almost exclusively Czech. Brünn constituted a Lassallean-socialist special case due to its proximity to Vienna, even though local labour was predominantly Czech. An increase in strikes and trade union formations, however, saw a generally significant spread of the workers' movement across the Bohemian lands<sup>164</sup>. From the very beginning, the social democratic movement evolved monarchy-wide. On April 11, 1868, 26 delegates from most major industrial centres, including from Budapest and Trieste, participated in a foundation celebration in Vienna<sup>165</sup>, but also other forms of gatherings enjoyed great popularity. So-called "Workers' Days" (*Arbeitertage*) were convened throughout the Habsburg Empire, at which political or economic demands were voiced and pressing issues addressed. These events were often attended by several thousand workingmen from near and far<sup>166</sup>.

At the ninth Viennese workers' day, on August 30, 1868, the first social democratic programme was adopted. Its preamble affirms the right of peoples to self-determination; other demands include universal (manhood) suffrage, the creation of producer cooperatives with state aid, unrestricted freedom of assembly and association, freedom of the press, complete freedom

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 316.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Pollak, *Sozialismus*, 43.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 8 and 11.

of religion, abolition of the standing army and instead arming the people<sup>167</sup>. In addition, it was decided to establish a social democratic party organisation. In October 1868, a so-called “Social Democratic Committee” was formed under the presidency of Hippolyt Tauschinsky to elucidate and distribute the programme<sup>168</sup>. From this programme onwards, the term “party” was used to (self-)describe the workers’ movement, although it did not exist de jure as an organisation<sup>169</sup>. It was essentially a rather loose collection of like-minded people, not a tight, vertical Leninist-type socialist party. In February 1869, plans were made to publish a social democratic newspaper<sup>170</sup>: On April 11, 1869, the *Volksstimme* (people’s voice) was founded, which initially only appeared fortnightly due to financial difficulties. The paper’s line was strictly Lassallean, only the motto – “Workers of the world, unite!” – came from Marx. It was simply written to reach many workers, but also peasants. However, attempts to carry the agitation into rural areas repeatedly failed in the early days of the labour movement<sup>171</sup>. As the Social Democratic Committee had already been dissolved by the police in December 1868<sup>172</sup>, the editors of the *Volksstimme* formed, according to Oberwinder, the de facto party leadership from then onwards<sup>173</sup>.

The 1868/69 attempts to found a powerful party were, nonetheless, initial experiments that were doomed to fail due to a lack of ideological and strategic consensus among the leadership. Besides, the early workers’ movement was not yet independent from the liberal bourgeoisie, politically as well as financially<sup>174</sup>. At the same time, industrialisation and the exponential rise of the proletariat had only just begun, and a significant proportion of the working class was

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<sup>167</sup> The programme is qtd. in Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 141.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 13f. Tauschinsky, a philosopher of religion, joined the labour movement in 1868 and originally came from bourgeois-democratic circles. The social democrats did not hesitate to accept people from the educated middle classes as long as they adhered to their programme.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 18 and 33.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 15f.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 31-33.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 13.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Heinrich Oberwinder, *Die Arbeiterbewegung in Österreich* (Vienna: Hügel, 1875), 29.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 27.



indifferent to any form of agitation. While the major events were very popular and well-frequented, even among students and the middle classes, not many were willing to become politically active<sup>175</sup>. In this situation, two factions formed: One, led by Oberwinder, wanted to establish a workers' section within the liberal camp. The other tendency regarded itself as the future class party encompassing not only the industrial proletariat but also peasants, peons and artisans<sup>176</sup>.

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<sup>175</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 18 and 34.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 27.

## 9. The secondary question

In the early years of Austrian social democracy, the national question did not play an important role, although this was particularly true for the German workers. Those who were politically active from the beginning were mostly journeymen. They were not subject to national forms of production and crossed many language borders on their frequent travels<sup>177</sup>. Thus, as Otto Bauer put it, the nation must have appeared to them as a “*bürgerliches Vorurteil*” (bourgeois prejudice): “*Wenn der revolutionäre Instinkt die Arbeiter der unterdrückten Nationen zum naiven Nationalismus führt, so erzeugt er in der Arbeiterschaft der national gesättigten Völker einen naiven Kosmopolitismus*“<sup>178</sup>. For the non-German craftsmen, especially the Czechs<sup>179</sup>, such a nationally nihilistic attitude was often incomprehensible, because their labour struggle was usually not just a struggle against capital, but against German capital, at least in their minds. It is therefore not surprising that, with a few exceptions, isolated workers’ movements initially emerged, even in multinational cities such as Vienna or Brunn<sup>180</sup>, and the early Czech social democrats had understandable difficulties to fully share the principle of internationalism<sup>181</sup>, which, in the form of a naïve cosmopolitanism, often found its way into manifestos, resolutions or petitions. Nevertheless, the labour movement in its origins was a German organisation that was not perceived as discriminatory by the other nationalities<sup>182</sup>, and national indifference, class struggle as a primarily socio-economic conflict and different industrial development – majority German areas like Lower Austria, Northern Bohemia or

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 18f; also Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 49f.

<sup>178</sup> Bauer, *Nationalitätenfrage*, 304: trans.: “If the revolutionary instinct leads the workers of the oppressed nations to naïve nationalism, it produces a naïve cosmopolitanism in the working class of the nationally saturated peoples”.

<sup>179</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 5, the bulk of the early proletariat was either German or Czech, with a small number of Slovenes in Styria, while the Italian worked in isolated seasonal industries (roadmaking, railway construction). Thus, the benchmark of mutual understanding and tolerance can therefore be found in the German-Czech relationship. Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 22.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 318.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 19f.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Hans Mommsen, *Nationalitätenfrage und Arbeiterbewegung*, Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus, no. 6 (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1971), 17.

Styria were the first to industrialise – must also be taken in account. Some regional histories even suggest that there was no nationalism among workers in the 1870s and that the German-Czech antagonism only occurred in a few specific regions such as the aforementioned Vienna and Brünn. Additionally, labour migration was not yet so widespread, which led to the later social distinction between German or Czech foremen and Czech or other unskilled workers<sup>183</sup>.

### 9.1. Greater German nationalism

The German nationalism of part of the workers' movement resembled the generic German nationalism of the 1860s in the Austrian Empire. German speakers who articulated their nationalism in ethnic terms described themselves as liberals or centrists, since in their view, Germans could not pursue the same selfish, narrow-minded interests as Hungarians or Poles. For them, Germans were supposedly the best educated nationality in the monarchy, bore the largest tax burden and had reached the highest level of culture compared to the rest. They paid the price for being the “state people” (*Staatsvolk*) by standing up for the common interests of all and, therefore, could not comprehend why those who spoke other languages did not want to assimilate in order to reach new heights or, politically speaking, to understand politics from an allegedly holistic perspective. Naturally, such a view was accompanied by a superiority complex, prejudices and much contempt for the other peoples, sometimes even hatred<sup>184</sup>.

As the debate between Schulze-Delitzsch and Lassalle proponents made clear, the young Austrian labour movement was dependent on the German labour movement in its early days. However, this initial dependence was not due to any form of Prussian paternalism or nationalist sentiment but simply served the purpose of progress. Economic development, many believed, progressed best in those large internal markets where communication was easiest.

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 22.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 297f.

Unsurprisingly, the settlement area of the German-speakers in Central Europe proved ideal. Although this “rational” argument did not yet evoke an emotional attachment to Germany, it created favourable conditions for the future incursion of nationalism into the working class (and beyond), especially since it still caused resentment among non-German workers<sup>185</sup>. Such a view was not only shared by most liberals, but also, unsurprisingly, fitted into Marx and Engels’ chain of reasoning.

Whilst the factional dispute within German social democracy was raging, both the Lassalleans and the Marxist faction of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht were trying to win over the Austrian workers, above all by sending representatives to help establish local organisations<sup>186</sup>. However, this conflict was not so well known, which is why the Austrian labour movement joined the victors around Bebel without debate<sup>187</sup>. Two prominent Lassalleans, who both knew him in person, came to the Habsburg Monarchy as representatives to help establish the local organisation. Both immediately assumed an important role in the Austrian workers’ movement, but while Hermann Hartung had to leave the Empire in December 1869, Heinrich Oberwinder became the most influential labour leader for about five years<sup>188</sup>. Since the latter exemplifies the greater German (and liberal) tendency within the movement, it seems appropriate to introduce him in detail. Oberwinder (1845-1914) was Hessian paralegal, who worked in Frankfurt (on the Main) before he moved to Vienna in 1867<sup>189</sup>. During the 1860s and 1870s he always advocated steadfast greater German opinions. In October 1868, Oberwinder became a member of the short-lived “Social Democratic Committee” and thus entered the inner circle of the movement. Over the years, he cultivated contacts with the International and the German workers’ organisations – he was the representative of Austrian

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. Konrad, “Nationale Frage“, 121f.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 17; Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46f.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 24f.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 46f.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. *Heinrich Oberwinder*, Box 22, Folder 33, Biographical Archive, Verein der Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung, Vienna: 1-3, 1.

social democracy in Germany and Switzerland – but also with liberal-bourgeois groups, in particular to the German People's Party of Austria (*Deutsche Volkspartei*). Oberwinder wrote extensively for a number of social democratic and liberal newspapers, including the *Neue Freie Presse*, the liberal party paper<sup>190</sup>. He saw himself as an intellectual and sought recognition in bourgeois milieus<sup>191</sup>. In early 1868, Johann Baptist Schweitzer, then the chairman of the German Lassalleans, addressed a manifesto to the Viennese workers: “*Wir wissen, daß wir eine Nation sind und eine Nation bleiben wollen!*“<sup>192</sup> In thoughts of Vienna and the Tyrolean mountains, he claimed: “*Soweit die deutsche Zunge klingt, ist deutsches Vaterland*”<sup>193</sup>. Despite his greater Germanism, he also urged to distribute Lassalle's ideas to other peoples. Furthermore, von Schweitzer summoned to support the liberals due to shared political interests, whereas he admitted the importance of creating an independent class-based force first. His speech, though, was not very successful, as many of the present workers, including the leaders, highly valued the international character of their movement, at least rhetorically<sup>194</sup>.

Nevertheless, there were undoubtedly significant Greater German elements in the movement at the time, which also show the strong aversion to Prussia and its strongman von Bismarck<sup>195</sup>. Oberwinder always remained a German nationalist. At first, he advocated greater German views, but from 1869 onwards, he actively opposed federalist proposals in favour of German-liberal centrism. In addition, he tried to repress anti-Prussian sentiments, which were very common among German workers in the Habsburg Empire<sup>196</sup>. In 1875, after he was already

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 53; Heinrich Oberwinder, Biographical Archive, 2.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Heinrich Oberwinder, Biographical Archive, 2.

<sup>192</sup> Qtd. in Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 144f. trans.: “We know that we are one nation and want to remain one nation”.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.: trans.: “As far as the German tongue sounds, there is a German fatherland”.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 7f.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 317.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 53.

ousted, he wrote a book, in which he outlined the origins of the Austrian labour movement as he saw it:

*“Im Uebrigen hatte die Bewegung in Oesterreich einen vorwiegend deutschen Charakter und suchte desshalb auch Anlehnung an die Partei der Arbeiter in Deutschland. Die Slaven hielten sich mit sehr unbedeutenden Ausnahmen gänzlich ferne. Die von der Prager Luft beeinflusste kleine Gruppe böhmischer Slaven, welche zeitweise selbstbewusst der österreichischen Arbeiterpartei sich anschloss, kehrte immer alsbald wieder unter die Fahnen alt- oder jungczechischer Führer zurück. Ich hatte mich in dieser Beziehung nie einer Illusion hingeeben, doch wurden meine diesbezüglichen Ansichten, die sich auf die sociale Entwicklung der einzelnen Nationalitäten stützten, längere Zeit als nationale Vorurtheile angesehen und insbesondere von den mit den Verhältnissen weniger vertrauten Genossen in Deutschland ungünstig beurtheilt“*<sup>197</sup>.

Interestingly, he praised the Serbs, who supported the movement out of conviction and selfless enthusiasm. In Hungary, however, where the “*verrottetsten socialen Zustände des Mittelalters*” still prevailed, only the German workers were willing to support the cause<sup>198</sup>.

### 9.1.1. The Eisenach Congress

At the Eisenach Congress of the German social democracy, held between August 7 and 9, 1869, in Thuringia, supporters of the Marxist, more internationalist and anti-Prussian notion, spearheaded by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, founded the German Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) as part of the Internationale, against Lassallean resistance and with the votes of the Austrian workers' associations<sup>199</sup>. The Austrian votes were particularly important for the congress' success, as they accounted for a large number of workers, about twice as many

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<sup>197</sup> Heinrich Oberwinder, *Die Arbeiterbewegung in Österreich* (Vienna: Hügel, 1875), 20: trans.: “Incidentally, the movement in Austria had a predominantly German character and therefore sought to align itself with the labour party in Germany. The Slavs, with very insignificant exceptions, kept completely aloof. The small group of Bohemian Slavs affected by the Prague air, which at times self-confidently joined the Austrian labour party, always soon returned to the banners of Old or Young Czech leaders. In this respect, I was never under any illusion, but my respective views, which were based on the social development of the individual nationalities, were for a long time regarded as national prejudices and judged unfavourably, especially by comrades in Germany who were less familiar with the situation”.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 20f: trans.: where the “most rotten social conditions of the Middle Ages” still prevailed.

<sup>199</sup> For a short but thorough summary of the congress cf. “Umschau”, *Eisenacher Tageblatt*, no. 185 (August 10, 1869), Gedenkstätte Goldener Löwe, Eisenach.

as all German votes combined<sup>200</sup>. While some votes were represented by German workers, Heinrich Oberwinder, Andreas Scheu (both for Vienna), Ludwig Neumayer (for Wiener Neustadt) and Edmund Mühlwasser (for Brünn) attended the conference in person<sup>201</sup>. As a result, the Austrian associations were officially incorporated into the SDAP<sup>202</sup> and the Austrian social democracy thus became a sub-organisation of the German workers' movement, without any prior internal discussions<sup>203</sup>. It was even possible to pay the party membership fee in Austro-Hungarian kronen (crowns)<sup>204</sup>. Although the national question was only briefly debated in Eisenach, in particular by asking how Czech workers could be convinced to join the social democracy, there was a revealing dialogue between Scheu and Mühlwasser. Pointing to the experiences he made in "mixed" Brünn, he drew attention to the danger of losing the Slavic workers for the movement and advised to address an appeal to all nationalities of the Monarchy. Nationality conflicts brought Austria to the abyss, he argued, so it is of central importance for the labour movement to win over the Slavic workers. Scheu unaffectedly replied that many Czechs already constitute an integral part of the Viennese branch<sup>205</sup>. Such a response demonstrates very well that the internationalism of the time was purely formal and that most labour leaders had no concrete plans to integrate the other peoples into the structures of the movement<sup>206</sup>. In his memoirs, however, Scheu wrote that he was very proud of being part of the German social democracy<sup>207</sup>. At the time, the majority of German workers regarded Austria's separation from the German Confederation as only temporary. Accordingly,

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<sup>200</sup> Of the 148,250 examined votes, 98,468 amounted to Austria-Hungary. Cf. H. Roller, *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Allgemeinen Deutschen Sozial-Demokratischen Arbeiterkongresses zu Eisenach am 7., 8. und 9. August 1869* (Leipzig: F. Thiele, 1869), 71.

<sup>201</sup> Oberwinder even became part of the presidium, Scheu a secretary. Cf. *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 47.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Konrad, "Nationale Frage", 121.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *Nationalismus*, 25.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Roller, *Protokoll*, 26f.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 55.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Andreas Scheu, *Umsturzkeime. Erlebnisse eines Kämpfers*, vol. 2, *Werdegang* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1923), 5.

Oberwinder intended to relocate the party leadership to Vienna<sup>208</sup>, it should turn into “the centre of social democratic agitation for all of Germany”<sup>209</sup>. Though rejected, Austria’s capital was to become the seat of the control commission, but this failed due to an objection by the authorities<sup>210</sup>. The Eisenach Programme that was adopted by the Austrian social democracy laid the foundation for many subsequent party programmes<sup>211</sup>, but also provoked a backlash from the Austrian state.

## 9.2. Naïve internationalism

Albeit national nihilism was widespread, the German social democrats could not ignore the national question when the liberal centrists came to power in 1867<sup>212</sup>, as the Austro-Slavic relationship, the restauration of a Polish state or the creation of a federal union of crownlands were among the pressing issues of the time<sup>213</sup>. In order to find an initial position, Marxist considerations were rudimentarily applied to the Austro-Hungarian context, first and foremost with the assistance of the International Workingmen’s Association (IAA)<sup>214</sup>. In the Habsburg Monarchy, the newly founded workers’ organisations were immediately under the influence of the Geneva (the German) section of the IAA<sup>215</sup>. In Bohemia-Moravia, for example, there were IAA branches in Asch, where the Lassallean ADAV was active since 1863, and Brünn, while Reichenberg had an IAA connection trough the socialist movement of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht<sup>216</sup>. Moreover, the IAA newspapers, especially *Der Vorbote*, were widely read across Austria and stimulated thought. Although the First International admittedly strengthened working class awareness, it was clearly not helpful in dealing with or even solving

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25; Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 47.

<sup>209</sup> Heinrich Oberwinder, Biogr. Archiv, 2.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 47.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 18.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 317.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 257f.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 317.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 47.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 317.



the national question, but rather a hindrance. On one hand, a generally ambivalent attitude towards national unification movements prevailed; on the other hand, the few positions the General Council agreed upon reflected Western and not Eastern European conditions<sup>217</sup>. In Marx's and Engels' tradition, a Greater Germany and a unified Italy were welcomed, to a lesser degree a Polish state, while the great multinational empires were seen as peoples' prisons, particularly Austria-Hungary and Czarist Russia, the hotbed of reactionism. However, the right to national self-determination for all was not necessarily endorsed, as the idea that "ahistorical nations" should have their own state was quite controversial<sup>218</sup>. This notion was not only to be found in the labour movement, but was a general consensus among the liberal Central European intelligentsia of the time. Nationalism was regarded as cultural in nature, not political. Thus, the rejection of "political" nationalism was a common courtesy, as was the commitment to the brotherhood of nations, for instance during wartime<sup>219</sup>.

In contrast, the practical difficulty of organising a cohesive political movement in a multinational state was barely, if at all, addressed, neither in the International nor among German workers. Following Marxist thought, there was often only a shallow emphasis on the internationality of labour interests. Although the "nationality problem" merely played a subordinate role in the young Austrian labour movement, with notable exceptions in the Bohemian lands, it paradoxically led to an increased inclusion of non-German workers<sup>220</sup>: In December 1867, the Czech Muska and the Slovene Blazincic were elected to the board of the Viennese Workers' Educational Association. Non-German workers also regularly took part in the Workers' Days, speaking in their mother tongue. In Vienna, both German and Czech speeches were commonly delivered meetings. Generally speaking, the Viennese labour

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<sup>217</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 47f.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Chapter 3.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 49.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

movement promoted the tenet of internationalism at every opportunity, above all to take position itself against liberalism<sup>221</sup>. Nonetheless, the importance of the national question was largely underestimated – the second assembly of the Gumpendorf Association declared the national question to be secondary to the social question, but continued to demand national equality without defining the term<sup>222</sup>. A comment by the printer Groß is characteristic for the German working class’s cosmopolitan viewpoint of the time: “*Betonen wir nicht das Nationaltum oder das religiöse Dogma, sondern das Menschtum*“<sup>223</sup>. Another example is the plan to organise a “Workers’ Fraternisation Festival” (*Arbeiterverbrüderungsfest*) in Vienna in September 1868. Workers from all parts of the Monarchy, delegates of foreign workers’ associations and even Karl Marx were to be invited, aiming to take a step in unifying the regionally divided labour movement into a comprehensive entity<sup>224</sup>. Nevertheless, it only had a demonstrative internationalist character, because there was still no concept for uniting the Slavic socialist groups with the Germans ones, let alone for conceding the right to political autonomy to the national minorities. Interior Minister Giskra toyed with the idea of allowing the festival to take place, as it could have calmed the ongoing nationalist conflicts at the time, but due to internal resistance from the conservative wing and ultimately from the Emperor himself, the festival was banned multiple times, much to the anger of the workers, since it was simply justified on the grounds of formalities. With this decision, however, the government unintentionally played into the hands of the German nationalist endeavours of a section of the Viennese working class led by Oberwinder<sup>225</sup>.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 8; also Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 49.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 49f.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 92: trans.: “Let us not emphasise nationalism or religious dogma, but humanity”.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 10f.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 52f.

### 9.3. Initial Czech-German relations

The topic of Czech-German relations would be best explored through regional histories. However, as this thesis focuses on the bigger picture, only three brief examples are presented in this chapter to give an initial impression. Moreover, since most Czech social democrats were fluent in German, the early German workers' movement was not overly concerned with developing a bilingual agitation<sup>226</sup>. In general, the distinct Czech social democracy with its centre in Prague was in its beginnings much more influenced by clerical-conservative circles than its more liberal German pendant. After the politicisation process of 1871, the first socialists and internationalists emerged from the nationalist-liberal Young Czech movement – their pioneer was the worker J. Pecka from Prague<sup>227</sup>. There were, however, multinational branches, for example in Reichenberg, and some Czech workers also joined the German organisation. In Vienna, a Czech workers' association existed since 1868, which initially kept more contact with nationalist students than with German labourers. In addition, nationalist Moravian groups made efforts to secure the Czech minority in Vienna as allies. Therefore, it took a while before internationalism prevailed in that very association. Interestingly enough, this seems to have been a specific Viennese phenomenon, as there are accounts on German-Czech collaborations in Lower Austria, for instance<sup>228</sup>. Andreas Scheu, one of the best-liked labour leaders and speakers, often undertook long agitation journeys across the Empire. In January 1870, he was supposed to speak at a workers' meeting in Reichenberg, but the event was officially banned in advance. Scheu was subsequently arrested, but such a large crowd protested against his imprisonment that the military eventually had to intervene. The incident, which lasted four days, showed the extent to which class solidarity had grown, but so too had antagonisms. In the end,

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 19f.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 319.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 56.

Scheu was released but had to leave the city immediately<sup>229</sup>. In August 1870, the hitherto biggest labour rally in North Bohemia took place on the Jeschken (Ještěd), a mountain close to Reichenberg. Around 30,000 German and Czech workers united and promised to fight together against the factory owners of both nations. It was also decided to stand up for the equality of peoples<sup>230</sup>. This event is often regarded as the early fraternisation event, which, at least in Bohemia, allowed an internationalist movement to grow.

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<sup>229</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 25f. Scheu dedicated a whole chapter of his memoirs to the events in Reichenberg. Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 29-47.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 27; also Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 326.

## 10. Caught in the middle

Politically, the young labour movement was caught between the ruling Citizens' Ministry, the advocates of German-liberal centrism, and several Slavic-clerical groups who demanded federalism. From 1867 onwards, the liberal endeavoured to win over the workers, and when this failed, they tried to drive a wedge between the Slavic workers and the social democrats. Against the centrists, the labour movement usually accentuated the internationality of labour interests, but the federalists posed a new challenge. The fact that it came from the "reactionaries" encouraged the social democrats to distance themselves<sup>231</sup>. In general, the early workers' movement had to be vigilant, as both political groups tried to use it for their respective interest in the national question<sup>232</sup>.

At the time, the social democratic solution to the "nationality problem" embraced the abolition of the crownlands in favour of more nationally homogenous counties (*Kreise*)<sup>233</sup>, universal suffrage and greater autonomy for municipalities. Hence, the national question was seen as a constitutional issue. Switzerland and the USA were often cited as role models, although the federal structure of these countries was not taken into account. In this view, the often proclaimed right of peoples to self-determination was not a contradiction, as it was defined as a democratic and not a national principle<sup>234</sup>. During the third *Deutschen Bundesschießen* (German federal shooting competition) in August 1868, Oberwinder, who participated, claimed that "*die Arbeiter principiell den föderalistischen Standpunkt [...] nicht theilen*"<sup>235</sup>. Nevertheless, there were tendencies to federalise the labour movement from the very outset. In 1869, Friedrich Pfeiffer and a couple of Czech companions intended to weaken

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 50.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 19.

<sup>233</sup> The apparent similarities to the Kremsier Draft are, however, not documented. Cf. Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 125; Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 51.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 51f.

<sup>235</sup> Oberwinder, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 25: trans.: He claimed that "the workers principally do not share the federalist point of view".

Vienna's supremacy in the workers' movement by granting the regional sections more autonomy. Although he quickly gained popularity, the reaction of the Viennese leadership was extremely fierce. Instrumentalising the *Volkswille*, Oberwinder and Andreas Scheu utilised a connection between Pfeiffer and a Jesuit priest to declare him an undesirable person. That internal conflict, however, was the beginning rather than the end, as the importance of the industrial centres within the movement only increased exponentially<sup>236</sup>. Alongside the national question, workers' opposition to both liberals and conservatives also aroused over time on other issues, particularly voting rights.

At the fourth Viennese Workers' Day, on April 5, 1868, the German speaker Frischauer said: "*Die nationale Frage ist eine rückschrittliche Frage, weil sämtliche Nationen in Österreich gleiches Recht besitzen sollen*", and the Czech referent Loric stated: "*Die tschechischen Arbeiter bereiten den tschechischen Feudalen nicht die Freude, sich von ihren deutschen Brüdern zu trennen*"<sup>237</sup>. It was decided to discuss the national question at the next meeting. Hence, at the fifth *Arbeitertag*, on May 5, 1868, manifesto was rendered and read. It claims: "*Die Zeit der Nationalitätenabsonderung ist vorüber, das Nationalitätsprinzip steht heute nur auf der Tagesordnung der Reaktionäre*". Furthermore, the clericals' efforts to found Czech and Polish associations are nothing but a "reactionary manoeuvre". In addition to upholding typical internationalist catchwords, the manifesto also shows first signs of practical considerations for a joint struggle. It also states: "*Der Arbeitsmarkt kennt keine Nationalitätengrenzen*", nor does capital<sup>238</sup>. Cheeringly adopted, the manifesto was to be translated into most Austro-Hungarian

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 38f.

<sup>237</sup> Qtd. in *ibid.*, 51. Mommsen in turn borrows the quotes from Šmeral. Cf. Bohumír Šmeral, *Národnostní otázka v sociální demokracii až do sjezdu hajnfeldského* (Brno: vydavatelství ústředního výboru KSČ, 1956), 19: trans.: "The national question is a backward question, because all nations in Austria should have equal rights" and "The Czech workers do not give the Czech feudalists the pleasure of breaking ties with their German brothers".

<sup>238</sup> "Manifest an das arbeitende Volk in Österreich" (May 5, 1868), qtd. in Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 122-124: trans.: "The time of nationality segregation is over; today the nationality principle is only on the agenda of reactionaries" and "The labour market knows no national borders".

vernaculars, together with an invitation to a workers' fraternisation festival<sup>239</sup>. A couple of more German nationalist labour leaders, first and foremost Oberwinder, agitated against the multilingual publication, and unsuccessfully tried to prevent it<sup>240</sup>. In his own summary of events, Oberwinder wrote in 1875: the manifesto “*hatte keinen besonderen Erfolg aufzuweisen, was wenig überraschen wird, wenn man bedenkt, daß beispielsweise das Gros der slawischen Arbeiter in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien weder lesen noch schreiben kann*”<sup>241</sup>. Quite the contrary, the manifesto was favourably received, especially by Czech workers. It even contributed to the spread of social democratic ideas and was an important prerequisite for the joint movement<sup>242</sup>. On the other hand, Oberwinder frequently espoused anti-Slavic sentiments and initially opposed any cooperation with Czech workingmen. He only changed his rhetoric when his position within social democracy was in jeopardy<sup>243</sup>. As a result of many small-scale political campaigns over several decades, the working class finally succeeded in being recognised as an independent political force alongside peasants, burghers, the nobility and clergy<sup>244</sup>.

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 51; Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 9.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 9; also Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 53.

<sup>241</sup> Oberwinder, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 20: trans.: the manifesto “was not particularly successful, which is hardly surprising when considering, for example, that the majority of Slavic workers in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia can neither read nor write”.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 9.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 55.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 16.

## 11. The state responds

Until the autumn of 1869, the state authorities, for whatever reason, exercised astonishing restraint towards the labour movement. Smaller meetings could be organised without major hindrances and persecutions were rare<sup>245</sup>, although the Lower Austrian prefecture disallowed, for example, repeatedly the staging of a workers' fraternisation festival in Vienna<sup>246</sup>. In addition, most workers' associations were also kept under surveillance<sup>247</sup>, especially after the adoption of the first party programme<sup>248</sup>. Even if a certain dissatisfaction with the police seems appropriate, the *Volksstimme* often criticised the authorities in an unreasonably harsh manner, which initially went unanswered as well - the newspaper was never confiscated during the first half of 1869. This, however, changed after the Eisenach Congress<sup>249</sup>. The Citizens' Ministry regarded the programme as a threat to the state, primarily as its first article calls for a "free people's state". This was not wrongly interpreted as a demand for a republic<sup>250</sup>. At the congress, Oberwinder had already remarked the need to rewrite the term republic, since it would make political activities in the Dual Monarchy impossible<sup>251</sup>. Using the Associations Act of 1867, Minister Giskra thus banned workers' associations, had existing ones disbanded and instructed the police to take firm action against any assembly whose agenda indicated social democratic tendencies<sup>252</sup>. Despite fierce protests, the young Austrian labour movement found itself in a time of harsh persecution, if not existential struggle<sup>253</sup>.

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<sup>245</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 36.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 10f.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 289.

<sup>248</sup> The authorities prohibited all meetings that wanted to discuss the programme, especially those planned by the Social Democratic Committee. All 14 members were sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment in April 1869. Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 13.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 35f.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Roller, *Protokoll*, 31.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 37f. Interestingly, during a conference in the Lower Austrian prefecture, the ministry officials unanimously agreed that not the Eisenach programme itself is a threat to the state but rather the means of its realisation. Qtd. in Brügel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 178; cf. also Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 19.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 38.



Regardless of its inclusive language, the rigorous reaction illustrates the narrow limits of Austrian liberalism at that time. As soon as the principle of self-help was discarded and the now self-aware working class began to demand political participation, the liberals ended any cooperation and, backed by the emperor, deployed the police and used all those repressive instruments that had been exerted on them just a few years earlier<sup>254</sup>. The repression increased even more once the labourers had developed a coherent policy and strategy<sup>255</sup>. However, there were liberal voices who criticized this course of action. A Viennese liberal newspaper recalled that persecution of social democracy today might turn “tomorrow against democracy and the next day it will be liberalism’s turn<sup>256</sup>”. Nevertheless, the liberal press only reluctantly sided with the workers when it identified a threat to civil liberties in governmental action. Social demands were just as outrageous and incomprehensible to them as they were to the government, industrialists or landowners<sup>257</sup>.

In response, the Viennese workers were keen to show that they had already become a mass movement to be reckoned with<sup>258</sup>. Hartung and Oberwinder<sup>259</sup> elaborated a plan to organise a huge demonstration in front of the Imperial Assembly where only the wealthy were represented. It was consensually accepted by all workers’ associations and *Fachvereine*<sup>260</sup>. Many social democratic newspapers, from near and far, immediately encouraged participation in the intended peaceful show of strength<sup>261</sup>. On December 13, 1869, between 15,000 and 20,000 workers<sup>262</sup> attended the demonstration at Vienna’s Paradeplatz (roughly at today’s Schottentor). The marchers spontaneously decided to prepare a petition demanding that the

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 288f.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 21.

<sup>256</sup> *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (October 15, 1868), qtd. in Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 289.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 23.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 20.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. *Heinrich Oberwinder*, Biographical Archive, 2.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 21.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. *Der Volkstribun* (Brünn: December 15, 1869), qtd. in Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 22f.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. *Heinrich Oberwinder*, biographical archive, 2; Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 22.

parliament passes the right to form coalitions and abolishes the law on forced cooperatives in its session. In addition, a bill to introduce universal suffrage and the freedoms of assembly, association and press ought to be submitted to the deputies soon. A workers' delegation submitted the petition to Minister-President Count Taaffe in person, who promised to take it to the council of ministers. He kept his word and two days later the draft of a new coalition law was put before the Imperial Assembly<sup>263</sup>. It was also the only case in which the early labour movement had a direct influence on political reform, as the right of coalition was granted<sup>264</sup>.

In order not to come under too much pressure itself, the government gave in to voices calling for tough action even in December. Several labour leaders were arrested and, in some cases, charged with high treason, workers' newspapers were censored or banned, and most associations also had to fear repression<sup>265</sup>. In December 1869, the targeted *Volksstimme* was discontinued, and its editor-in-chief Hartung, the influential early labour leader, only escaped arrest through flight – he was never to return<sup>266</sup>. Regarding his escape, Andreas Scheu retells an enjoyable anecdote, which Hartung told him. On his flight, the latter who was disguised as a boilerman took the same train to Brünn as Giskra did and both men met at the toilet. Fortunately, Hartung slipped away undetected from the minister who would have been responsible for his capture<sup>267</sup>. Just two weeks after the demonstration, however, a new newspaper for workers, the *Volkswille* (people's will) was founded, which even appeared weekly and doubled its circulation<sup>268</sup>. While the exact background of the funding is unclear, a large part of the deposit was provided by the liberal banker Simon Deutsch<sup>269</sup>.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 21-24.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 29.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Steiner, "Nationale Frage", 27.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 38.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 27.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 41f.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 28. As Deutsch is only referred to as "the well-known banker", his role in Austrian social democracy remains unclear as well. However, it is said that he had some sympathies for the workers' movement. Cf. also Michael L. Miller, "From liberal nationalism to cosmopolitan patriotism. Simon

In general, the liberals were vehemently opposed to universal suffrage, mainly out of fear. Expanding the electorate would only strengthen the reactionary parties, they reasoned, because the illiterate masses were easy to indoctrinate. However, their basic education law would enable workers to participate in politics in the long run. According to Giskra, there will be no “mobocracy” in Austria-Hungary, as the income determines the right to vote. It is an irony that Giskra of all people, the son of a tanner and one of the student leaders of 1848, spearheaded the incipient repression alongside Taaffe, as he epitomises the hypocrisy with which workers (and women) were treated by the liberal bourgeoisie<sup>270</sup>. Unsurprisingly, their disregard for their own values – freedom and progress – did not exactly popularise them among the working class<sup>271</sup>. The emancipation of the labour movement from liberal ideas began at the end of 1869 and was completed in 1873 with the economic crisis<sup>272</sup>.

### 11.1. High treason

*“Der Atemzug einer freiheitsdurstigen Seele war in Österreich immer Hochverrat”<sup>273</sup>!*

The two major high treason trials of 1870 can be seen as a direct consequence of the great demonstration and the beginnings of state repression<sup>274</sup>. As the above quote from Andreas Scheu suggests, the offence of high treason was nothing but pure despotism in the eyes of the workers. As soon as December 1869, all the influential Viennese labour leaders were subsequently arrested and put on trial in July 1870<sup>275</sup>. Despite eager efforts by the public prosecutor to accuse and convict the defendants of high treason, no valuable evidence could be

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Deutsch and 1848ers in exile”, *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire* 17, no. 3 (June 2010): 379–393, 384.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 289f; also Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 21 and 23f.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 23f.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 29; März, “Österreich”, 17.

<sup>273</sup> Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 82: trans.: “One breath of a soul thirsty for freedom has always been treason in Austria”!

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Steiner, “Neudörfel”, 28.

<sup>275</sup> For the trial cf. Heinrich Scheu, *Der Hochverraths-Proceß gegen Oberwinder, Andr. Scheu, Most, Pabst, Hecker, Perrin, Schönfelder, Berka, Schäftner, Pfeiffer, Dorsch, Eichinger, Gehrke und Baudisch. Verhandelt vor dem k. k. Landesgerichte in Wien, begonnen am 4. Juli 1870* (Vienna: Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1870).

presented – the prosecution focused primarily on the demand for a republic, which it derived from the Eisenach programme. On the contrary, the young workers were generally able to uphold their principles and defend themselves objectively and with vigour. The state's intention was to stage a show trial in which socialism would finally be brought to justice and the labour movement would thus disappear<sup>276</sup>. While some culprits were acquitted, Oberwinder was sentenced to six years imprisonment<sup>277</sup>, Scheu to five years. Both began their sentence in October 1870 and shared a cell in Garsten Prison, Upper Austria, which was to have a very negative effect on their future relationship<sup>278</sup>. Parallel to this grand trial, a second one took place in Wiener Neustadt in March 1870, in which Ludwig Neumayer, the socialist founder of the *Gleichheit*<sup>279</sup>, stood trial. He too was acquitted of high treason by the jury<sup>280</sup>.

In February 1871, the liberals lost power completely and the feudal-conservative Government Hohenwart took office. To gain popularity, it immediately issued an amnesty decree releasing the labour leaders convicted in the Viennese high treason trial. By doing so, they believed to win over the workers, but that did not really work out. Not long after the prison releases, a large-scale meeting was organised in Vienna's *Sofiensäle*, which was to be the last major labour assembly until the 1880s. A resolution of minimum demands was drafted, including universal suffrage, freedom of the press or the abolition of compulsory cooperatives, among others. It almost seemed as if the amnesty had achieved the opposite of what the authorities had hoped for. Austrian social democracy gradually started to see itself as an independent political force, and their leader were as motivated as ever<sup>281</sup>. After amnesty was granted and the social democrats resumed their political activities, the anxious liberal camp

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 29f.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Heinrich Oberwinder, Biogr. Archiv, 2.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 72.

<sup>279</sup> Besides the *Volkswille*, the *Gleichheit* was the most influential workers' newspaper. Moreover, it had an Marxist, internationalist orientation. Cf. Miersch, *Arbeiterpresse*, 93f.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 28.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 28-30.

intended to counter the upsurge by unleashing the *Neue Freie Presse*, which began to cover every larger national or international workers' movement and polemicise vehemently against it<sup>282</sup>. Interestingly, the young workers' movement survived the increased government pressure without any significant damage, presumably because the idea that labour could only free itself through its own efforts had become prevalent. Intimidation by other political actors rarely succeeded, but there was always a new activist to be found, which shows how difficult their individual chances in life were at that time<sup>283</sup>. Nevertheless, the weakness in leadership caused by the arrests was of course noticeable. Andreas' brother Heinrich Scheu took over the *Volkswille* and thus the de facto organisation leadership. During these months, he mainly forged contacts with Prague and the Young Czech Party<sup>284</sup>.

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<sup>282</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 32.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Steiner, "Neudörfel", 27.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 318f.

## 12. Lessons learned

For most workers, the high treason trial not only showed that they needed an independent, powerful organisation to protect their integrity and survival<sup>285</sup>, but it also marked a turning point in their political alignment due to their disillusionment with the liberal government's insincere actions. As will be seen, several international events acted as important impulses and strongly influenced the further course of the Austrian labour movement, namely the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, the resulting foundation of the German Empire and the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871. Thus, an important development phase began for Austrian social democracy<sup>286</sup>, especially since its leaders abandoned their efforts to find a compromise with the bourgeoisie<sup>287</sup> and began to reflect on internationalism.

### 12.1. Germans outside of Germany

As the title suggests, many Germans (Austrians) found themselves on the other side of the border when the North German Confederation won its war against France in 1871 and proclaimed a united Germany, the German Empire<sup>288</sup>. It was only after this event that the partition into two states was accepted by a majority of German workers in the Habsburg Empire. Nevertheless, a potential Anschluss ought to play a crucial role in Austria for many decades. Shortly before his death, Engels firmly emphasised that the separation was only a temporary phenomenon<sup>289</sup>, and Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxists even tried to unify Austria with

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<sup>285</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 319.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25; also Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 41-43.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Konrad, "Nationale Frage", 121.

Germany after the Great War<sup>290</sup>. And even some proletarians of the 1870s only thought that the Austrian labour movement was now a weaker part of German social democracy<sup>291</sup>.

Besides the foundation of the German Empire, there was another event that crucially affected the Austrian workers' movement of that time, the emergence of the Paris Commune. The feuilleton of the *Volkswille* published a multi-part documentary on life in the Commune over several years<sup>292</sup>, which shows the immense impact this short-lived self-government of French workers had on the Austrian proletariat. Both Czechs and Germans shared sympathies for the uprising, especially workers from Prague<sup>293</sup>. Andreas Scheu reports on great emotions in relation to the Commune. When it was proclaimed on 18 March 1871, he and Heinrich Oberwinder rejoiced at the first workers' self-government in Europe. During its brief existence, it was subject of lively daily discussion in the Café Griensteidl in Vienna. When the Paris Commune was crushed, however, he felt the following disappointment<sup>294</sup>: "*In Frankreich war die Kommune von Paris im Blute der Arbeiter ertränkt und damit unsere Hoffnung auf den Sieg der proletarischen Sache zeitweilig vernichtet worden*"<sup>295</sup>. In the discourse on the insurrection, the newspapers of the other political camps tended to grossly misrepresent the situation by focusing only on the misdeeds of the Commune's administration. According to Scheu, it was not permitted in the Monarchy's public sphere to express regret about the developments<sup>296</sup>.

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<sup>290</sup> Cf. Ernst Hanisch, *Der große Illusionist. Otto Bauer 1881-1938* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 98 and 157; also Otto Bauer, "Deutschtum und Sozialdemokratie" (Vienna, 1907), in *Otto Bauer Werkausgabe*, ed. Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Geschichte der österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung, vol. 1 (Vienna: Europaverlag, 1975): 23-47, 26.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 322.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. e.g. "Paris und die Commune. Notizen und Erinnerungen von Arthur Arnould, Mitglieder der Pariser Commune und der internationalen Arbeiterassociation. Uebersetzt von Gustav Kwasniewski 3. Fortsetzung", *Volkswille* 4, no. 98 (Vienna: December 10, 1873); "Paris und die Commune. 19. Fortsetzung", *Volkswille* 5, no. 13 (Vienna: February 14, 1874), Verein der Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung, Vienna.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 319.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 95.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.: trans.: "In France, the Paris Commune was drowned in the blood of workers, temporarily destroying our hope in the victory of the proletarian cause".

<sup>296</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 95f.

As a result, the social democrats became further alienated from the government and the liberal bourgeoisie, while internationalism gained in importance. On the one hand, the workers were captured by international solidarity; on the other, the IAA represented the positions in Austria-Hungary through their newly appointed corresponding secretary, the Hungarian Leo Frankl, as he himself was a member of the Commune's directorate<sup>297</sup>. He, a friend of Scheu<sup>298</sup>, was appointed due to the state separation from Germany, as Marx had previously been the IAA correspondent responsible for all German-speaking countries<sup>299</sup>. In general, the defeat of the Paris Commune led to a vilification campaign and persecution of the labour movement throughout Europe<sup>300</sup>.

## 12.2. Class consciousness

At the large 1869 Schottentor demonstration in Vienna, the workers showed, according to some, first signs of class consciousness<sup>301</sup>. An article written by Johann Pabst, which was published anonymously in *Der Vorbote* in January 1870, impressively illustrates the already realised emancipation from the liberals:

*“Unsere Partei, die sich nirgends wie die alten politischen Parteien faul, nein überall rührig und regsam zeigt, sie hat nichts zu verlieren, nur alles zu gewinnen, und kann sie dies nicht im Rahmen dieses Staates; sie muß ihn so zersprengen und dabei mögen alle Kräfte, ob sonst Freund oder Feind, mitwirken. Den Jungczechen wird wohl begreiflich zu machen sein, daß sie alle ihre nationalen Forderungen mit verlangen und erlangen, wenn sie Freiheit wollen und ein immer unter allen Formen despotisches Joch, wie die Monarchie abschütteln. Die Magyaren, die werden sich der Ansicht auch nicht verschließen können und bereits haben dort die Mitglieder mehrerer Vereine, die in Wien sich einige Zeit aufgehalten und hier unsere Ideen eingesogen und dann in dies oder jenes ungarische Heft verschlagen wurden, tüchtig vorgearbeitet. Die Polen werden auch mithelfen beim Zerstören und die Italiener sind ja schon daran. Glückauf!”<sup>302</sup>*

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25f.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 95.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 25f.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Steiner, “Neudörfel”, 27.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 22.

<sup>302</sup> Johann Pabst, “Wiener Korrespondenz“, *Der Vorbote. Politische und sozial-ökonomische Monatsschrift* 5, no. 1 (January 1870), in *Der Vorbote. Politische und sozial-ökonomische Monatsschrift. Zentralorgan der Sektionsgruppe deutscher Sprache der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation*, ed. Johann Philipp Becker (Geneva: Verlag der Assoziation, 1870): trans.: “Our party, which, unlike the old political parties, is nowhere lazy, but



For the first time, a social democrat portrayed the liberal government as the main enemy, while simultaneously declaring the various nationalities of the empire to be his allies<sup>303</sup>. The emergence of class consciousness also led to greater self-confidence. After his imprisonment, Scheu was more politicised than ever: *“Inniger und glühender als je war ich davon überzeugt, daß diese Gesellschaft und ihre Ordnung um jeden Preis bekämpft werden müsse”*<sup>304</sup>.

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everywhere active and busy, has nothing to lose, only everything to gain, and it cannot do this within the framework of this state; it must thus be wrecked, and all forces, whether friend or foe, may collaborate in it. It must be made clear to the Young Czechs that they must demand and can obtain all their national demands, if they want freedom and to shake off a yoke that is always despotic in all its forms, such as the Monarchy. The Magyars, too, will not be able to ignore this view, and the members of several associations, who have spent some time in Vienna, and have absorbed our ideas here, which then were drawn into this or that Hungarian magazine, have already worked hard on it. The Poles will also help with the destruction and the Italians are already working on it. Glückauf“!

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Šolle, “Sozialdemokratie“, 318.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 105: trans.: “I was more deeply and passionately convinced than ever that this society and its order had to be fought at all costs”.

### 13. Internal conflict

The Viennese workers' movement of the 1870s in particular was characterized by personal quarrels between the leaders, which thus produced a number of strongmen with autocratic features<sup>305</sup>. In fact, the conflict between Oberwinder and Scheu was in essence a conflict over the national question and the right to vote, albeit personal antipathies also played a role<sup>306</sup>. According to Scheu, the previously good relationship deteriorated during their time together in prison. Not only did he become increasingly sceptical about Oberwinder's relationships with journalists of a certain kind, which cast doubt on his commitment, but he also lost trust because Oberwinder minimised his role within the movement in the trial records of 1870 and declared that he was not at all interested in the economic struggle. Oberwinder replied bluntly that he was not interested in becoming a martyr<sup>307</sup>. Both were self-confident men, Oberwinder even very vain<sup>308</sup>, so it is hardly surprising that the personal level was a big factor in the conflict. Nevertheless, reducing the dispute to a personal strife would be too simple<sup>309</sup>. The party split was provoked by Oberwinder's support for the liberal electoral law reform of 1873, which made no concessions to the working class. Furthermore, the market crash of the same year left the *Volksstimme* without sufficient funds and Scheu immediately accused Oberwinder of negligently causing the financial collapse. As a response, the latter filed a defamation suit against the former, and the split was finalised. When it failed, Oberwinder's political career in the workers' movement was basically over. Over time, he was dragged deeper and deeper into the bourgeois faction and soon became an outspoken critic of his former ideas. At some point, he even worked for the Prussian police as an informant<sup>310</sup>.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Maderthaner, "Entwicklung", 25f.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 320.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 92-94.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 24.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Steiner, "Neudörf", 26.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. *Heinrich Oberwinder*, Biogr. Archiv, 2.

Although Oberwinder was always a devout German nationalist, he often publicly emphasised the internationalist character of the proletariat<sup>311</sup>. In 1871, he attracted negative attention during a speech because of the anti-Slavic resentments he spread<sup>312</sup>. Internally, opposition arose, especially from the federalist camp around Neumayer, Pfeiffer and now also Scheu<sup>313</sup>, whose concrete position on the national question is still not entirely clear. In his youth, he was, according to himself, a greater German gymnast<sup>314</sup>. However, when reading Scheu's memoirs, he atomises a very different, much more open attitude compared to Oberwinder. For example, there is a wonderful account from Prague, where he befriends a Czech journeyman and they drink the best Bohemian beer<sup>315</sup>. In the 1870s, in any case, Scheu espouses international equality against Oberwinder's "great power chauvinism"<sup>316</sup>. A reason for the latter's downfall is also that he made too many enemies. While backed by the IAA, he tends to accuse every critic being "anarchists" "Bakunists"<sup>317</sup>. He blamed Scheu for being close to Bakunin, Russia and even for promoting pan-Slavism, although the latter only wanted to unify the German workers' movement with the other nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy<sup>318</sup>. As will be seen, he won.

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<sup>311</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 26.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 58.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 27; also Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 40.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 1, 104.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 320f.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. *Heinrich Oberwinder*, Biographical Archive, 2; also Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 322.

<sup>318</sup> Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 321.

## 14. The Neudörfl Congress

In parallel to the division of social democracy in the Habsburg Empire, the economic crisis of 1873 worsened the situation of the workers dramatically. On May 1, 1873, the Viennese world fair opened. As a direct result of the exhibition, food prices were expected to explode, which they did. With the “Black Friday” nine days later, the market crashed, and Austria-Hungary found itself in the midst of an economic crisis<sup>319</sup>. A large-scale bank and industrial demise began, as did the recession, which was to last a decade. Liberalism, which had already passed its peak, received its final blow, the *Gründerzeit* was over<sup>320</sup>. 10,000s of workers lost their jobs or their homes and wage pressure increased sharply. Many craftsmen lost their livelihoods, which led to further proletarianisation and an overall process of immense social restructuring<sup>321</sup>. However, the working class in particular recognised as a result of its political experience and class consciousness that solidarity across national borders is needed in a crisis<sup>322</sup>. Moreover, it decided to use that solidarity to build a powerful party that could fight for its interests.

A Saxon newspaper, “*Der Volksstaat*” (the people’s state), reported on the assembly in Wiener Neustadt on June 29, 1873. In his almost two-hour speech, Scheu emphasised the importance of drafting a new party programme that would serve as a guide for individuals and prevent external influencing. Those present also agreed on the need for an Austrian workers’ party worthy of the name, and their demands already sound much more social democratic, as they contain concrete labour and social policies: reduction of female and abolition of child labour, or the introduction of a labour inspectorate and normal working day, among others<sup>323</sup>.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 72; März, “Österreich”, 16.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. März, “Österreich”, 16.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. Steiner, “Neudörfl”, 27.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 29.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. “Volksversammlung in Wiener Neustadt“, *Der Volksstaat*, no. 59. (Leipzig: July 16, 1873), in Box 13, Folder 49, Sacharchiv, Verein der Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung, Vienna.

Nevertheless, it took a good year before this decision was realised. On April 18, 1874, the *Gleichheit* announced:

*“Die sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei hat sich konstituiert. Zum erstenmale seit dem Auftreten der Bewegung in Oesterreich haben sich nicht blos die Arbeiter einer Stadt oder einer Provinz, sondern die aller Provinzen und Industrieorte Oesterreichs zusammengefunden, um sich über ein gemeinsames Programm und ein gemeinsames Vorgehen auszusprechen und zu einigen“*<sup>324</sup>.

Andreas Scheu, who was the primary initiator of this party foundation, used the Eisenach programme as a basis for the Neudörfl programme, but emphasised that it must include a paragraph on the relationship with the Slavic workers<sup>325</sup>. This reads:

*“In nationaler Beziehung stellt sie das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker als Grundsatz auf, erblickt jedoch in der nationalen Gliederung ihrer Genossen kein Hindernis ihres gemeinsamen Strebens nach materieller Befreiung, sondern erkennt im Gegenteil nur in einem brüderlichen Zusammenwirken, welches alle nationalen Arbeiterschaften gleich berechtigt und gleich verpflichtet, die einzige Bürgschaft eines Erfolges“*<sup>326</sup>.

This programme represented the clearest, wisest and most humane answer to the national question in the Habsburg Empire to date, because it considered the actual situation in the country. As a result, the programme is not naïvely cosmopolitan in Bauer’s sense<sup>327</sup>. The internationalist flavour can also be seen in the fact that ten Slavic social democrats participated in the party conference, some of whom spoke Czech. Furthermore, the printers of Graz, the textile workers of Brünn and the associations from Cilli (Celje), Leoben and Schlaggenwald

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<sup>324</sup> “Die sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in Oesterreich“, *Gleichheit* 5, no. 16 (Wiener Neustadt: April 18, 1874), Verein der Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung, Vienna: trans.: “The Social Democratic Labour Party has been constituted. For the first time since the emergence of the movement in Austria, not only the workers of one city or province, but those of all provinces and industrial towns in Austria have come together to discuss and agree on a common programme and a common approach”.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 96; also Konrad “Nationale Frage”, 123.

<sup>326</sup> “Das Neudörfler Programm“ (1874), *Archiv. Mitteilungsblatt des Vereins für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 14, no. 2 (April/June 1974), 23: “In national terms, it establishes the right to self-determination of the peoples as a principle, but does not regard the national division of its comrades as an obstacle to their common struggle for material liberation; on the contrary, it recognises that the only guarantee of success lies in fraternal cooperation, which entitles and obliges all national working classes equally”.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 30.

(Horní Slavkov) agreed to the programme beforehand<sup>328</sup>. The Czech delegation was headed by J.B. Pecka and J. Koula, both from Prague and pioneers of Czech socialism<sup>329</sup>. Austria's new party had two official newspapers, the German *Gleichheit* and the Czech *Dělnické listy* (workers' sheets), although already in autumn 1874 the latter was changed to the *Budoucnost* (the future)<sup>330</sup>. Due to the still unforgotten dispute with Oberwinder and the IAA, the congress and its programme remained under the radar abroad. Heinrich Scheu sharply criticised this underexposure due to earlier conflicts<sup>331</sup>. In his memoirs, Andreas Scheu wrote that as soon as they left Neudörfel, the following feeling prevailed: "*Wir schüttelten uns beglückwünschend die Hände und fühlten wie Männer, die ein Stück guten, ehrlichen Werkes vollbracht haben*"<sup>332</sup>.

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<sup>328</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 159.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 323.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 324; Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 31.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. Šolle, "Sozialdemokratie", 322f.

<sup>332</sup> Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 162.

## 15. Outlook

Compared to later statements on the national question, such as the Brno programme, the Neudörfl programme did not offer a direct solution to the “nationality problem”. It is, however, its strength, because as a straight-forward party programme, other things matter. Much more central is the spirit of Neudörfl, which for the first time produced an internationalist labour organisation in a multinational state. Unfortunately, the lifespan of the young party as a unified force was short. The reasons were manifold and there was not even a genuine test<sup>333</sup>, although of course mistakes were made. Initially, the movement lost with Andreas Scheu its charismatic leader, who moved to England. According to himself, he never had any political ambitions<sup>334</sup>. Second, the economic situation continued to deteriorate – between 1873 and 1876, there was a major decline in organised labour, as most companies were small or medium-sized. In addition, resentment intensified in economically difficult times, and images of the “privileged” Germans and “wage-squeezing” Slavs were more common. Other notable external factors include the renewed waves of repression<sup>335</sup>. As early as autumn 1874, a treason trial was held against several labour leaders in Graz, one of the new centres of the labour movement<sup>336</sup>. For years, Vienna was particularly weak as a result of the factional dispute, causing Austrian social democracy to federalise. In addition to Graz, Northern Bohemia experienced an upswing and Reichenberg became the centre for a time<sup>337</sup>.

On the other hand, the young internationalist party also made many mistakes. At Neudörfl, the delegates did not yet agree on any concrete form of organisation. They only planned to meet every year for a congress<sup>338</sup>. In 1876, it was held in Wiener Neustadt, but this

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<sup>333</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 31.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Scheu, *Umsturzkeime*, vol. 2, 164f.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 33.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 111.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 34; Steiner, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 123.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Konrad, *Nationalismus*, 34f.

was a step backwards in every respect<sup>339</sup>. The agreed programme did not address the national question or dismissed it as unimportant. Helmut Konrad is not wrong to speak of a relapse into the most stereotypical form of naive cosmopolitanism. In spring 1878, however, a congress took place in Břevnov, a district of Prague, whereby the Czech social democracy was founded as an autonomous branch of the Austrian one<sup>340</sup>. In summer of the same year, this lived reality was made official and Czech and German workers came to the agreement that, while they were organised in national parties, fought alongside political or economic struggles<sup>341</sup>. In this year, internationalism had reached its peak; persecution and censorship increased due to the Socialist Law and the party was soon to split into two or three camps. However, this chapter should end on a more positive note. The period after Neudörfl was a consciously internationalist one and there was a great deal of international solidarity, especially in the newspapers. During this time, Austrian workers often looked to the Balkans and therefore here is a strong opinion piece by a Serbian party member:

*„Der angeborene Slavenhaß der turkophilen Wiener Presse verläugnet sich nie. Sobald die Slaven – sei es wo immer – etwas unternehmen, was wenigstens auf Gleichberechtigung mit anderen europäischen Völkern abzielt, wird gleich im Namen der „Kultur“ wacker losgezogen und ein Höllenspektakel inszeniert, als ob es gälte, einen Kreuzzug wider die „barbarischen“ Slaven, speziell die Serben, zu eröffnen, welche die „Kultur“, das „europäische Gleichgewicht“, den durch so und so viele Großmächte garantirten „europäischen Frieden“ und wie sonst alle die schönen Dinge heißen, in höchst gefährlicher Weise bedrohen, oder gar Europa mit Feuer und Schwert überziehen wollen, um tabula rasa zu machen“<sup>342</sup>.*

<sup>339</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 61.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. Šolle, „Sozialdemokratie“, 326f.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. Mommsen, *Sozialdemokratie*, 94.

<sup>342</sup> „Im Namen der Kultur verschwinde. (Von einem serbischen Parteigenossen)“, *Gleichheit* 6, no. 34 (August 21, 1875), VGA-Archiv: trans.: „The inborn Slav-hatred of the Turcophile Viennese press never negates itself. As soon as the Slavs - wherever they may be - undertake something which at least aims for equal rights with other European peoples, they immediately set off in the name of “culture” and stage a hellish spectacle, as if it were necessary to start a crusade against the “barbaric” Slavs, especially the Serbs, who threaten “culture”, the “European equilibrium”, the “European peace” guaranteed by so and so many great powers, and all the other beautiful things, in a most dangerous way, or even want to cover Europe with fire and sword in order to make tabula rasa”.



## 16. Conclusion

Some historians assumed that the “nationality problem” hindered the development of the Austrian workers’ movement, as its discursive dominance suppressed a number of labour concerns<sup>343</sup>. In my opinion, this is both right and wrong. It is true that nationalist propaganda and the efforts of other political parties to win over the workers prevented temporary unity or political success, but especially the German labour leaders, who had various degrees of agency, also made wrong decisions. For example, they could have taken a more practical approach to integration with non-German workers rather than their more formalised, “mechanistical” internationalism. On the other hand, I also believe that labour only became the political force that shaped large parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through various conflicts, first and foremost with capital but not only. The comparatively rapid process from a loose social class to a strong organisation, at least regionally, became quite visible in those years, I think. From 1869, the first workers had already reached a profound class consciousness (although others probably did not even know that they would soon become proletarians). And to criticise myself: just as certain forms of national indifference, as distinguished scholars have proven, there have definitely been forms of social (or socialist) indifference as well. To make my point, I think that a party like the Neudörfl one, which in many ways does not correspond to the zeitgeist, not even to the socialist one, could not have come into being if there had not been so much conflict and difficulties such as the economic crisis, the resulting social upheaval or the repressive state.

I would like to use the second part of this conclusion to reflect on my work. What could I have done better? First, I admit that I find it difficult to stick to a given character or word count. I would certainly have material to fill several such works on the subject. Second, I can now appreciate translation achievements much better. I had a hard time translating some German newspaper articles into reasonably clean English. Especially with unfamiliar wording, you have

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<sup>343</sup> Cf. Göhring, *Gründungsparteitag*, 13.

to try a lot of things out. Third, I could have narrowed the topic down even more, for example to a specific city or group of workers. It is not without good reason that the trend in historical studies is increasingly moving towards everyday and micro-histories. Fourth, there are many things I would have liked to take a closer look at. The Czech perspective is clearly neglected, which is of course mainly due to my lack of language skills. But apart from the leaders, I also treat the vast majority of workers from a bird's eye view. I also leave out other social categories such as gender, religion or age. Fifth, If I were to continue working on the topic, I would either devote myself even more to the history of ideas and perhaps draw more concrete comparisons with liberal views of the nation, or I would work more regionally, focussing specifically on Wiener Neustadt, Linz or Viennese districts. I would like to emphasise that I have learned a lot in dealing with this topic and hope that there will be more to come in this field. For the sake of transparency, I would like to conclude by stating the obvious. You don't pick a topic like this and deal with it if you don't sympathise with social democracy.

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