

CALLAHAN, KEVIN J. *Demonstration Culture. European Socialism and the Second International, 1889–1914*. Troubadour Publishing, Kibworth Beauchamp 2010. xxxii, 324 pp. £24.95; doi:10.1017/S0020859012000028

The meeting of labour history and cultural history has been one of the more productive encounters over recent years. Therefore an attempt to write a cultural history of the Second International is entirely welcome. Much has been said on its congresses, its debates, and its leaders, but this study is the first to analyse systematically its “practice of showing, manifesting, expressing and displaying” (p. xiii), i.e. its demonstration culture.

Callahan sees the International explicitly as a movement, and indeed, it was the largest social movement before World War I. A community of shared ideas and expectations, its identity was characterized by fluidity and performance, which is why we learn much in this volume about its congresses and mass meetings, its party press, its diverse rituals, manifestos, and discourse more generally. The International’s politics, the author argues convincingly, was expressed through a range of symbolic gestures making the International’s congresses into spectacles, or theatres.

Making good use of discourse analysis, social movement theory, and insights from communication studies, Callahan distinguishes three different types of demonstrations: paper demonstrations, congresses, and mass demonstrations. The three parts of the book deal with those three types in turn.

Chapter 1 looks at resolutions and examines socialist discourse. The ideological disunity of the diverse national parties was exacerbated by their failure to find a common language. Many delegates could not understand each other, and even if they could, competing conceptions of internationalism and socialism led to spectacles of disunity. Callahan also rightly stresses the strength of nationalism among socialist delegates to the International. However, he carefully traces how the bureau of the International got better in stage managing the International’s congresses and providing orderly spectacles which did impress not only socialist but wider European and world audiences after the turn of the century.

Chapter 2 examines these successes in greater detail. The officials of the International gave greater attention to accrediting journalists, realizing the importance of publicity and reaching the public sphere. Consequently the press coverage of the International’s congresses improved. Where a strong socialist press existed, it clearly helped. The bourgeois press was inclined to mock the International and highlight its divisions, but some, like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in Germany reported in a remarkably positive matter, recognizing the importance of the social question and the need to work with representatives of the working class. Callahan’s detailed examination of the press coverage in France and Germany shows clearly how the socialist press in both countries struggled to bring their internationalism into line with socialist constructions of national identity. Nevertheless, the German socialist press, in particular, produced powerful visual images depicting the leaders of the International as architects, working on the construction site of a better future – a truly Herculean task.

Chapter 3 analyses the details of congress preparations as well as the diverse forms of sociability during the congresses, and the many public speaking tours of leading international socialists in countries hosting the congresses of the International. Callahan shows how important the work of the organizing committee of the congresses was in producing powerful rituals, ceremonies, demonstrations, and symbols. He also highlights the fact that the international congresses were an opportunity to showcase the

national advances of the socialist party hosting the congress. Finally, the chapter powerfully underlines the close interconnection between the private and public lives of socialists. The congresses were widely perceived as opportunities to forge friendships that often lasted a lifetime. Hence, the diverse forms of social activity that accompanied the congresses were important for the forging of a socialist internationalist community.

Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the rituals of the receptions, the inaugural ceremonias, and the mass demonstrations during the International's congresses. Together, they positioned the sum total of the congress as an abstraction of the community of the workers of the world. Accompanied by music, quasi-religious symbolism, public addresses by socialist leaders, and the use of allegory and marches through city centres, they transformed the congresses into an "impressive mass political spectacle" (p. 140).

Chapter 5 digs deeper into key symbolic moments during the congresses, such as the homage to the dead, the use of song and rhetorical slogans, and the handshakes of working-class representatives of nations whose governments were at loggerheads with each other. Chapter 6 continues this theme by analysing the demonstration culture of the International. Manifesting socialism through resolutions and manifestos issued by the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) and discussed by the congresses was an important means of creating publicity. However, Callahan also underlines the difficulties of the International in reacting to international injustices through common action, as the very different national circumstances of the socialist parties led to disagreements on the most appropriate form of action to be taken.

Chapter 7 concentrates on the mass demonstrations, emphasizing their lawfulness and non-violent character – aspects that were meant to underline the discipline and order of the proletarian armies of international socialism. Detailed examinations of the International's reaction to Russian czarism, to the execution of Ferrer in Spain, and to the Moroccan crisis demonstrate both the power and difficulties of international socialists in demonstrating socialist internationalism effectively in the public sphere.

The final substantive chapter of the book closely examines the anti-war strike debate and the 1912 Basle Extraordinary Socialist Congress. The author contends that the threat of an anti-war strike as a form of demonstration was more important than the strike itself, about which many international socialists had serious doubts, and which, of course, never came into effect. In a similar vein Callahan argues that hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets and squares of Europe were a powerful symbol for peace. The Basle congress was rooted in the determination of the International to produce a public spectacle against war, even if most of its leaders had no illusions about the International's power to stop such a war.

Overall, this volume succeeds well in showing that the internationalism of the socialist parties stood for a new style of politics. At the same time, it also demonstrates that the International's demonstration culture, its performance cultures, rites, and rituals as well as its extra-parliamentary political mobilization was ultimately incapable of influencing international politics decisively. Whilst the author is surely right in highlighting the International's demonstration culture as a powerful force in the European public sphere before 1914, the volume ultimately also shows the overall weakness of that public sphere.

*Stefan Berger*