

Social conflict, national strife, or political battle? Violence and strikebreaking in late Habsburg Austria*

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Introduction

‘To weaken a strike, there is no need for a mass of people; a few individuals suffice, which you always find, and who, taking up the name of national socialists, readily execute the “collaboration between capital and labour”’.¹ Commenting on an influx of replacement workers during a bakers’ strike in Prague, an article in Masaryk’s monthly review, *Naše doba*, thus summarised the basic principle of strikebreaking: numerical strength did not matter and Czech national socialists, despite poor election results, could therefore represent a threat in economic struggles. From the 1890s until the outbreak of the First World War, strikes in Austria-Hungary constituted one of the main forums for social and political conflict as they became much more frequent and mobilised increasing numbers of workers. Yet, a minority of workers sufficed to make them fail, and, as a result, strikes often entailed great potential for violence between strikers, workers who did not join the strike and the state authorities protecting them. This aspect has received less attention in the vast historiography of the workers’ movement (in both communist countries and Austria), which has framed its narrative around the development and setbacks of social democracy with strikes merely featuring as one of the key steps in that struggle.² Counter-reactions and the accompanying

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¹ *Naše doba*, vol. 15, no. 6, 20 March 1908, 451.

² For a relatively recent overview of the Czechoslovak historiography concerning strikes, see Stanislav Knob, ‘Stávkové hnutí v československé i zahraniční historiografii. Srovnání a výhledy’, in Stanislav Knob, Tomáš Ruckí, eds, *Problematika dělnictva v 19. a 20. století: bilance a výhledy studia* (Ostrava 2011), 65-72. See also, Zdeněk Šolle, *Dělnické stávky v Čechách v druhé polovině 19. století* (Prague 1960). On Austria: Helmut Konrad, *Nationalismus und Internationalismus: die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna 1976); Michael Mesch, *Arbeiterexistenz in der Spätgründerzeit – Gewerkschaften und Lohnentwicklung in Österreich, 1890-1914* (Vienna, 1984), 72-76; Wolfgang Maderthaner, ed., *Arbeiterbewegung in Österreich und Ungarn bis 1914: Referate des österreichisch-ungarischen Historikersymposiums in Graz vom 5. bis 9. September 1986* (Vienna 1986). On Austrian social democracy: Hans Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Vienna 1963); On Trieste: Marina Cattaruzza, *Sozialisten an der Adria: Plurinationale Arbeiterbewegung in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Berlin 2011). On Galicia: John-Paul Himka, *Socialism in Galicia: The Emergence of Polish Social Democracy and Ukrainian Radicalism* (Cambridge, Mass 1983); Kerstin Jobst, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus: die polnische und ukrainische Sozialdemokratie in Galizien von 1890 bis 1914* (Hamburg 1996).

violence have received only limited consideration. However, as the number and intensity of strikes grew, so did the efforts to break them and to recruit new workers, including through national mobilisation. Interestingly, nationalism in this context appears as a strategy to pursue social conflict by other means.

Political violence during the late Habsburg monarchy has been primarily analysed in relation to nationalist battles. Traditional narratives have presented the pre-war nationalist tensions as paving the way for imperial collapse in 1918. Over the last twenty years, however, a revisionist historiography on Austria-Hungary has shown the Habsburg Empire to have been a much more viable political structure than has been commonly accepted. The more refined picture that has emerged of the Habsburg monarchy at the turn of the century as a functioning European state allows us to re-evaluate the role played by other forms of conflict in Habsburg society. Pieter Judson, whose recent book synthesises these new studies, argues that the Austrian half of the empire was a ‘full-fledged *Rechtsstaat*, that is a state that functions according to the rule of law’.³ This article examines the violent practices associated with strikes in order to probe the strength of the Austrian *Rechtsstaat* on the ground, and analyse the link between social conflict and national conflict in late Habsburg Austria.

Studying strikebreaking also offers a fresh perspective on the early years of both Czech and German national workers’ movements. Political efforts to mobilise workers in support of nationalist causes through the creation of new parties in late Habsburg Austria have primarily been studied on an ideological level as an aspect of fin-de-siècle nationalism. The small *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (DAP; German Workers’ Party), which was founded in 1903, has therefore attracted interest as a forerunner of National Socialism.⁴ Studies of the Czech National Social Party (created in 1897) have similarly viewed it through the lens of radicalised Czech nationalism.⁵ The practices of these movements’ unions, which were central to their formation, their role as alternatives to social democracy, and their behaviour during strikes have, however, been largely overlooked. Their political significance has been dismissed because of their limited electoral gains, but their power to break strikes remained important during this period.

³ Pieter M Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass 2016), 106.

⁴ Andrew Gladding Whiteside, *Austrian National Socialism before 1918* (The Hague 1962); Bruce Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis: A History of Austrian National Socialism* (Chapel Hill 1981); Michael Wladika, *Hitlers Vätergeneration: die Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus in der k.u.k. Monarchie* (Vienna 2005).

⁵ T. Mills Kelly, *Without remorse: Czech National Socialism in Late Habsburg Austria* (Boulder 2006).

Although the overall level of industrial development in the Habsburg Empire did not match that of other Western European countries, strong regional disparities and a high level of growth during the decades immediately prior to the First World War meant that the western regions of the monarchy (present-day Austria and the Czech Republic) were highly industrialised by European standards, in stark contrast to the very rural regions in the east.⁶ As a result, Austria-Hungary in general, and more particularly the Austrian half, witnessed a very active period of social conflict in the first decade of the twentieth century, which culminated in a large wave of strikes in 1905–1907 in the wake of the mobilisation for suffrage reform. 1906 and 1907 represented unprecedented peaks in the number of strikers (not surpassed until 1918): in Cisleithania 153,688 and 176,789 workers went on strike, respectively, compared with 64,227 in 1904.⁷ Following the revolution in Russia and the political crisis in Hungary, hundreds of thousands of workers participated in massive demonstrations calling for universal manhood suffrage. This had been a central tenet of social democracy in Austria since the 1890s, and workers in strikes and on marches all over Cisleithania now demanded abolition of the curial system for electing representatives to Parliament. The suffrage reform approved by the Emperor in 1907 resulted in a reconfiguration of politics in Habsburg Austria, which cannot be overestimated.⁸ As Jakub Beneš has recently shown, this constituted a moment of galvanising victory for the Social Democrats as they considered universal suffrage to have been the result of their mass mobilisation. For them, universal suffrage was a means of making their voices heard in Austrian politics, and having won it gave them renewed confidence.⁹ At the same time, as this article will show, employers felt increasingly threatened by workers' strikes after the turn of the century: they asked for more state intervention to repress them and tried to mobilise workers and public opinion against strikers.

In exploring the practices and discourses around strikebreaking, I seek to investigate how the process of democratisation created new flashpoints of contention in Habsburg society. Violence in East Central Europe tends to be systematically viewed as the result of exacerbated nationalism, but more careful examination of other types of violence brings the

⁶ Max-Stephan Schulze, 'Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century Habsburg Empire', *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 28 (1997), 293-307.

⁷ Mesch, *Arbeiterexistenz*, 73.

⁸ John Boyer, 'Power, Partisanship, and the Grid of Democratic Politics: 1907 as the Pivot Point of Modern Austrian History', *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 44 (2013), 148-174.

⁹ Jakub S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890-1918* (Oxford 2016).

Habsburg case much closer to the rest of Europe.¹⁰ This is not simply to restate that nationalist conflicts had socio-economic roots (with Slavic workers migrating to German areas),¹¹ but, on the contrary, to argue for the importance in late Habsburg society of social conflicts linked to the rise of Social Democracy and to the threats to the social order created by the prospects of democratisation, which have been too easily subsumed under national conflicts. This shift away from an interpretation in terms of nationalism reveals a more complex picture of public violence in the period. The present study will first focus on the repressive apparatus of the state during strikes and explore the attitude of Habsburg authorities to workers and employers. I will then turn to the analysis of episodes of violence and the tensions resulting from strikebreaking practices. The last section explores the links between national unions and strikebreaking to show the political relevance of the issue and integrate it into the larger framework of conflicts around democratisation at the turn of the century.

The repression of strikes in Habsburg Austria

The growth of strike action from the 1890s onwards challenged the Austrian state, which was always understaffed, in its capacity to respond to increasing demands for policing and management. In cases of strikes, the district authorities relied in the first instance on the municipal police forces, but very often they also had to depend on the support of gendarmerie units and, when a strike risked turning into a demonstration or riot, to call for reinforcements from the army. The gendarmerie and the army were used to repress unrest, but also to protect those workers who continued to work during the strikes and sometimes even to replace striking workers.¹² The intervention of the army in strike repression was considered an emergency measure, although it was still common around the turn of the century. In 1912, in preparation for a potential miners' strike, the police chief of Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava, a large industrial area, laid before his superiors the typical measures used during strikes in the coal-mining region: the first step was to call for gendarmerie reinforcements

¹⁰ Daniel Unowsky also recently argued that the 1898 anti-Semitic riots should be understood as a product of modernisation. See Daniel Unowsky, *The Plunder: The 1898 Anti-Jewish Riots in Habsburg Galicia* (Stanford 2018). See also, Irina Marin, *Peasant Violence and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cham 2018).

¹¹ Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage*, 17-45, esp. 33-38.

¹² Gustav Otruba, 'Streikbewegung, Ausstände und Militärassistenzen in der Österreichischen Reichshälfte 1890 bis 1914', in Jürgen Schneider, ed., *Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftswege. V: Festschrift für Hermann Kellenbenz* (Stuttgart 1981), 439-503.

(around 80 men) and then, in case of a general strike in the area, recourse to army units was considered necessary. Until then, the army had been deployed during every strike to maintain order during demonstrations. Soldiers were also supposed to lead patrols with the gendarmerie to protect both the roads to the mines and the non-striking workers.¹³ The agricultural strikes that took place in Galicia in 1902, which spread over one fifth of the province, saw the fairly systematic deployment of army units, even in the absence of unrest.¹⁴ Replacement labourers were brought in from the north and the south of the province. Agricultural labourers protested against the billeting of troops in their homes.¹⁵ From 1889, the official procedure for requesting military assistance required authorisation from the War Ministry in consultation with the Imperial Chancellery, and such assistance was only to be used in cases of threats to public order.¹⁶ The reality on the ground, however, sometimes differed from the guidelines, especially in Galicia and Hungary. An article published in the military officers' journal, the *Danzers Arme-Zeitung*, criticised local officials for their misuse of army forces in Hungary, since they often asked the local military commander directly for assistance instead of going through the ministry. Moreover, the officials sometimes did not act impartially but rather to further specific political interests.¹⁷ The article complained that the army had to obey orders in such cases, but that it could not then be held responsible for its involvement.

Frequent military intervention also risked damaging the army's image among the general population as it entailed a higher risk of violence. One of the better known episodes of repression by the army occurred in February 1902 during a strike in Trieste/Trst, where 14 strikers were killed. After stokers working for Austrian Lloyd went on strike, the company hired new workers and the Austrian navy even lent them its stokers. This provoked a massive

¹³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA), Ministerium des Innern (Mdl), Präsidiale (Präs), K1996, no 2845/12, From the police chief in Ostrau to the regional president in Silesia, 13 March 1912.

¹⁴ *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 3 August 1902, 10. Teresa Stochel-Nabielska, 'Das polnische Parteienspektrum in Galizien vor 1914. Eine Bestandsaufnahme der Bemühungen um die Demokratisierung des Landes' (PhD diss.: University of Vienna 2008), 155. On the strike's organisation, see Zoriana Melnyk, 'Catholic Churches and Mass Mobilization in Austrian Galicia, 1890-1914' (Phd diss; European University Institute 2018), 26-27.

¹⁵ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31 July 1902, 8.

¹⁶ Otruba, 'Streikbewegung, Ausstände und Militärassistenzen', 448-449.

¹⁷ *Danzers Arme-Zeitung*, 26 May 1910, 6. On tensions between military officers and civilian administrators in Galicia, see Joseph Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven 1929), 79; more generally, see John Deak, Jonathan Gumz, 'How to Break a State: The Habsburg Monarchy's Internal War, 1914-1918', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 122, No. 5 (2017), 1111-1112.

demonstration and the local garrison intervened to quell the unrest.¹⁸ The soldiers' lack of preparedness for repression increased the likelihood of weapons being used. The army's own attitude towards military assistance was ambivalent: policing was not considered to be the worthiest task for soldiers and the military elites worried about the army's image, but they also deemed violent force to be an appropriate response to protests. After the events in Trieste, an article in the *Danzers Armee-Zeitung* remarked: 'in the last fifteen to twenty years, the practice has developed that the police and the political authorities call for the assistance of the military already at the beginning of street unrest',¹⁹ which had the effect of transferring public discontent onto the army. The article went on to accuse the authorities of delegating their responsibilities to the military during such situations, offering the example of a prefect in Galicia who tried to cede his authority to a military commander during the anti-Jewish riots.²⁰ However, these criticisms did not undermine the widespread conviction that only the army could successfully defend the state against its internal enemies and efficiently intervene in cases of major unrest.²¹

The Trieste strike was among the bloodiest cases of repression, but it was certainly far from being an isolated incident. In Austria-Hungary prior to 1914, the army was still largely considered an appropriate means to quell internal unrest, sometimes with lethal consequences. Later in 1902, the army killed five men during the repression of a construction workers' strike in Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv.²² From the 1890s until the outbreak of the First World War, civilians frequently fell victim to army fire during different types of conflicts across the empire: an estimated three to seven people died during the repression of the miners' strike in Ostrau/Ostrava in 1890,²³ one student was shot in Graz during the Badeni

¹⁸ Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development and the Politics of Dualism* (West Lafayette 1994), 154; On anti-militaristic reactions to the events of February 1902, see Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford 2014), 235-236. See also, Sabine Rutar, *Kultur Nation Milieu: Sozialdemokratie in Triest* (Essen 2004), 214.

¹⁹ *Danzers Armee-Zeitung*, 20 February 1902, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ József Zachar, 'Die Rolle der k.u.k. Streitkräfte in der Sicherung der inneren Ordnung zur Zeit des Ausbruchs des ersten Weltkriegs', in Jan Galandauer, ed., *Od Sarajeva k velké válce: Sborník příspěvků vědeckého semináře k 80. výročí vypuknutí první světové války konaného ve dnech 29.-30. června 1994 v Praze* (Prague 1995), 87; See also, Günther Kronenbitter, *'Krieg im Frieden': Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns 1906-1914* (Munich 2003), 219.

²² Ruthenian Social Democrat Semen Wityk: Stenographische protokoll Abgeordnetenhaus, 74. Sitzung der XVIII Session, 22 May 1908, 4792-4793.

²³ Adolf Turek, 'Rok 1890 na Ostravsku', in Andělin Grobelný, Bohumil Sobotík, eds, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku* (Ostrava 1957), 38-39.

riots in 1897²⁴ and 18 people were killed during the repression of anti-Semitic riots in Galicia in 1898,²⁵ while battles over national universities in Innsbruck in 1904 and in Brno in 1905 resulted in one death each.²⁶ Demonstrations in favour of suffrage reform in 1905–1906 brought about three deaths in Galicia and three in the Bohemian Lands.²⁷ Two protesters were killed during nationalist riots in Ljubljana in 1908.²⁸ Four people were shot in Vienna in 1911 during the hunger riot²⁹ and in the same year the army killed 26 in Drohobycz during an election rally.³⁰ Finally, suffrage protests in Budapest in 1912 saw the deaths of six people.³¹ As Social Democrat deputy Karl Leuthner claimed in 1912, ‘in Austria and Hungary there is more shooting than anywhere in Europe: for every election, every larger strike, every turbulent demonstration’.³²

From nationalist students to protesters seeking voting rights or striking workers, the violence was not confined to a specific nation or political party. As Galician Social Democrat deputy Ignacy Daszyński stated, ‘there is no region, no larger city where the intervention of the military has not led to bloody results: Trieste, Graz, Vienna, Prague, Graslitz, Bielitz, Lemberg, Drohobycz, Mährisch Ostrau, Falkenau’.³³ If the workers killed by the gendarmerie during the strikes in Falkenau/Sokolov (five) and Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava (13) in 1894 and during a demonstration against emergency legislation in Graslitz/Kraslice in 1899 (four) are included into the count,³⁴ the total number of casualties reached almost 100 in the Austrian half of the empire alone.³⁵ Even these partial figures are already significantly

²⁴ István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford 1990), 68.

²⁵ Unowsky, *The Plunder*.

²⁶ On Innsbruck: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 5 November 1904, 4; on Brno: Nancy Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, Mass 2007), 94.

²⁷ On Galicia: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 7 March 1906, 4; on the Bohemian Lands: Jiří Pernes, *Nejen rudé prapory aneb Pravda o revolučním roce 1905 v českých zemích* (Brno 2005).

²⁸ Rok Stergar, ‘National Indifference in the Heyday of Nationalist Mobilization? Ljubljana Military Veterans and the Language of Command’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 43 (2012), 45-58.

²⁹ See Wolfgang Maderthaner, Lutz Musner, *Unruly Masses: The Other Side of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New York 2008).

³⁰ Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 2.

³¹ Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Washington, D.C. 2000), 301.

³² *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 5 June 1912, 6.

³³ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 22 June 1912, 3.

³⁴ Wolfgang Maderthaner, ‘Die korporative Arbeitsverweigerung. Zur Entwicklung des industriellen Interessenkonflikts in Österreichs, 1890-1914’, *Archiv. Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. 11(1995), 13; For Graslitz, see (*Linzer*) *Tages-Post*, 25 August 1899, 1.

³⁵ A further six were killed during anti-Semitic riots in Moravia, see Michal Frankl, ‘From Boycott to Riot. Moravian Anti-Jewish Violence of 1899 and Its Background’, in Robert Nemes, Daniel Unowsky, eds, *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics, 1880-1918* (Waltham 2014), 97-99. The numbers for the Hungarian half were probably also high. For example, eight miners were killed during a strike in Mitrovica in Croatia in 1900: *Wiener Bilder*, 28 October 1900, 1.

higher than those seen in France and Germany during the same period, where only 39 and 21 protesters, respectively, were killed by state forces (although the figures are probably lower than in Italy or Russia).³⁶ The Social Democrats tended to link all these events and to criticise their constant reoccurrence: ‘after Graz came Graslitz, after Trieste came Lemberg, and the Prime Minister found that it was good’.³⁷ This attack on Prime Minister Koerber, who was otherwise an initiator of liberalising reforms, points to the relative acceptance in government circles of military intervention as a necessary evil.³⁸

A further step in strikebreaking, the use of soldiers as replacement workers, was still a relatively common practice until 1914 in Habsburg Austria, although military elites did not encourage it. It was limited to industries considered of vital importance, such as bakeries, butchers, printers, transportation facilities, and gas and water works. In November 1905, as rumours of a general strike spread across the country, several regional administrations asked for help from local military commands to replace striking bakers to guarantee the provisioning of cities. The War Ministry, in a decree issued to all military commands, emphasised its reluctance to employ soldiers in such functions by insisting on ‘the maintenance of military discipline and prestige, which requires the avoidance of any possible insult of troops from the strikers or the excited population’.³⁹ However, at the local level, military commanders sometimes agreed to the use of soldiers for strikebreaking purposes. During a strike in Cracow’s gas works in 1913, 40 soldiers were used to continue production⁴⁰, while during the printers’ strike of 1914, the official newspaper in Lemberg/Lwów/L’viv, *Gazeta Lwowska*, was printed in the local garrison.⁴¹ Newspapers also reported on the ad hoc loan of soldiers beyond these vital areas of activity. For example, a few soldiers had been used during a tailors’ strike in Reichenberg/Liberec⁴² and in 1913 the

³⁶ Anja Johansen, ‘Policing and Repression: Military Involvement in the Policing of French and German Industrial Areas, 1889-1914’, *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2004), 76.

³⁷ *Arbeiterwille*, 6 June 1902, 1.

³⁸ Conrad was, for example, congratulated on his handling of the situation in Trieste, see Wolfram Dornik, *Des Kaisers Falke. Wirken und Nach-Wirken von Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf* (Innsbruck 2013), 55. See also the justification for the army’s intervention in Trieste, for example: *Neue Freie Presse*, 17 February 1902, 1-2; *Wiener Zeitung*, 17 February 1902, 1-2. On Koerber’s reforms, see: Fredrik Lindström, ‘Ernest von Koerber and the Austrian State Idea: A Reinterpretation of the Koerber Plan (1900-1904)’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 35 (2004), 143-184.

³⁹ Copy of War Ministry decree Abt 5, no 2483, 29 November 1905. See file ÖStA, AVA, MdI, K1990, sig. 20/9, no 8292/05, 27 November 1905.

⁴⁰ Report from the Lemberg Governor’s Office, 23 January 1913, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, K1998, sig. 20/9, no 1104/13, 24-27 January 1913.

⁴¹ Telegram of protest sent by Socialist deputy Daszyński and reply from the Governor’s Office, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, K1998, sig. 20/9, no 984, 27 January 1914.

⁴² *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 6 May 1904, 2.

Social Democrats had protested against the sending of several soldiers from the military command in Trento/Trient to replace striking workers during a carpenters' strike.⁴³ More frequently, local authorities or even employers asked for troops to be sent, as was the case during the mining strike in Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava in 1900.⁴⁴ Similarly, the Galician nobility demanded the use of military personnel as strikebreakers during the agricultural strikes of 1906.⁴⁵ Some inhabitants of the most easterly district of Galicia complained that dragoons were being used for field work, a claim that was denied by the Galician governor.⁴⁶ The Social Democrats vehemently complained against this practice, which they perceived as contrary to the law. In 1913, Polish Social Democrats asked the Defence Minister to immediately recall the troops working in the Cracow gas works.⁴⁷ An interpellation in Parliament regarding plans to replace state employees during passive resistance in Trieste with military personnel made this point forcefully: 'Is the government prepared to acknowledge clearly and openly that the replacement of functionaries through military personnel has no [basis in] law?'.⁴⁸ The continuation of this practice highlights the divergent stances of the military hierarchy, who in 1905 had made it clear that soldiers should only perform such work in exceptional cases of 'state necessity', and of local commanders, who might have been more accommodating.⁴⁹ Personal relations certainly played a role. Daszyński, in his aforementioned speech, recalled Lueger's insult of 'Rothschild military' and found it fitting, pointing to the collusion between the elites and the military in the numerous cases in which the army intervened in disputes between landowners and agricultural labourers: 'And where do the officers take their meals? Always at the estate manor!'.⁵⁰ The army's partiality to employers could be denounced in other cases, such as when officers advertised jobs as strikebreakers in the wagon factory of Nesseldorf/Kopřivnice to their recruits before they left.⁵¹

⁴³ *Salzburger Wacht*, 10 July 1913, 6.

⁴⁴ Růžena Vyhnalíková, 'Generalni stavka horníků na Ostravsku-karvinsku roku 1900', in *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku*, 88.

⁴⁵ *Volksbote*, 24 May 1906, 2.

⁴⁶ Telegram to the Prime Minister, 26 July 1906, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, no 6568/06. For the denial: Galician Governor to Interior Ministry, *Ibid.*, no 7010/06, 8 August 1906.

⁴⁷ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 29 January 1913, 9.

⁴⁸ Interpellation de Pittoni and Genossen Stenographische Protokolle, Abgeordnetenhaus, 92 Sitzung der 20 session am 8. März 1911 p. 1182.

⁴⁹ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1990, sig. 20/9, no 7714/05, 14 November 1905.

⁵⁰ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 22 June 1912, 3.

⁵¹ See interpellation in Parliament by Social Democrat Antonín Němec in *Právo lidu*, 29 September 1912, 2.

In most cases of strikes, however, the gendarmerie was the force used to restore order.⁵² Established in 1850, the corps was regularly called upon, especially for strikes in areas outside the few larger cities with state police forces (Vienna, Graz, Prague, Brünn/Brno, Lemberg/Lwów/L'viv, Cracow, Trieste/Trst, Trento/Trient, Przemyśl, Mährisch-Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava). For example, during the second half of 1911 alone, 1,700 gendarmes intervened in 64 places in Bohemia to restore order during strikes. While they did not make use of firearms in that year, they nonetheless systematically used bayonets to disperse workers.⁵³ Although they received more appropriate training than soldiers, they also sometimes fired on the crowd. Moreover, these 'concentrations' of gendarmes in a specific location were expensive. The Defence Ministry charged the expenses incurred during such operations to the Interior Ministry. Interestingly, in several cases of strikes, the Interior Ministry noted that both officers and men received special fees for their participation.⁵⁴ The potential for collusion between security forces and employers was very real in the case of the army and the gendarmerie, whose personnel had to be housed and fed wherever they intervened. However, it is important to underline that, compared with the local police forces paid for by the municipal council, state forces such as the gendarmerie or the state police were often perceived by the workers themselves as more impartial. Municipal police all over Cisleithania were indeed receiving orders directly from the mayor, who, up until 1914, was still elected through limited suffrage. John Robertson, in his study of the Ostrava mining region, argues that the municipal police force in Witkowitz/Vítkovice was effectively acting on behalf of the steelworks' management (because of their influence on the municipal council). The workers contrasted their behaviour with that of the state gendarmerie and the army, and they referred to them as the 'cossacks of the Vítkovice Czar'.⁵⁵ Jan Havránek, in his study of mining strikes in Northern Bohemia, found a case of two policemen who each received 20 crowns remuneration for their services during strikes.⁵⁶ The partiality of the municipal police tended to be taken for granted, while official forces were judged against a higher standard.

⁵² On the history of the police and gendarmerie in Austria, see: Helmut Gebhardt, 'Die Etablierung der österreichischen Polizei und Gendarmerie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert – Aspekte zu ihrer Rolle bei der Entwicklung von Staatsorganisation und Rechtsstaat' in Helmut Gebhardt, ed., *Polizei, Recht und Geschichte. Europäische Aspekte einer wechselvollen Entwicklung* (Graz 2006), 30-41.

⁵³ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, AR, K2083, sig. 20, no 25985/12, 4 March 1912.

⁵⁴ For example, during the tramway strike in Trieste in 1910, see the expenses claims, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, AR, K2083, sig. 20, no 8446/12, 6 March 1912.

⁵⁵ John Robertson, 'Calamitous methods of compulsion: Labor, War, and Revolution in a Habsburg industrial district, 1906-1919' (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2014), p. 82.

⁵⁶ Jan Havránek, *Hornická stávká roku 1900 v severočeském hnědouhelném revíru* (Prague 1953), 76 and 96.

The numerous parliamentary interpellations to the Interior Ministry highlight both the potential partiality of the security forces against workers and the ideal of impartiality and equality before the law. The Austrian state authorities were supposed to act as a pacifying force supporting mediation and the brokering of an agreement.⁵⁷ This does not mean that they did not frequently intervene in a manner that was more favourable to employers, but it was ostensibly contrary to the spirit of the law. Interpellations to the ministry by Social Democrats complained, with reference to the legal framework, about acts of collusion between state authorities and employers. A Czech Social Democrat, for example, denounced the unlawful arrests of strikers on the street by gendarmes during a strike in Litomyšl/Leitomischl in Bohemia. The local prefect was, according to these accusations, fully supportive of the employers and the gendarmes were actually housed in the factory.⁵⁸ In other cases, the deputies deplored the violent and menacing behaviour of the gendarmes. In Styria, during a miners' strike, acts of violence by the gendarmerie against striking workers (beatings and the use of sticks) were denounced.⁵⁹ Gendarmes also allegedly threatened and bullied striking construction workers in Troppau/Opava, even entering their homes to pressure them into returning to work.⁶⁰ The fact that the authorities in Vienna were used as a recourse in these cases does demonstrate a certain degree of trust in the central state. A telegram from Sokal (Galicia) to the Prime Minister simply stated: 'The prefect from Sokal Szwedzicki harasses striking workers, I ask for intervention'.⁶¹ Certain local officials sometimes overstepped their own authority and issued interdictions against picketing, which directly threatened the right to strike. In Asch/Aš (Bohemia), for example, the prefect published several announcements denouncing attacks on non-striking textile workers and forbidding public gatherings and picketing, as well as any attempt to discourage others to work.⁶² Individuals shaped, to some extent, the application of the law and there were, to be sure, regional differences across the empire. For example, in 1910 the prefect in Borysław (Galicia) mobilised two army companies before a strike of oil workers had even begun.⁶³ Similarly, a proclamation issued by such a prominent figure as Galician governor Potocki that

⁵⁷ On the role of bureaucracy in civil society, see John Deak, *Forging a Multinational State: State Making in Imperial Austria from the Enlightenment to the First World War* (Stanford 2015), 215-260.

⁵⁸ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1997, sig. 20/9, no 11532/12, Interpellation 12 November 1912.

⁵⁹ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1990, sig. 20/9, no 1748/06, Interpellation 7 February 1906.

⁶⁰ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1992, sig. 20/9, no 6744/08, Interpellation Pospíšil 16 July 1908.

⁶¹ Telegram from Ladislaus Kobak, 8 June 1906, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, no 5125/06.

⁶² Interpellation Rieger, 21 February 1905, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, no 3493/06.

⁶³ Letter from the Galician governor's office to the Interior Ministry justifying this decision, 3 February 1911, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1995, sig. 20/9, no 1225/11.

was hung in the eastern districts of the province to prevent fieldworkers from striking stating that ‘strike committees have no right to keep others away from their work’, seems difficult to imagine further west.⁶⁴

The Social Democrats were not the only ones to criticise the behaviour of state officials. Complementary criticism came from employers, who often complained about the insufficient protection afforded by gendarmes during strikes. A factory owner in Mährisch-Trubau/Moravská Třebová attempted to put pressure on the regional authorities to dismiss the prefect who had not called on the gendarmerie soon enough.⁶⁵ The director of a paper factory near Ljubljana/Laibach complained about the conduct of the prefect, who did not prevent workers from protesting in front of the factory: ‘we can absolutely not understand why the esteemed authority refuses to issue an interdiction in line with our proposals. It would be very dangerous if the behaviour of the esteemed authority were to be interpreted by the strikers as support for their unjustified action’.⁶⁶ Being perceived as impartial was an important part of all local civil servants’ roles as mediators and essential to their legitimacy. They could only succeed in obtaining satisfactory results if they had the trust of both parties. The president of Carnolia subsequently described the difficult negotiations that went on throughout the night in an effort to stop the strike and to reach an enforceable compromise.⁶⁷ The work inspectors (whose office was created in 1883 and who supervised labour relations in a specific area) also often mediated in their roles as state representatives. Thus, the official channels of complaint (especially through Parliament) played a role in the process of claiming rights based on legal principles in reaction to the violence perpetrated against workers during strikes.

Repression of strikes by the Austrian state demonstrated a variety of potential local responses within the common legal framework in reaction to the growing strike movement. As Laurence Cole has recently argued, ‘despite the liberal constitutional framework, social reality often still looked “illiberal” on the ground’.⁶⁸ As one side denounced forceful repression by the organs of the state, such measures were still perceived as insufficient by

⁶⁴ See a copy of the announcement in Polish and Ukrainian (26 June 1906), ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, no 7073/06.

⁶⁵ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1990, sig. 20/9, no 5748/05, Letter from 31 August 1905.

⁶⁶ Letter from Leykam-Josefstahl Society to the Interior Ministry, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1992, sig. 20/9, no 8160/08, 28 August 1908.

⁶⁷ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1992, sig. 20/9, no 9415/08, 1 October 1908.

⁶⁸ Laurence Cole, ‘Visions and Revisions of Empire: Reflections on a New History of the Habsburg Monarchy’, *Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 49 (2018), 276; on illiberal tendencies, see also: Mark Cornwall, ‘Treason in an Era of Regime Change: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy,’ *Austrian History Yearbook* 50 (2019), 124-49.

many employers, who asked for increased support and protection, especially after the massive wave of strikes of 1905–1906.

The dynamics of strikebreaking violence

In the wake of the mass mobilisation for universal suffrage, a whole section of Austrian society felt threatened, whether or not they supported the reform itself. What frightened them was the mass demonstrations, the accompanying violence and the spread of strike movements in 1905 and 1906, as well as the potential for general unrest that they revealed. The mass demonstrations of November 1905 had seen up to hundreds of thousands of people gather in the major cities and tens of thousands in other towns throughout Cisleithania. They had taken place peacefully in many places, but had sometimes taken a more violent turn, such as in Prague, where there were bloody confrontations between police and demonstrators. The local elites were nervous and unsure that the authorities could keep the situation under control. After the demonstrations in Prague, the municipal council discussed how the local police had been overwhelmed and suggested the creation of a citizens' militia to establish law and order and avoid the intervention of the military.⁶⁹ The local section of the Federation of Austrian Industrialists in Teplitz/Teplice (Bohemia) complained after a pro-suffrage demonstration in their town that 'on that day the workers were really the masters of the city and the authorities completely powerless'. Insisting on their right as 'citizens and taxpayers' to protection from the 'terrorism of working leaders', they emphasised that the 'demoralisation' of the employers and the 'superiority' of the working leaders constituted an 'unnatural state'.⁷⁰ The massive presence of workers on the streets unnerved the bourgeois classes. In Trieste, rumours of insurrections circulated, which were reflected in letters of denunciation sent to the state authorities asking for intervention.⁷¹ Public spaces and who occupied them played a crucial role here, since threats to public order were also experienced as threats to the social order.

⁶⁹ *Mährisches Tagblatt*, 8 November 1905, 6.

⁷⁰ ÖStA, AVA, Mdl, Präs, K2093, sig. 22 Böhmen, no 9014/05, 19 December 1905.

⁷¹ Eduard Winkler, *Wahlrechtsreformen und Wahlen in Triest, 1905-1909. Eine Analyse der politischen Partizipation in einer multinationalen Stadtregion der Habsburgermonarchie* (Munich 2000), 106.

Fears of general violence by Social Democrats could, in some cases, lead to misinformation about strike actions.⁷² During a bakers' strike in 1907, a rumour spread among the master craftsmen that many employees had been violently prevented from leaving social-democratic meetings by the stewards. The police, however, found this accusation to be without any basis in fact.⁷³ The wave of strikes encouraged factory owners in Austria to better organise themselves and to develop their own networks, especially through the use of blacklists and strikebreaking agents. Around 1907 and 1908 the journal of the Austrian organisation of employers, *Die Arbeit*, published many calls for stronger unification of the various employers' associations across the empire, and it deplored the state's insufficient repression of strikers. As Social Democratic deputies became an important force in Parliament after 1907, employers felt that a unified voice was necessary to enable them to lobby in favour of the 'protection of property to counter the Social Democratic strike terror' and 'against the collectivist wave attacking bourgeois society'.⁷⁴ Other articles advocated the use of blacklisting and better defence of 'willing workers' (*Arbeitswillige*) who were attacked during strikes.

A memorandum sent to the Interior Ministry by the Union of Employers in Austria in 1906 asked for reform of the 1870 law on freedom of association to forbid picket lines and to better protect employers from the 'violence' of striking workers. Many employers sent separate correspondences to the ministry in support of the memorandum. The director of a gas works in Vienna, for example, denounced the 'ever growing, mostly frivolous organisation of strikes whose continuation and often repetition inflicts serious wounds not only on industrialists but also on all the production branches linked with the industry'. He claimed to act 'on consideration of the common good, [...] of the existence of our state'.⁷⁵ In 1909, a petition organised by the employers' associations and relayed by the Christian Social Party seeking to reform the right to strike and 'protect willing workers' was submitted to Parliament. It bore the signatures of almost 200,000 Austrian employers (including artisans).⁷⁶ The notion that replacement workers (seen as 'strikebreakers' by the workers and

⁷² On social fears in Belle Époque Europe, see Matteo Millan, 'The Shadows of Social Fear: Emotions, Mentalities and Practices of the Propertied Classes in Italy, Spain and France (1900–1914)', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 50, No 2 (2016), 336–361.

⁷³ ÖStA, AVA, Handelsministerium, Fz 485, P.Z. 8578, 15 March 1907. On the role of rumours in social conflict, see Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918–1919* (Cambridge 2016).

⁷⁴ *Die Arbeit*, 9 February 1908, 1.

⁷⁵ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, ad 4166/06, Letter from Franz Manoschek, 25 April 1906.

⁷⁶ *Neue Schlesische Zeitung*, 13 May 1909, 2.

‘willing workers’ by the employers) deserved the full protection of the police was justified, in the employers’ view, by the risk to their safety on their way to work. A conservative newspaper in Linz commented: ‘that the police protect the strikebreakers is a matter of course’.⁷⁷ This idea was so ingrained in conservative discourse that *Die Arbeit* wondered how a Social Democrat vice-mayor (just elected in Wiener Neustadt) would cope when he had to send the municipal police to protect replacement workers during a strike.⁷⁸ This remark would seem to indicate that employers generally saw the municipal police forces (who obeyed mayors elected through limited suffrage) as an instrument at their disposal. Thus, in anticipation of a strike, a metal factory in Trieste asked the police to protect their workers around the factory during the day and inside it at night.⁷⁹

Agitation for law reform continued over the following years. A meeting of carpenters in Vienna in 1912 still called for the prompt creation of a new law on ‘willing workers’ so that ‘the hard-working artisans and their work-willing employees would finally find protection from the terrorism of Social Democrats’.⁸⁰ As the right to form picket lines was threatened, the ministry circulated among Austrian local authorities a clarification text from 1908 detailing the limits of acceptable picketing. Standing on a picket line was only tolerated if it did not disturb the peace and if no violence was used against non-striking workers. Interpretation of these guidelines left some margin of interpretation for local officials, who could decide to intervene more or less severely, and determine what constituted excessive ‘intimidation’.⁸¹

Discourses on strikebreaking and the protection of non-striking workers were used as slogans, and they were perceived as a legitimate goal among broad sections of the population (not just the police and employers, but also some portion of the middle classes). Replacement workers were positioned as victims of the Social Democrats. Anti-Social-Democrat discourses emphasised ‘red’ terrorism and the intimidation suffered by those workers who were willing to work and who needed to be protected, sometimes with weapons. In 1908, the social democratic newspaper, *Arbeiterwille*, accused the bourgeois press of campaigning for the arming of strikebreakers.⁸² A factory owner in Sternberg had provided his strikebreakers

⁷⁷ *Linzer Tages-Post*, 12 August 1911, 5.

⁷⁸ *Die Arbeit*, 16 March 1913, 2.

⁷⁹ Letter from the Società metallurgica triestina, Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Direzione di polizia, Atti presidenziali riservati, Busta 253, no 3283, 24 June 1902.

⁸⁰ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1997, sig. 20/9, no 12664/12, 26 November 1912, Resolution.

⁸¹ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1997, sig. 20/9, no 10113/12, 7 October 1912.

⁸² *Arbeiterwille*, 15 February 1908, 1.

with iron bars and brass knuckles to defend themselves.⁸³ The slogan ‘protection for the willing workers’ emerged during the electoral campaign of 1907, when, for example, the German Nationalist candidate Artur Stölzel included it in his manifesto, framing it as the protection of liberty. Employers sought to make their concerns over the safety of a compliant labour force appear to be part of a broader movement that incorporated some of the working class. One factory owner wrote the following telegram asking for support from the authorities in the name of his employees: ‘We 31 workers of the Heim oven factory in Baden ask for official protection by the authorities from the daily attacks, insults and limits to our freedom of movement by the striking workers. We are forced to stay in the factory on weekdays if we do not want to leave the factory with a gendarme or a policeman’.⁸⁴ The prefect, however, was not duped and noted that the owner had simply read the text of the telegram aloud to the supposed ‘senders’. Yet, the fact that the employer felt that sending this plea on behalf of his workers would add legitimacy to his claims is in itself revealing. In an age of mass politics, anti-socialist measures were presented as a means of defending the freedom of workers.

The presence of replacement workers and the attempts made by strikers to convince them to join the strike automatically resulted in verbal confrontations, which could easily become physical. Violence often featured in strikes when replacement workers were brought in and, as far as can be ascertained from police reports and newspaper descriptions, it was initiated by both sides. Striking workers sometimes attacked strikebreakers with stones or sticks, while replacement workers were also frequently violent during their disputes with strikers. Moreover, the police or gendarmerie in charge of protecting the workers would sometimes violently disperse strikers or attack pickets. Although there were no dedicated, officially-organised armed protection groups, strikebreaking agents or helpers sometimes resorted to violence. Fights regularly took place on the way from the railway station to the factory (as replacement workers often came from elsewhere by train) or as workers were returning home. Striking workers attempted to warn newcomers or frighten them into leaving the city. Brawls also often took place in pubs between strikers and non-strikers.

The strike at the Titania works in Wels (Upper Austria) in 1912 offers a good example of a violent conflict between strikers and strikebreakers and intervention by the authorities. The management of the Titania works had dismissed all the workers after the start

⁸³ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1 February 1910, 9.

⁸⁴ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1994, sig. 20/9, no 11061/10, 26 October 1910.

of the strike in March and hired new workers from Vienna to replace them.⁸⁵ These new workers had to be housed in the factory to avoid violence from the workers who had been dismissed. The striking workers repeatedly gathered in front of the factory to protest against the strikebreakers and were monitored by the police. In May, the prefect, having sent a photographer near the factory, judged that public order was not threatened. The employers complained to the authorities about this potentially explosive situation and so the prefect asked for gendarmerie reinforcements from other regions of Cisleithania. During the night of 1st to 2nd June, a crowd of 300 to 400 striking workers waited for around 20 strikebreakers outside a pub and threw stones at them, resulting in a fight. There were several wounded on both sides, and a striking worker received a knife wound from a replacement worker. The police and the gendarmerie intervened, but they had trouble controlling the situation and had to clear the square with the help of bayonets. The Secretary of Industrial Employers in Austria demanded more measures from the Interior Ministry, while the local prefect tried to convince the employers to negotiate with the workers.⁸⁶

The recruitment of replacement workers from other regions of the Habsburg Empire often intensified the level of violence, both verbal and physical. During a strike in Traisen (Lower Austria) in 1905, the rural Slovak and Hungarian workers hired by the factory were called ‘Krowoten’ by the workers, a derogatory term for Slavic- or Hungarian-speaking migrants from the countryside. These young men, who were armed with knives, sticks and revolvers, created havoc in the town of Marktl where they were staying. Indeed, the town was said to look as if in a ‘state of war’.⁸⁷ Violence between strikers and strikebreakers was frequent and a particularly conflictual encounter broke out in a pub where the strikers were gathering during the evening of 30th July. The Social Democratic press accused the owner of having provided the weapons and denounced this example of ‘strikebreaker terrorism’.⁸⁸ The *Deutsches Volksblatt*, however, blamed Social Democrat agitators: ‘the embitterment of the willing workers is enormous’ and they had ‘to resort to self-help’ as the gendarmerie were protecting the striking workers.⁸⁹

The presence of firearms, which were often used by replacement workers themselves or by agents, heightened tensions. In Vienna, a strikebreaker shot at three other workers in the

⁸⁵ One of the workers at the Titania works acted as a recruiter according to the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (24 May 1912).

⁸⁶ Report from the governor of Upper Austria to the Interior Ministry, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1996, sig. 20/9, no 5875/12, 6 June 1912. See also the rest of the file.

⁸⁷ *Deutsches Volksblatt*, 2 July 1905, 6.

⁸⁸ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1 August 1905, 6; *Arbeiterwille*, 2 August 1905, 1.

⁸⁹ *Deutsches Volksblatt*, 31 July 1905, 4.

street who were criticising his behaviour and was subsequently arrested.⁹⁰ In Graz, during a bakers' strike in 1909, a Christian Social strikebreaker managed to obtain a weapons permit and a revolver. He went to a coffeehouse where the striking bakers were gathered and fired a few shots in the air. He claimed not to need police protection as he always had a policeman with him in the form of his weapon.⁹¹ During a carpenters' strike in Innsbruck in 1912, a fight broke out between the strikebreakers (accused of being Christian Socials) and the striking workers, during which a strikebreaker fired a revolver at six people, although no one was injured.⁹² A gang of 30 to 40 strikebreakers led by a strikebreaking agent and armed with revolvers, sticks and rocks went from pub to pub in Rohrbach an der Gölzen during a strike in 1911 looking for striking workers to attack. Their leader banged his stick on one of the tables and asked about a certain striking worker, before proclaiming that the man had to die that day. They then fired at the pub and the windows while the other workers fled and the customers threw themselves to the floor.⁹³ This case shows how the authorities could minimise firearms incidents if they were initiated by strikebreakers. The official report considered that these types of clash could always erupt as long as organised workers continued to be in the vicinity of the factory.⁹⁴

The years immediately before the First World War saw several cases of dramatic violence perpetrated against Social Democrats. Reichsrat deputy Heinrich Beer accused employers of having armed the strikebreakers more systematically during those years: 'I admit that it happens sometimes that a strikebreaker gets beaten. [...] But the government, or at least their prefects and administrators, must surely know that in recent times the employers systematically arm the strikebreakers with revolvers or iron bars, which they produce in their own workshops'.⁹⁵ The climate of violent distrust was heightened by two murders and one attempted murder in 1913 and 1914. Paul Kunschak shot the popular Social Democrat deputy Franz Schuhmeier in Vienna in February 1913 in revenge against Social Democratic workers' unions. He felt that Social Democratic unions had continuously barred him from employment after he had refused to join them.⁹⁶ The two other shootings targeted less prominent figures, but were more directly related to strikes. A year later, German strikebreaking agent Paul

⁹⁰ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 24 May 1909, 3.

⁹¹ *Arbeiterwille*, 28 June 1909, 3.

⁹² *Salzburger Wacht*, 18 November 1912, 5.

⁹³ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 20 September 1911, 9.

⁹⁴ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1995, sig. 20/9, no 9561/11, 17 September 1911.

⁹⁵ Speech at the Party Convention: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 7 November 1912, 9.

⁹⁶ *Reichspost*, 12 February 1913, 18; *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 13 February 1913, 4.

Keiling killed a striking worker in Bohemia. In June 1914, directly inspired by Kunschak, a young worker called Mattaschitz, who was worried about being named as a strikebreaker in the newspapers, fired at a Social Democratic leader in Graz (although the shot did not kill him).⁹⁷ These three episodes exemplify the escalation of violence around the notion of protecting the ‘freedom’ of workers who did not want to go on strike or join a union.

Although they did not ban picketing and actually tried to protect the workers’ freedom to strike, in practice the security forces and tribunals often accepted the notion that the strikers were the ones provoking the violence. When Paul Keiling killed a bookbinder during a strike in Tetschen/Děčín (Bohemia), he was given only a mild sentence by a popular jury.⁹⁸ The Social Democrats’ complaints about the leniency towards violent strikebreakers did not, however, consistently undermine the perception of living in a *Rechtsstaat*, at least not for the Social Democrat leaders. The Social Democratic press often condemned the practices of tribunals and specific local administrations and police, but not the spirit of the law. In the Keiling case, the jurors, all drawn from the bourgeoisie because of the tax requirements for town citizenship, were accused of perpetrating ‘class justice’.⁹⁹ Similarly, when Mattaschitz was acquitted of attempted murder, the decision was again blamed on juror bias.¹⁰⁰ One Social Democratic newspaper stressed that it was not the law protecting strikebreakers that was problematic, but rather the practical interpretation of it: ‘from this penal provision, which cannot be done away with in a capitalist state, and besides stems from the principle that self-help cannot be authorised in a lawful state (*Rechtsstaat*), the employers and their lackeys have concluded that the person of the strikebreaker is saintly and untouchable. The practice of many courts has even been to acknowledge the irresponsibility of strikebreakers’.¹⁰¹ The Social Democratic discourse often emphasised the difference between the law and its enforcement, calling for a more consistent legal stance throughout the empire.

Bringing replacement workers into a factory frequently created a potentially unstable situation. Whether the violence first emerged from striking workers physically intimidating a strikebreaker or from armed replacement workers feeling entitled to practice ‘self-defence’ by violent means is unclear in many cases. An incident often gave rise to conflicting interpretations in the Social Democratic and bourgeois newspapers. Official reports relate

⁹⁷ *Arbeiterwille*, 19 June 1914, 3-7.

⁹⁸ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 27 February 1914, 8.

⁹⁹ *Böhmerwald Volksbote*, 7 March 1914, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Arbeiterwille*, 19 June 1914, 3-7.

¹⁰¹ *Salzburger Wacht*, 10 February 1914, 1.

events from a non-partisan perspective, but they also show that the state authorities tended to treat violence by strikebreakers with more leniency. However, as Pieter Judson has shown in the case of nationalist violence, untangling the immediate causes and responsibility for violence is less important than analysing the dynamics and underlying discourses surrounding it in Habsburg Austria.¹⁰² Small-scale brawls related to strikebreaking denote contrasting conceptions of liberty, citizenship and state protection. A few efforts to organise ‘willing workers’ in Austria prior to the First World War show that these violent confrontations could intersect with other points of contention in Austrian society.

‘Yellow’ unions

After the turn of the century, Austrian employers increasingly attempted to retain non-striking workers and to create associations of ‘loyal’ employees to prevent strikes. These counter-organisations, working in opposition to Social Democratic goals, took different forms. The most straightforward were employer-sponsored unions, also known as ‘yellow’ unions, which began forming after 1907 in Austria. The movement had emerged in France in 1899 with the organisation of the *Jaunes* and had then been imported to Germany. The journal of Austrian employers, *Die Arbeit*, published a series of articles in December 1907 and January 1908 on the ‘yellow movement’, presenting it as a useful tool. It encouraged employers to finance ‘yellow’ associations and to give preferential treatment to workers who continued to work during strikes. Financial contribution to the creation of associations was presented as an ultimately rewarding investment, since these organisations fostered peaceful relationships in the factory and preserved ‘industrial peace’ in the long term. Emphasis was also placed on the ideological dimensions of the movement: promoting the acquisition of private property and ‘harmonious collaboration’ between workers and employers. Workers were supposed to be at the forefront of the organisation and the newspaper advised employers to agitate among non-striking workers. Even if the improvement of workers’ conditions may initially have seemed like a loss-making venture, the argument continued, it was worth creating these unions to avoid strikes.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the language frontiers in imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass 2006), chapter 6.

¹⁰³ See especially *Die Arbeit*, 22 December 1907, 2-3; 29 December 1907, 2-3; 19 January 1908, 4.

These ‘yellow’ unions remained limited to a small number of factories in Austria-Hungary before the war. Moreover, they were not linked to one another to form a larger confederation.¹⁰⁴ They would become more important during the interwar period in Austria and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁵ The Krupp metal works in Berndorf (owned by the Austrian branch of the Krupp family) was among the first to introduce these types of workers’ associations, followed by the locomotive factory in Wiener Neustadt. In the machine factory in Leobersdorf, workers were also encouraged to join an association of this type, which provided Christmas gifts, coal from the factory, rent assistance and better sickness cover.¹⁰⁶ The armament industrial complex of the Škoda works in Plzeň/Pilsen (one of the largest in Europe) founded its own ‘yellow’ union, the Association of Workers of the Škoda Works, in 1909 under the auspices of the management. By the end of that year, the union already counted 2,803 members, more than half of all the employees. Joining the union meant renouncing the right to belong to another union and signing a declaration in support of ‘the company’s interests’. It also provided multiple material benefits, including accommodation in one of the company-owned flats and the option to rent a small garden. The union organised cultural events and distributed Christmas parcels.¹⁰⁷

An article in the Social Democratic press entitled ‘The yellow danger’ explained that such unions were a means for employers to retain and reinforce strikebreaking workers after strikes through the creation of support associations or cultural associations.¹⁰⁸ A Social Democratic journal in Northern Bohemia, *Pochodeň*, warned its readers against the ploy masked by such ‘yellow unions’: ‘yellow organisations and their protectors [...] use the whip of hunger to recruit members for their yellow unions, and if someone agrees to join the “free workers’ association” or the patriotic, national etc. association, he receives good work and works all day; if he refuses, he receives bad work and stays home in the afternoon.’¹⁰⁹ The efforts of the Social Democratic press to enlighten their readers on the dangers of these unions show that they had some appeal among workers despite their modest reach. In a publication by the Employers’ Association in 1909, the ‘yellow’ movement was presented as a solution to the ‘social question’. However, the author acknowledged that some of the

¹⁰⁴ Jan Křen, ‘K počátkům českých žlutých odborů’, *Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ*, 9 (listopad 1959), 73-93.

¹⁰⁵ Walter Göhring, *Die Gelben Gewerkschaften Österreichs in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna 1998).

¹⁰⁶ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 30 March 1908, 5.

¹⁰⁷ František Janáček, *Největší zbrojovka monarchie: Škodovka v dějinách, dějiny v Škodovce, 1859-1918* (Prague 1990), 305.

¹⁰⁸ *Volksbote*, 24 April 1908, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Pochodeň*, 23 October 1908, 3.

principles and conceptions of the ‘yellows’ were, to some extent at least, already defended by German national unions in Austria.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the Christian Social workers’ newspaper remarked in 1910 that, at first sight, an openly ‘yellow workers’ movement’ did not seem to exist in Austria, as was the case in Germany. Yet, on closer examination, it appeared that the national unions were simply bought by employers. The article offered several examples of bribed ‘workers’ leaders’, explaining: ‘it becomes immediately clear why the Austrian agitators have not found it necessary until now to create their own “yellow” trade unions’.¹¹¹

The national unions (both Czech and German), which had been formed much earlier in the Austrian context, shared many similarities with the ‘yellow’ movement. The Czech National Social Party, created in 1897, had developed its own unions, which were accused of strikebreaking by Czech Social Democrats.¹¹² In the words of a Social Democratic publication, ‘with the help and support of the Czech bourgeoisie, a movement unmatched in viciousness by the yellow movement in any other nation developed in our country.’¹¹³ The German movement was established around the same time with the creation of a nationalist miners’ union in Northern Bohemia, the *Gewerkverein Deutscher Berg- und Hüttenarbeiter*, in 1902. The miners protested against the influx of cheap Czech labour into German districts, which undercut their wages and threatened their positions, and therefore rejected the national position of Social Democracy.¹¹⁴ The German national unions were most successful in Northern and Western Bohemia, although by the outbreak of the First World War they had managed to make some progress in the Alpine lands as well. The membership of the national unions remained lower than that of the Social Democratic unions during the same period, although they grew significantly in the last years before the war. Margarete Grandner quotes a figure of 80,000 members for the German national unions and 72,076 for the Czech national unions in 1912, which she considers inflated.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ *Die Gelbe Bewegung* (Vienna 1909), 14. On the ‘social question’, see Holly Case, ‘The “Social Question”, 1820-1920’, *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 13, No 3 (2016), 747-775.

¹¹¹ *Christlich-Soziale Arbeiterzeitung*, 27 August 1910, 1.

¹¹² Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*, 94.

¹¹³ *Solidarita*, 1 October 1908, 2.

¹¹⁴ Whiteside, *Austrian National Socialism*, 74.

¹¹⁵ See Margarete Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik in der Kriegswirtschaft: Die freien Gewerkschaften Österreichs im ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna 1992), 20; by comparison, for 1912, 82459 members in Christian unions and half a million members in Social Democratic unions, Mesch, *Arbeiterexistenz*, 37, 49. For 1900, a survey indicated 24,979 members of national unions, *Die Arbeitervereine in Österreich nach dem Stande vom 31. Dezember 1900* (Vienna 1905), 37.

Much of the anger at the so-called ‘yellow’ trade unions was directed against the national trade unions, which were accused of being paid for by employers.¹¹⁶ The Social Democratic press regularly attacked the German nationalist trade unions: the *Arbeiterwille* in Graz accused the ‘Bund deutscher Arbeiter’ of strikebreaking, while the *Salzburger Wacht* referred to the ‘Deutschvölkische Bauarbeiterschaft’ as a ‘yellow organisation’ that employers pressured their workers to join.¹¹⁷ Social Democrats accused, for example, the German national organisation in Cilli/Celje of being manipulated by capitalists who provided them with beer to help maintain the movement artificially.¹¹⁸ These unions were not set up by employers, but due to their comparative weakness in most branches of industry, it is certainly plausible that they sometimes turned to employers for financial support. In one of the founding meetings of the DAP, a miner from Bohemia had, for example, appealed for active support of the movement by employers.¹¹⁹ The German radical deputy Von Stransky sent a letter to several business owners in his election district in Asch (Bohemia) to ask them to support the German national unions because otherwise the district would fall into the hands of ‘strike organiser’ Schuhmeier.¹²⁰

Strikebreaking might not have been the primary *raison d’être* of the national unions, but it was definitely encouraged in some instances. The German Workers’ Party in the Alpine lands invited workers to participate in strikebreaking, since strikes were a ‘tool for the Slavicization of German areas’ as employers sought to replace German workers with Czech or other Slav workers. Strikebreaking was thus presented as a form of ‘national self-defence’.¹²¹ The Czech National Socialists militated against the general strike of 1906 because they considered that the fight for universal suffrage should not be directed against ‘Czech artisans, traders, and businessmen’.¹²² Leaders of national unions sometimes used strikebreaking to recruit new members or negotiate preferential treatment with employers. In some cases, National Socialists incited workers to resume work, which elicited accusations of betrayal among Social Democrats. In a shoe factory on strike in Lytomyšl, national socialist leader Červenka provided replacement workers and had them join the national socialist

¹¹⁶ Example quoting a payment letter from an employer in *Böhmerwald Volksbote*, 12 August 1911, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Arbeiterwille*, 1 September 1910, 7; *Salzburger Wacht*, 6 March 1912, 1.

¹¹⁸ *Arbeiterwille*, 9 February 1909, 3.

¹¹⁹ Ferdinand Burschofsky, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschnationalen Arbeiterbewegung in Österreich* (Hohenstadt 1914), 27.

¹²⁰ *Die Arbeit*, 10 May 1908, 2.

¹²¹ Quoted in *Salzburger Wacht*, 21 May 1908, 3.

¹²² Special issue of *Lid*, 28 June 1906 in ÖStA, AVA, Mdi, Präs, K1991, sig. 20/9, no 6011/06, 6 July 1906.

organisation.¹²³ In Plzeň/Pilsen, the maltster members of a national socialist union broke the strike at a brewery after striking a deal with the management.¹²⁴ In the same town, the National Socialists encouraged some construction workers to resume work during a strike in 1906. At a meeting discussing the strike, a Social Democrat speaker had threatened to use physical violence against National Socialists at the next such betrayal. The Bohemian Governor's Office recommended a judicial condemnation of the speaker to ensure the protection of willing workers.¹²⁵

The action of national unions has been understood so far through the prism of rising nationalism in the Habsburg monarchy. At the time, efforts to mobilise workers were presented in the nationalist press as part of the campaigns for the national cause. However, demonstrations of national workers sometimes revealed social tensions between organised workers and their replacements. During a construction workers' strike in Carlsbad in 1909, 260 replacement workers demonstrated at the district office against picketing. The German radical deputy Lössl made a speech in which he celebrated strikebreaking as a national action and the protesters sang nationalist songs.¹²⁶ This demonstration could be interpreted as a nationalist event or as an expression of the grievances of 'willing workers'.¹²⁷ Nationalist attempts to incorporate strikebreaking workers into the national movement should not mask the different motives for strife between workers, which were not limited to nationalist battles. During a strike in Maxglan (near Salzburg), the *Volksblatt* presented an incident of violence as an attack on a German national worker by Czech Social Democrats, whereas the (Social Democrat) *Salzburger Wacht* saw it as a fight between German strikebreakers and non-organised workers.¹²⁸

The violent brand of nationalism promoted by the DAP and the National Socialists was directed not only at ethnic foes, but also to a large extent at Social Democrats. The German nationalist movement *Jungmannenbewegung* (Young Men's Movement), which recruited members among young workers and apprentices, were often gangs of young men who engaged in street violence against Czechs and Social Democrats.¹²⁹ For instance, in Gablonz in 1909, the *Jungmannen* 'provoked' a crowd of workers leaving a Social

¹²³ *Právo lidu*, 16 August 1912, 4.

¹²⁴ *Nová doba*, 14 April 1906, 1.

¹²⁵ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K2093, sig. 22 Böhmen, no 9482/06, 5 November 1906.

¹²⁶ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 18 Januar 1909, 3.

¹²⁷ *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 16 January 1909, 12.

¹²⁸ *Salzburger Wacht*, 25 Sept 1908, 3.

¹²⁹ Whiteside, *Austrian National Socialism*, 98.

Democratic meeting.¹³⁰ A few years later, a group of *Jungmänner* disrupted another Social Democratic meeting in Carlsbad and a young Social Democrat received a knife wound to the forehead.¹³¹ *Jungmänner* accompanied strikebreakers during a book printers' strike in Winterberg/Vimperk.¹³² Their relative success can be measured by the Social Democrats' concern for the number of young workers joining the *Jungmänner*.¹³³ Similarly, street violence by Czech National Socialists did not only target Germans in Prague.¹³⁴ Official reports underlined the hostility between the two groups of workers, as fights broke out during meetings, demonstrations and even dance evenings.¹³⁵ National Socialists attacked the Workers' Home in Plzeň/Pilsen with sticks, while thousands of Social Democrats violently interrupted a National Socialist meeting in a Prague suburb.¹³⁶ The Old Czech newspaper *Národní politika* also reported on the violence against national socialist workers, for example when construction workers in Prague assaulted a national socialist they suspected of having brought strikebreakers to the building site.¹³⁷ This type of violence complicates our understanding of the everyday nationalist battles in Bohemia, which are mostly presented as a conflict between Czechs and Germans.¹³⁸ Other factors, such as competition for workers' loyalties and the battle against Social Democracy, played an important role.

Even the national credentials of the national unions could be doubtful. The Social Democrats often mocked the pretensions of recruiting strikebreakers into national organisations, since many replacement workers came from other regions of the monarchy, or even from other countries. After a construction workers' strike in Salzburg, the new workers forced to join the German national organisation included many Italians.¹³⁹ Finding replacement workers often meant relying on networks of mobility, bringing men from far away who did not know about the strike and came from more impoverished areas. A district official acknowledged the potential for violence in these circumstances: 'The situation could

¹³⁰ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 3 December 1909, 3.

¹³¹ *Böhmerwald-Volksbote*, 26 August 1911, 3.

¹³² *Böhmerwald-Volksbote*, 13 June 1914, 4.

¹³³ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31 May 1912, 7.

¹³⁴ See T. Mills Kelly, 'Taking It to the Streets: Czech National Socialists in 1908,' *Austrian History Yearbook* 29 (1998), 93-112.

¹³⁵ ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K2093, sig. 22 Böhmen, no 1078/06, 3 February 1906.

¹³⁶ *Nová doba*, 9 October 1908, 4; *Nová doba*, 17 June 1908, 5.

¹³⁷ *Národní politika*, 17 October 1906, 6.

¹³⁸ On nationalist violence, see Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints*; Jan Křen, *Die Konfliktgemeinschaft: Tschechen und Deutsche, 1780-1918* (Munich 1996).

¹³⁹ *Salzburger Wacht*, 9 April 1908, 2.

become dangerous if the management were to procure workers from outside, for example Croats returning from America'.¹⁴⁰

This was only one side of the strikebreaker's stereotypical profile. Social Democratic portrayals tended to differentiate between separate social types: the simple-minded strikebreakers led astray by treacherous agents and the leaders. For example, Macedonian strikebreakers at a trial in Rovigno/Rovinj were described as 'draught animals' with 'low foreheads, yellow faces' and 'a stupid gaze', while their Italian leader was characterized, with his pomaded hair and starch collar, as 'someone who lives off others'.¹⁴¹ In these representations, workers in national unions were either paid-up foremen, spineless workers, or inexperienced youths.¹⁴² These oversimplified caricatures erase the real appeal of radical nationalism among working-class men, which explains the relative success of alternative unions.¹⁴³ However, strikes could also incite mobilisation along class lines with middle-class men intervening to prevent the strike's success. During a stonemasons' strike in Saubsdorf/Supikovice in Silesia, a German nationalist clerk escorting 50 strikebreakers fired his revolver into the air as striking workers gathered around them.¹⁴⁴ Middle-class men acted both by protecting replacement labour and, sometimes even, by replacing workers themselves. In Ljubljana/Laibach, for example, the municipal volunteer firemen offered their services as strikebreakers during an industrial conflict at a brewery.¹⁴⁵ University students in Cracow volunteered to replace print workers during the strike of January 1914, leading to tensions with Social Democratic organisations.¹⁴⁶

Anti-labour measures during strikes were one of the means of reaction against democratisation and the spread of Social Democracy. Strikes were not simply isolated industrial conflicts between employers and workers, they also reflected the dynamics of change in Austrian society as a result of the suffrage movement. The Social Democrats accused the German workers' movement of having been supported by employers and the municipal authorities (for example, in Carlsbad) as a means for the bourgeoisie to contain the

¹⁴⁰ Report from the district office in Steyr, Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Statthaltereipräsidium, sig. 6B, K113, no 4957, 24 December 1907.

¹⁴¹ *Il proletario*, 21 May 1902, 2.

¹⁴² See a description of German national workers in Neusattl/Nové Sedlo, *Solidarita*, 25 May 1911, 2-3.

¹⁴³ Whiteside, *Austrian National Socialism*, 78-79; T. Mills Kelly, *Without Remorse*, 129.

¹⁴⁴ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 5 August 1910, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 22 May 1906, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Report from Galician governor to the Interior Ministry, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1998, sig. 20/9, no 950, 23 January 1914.

‘red’ danger during the 1907 elections.¹⁴⁷ The Social Democratic press used the derogatory term ‘German yellows’ (*Deutschgelben*) to refer to the German Workers’ Party. The goal was to cement the link between the national workers’ movement and strikebreaking. Social Democrats saw the party as a means for German nationalists to win workers’ votes. Similar accusations surfaced against Czech National Socialists, who were supposedly bankrolled by the Czech bourgeoisie, eager to control ‘their’ national workers.¹⁴⁸

The conflicts during strikes should be placed within a broader framework of resistance to democratisation and to Social Democratic gains in pre-war Europe.¹⁴⁹ The violence around strikebreaking was directly linked to the battles during elections as traditional elites needed to reach beyond their usual base by mobilising workers, sometimes through violent pressure, in order to preserve their electoral mandates. This period of electoral mobilizations from the introduction of a fifth curia in 1897 to the elections of 1911 and beyond, corresponded to a moment of intense reconfiguration of the political balance visible in suffrage campaigns, as well as general and local elections. The elections to the *Reichsrat* in 1907, which were based on universal male suffrage for the first time, saw a peak in this type of electoral violence. In Galicia, in particular, attempts to influence voters often took very violent forms.¹⁵⁰ During the 1907 elections in Trieste, the local Social Democrat press referred to the Italian National Liberal candidate, Mazonara, as ‘chief strikebreaker’. His *bande nere*, gangs of youths who tried to influence the elections by means of violence, primarily targeted Social Democrats.¹⁵¹ Election manipulation sometimes led to strikes. In 1911, workers in a factory in Silesia went on strike demanding the dismissal of two German nationalist workers after the victory of their candidate in the election. The striking workers argued that the German nationalists had been given time off work to pursue their electoral campaign, but not the Social Democrat voters who had been unable to leave the factory to vote.¹⁵²

Conclusion

¹⁴⁷ *Böhmerwald Volksbote*, 17 August 1912, 1; 13 April 1912, 2.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, in this pamphlet: Rudolf Fárek, *Budiž jasno* (Brno 1902).

¹⁴⁹ On Germany, see James Retallack, *Red Saxony: Election Battles and the Spectre of Democracy in Germany, 1860-1918* (Oxford, 2017).

¹⁵⁰ On the notorious ‘Galician elections’, see Harald Binder, *Galizien in Wien: Parteien, Wahlen, Fraktionen und Abgeordnete im Übergang zur Massenpolitik* (Vienna 2005), 295-307.

¹⁵¹ Winkler, *Wahlrechtsreformen und Wahlen in Triest*, 152; 160.

¹⁵² Report from the district office in Jägerndorf/Krnov, 5 July 1911, ÖStA, AVA, MdI, Präs, K1995, sig. 20/9, no 7308/11, 17 July 1911.

Strikes, as a relatively new form of social conflict, which reached a high point before the First World War, highlighted the various tensions in Austrian society as well as the state's role in regulating them. The state repression of strikes in Austria-Hungary from the 1890s to 1914 shows the limits of the rule of law as exercised by the Habsburg state on the ground. Repression by the police and the gendarmerie aimed to achieve impartiality, but it often reflected local officials' sympathies for the employers' causes. Frequent army intervention increased the number of casualties. The state of affairs in Galicia seems to have been marked by a special willingness to rely on the army in this regard. However, recurring complaints from employers about the insufficiency of state forces show that the link between the administration and industry was far from systematically positive. Moreover, Social Democrats often demonstrated faith in both the state and the legal system in their appeals for a more thorough application of the law everywhere and for everyone. The wave of strikes in 1905-1906 and the democratisation of 1907 persuaded factory owners to organise themselves better and develop their own networks. This reaction to Social Democratic mobilisation took place in factories, as well as on the streets and in the ballot box. Concerns for the safety of 'willing workers' recruited by employers framed the debate in terms of protection of the freedom to work against the 'terrorism' of the Social Democrats. This discourse was able to channel the fears of broad sections of the population.

As a case study, then, strikebreaking can help paint a more complete picture of political violence in late Habsburg Austria, which was not limited to nationalist grievances. Low-level violence during strikes was part of a larger movement of intimidation and rioting, which also took place around elections. Physical confrontations between striking workers and strikebreakers were sometimes interpreted in nationalist terms in the nationalist press, especially since employers often supported the creation or development of national unions. However, the movements and violent incidents that have been primarily interpreted as manifestations of nationalism should be viewed as a reflection of deep social conflicts. In this, they are actually closer to the other European case studies analysed in the other articles in this special issue. Instead of viewing this violence as a result of the backwardness or pathologically violent nationalism present in Eastern Europe, it must be seen as directly related to the growth of mass politics prior to 1914. Strikebreaking forms part of a larger spectrum of battles triggered by the process of democratisation in Austria at the turn of the century, and the resulting attempts by the bourgeois parties to co-opt workers on their own terms.

Furthermore, resituating street violence in Habsburg Austria within the context of the struggles against Social Democratic gains in the wake of 1907 illuminates the connections with the post-war period. Unrest and counterrevolution in the aftermath of the First World War have recently been interpreted as the result of imperial collapse, defeat and anti-Bolshevik reaction.¹⁵³ However, all the movements across the region drew on local practices and discourses that pre-dated 1914. Prior to 1918, the war and the demands it placed on the population had exacerbated tensions over in/exclusion from citizenship, which harked back to the post-1907 debates. The conflicts running through Austrian society before the war were not primarily driven by discontented national groups, but rather by democratising forces fighting for broader participation in politics and their opponents, who were seeking to hold on to their social positions. Furthermore, threats to the empire's legitimacy came from tensions between the population's expectations of the state and the rule of law and local illiberal practices.

¹⁵³ Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London 2016).