

# *Socialisms in the Tsarist Borderlands Poland and Finland in a Contrastive Comparison, 1830–1907*

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a conceptual history of *socialism* in two Western borderlands of the Russian Empire—namely, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland. A contrastive comparison is used to examine the birth, dissemination, and breakthrough of the concept from its first appearance until the Revolution of 1905. The concept entered Polish political conversation as a self-applied label among émigrés in the 1830s, whereas the opponents of *socialism* made it famous in Finland in the 1840s in Swedish and in the 1860s in Finnish. When *socialism* became a mass movement at the turn of the century, socialist parties (re)defined the concept through underground leaflets and brochures in Poland, and through a legal labor press in Finland. In both cases, the Revolution of 1905 meant the final democratization of *socialism*, attaching more meanings to the concept and making it the most discussed ism of modern politics.

## KEYWORDS

democratization, Finland, isms, Poland, Revolution of 1905, Russian Empire, *socialism*

There are probably few ism concepts that have influenced European political trajectories at the turn of the twentieth century more profoundly than *socialism*. This concept was at the vortex of the great transformation of European societies into welfare democracies, a transformation that was introduced either because of socialist mobilization or because of a fear-based reaction against it.<sup>1</sup> Its active appropriation was also a vital factor in the trajectories of political militancy in the Russian Empire. In the case of Polish *socialism* and

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1. See Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).



Finnish *socialism*, their long-term destinies were inevitably tied to both the resilience and the fall of the Empire.<sup>2</sup> However, one can approach the political history of the imperial borderlands of Poland and Finland from a less fatalistic perspective, and argue that the active choices of popular classes in a way determined the political futures of various states throughout Europe. And one can see that these choices, though made in the past, are enmeshed in ongoing conceptual transformations.

The areas under examination in this article—the Polish Kingdom, or Russian Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Finland—provide a useful field of research on the diffusion, transfer, and entanglement of concepts because of their specific language situations, political traditions, and class structures, together with their intermediary position influenced simultaneously by Western conceptual imports and Russian radical ideas. Although they were part of the same imperial space, they also provide fruitful grounds for a contrastive comparison, as their conceptual developments appear to have differences that require explanation. An investigation into such differences can also address different modalities of being under an imperial situation. While new imperial historians have studied entangled histories of dependent regions, the history of militant concepts leading people out onto the streets can contribute to our understanding of the political results of different modes of imperial control. Thus, the point of our comparison is to study the adaptation of *socialism* in one and the same imperial ecosystem but with two different local habitats in order to find regularities and variations in their histories.

In order to pay due attention to these complexities, we first offer a brief reconstruction of the historical context of Poland and Finland in the nineteenth century. We then move on to examining the similarities and divergences between these countries in three loosely chronological parts. First, we compare the birth stories of *socialism* in Russian Poland and in Finland. Second, we analyze the changes in the architecture of the concept in the late nineteenth century, when *socialism* became a mass movement. And third, we explain the major influences brought about by the Revolution of 1905. The main sources of our research consist of newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, brochures, and leaflets. Our contribution is not focused solely on conceptual differences between languages; we are more interested in the social embedding of concepts and their transfer across the social spectrum, an issue that is especially important for concepts used as a means of agitation.

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2. Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

## Tsarist Borderlands on the Verge of Modernity

Russian Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland were both overdeveloped minority regions within the multinational Russian Empire. Despite their common imperial affiliation, the countries had their separate political histories. Poland had long been an independent republican monarchy, whereas Finland had been under the control of the Swedish crown until 1809. Once incorporated into the Russian Empire, both states retained a separate legal status in relation to other Russian provinces. Russian Poland, which comprised only a part of the former Polish state, was initially in a personal union with Russia. Finland was formally ruled by the Russian emperor, who held the title of Grand Duke. The local elites and the Russian administration interpreted the status of the Grand Duchy differently, which caused political tensions at the turn of the century. However, Finland was able to preserve and even strengthen its position and national rights, while Poland eventually lost its original status.<sup>3</sup>

This created differences in the attitudes of the local elites toward the empire. Polish nobles faced a difficult choice between an imperial career and national fidelity, while members of the Finnish elite saw imperial Russia as just another ruler and did not have great problems with collaboration.<sup>4</sup> This early antagonism in Poland worked as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and later the margins of political action became much broader in Finland: associational life was less restricted and censorship meeker with only a short interlude of Russification efforts by Governor-General Nikolay Bobrikov.<sup>5</sup> During most

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3. Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34, 38, 111–114.

4. Jörg Ganzenmüller, *Russische Staatsgewalt Und Polnischer Adel: Elitenintegration Und Staatsausbau Im Westen Des Zarenreiches (1772–1850)* [Russian power and the Polish nobility: The integration of the elite and the expansion of the state in the western tsarist empire (1772–1850)] (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 375; Kristiina Kalleinen, “Byrokratian pyhä yhteys: Suomen ylin virkamiehistö ja Venäjä 1809–98” [Holy bond of bureaucracy: Highest officials in Finland and Russia, 1809–98], in *Venäjän kahdet kasvot: Venäjä-kuva suomalaisen identiteetin rakennuskivenä* [The two faces of Russia: The image of Russia in the making of Finnish identity], ed. Timo Vihavainen (Helsinki: Edita, 2004), 33–53, here 34. All translations of non-English references and quotations are our own unless otherwise indicated.

5. Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804–1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Malte Rolf, *Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland: Das Königreich Polen im russischen Imperium (1864–1915)* [Imperial rule in Vistula Country: The Kingdom of Poland in the Russian Empire (1864–1915)] (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 125–154.

of the long nineteenth century, Finnish political actors, socialists included, were busier with direct competition between themselves than with organizing anti-imperial separatist movements.

Both countries constituted the western fringe of the tsarist empire and remained economically, culturally, and linguistically distinct borderlands. They spearheaded Russian industrialization and witnessed intensified processes of modernization during the course of the nineteenth century. Thus, the industrial hubs of the borderlands often had more in common with their urban counterparts in the west than with the neighboring areas in the east. In both contexts, local elites sought connections with Western Europe. Simultaneously, however, they remained embedded in Russian intellectual life through universities, administration, and direct personal transfers—a debt not always willingly admitted by the local intellectuals.<sup>6</sup> Despite these similarities between the two lands, with respect to social structure, ethnic composition, and especially linguistic traditions, “Poland” and “Finland” were very different from each other.

While the old Polish statehood came to a formal end in 1795, it left legacies in the abundant lore of political literature and a well-developed political language. Its atypical political regime—a noble class republic with an elected king—fostered the development of a peculiar form of republicanism and a corresponding vocabulary. Local writers were well versed in Renaissance thought and consciously built the Polish political vocabulary in a highly Latinized form. However, during the reign of the last king and the “Great Sejm,” French became the main source of linguistic inspiration. French gained additional significance because of a prominent role played by the emigration of political dissidents under the partitions, when three neighboring imperial states divided the Polish land between each other and Poland ceased to exist as an independent entity (in full effect after 1795). They very often chose France as a safe haven after the failure of the November uprising of 1831 and were therefore important intermediaries between the French political vocabulary and the rapidly modernizing Polish political language.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Jacek Kochanowicz, “The Economy of the Polish Kingdom: A Question of Dependence,” in *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire: A Comparative Study*, ed. Michael Branch, Janet M. Hartley, and Antoni Mączak (London: University of London, 1995), 123–139; Erkki Pihkala, “The Finnish Economy and Russia, 1809–1917,” in Branch et al., *Finland and Poland*, 153–166; Ben Hellman, “The Reception of Russian Culture in Finland, 1809–1917,” in Branch et al., *Finland and Poland*, 199–213; Andrea Szwarc, “To Be a Pole in Russia in the Nineteenth Century,” in Branch et al., *Finland and Poland*, 227–239.

7. Franciszek Peplowski, *Słownictwo i frazeologia polskiej publicystyki okresu Oświecenia i romantyzmu* [Vocabulary and phraseology in Polish journalism in the Age of Enlightenment] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961).

In the case of Finland, the linguistic connection to Swedish was much more important than the linguistic connection to Russian, for Swedish elites and the Swedish language dominated the most important spheres of Finnish society until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Finnish—the language of the vast majority of the common people—was only used in religious and juridical contexts. It did not exist as a language of politics. “Fennomans,” the nationalist politicians who promoted the use of Finnish, created a political vocabulary only in the mid-nineteenth century. By the end of the century, the linguistic hegemony of Swedish was challenged. One quantitative indicator of this change is the number of newspaper pages in Finnish: it exceeded the number of Swedish pages in the 1890s.<sup>8</sup>

Hence, while a political link to the Russian Empire created a degree of uniformity between Russian Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland, the distinct cultural traditions generated a variation between these tsarist borderlands, especially with regard the beginning of the conceptual history of *socialism* in the two lands.

## Beginnings

*Socialism*, as other modern ism concepts, proliferated in European languages at different times and from varied directions. In the case of Polish *socialism* and *communism*, they were deployed for the first time almost simultaneously in the radical émigrés’ journalism abroad and among domestic conservative pamphleteers in the 1830 and 1840s.<sup>9</sup> The first steps toward *socialism* were allegedly made in the journal *Przyszłość* (The future), which was authored and published by Adam Gurowski, one of the radical leftist émigrés. He attempted to usher in a Polish translation of *sociabilité*, and introduced terms that in the end turned out to be blind alleys (*towarzystwość*, *socjalność*).<sup>10</sup> Finally, how-

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8. Risto Alapuro, “Vallankumous” [Revolution], in *Käsitteet liikkeessä: Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsitehistoria* [Concepts in motion: The conceptual history of the Finnish political culture], ed. Matti Hyvärinen, Jussi Kurunmäki, Kari Palonen, Tuija Pulkkinen, and Henrik Stenius (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003), 519–568, here 523; Kaisa Häkkinen, *Agricolasta nykykieleen: Suomen kirjakielen historia* [From Agricola to present-day Finnish: The history of standard Finnish] (Juva: WSOY, 1994), 37–56; Tuula Pääkkönen, Jukka Kervinen, Asko Nivala, and Eetu Mäkelä, “Exporting Finnish Digitized Historical Newspaper Contents for Offline Use,” *D-Lib Magazine* 22, nos. 7–8 (2016), doi:10.1045/july2016-paakkonen.

9. Peplowski, *Slownictwo i frazeologia polskiej publicystyki okresu Oświecenia i romantyzmu*, 245–251.

10. Piotr Kuligowski, “Remarks on Communes of the Polish People: The Character of Organization, the Ideology, the Meaning,” *Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 2 (2015): 268–282, here 277.

ever, it was the suffix -ism that became successful. The internal journal of the Polish Democratic Society—the main democratic-constitutionalist émigré organization—was ready to claim that adherents of the new radical doctrine accepted “the well-grounded concept of socialism” in 1835.<sup>11</sup>

In the initial phase, there were two main sets of meanings associated with *socialism*. The first, later abandoned, spread among émigré democrats and referred to a moral stance in contradiction to individualism or egoism. This meaning existed in France and England at the time,<sup>12</sup> and it was especially cherished by the members of the Communes of the Polish People, who attempted to build a radical social philosophy grounded in the religious principles and radical potentials of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> Such *socialism* was “born in the bosom of Christian philosophy” and resisted the individualistic tendencies initiated by Martin Luther, which spurred on Anglicanism and English liberalism. The latter had infected Polish moderate constitutionalism and had to be defeated by socialist gospel.<sup>14</sup>

The second meaning, which was closer to the dominant modern one, emerged a bit later but gradually took the upper hand. As in the German case, the socialists were in some pamphlets presented as representatives of a particular ideological current, later commonly referred to as utopian socialism.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a more generic meaning was introduced that referred to some form of social science with a political potential, where those who “worked under the banner of socialism” were the “revolutionary economists.”<sup>16</sup> The influence of German patterns is detectable, an influence that is confirmed by the place of publication of these enunciations, which was Berlin.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting that the Polish circulation of concepts had at least four entangled sources: émigré debates in close exchange with French circulation, and Polish writers active in three partitions of the former Poland, now integrated in the three large imperial states. While political practices often diverged because of different circumstances, the transfer of ideas did not stop at the border. Publications and books were smuggled in huge quantities, and political actors were often surprisingly mobile. We focus here on

11. “Okólniki TDP,” 6 May 1835, no. 671: 154, quoted in Peter Brock, *Polish Revolutionary Populism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 22.

12. Wolfgang Schieder, “Sozialismus,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* [Historical concepts] vol. 5, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–1997): 923–996, here 943.

13. Kuligowski, “Remarks on Communes of the Polish People.”

14. Zenon Świętosławski, ed., *Lud polski w emigracji 1835–1846* [The Polish people in emigration 1835–1846] (Jersey: Drukarnia Powszechna, 1854), 56, 97.

15. See, e.g., Edmund Chojecki, *Rewolucjoniści i stronnictwa wsteczne* [Revolutionaries and reactionary parties] (Berlin: Behr, 1849), 25.

16. *Ibid.*, 28.

17. For more on German patterns, see Schieder, “Sozialismus,” esp. 944–947.

the Russian part for the sake of imperial comparison, but all the other contexts were important tributaries.

Amid these early fluctuations during the 1840s, the meaning of *socialism* became stabilized and began to describe a definite set of principles. Thus, “social freedom that is socialism” was considered a part of the general principle of “democratism.”<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, the pamphlet stipulating this, perhaps the first one to define *socialism* explicitly, makes a clear declaration that *socialism* is a generic principle, a direction of movement, some form of all-encompassing moral knowledge, and “not a system of general social organization, as it does not integrate details into any organic whole; as an absolute, progressive and general aspiration it does not enclose itself in the limit of time and space”—in the same way that medicine did not invent a universal drug.<sup>19</sup> This pamphlet paved the way for the outspoken appropriation of *socialism* and its defense in close interdiscourse with the concept’s opponents. In one of the journals of the Polish Democratic Society from 1852, one may already find extensive polemics against conservative critics who were fighting against *socialism* “with lies.”<sup>20</sup> This dynamic illuminates the polemical capacities of the suffix -ism. Its career was part and parcel of ideologization and politicization of concepts that took place in modernity.<sup>21</sup> Concepts became not only hotly contested issues but also direct weapons, “fighting words.”<sup>22</sup> The stabilization of the meaning of *socialism* and its entrenchment in polemics soon also affected the debates among the Polish writers who remained in partitioned Poland.

An illustrative example is the eccentric Count Leon Rzewuski, who was a member of the Galician landed gentry but claimed to be a “citizen of a local commune,” which appeared to be his own castle. His radicalism was tempered when he was later disappointed with the democratic movement and became a conservative writer. Before that, however, he offered a positive definition of *socialism* as “a philosophy of social principles recognizing the sovereignty of the nation in economic relations as well as in political life.”<sup>23</sup> Again, *socialism* is “merely a practical application of democracy to the life of

18. Stanisław Worcell, *Co przed nami?* [What is in front of us?] (Paris: Martinet L., 1850), 22.

19. Worcell, *Co przed nami?* 19.

20. *Demokrata Polski* [The Polish democrat] 1852, in *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie: Dokumenty i Pisma* [Polish democratic society: Documents and writings], ed. Bronisław Baczko (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1954).

21. Reinhart Koselleck, “Einleitung” [Introduction], in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), xiii–xxvii.

22. Marc W. Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

23. *Postęp* [Progress] 32 (1848): 128 quoted in Brock, *Polish Revolutionary Populism*, 73.

the people.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the early presence of Polish socialism was marked by the conflation of *socialism* and democracy.

While radical Polish émigrés were willingly referring to the concept of socialism from the 1830s onward, the Finnish elite were not. *Socialism*, like all other isms, arrived in the Finnish language late compared to other European languages. Here, the difference between the Finnish and Swedish press in Finland is striking. In the Swedish-language press, several isms were already in use in the late eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In turn, the first ism we found in the Finnish press is from 1836: *parallelism*, meaning repetition as a rhetorical device.<sup>26</sup> The only isms appearing in the Finnish newspapers and periodicals from 1840 to 1859 are *galvanism*, *magnetism*, and *pan-Slavism*. The first decade of Finnish isms was the 1860s, when several new isms entered the language: not only *socialism* but also *determinism*, *Spiritism*, *organism*, *realism*, *Protestantism*, *pessimism*, *patriotism*, *communism*, and *idealism*.<sup>27</sup> The word socialist had been mentioned by an anonymous writer in *Suometar*, one of the few weekly Finnish newspapers, in the beginning of the revolutionary year 1848.<sup>28</sup> However, the first Finnish-language use of *socialism* as an ism was contained in a newspaper article as late as 1863—in other words, twenty-three years after its first appearance in the Swedish-language press.<sup>29</sup> It was published in *Helsingin Uutiset* (News from Helsinki), the recently established organ of the radical wing of the Finnish Fennoman movement. This unidentified writer<sup>30</sup> criticized the Poor Relief Law for its socialist elements and saw the law as an attack on the principle of private property. He used the concepts of socialism and communism virtually synonymously. This connection was common in the press later on in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s.<sup>31</sup>

24. *Postep* 15 (1848): 206.

25. E.g., *magnetism* in *Åbo Tidningar*, 21 February 1791, and *egoism* in *Åbo Tidningar*, 11 June 1798.

26. *Mehiläinen* 3 (1836): 5.

27. The analysis was carried out by searching the string “\*ism\*” in the Finnish N-grams (1820–2000) of the Newspaper and Periodical Corpus of the National Library of Finland distributed by the University of Helsinki on behalf of the FIN-CLARIN Consortium and available at <http://www.helsinki.fi/finclarin/fnc1>.

28. *Suometar*, 7 January 1848.

29. For the first Finnish mention we found, see *Helsingin Uutiset*, 19 March 1863. For the first Swedish mention, see *Borgå Tidning*, 1 January 1840.

30. The writer could be Agathon Meurman (1826–1909), who we mention later in this article, for he was contributing to *Helsingin Uutiset* at the time. See Päiviö Tommila, ed., *Suomen lehdistön historia 5: Hakuteos Aamulehti—Kotka Nyheter. Sanoma- ja paikallis-lehdistö 1771–1985* [History of the Finnish press 5: Reference book Aamulehti—Kotka Nyheter. Newspapers and local papers 1771–1985] (Kuopio: Kustannuskiila, 1988), 134.

31. See, e.g., *Vaasan Sanomat*, 16 September 1878; *Tampereen Sanomat*, 30 January 1883; *Hämäläinen*, 11 July 1894.

A similar close link between *socialism* and *communism* had existed in many European languages, including Polish, in the 1840s.<sup>32</sup>

Contrary to the Polish and German cases, however, these concepts did not have any unambiguously positive formulations in the Finnish newspapers until the 1890s, for there was no political movement that wished to affiliate itself with *socialism* or *communism*. In fact, *socialism* gained such negative publicity that it could be used as a weapon in Finnish domestic politics. In the early 1880s, the Swedish-speaking conservatives highlighted the similarities between Fennoman *nationalism* and foreign *socialism*.<sup>33</sup> This parallel obviously irritated nationalists, because most of them came from the middle and upper classes and were strongly against *socialism*.<sup>34</sup> When a correspondent of *Uusi Suometar*, the leading voice of Finnish Fennoman *nationalism*, was reporting on the federal election of 1878 in Dresden, he referred to *socialism* as intolerable as a religion, one-sided as a science, and violent or impossible as a practice.<sup>35</sup> This newspaper was not only the most active newspaper when it came to writing about *socialism*, but it was also its fiercest opponent.<sup>36</sup> The very same phenomenon had occurred in England in the 1830s, where it was the religious opponents of the Owenites who most often used the concept of socialism.<sup>37</sup>

The Finnish concept of socialism cannot be understood solely in the context of *communism*, for it was connected to many other dangerous isms in the emerging Finnish press. The Fennoman newspaper *Satakunta* argued in its foreign coverage that the disease was one and the same everywhere in Europe, but it had many names: *socialism* in Germany, *communism* in France, and *nihilism* in Russia.<sup>38</sup> In addition, contemporary newspapers presented *socialism* in the negative semantic fields of *materialism*, *internationalism*, and *atheism*.<sup>39</sup> Some writers had self-made theories about the birth

32. Schieder, "Sozialismus," 958; Bertel Nygaard, "The Specter of Communism: Denmark, 1848," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11, no. 1 (2016): 1–23; Piotr Kuliowski, "Ouvriers, proletarjat czy stan czwarty? Konceptualizacje klasy robotniczej w kregach polskiej lewicy (1832–1892)" [Workers, proletariat, or the fourth estate? Conceptualizations of the working class by political circles on the Polish left], *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 1 (2017): 160–194.

33. *Östra Nyland*, 25 January 1882.

34. *Laatokka*, 9 February; *Aamulehti*, 18 February 1882; *Päijänne*, 8 November 1882.

35. *Uusi Suometar*, 23 August 1878.

36. In total, *Uusi Suometar* produced about 40 percent (71 out of 177) of all *socialisms* in the Finnish newspapers and periodicals between 1863 and 1879. This result is based on searching the lemma "sosialismi" in the KORP interface of the Language Bank of Finland, korp.csc.fi. For more details on the corpus, see <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:lb-201405275>.

37. Schieder, "Sozialismus," 935–936.

38. *Satakunta*, 14 December 1878.

39. *Ilmarinen*, 3 June 1876; *Tampereen Sanomat*, 23 July 1878; *Laatokka*, 17 February 1894.

of isms. According to a letter to the editor in *Uusi Suometar*, “socialism, materialism, and nihilism all originate from rationalism, which treats reason as a religion.”<sup>40</sup> Another Fennoman newspaper, *Hämäläinen*, published an article series on modern times, claiming that isms were a result of incapable and revengeful minds. It was “the rotten condition of the poor” that gave birth to isms such as *socialism*. In addition, this anonymous writer localized the source of evil isms in Paris, “the kindergarten of the world.”<sup>41</sup> Newspapers described the progress of *socialism* not only in France but also in Germany, England, Russia, Denmark, and Sweden. However, there was a public consensus that isms had not yet conquered Finland. One teacher phrased it humorously in 1879: “To this date, the Finnish nation has stayed away from devastating ideas: materialism, socialism and other harmful ‘lisms’ which rot and trouble civilized bodies of people in Europe, and threaten them with destruction; yes, thank God none of these are known in Finland, but beware the elementary school!”<sup>42</sup>

The first mild sympathizers with *socialism* came out in the Finnish press in the late 1880s.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, it could be argued that the first openly socialist Finn in the public sphere was actually a fictional character from a realist play by Minna Canth that was published in 1888.<sup>44</sup> The protagonist, Topra-Heikki, is a poor worker who takes justice into his own hands after becoming unemployed. The play caused a scandal in the Finnish National Theatre, and it was performed only once.<sup>45</sup> The nationalist press wanted to emphasize in the reviews that this solitary Finnish socialist did not exist in the real world.<sup>46</sup>

Both in Finland and in Russian Poland, *socialism* was seen by its political opponents as an alien idea. Perhaps because of this interpretation, the concept of socialism experienced a variation in spelling in the course of the long nineteenth century. In the Polish case, the modern form *socjalizm* is seen relatively early. Some of the first usages are already in this form.<sup>47</sup> However, a parallel spelling *socyjalizm* is also present. For instance, the most important

40. *Uusi Suometar*, 5 May 1879.

41. *Hämäläinen*, 17 January 1880. See also *Hämäläinen*, 21 and 28 January and 4 and 11 February 1880.

42. *Uusi Suometar*, 14 May 1879.

43. See, e.g., *Sawo*, 18, 20, and 25 October 1888; *Tampereen Sanomat*, 14 November 1887.

44. Minna Canth, *Kovan onnen lapsia: Näytelmä kolmessa näytöksessä* [Hard luck's children: A play in three acts] (Helsinki: G. W. Edlund, 1888).

45. Minna Maijala, *Herkkä, hellä, hehkuvainen: Minna Canth* [Sensitive, tender, glowing: Minna Canth] (Helsinki: Otava, 2016), 187–189.

46. *Mikkelin Sanomat*, 9 February 1889; Elis Bergroth: “Kotimaan kirjallisuutta” [Domestic literature], *Valvoja* 2 (1889): 62–64.

47. As in those quoted above, e.g., Chojecki, *Rewolucjoniści i stronnictwa wsteczne*.

Polish Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz, used this spelling, and it was retained in translations of his French articles in the journal *Tribune des peuples* from the late 1840s. It seems that in the later period, the “archaic” form was more willingly used in polemical contexts, which is when authors wanted to stress the foreign origin of *socialism*, one example being a satirical limerick by the playwright Aleksander Fredro from the 1880s.<sup>48</sup> In some cases, however, it had a prolonged existence also among the socialists themselves. The Cracow-based journal *Naprzód* (Forward) proudly announced on its vignette that it was an organ of the “social-democratic” party up until 1914.

The first major Polish dictionary entry defining *socialism* is the so-called Vilnius dictionary from the early 1860s. The entry was written using the modern form. There, a “socialist”—explicitly described as a term of French origin—is defined as a “founder or supporter of a social system called socialism,” which meant that the socialist “strives for the socialization of society according to his [*sic*] conviction.”<sup>49</sup> A later major edition, the Warsaw dictionary from the early twentieth century, builds upon this core definition without, however, indicating any foreign origin for the term.<sup>50</sup> The canonical meaning is established as a political, philosophical, and economic system aiming to introduce equal rights and equal distribution of property and labor among people. This dictionary also adds many additional contexts and collocations, such as “socialist propaganda” and “socialist movement.”

The linguistic variation concerned the core of the term and not the -ism (-izm) suffix in Polish, whereas in Finnish both the root and the suffix experienced changes in the latter half of the century. The first mentions of *socialism* were written in the Latin form of the root and suffix. In fact, most Finnish isms of the 1860s have the Latin-based -ismo suffix. *Ismi* overtakes *ismo* only during the 1870s.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the term *socialismo*—that is still used in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—was replaced with *sosialismi*. When the renowned Fennoman nationalist and antisocialist Agathon Meurman compiled the first Finnish-language encyclopedia (1883–1890), he already used the modern form and defined *socialism*, *social democracy*, *communism*, and *nihilism* in relation to each other. Social democracy was a party supporting *socialism*, whereas *socialism* was an idea that wanted to organize the state on the basis of collective work. *Communism* was an extreme version of social

48. Aleksander Fredro, *Dzieła* [Works], vol. XIII/2 (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1880), 220.

49. Aleksander Zdanowicz, *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish language], vol. 2 (Vilna: Nakładem Maurycego Orgelbranda, 1861), 1,523.

50. Adam Kryński and Władysław Niedźwiedzki, *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish language], vol. 6 (Warsaw: Nakładem prenumeratorów i Kasy im. Mianowskiego, 1909), 257.

51. The same method was utilized here as was used above in note 27.

democracy and *socialism*. *Nihilism* was an idea without any positive content. It wanted to destroy the entire social order and was supported by the social democrats in Russia.<sup>52</sup> Despite such negative connotations in its beginning phase, the idea of *socialism* was able to gather a growing number of supporters in the long term.

## Dissemination of the Concept

When the first socialists tried to garner mass support in Finland and in Russian Poland at the end of the nineteenth century, they invented novel rhetorical tricks to get rid of the heavy baggage that the concept of socialism carried. Here, we focus not only on the meanings that socialist parties and politicians attached to and detached from the concept, but also on the interaction between socialist activists and ordinary working people. Socialist ideas were still not widely known in the Russian Poland of the 1870s, but the rise of socialist parties soon changed this situation.<sup>53</sup> The most prominent of these parties was the Proletariat Party, which was most active in Russian Poland in the first half of the 1880s before the party was bloodily crushed by the tsarist police apparatus.<sup>54</sup> It was a trailblazer, however, leading to a full-fledged socialist parlance and constituting an important founding myth for subsequent party organizations. In one of their programmatic documents, *socialism* was defined as a “political principle, which strives for a free popular state with the state control over the working tools.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, in the foundational moment for the socialist orthodoxy, the concept of socialism was referred to as an ideological system.

This basic meaning was rendered more complex after the founding of new generations of socialist parties. It is worth underlining that in Poland there was not a single socialist party representing the working classes, as in Finland, but competing entities that introduced a highly polemical discus-

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52. See the entries on *socialism*, *communism*, social democracy, *nihilism*, and nihilists in Agathon Meurman, *Sanakirja yleiseen sivistykseen kuuluvia tietoja varten* [Dictionary of general education] (Helsinki: G. W. Edlund, 1883–1890), [http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/1800/meta/meurman/sanakirja1883-1890\\_rdf.xml](http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/1800/meta/meurman/sanakirja1883-1890_rdf.xml).

53. Bolesław Limanowski, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs], vol. 2, 1835–1870 (Warsaw, 1958), 180.

54. Lucjan Blit, *The Origins of Polish Socialism: The History and Ideas of the First Polish Socialist Party, 1878–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

55. “Socjalizm i rodzina” [Socialism and family], *Przedświt* [Dawn] 8 (1884), in *Pierwsze pokolenie marksistów polskich: Wybór pism i materiałów źródłowych z lat 1878–1886* [The first generation of the Polish Marxists: A selection of sources from 1878 to 1886], vol. 2, ed. Alina Molska (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1962), 92.

sive culture. The causes of disagreement were not only personal issues, but deep theoretical differences as well. In conditions of a much higher antagonism against Russia and a vivid tradition of struggle for national self-assertion, the national question soon interfered in socialist politics. This affected the very core of the concept of socialism and its future trajectories. The nationalist-socialist Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was founded in 1892, and the secessionist, internationalist left-wing Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1893 (SDKP; later Lithuania was added to the name to make it the SDKPiL).

The extent to which the relationship between *socialism* and *social democracy* as concepts was determined by the names of these parties is not entirely clear. There is also little information about what motivated the party leaders to give their organizations these particular names. Certainly, *social democracy* was adapted by the splinter group in order to differentiate its name from the original PPS. Later on, the concepts became labels applied to parties, their representatives, and ideas to some extent contrary to linguistic intuition, as the “social democratic” SDKPiL was ultimately more left-leaning than the “socialist” PPS. Neither of the parties, however, was trying to hide its socialist identity. *Socialism* featured shamelessly in almost all party programs, although party journals were usually titled more figuratively with such names as *Wake Up Call*, *The Worker*, *Dawn*, *Red Banner*, and *The Workers’ Cause*, to name a few issued by both parties. The only exception was *The Social Democratic Review*, which was the theoretical organ of the SDKPiL.

The Finnish Labor Party, which had been established in 1899, officially adopted a socialist program and changed its name to the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP) in 1903. Its program was based on the Erfurt Program, which was written mainly by the socialists Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, and August Bebel in 1891. Karl Marx now became the leading authority of the Finnish left, as in Germany a decade earlier. The Finnish variant of socialism was simplified *Marxism*, for Marx was interpreted through the writings of Karl Kautsky,<sup>56</sup> which was the case all over Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>57</sup> The intellectual connection to Russian *socialism* remained weak, especially before World War I, although Finland provided an occasional safe haven for the revolutionaries escaping the most extreme version of tsarist oppression.

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56. Hannu Soikkanen, *Sosialismin tulo Suomeen: Ensimmäisiin yksikamarisen eduskunnan vaaleihin asti* [The arrival of socialism in Finland: Until the first unicameral parliamentary elections] (Helsinki: WSOY, 1961), 28, 91–93, 112–116, <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/17389>.

57. Moira Donald, *Marxism and Revolution: Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists, 1900–1924* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

Finnish socialists preferred “democratic” and “progressive” Europe to “despotic” and “backward” Russia when looking for ideological inspiration.<sup>58</sup>

The adoption of *Marxian socialism* and the new social democratic name raised doubts that needed to be addressed. According to the second biggest labor newspaper in Finland at the time, *Kansan Lehti* (People’s paper), the party’s name should reveal its destination. The old word “labor” was not very welcoming for the young academic people who wanted to fight for social democracy. In addition, the new name would fit better with the international nature of *socialism*:

Many members of the party might take note that the name comes from a foreign language. But, on the other hand, we know that even in the periphery of our country people know, at least more or less, what the word socialism means. The word social democracy is in reality international, like the movement that the word represents. For that reason alone, it is neither necessary nor justified that people speaking different languages try to translate the name into their own language.<sup>59</sup>

Here, *social democracy* was used as a parallel concept or as a euphemism for *socialism*, which possibly would have attracted more unfavorable attention from the censors. Caution made sense, since Governor-General Bobrikov had tried to ban the entire party in 1901 because of some individual writings in the Finnish labor press that contained the word agitation.<sup>60</sup> However, in early 1904 the Russian authorities banned use of “the Finnish Social Democratic Party” in the press.<sup>61</sup> In the German case, the concept of socialism was not fully accepted in the labor movement until it was merged with democracy in the double concept of social democracy.<sup>62</sup> However, *social democracy* never gained the popularity of *socialism* in either the Finnish or Polish press. In both cases, *social democracy* was connected with a particular party, whereas *socialism* had a broader semantic field. Thus, both

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58. David Kirby, “The Finnish Social Democratic Party and the Bolsheviks,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, nos. 2–3 (1976): 99–113; Jari Ehrnrooth, *Sanan vallassa, vihan voimalla: Sosialistiset vallankumousopit ja niiden vaikutus Suomen työväenliikkeessä 1905–1914* [Power of the word, force of hatred: Socialist revolutionary doctrines and their effect in the Finnish workers’ movement, 1905–1914] (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1992), 181–184.

59. *Kansan Lehti*, 31 January 1903.

60. Antti Kujala, *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905* [Russian government and the Finnish workers’ movement, 1899–1905] (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1995), 77–82.

61. Kujala, *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike*, 48–49.

62. Schieder, “Sozialismus,” 974, 977.

supporters and opponents could use *socialism* in more linguistic contexts than *social democracy*, which was mostly restricted to a practical movement.

Meanwhile, socialist ideas were adopted by a growing number of intellectuals and working-class adherents. These enthusiastic supporters of the ism wanted to spread the word to their compatriots. Here, Finnish and Polish socialists took different routes because of the different levels of censorship that existed in their countries. Finnish socialists could use the legal socialist press in order to promote *socialism*, whereas Polish socialists had to rely on illegal underground materials. Considering the structural constraints of the underground press, the reach of those attempts was impressive. This period was marked by the emergence of standardized forms of political communication—smaller leaflets (which we will discuss below in the context of the Revolution of 1905) and, above all, more extensive brochures.

The latter publications offered a basic explanation of what *socialism* was and what goals the parties had. Thus, the brochures of the germinating mass movement constitute valuable evidence of the process of forging tentative definitions of *socialism*. The titles of the most popular publications were quite explicit, such as “What Do the Socialists Want?”<sup>63</sup> This brochure contained an extensive explanation of postulated property relations, giving *socialism* largely an economic meaning. Its legitimacy was, for propaganda purposes, supported with quotes from the church fathers.

In other brochures, however, *socialism* was framed as a truth backed up by modern science.<sup>64</sup> *Socialism* was commonly given the status of a science in Germany, and it was later an important pillar of the German Social Democratic Party’s (SPD) mainstream doctrine.<sup>65</sup> In the Polish case, it was mere a rhetorical device that was useful for agitation among people reverent toward science. The aura of scientific authority was an important factor in the actual agitation capacities among peasants and workers, who considered *socialism* politically important because of this scientificity and vice versa.<sup>66</sup>

Brochures explaining more systematically what *socialism* is were also eagerly read. A good example is a text translated from German, Wilhelm Bracke’s *Down with the Socialists*.<sup>67</sup> Its argumentative structure resembles

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63. Warszawiak [Edward Abramowski], *Czego chcą socjaliści?* [What do the socialists want?] (London: Wydawnictwo PPS, 1902).

64. Ignacy Daszyński, *Pogadanka o socjalizmie* [A conversation about socialism] (Lvov: Latarnia, 1900).

65. Schieder, “Sozialismus,” 949; Dave Renton, *Classical Marxism: Socialist Theory and the Second International* (Cheltenham, UK: New Clarion, 2002).

66. Wiktor Marzec, “Vernacular Marxism: Proletarian Readings in Russian Poland around the 1905 Revolution,” *Historical Materialism* 25, no. 4 (2017): 65–104.

67. Wilhelm Bracke, *Precz z socjalistami!* [Down with the socialists!] (Drukarnia Partyjna PPS, 1904). Originally published as *Nieder mit den Sozialdemokraten!* [Down with the social democrats!] (Braunschweig, 1876).

the common polemical situation that socialists might have often encountered in the emerging proletarian public sphere—in factory mass meetings or during agitation circles. The brochure is a stylized answer to the attacks on *socialism* by the doubtful. Apparently, such a polemical handbook of arguments was attractive also for those readers who themselves were not so sure what *socialism* could mean and what goals its proponents pursued. The brochure clarifies that *socialism* is not the parceling out of land, but rather common ownership, that it will not bring about the abolition of property but rather its true realization, and so on. It seems that the German connection ushered in the meaning of *socialism* as a prospective mode of social organization. Such a hypothesis is supported by the fact that it was the SDKPiL that used this meaning more consciously and that this party had a much more theoretically oriented political culture, which closely paralleled that of the German SPD.<sup>68</sup>

The usual intellectual transfer was directed eastward. Polish socialists either followed German trends (i.e., the SDKPiL, which was nevertheless organizationally much closer to the Russian Social Democratic Party and which even spoke with the latter about an effective merger in 1903) or styled themselves as genuine national thinkers (i.e., the PPS, which nevertheless was up-to-date with the contemporary European theoretical debates). Polish socialists were often socialized politically in radical, multinational milieus such as Russian gymnasia and, later, political prisons. Some of them joined the Russian revolutionaries. This influence, however, is not documented in their self-perception. As for socialist publications, they traveled mainly in one direction—there were many successful brochures that were translations from German, such as the one quoted above, but almost none were imported from Russia.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, some Polish brochures, such as Szymon Diksztein's *Who Lives on What?*, were widely republished in Russia.<sup>70</sup> This illustrates the multidirectional nature of imperial transfer: Russia was without a doubt an imperial power, but in many respects it was Poland that was the exporter of ideas.<sup>71</sup>

68. Georg W. Strobel, *Die Partei Rosa Luxemburgs, Lenin und die SPD: Der polnische europäische Internationalismus in der russischen Sozialdemokratie* [The party of Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and the SPD: Polish European internationalism in the Russian social democracy] (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974).

69. See lists and print runs in Zanna Kormanowa, *Materiały do bibliografii druków socjalistycznych na ziemiach polskich w latach 1866–1918* [Materials concerning the bibliography of socialist printings on the Polish lands (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1949)].

70. Brochure available in Polish as Jan Młot, *Kto z czego żyje?* [Who lives on what?] (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1952); on the career of the Russian translation, see Deborah Lee Pearl, *Creating a Culture of Revolution: Workers and the Revolutionary Movement in Late Imperial Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2015).

71. Rolf, *Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland*, 3–12.

In contrast to brochures, the newspaper became the main medium of Finnish *socialism*. When the first labor newspaper, *Työmies*, meaning the “working man,” was launched in 1895, it presented a modest program.<sup>72</sup> However, by the end of its first year, *Työmies* criticized Swedish newspapers for drawing parallels between Finnish and foreign *socialism* and claimed that its “mouth had been squeezed so tight it did not know what to talk about anymore.”<sup>73</sup> The next year, after the “great summer of strikes” in the capital, *Työmies* was already more confident. It sent the shoemaker-journalist Eetu Salin to study Swedish *socialism*, and he reported the following from Stockholm:

My assumptions of socialists, which I got through the Finnish press, have vanished. I thought socialists were stubborn, roaring, irregular and ragged working men whose greatest joy was to breed unrest in society, do stupid things in parliament, bomb the government and overthrow ministries (in France). Right?—That is how socialists have been described in the Finnish press.<sup>74</sup>

At the end of the letter, he declares that he is a socialist as well. Following Salin’s example, more and more people confessed their identification with *socialism* in the labor press in the late 1890s.<sup>75</sup> This public confession must have been meaningful, especially in those remote areas where the socialist movement had not yet gained any ground. Isolated individuals could connect themselves to the great stream of *socialism* through the press.

In order to facilitate this process, the newborn socialists had to define their relation to the massive weight of tradition. First, *socialism* had to be purified by breaking the old link between *socialism* and other isms. Socialists repeatedly explained that *socialism* was not a parallel concept to *nihilism*, *anarchism*, or *communism*, but rather their opposite.<sup>76</sup> Other explicitly named counterconcepts of *socialism* included *capitalism*, *militarism*, *imperialism*, and *liberalism*.<sup>77</sup> The bourgeois press obviously did not accept these redescriptions.<sup>78</sup>

This battle over the meaning of *socialism* also took place in the metaphorical sphere. The bourgeois press followed the age-old tradition by

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72. *Työmies*, 14 February 1895.

73. *Työmies*, 17 August 1895. For Swedish criticism, see, e.g., *Aftonposten*, 19 April 1895, 1 May 1895; *Nya Pressen*, 2 May 1895.

74. *Työmies*, 24 December 1896.

75. See, e.g., a letter from the audience in *Työmies*, 5 March 1898.

76. *Työmies*, 19 and 31 March 1900; *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 12 and 19 September 1901.

77. *Työmies*, 1 October 1898; *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 30 October 1900.

78. *Savo-Karjala*, 19 and 21 September 1898; *Turun Lehti*, 19 September 1901.

claiming that socialism was a poison or a disease,<sup>79</sup> whereas the socialist press referred socialism a cure for capitalism.<sup>80</sup> Whereas the conservative press talked about the evil monster or the Antichrist of socialism,<sup>81</sup> socialists responded by summoning the genius of socialism—a female goddess in a red mantle.<sup>82</sup> Religious critics mocked the greedy and hedonist nature of socialism with expressions such as “the gospel of the flesh,”<sup>83</sup> but socialists preferred the phrase “the gospel of the poor.”<sup>84</sup> It was common for socialists to ridicule antisocialist tradition by imitating bourgeois metaphors. If socialists managed to sell labor literature exceptionally well, they could joke that the “poison of socialism” had been successfully spread to many brains.<sup>85</sup> The capacity for irony is, by itself, evidence of the strengthened standing of socialism among its adherents.

In the ideological sphere, *socialism* collided with two other powerful ideologies of the long nineteenth century: Christianity and nationalism. Finnish socialists tried to solve this problem at the conceptual level by claiming—similarly to their Polish counterparts in the 1830s and 1840s—that *socialism* stood for original Christianity, whereas the state religion and priests were leading the people astray.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the concept of the fatherland was reinterpreted by arguing that upper-class patriotism meant merely parochial self-interest. Here, the editor-in-chief of *Työmies*, A. B. Mäkelä, made the most influential contribution with his three articles on the fatherland that were circulated in other labor newspapers. Mäkelä presented *socialism* and *patriotism* in Finland as being not in opposition, but “the same thing.”<sup>87</sup> This paralleled the attempts of the PPS in Poland to convince its audiences that its version of socialism was the fullest embodiment of the true national spirit. In the Polish case, however, *socialism* had a more openly national configuration, explicitly proclaiming an almost insurrectionary struggle against the “Muscovite yoke.”

The issue of “the fatherland” was not only an academic one; it was also a decisive real-life argument. For example, workers organized a public debate in Helsinki in 1900 with the title “What Is the Relationship between Socialism and Love for One’s Country?” The meeting lasted seven and a half

79. *Uusi Suometar*, 24 December 1898; *Suomen Kansa*, 1 April 1903.

80. *Työmies*, 6 October 1902; *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 27 September 1904.

81. *Isänmaan Ystävä*, 25 August 1899; *Suomen Kansa*, 19 September 1903.

82. *Kansan Lehti*, 14 June 1902; *Forssan Sanomat*, 2 January 1906.

83. *Karjalatar*, 10 January 1903.

84. *Savon Työmies*, 28 July 1906; *Sosialisti*, 18 September 1907.

85. *Kansan Lehti*, 13 June 1899.

86. *Työmies*, 5 and 11 June 1899; 11 July 1899; 6 July 1900.

87. *Työmies*, 18–20 October 1900. Circulated in *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 23, 25, and 30 October 1900; *Kansan Lehti*, 25, 27, and 30 October 1900.

hours.<sup>88</sup> This heated debate on the wider reconceptualizations of the concept took place in the aftermath of the February 1899 Manifesto published by Tsar Nicholas II, which limited Finnish autonomy. The nationalists were shocked when some of the labor leaders had refused to sign the Great Address, a petition for the tsar to withdraw the manifesto. From the nationalist perspective, socialists lacked patriotism, whereas the socialist argued that the workers had been completely ignored in the organization of the opposition against the tsar.<sup>89</sup>

In such polemical circumstances, the readers of the labor press were not passive victims of socialist propaganda, as was often claimed by the bourgeoisie, but rather active adopters. The use of various terms illustrates this point. The popular supporters preferred vernacular Finnish words such as *työväenaate* (labor's idea), *työväenliike* (labor's movement), or *työväenasia* (labor's cause) to their Latin options *socialismi* and *socialidemokratia* when they were defining their political identity.<sup>90</sup> Workers often had problems with the correct spelling and pronunciation of socialism and social democracy, and contemporary intellectuals ridiculed this linguistic incompetence.<sup>91</sup> For the educated classes, it was further evidence of the artificial nature of Finnish *socialism*. Some workers were horrified by the word *socialism*, since they regarded it as unchristian,<sup>92</sup> whereas others gave *socialism* a religious meaning.<sup>93</sup> A metalworker from Helsinki preached that if the capitalists wanted to call workers socialists, then the word should be taken as a compliment, for the Bible and *socialism* shared the same spirit.<sup>94</sup>

Based on the letters from the readers sent to the socialist newspapers, *socialism* could also benefit from its dangerous reputation. While the upper classes were constantly demonizing socialism in the press, workers wanted to find out what *socialism* meant and began to subscribe to socialist newspa-

88. *Päivälehti*, 23 October 1900.

89. Kujala, *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike*, 128–138.

90. Otto Wille Kuusinen, "Sosialismin käsite ja maailmankatsomus" [Concept and ideology of socialism], in *Uuden ajan kynnyksellä: Suomen työväen alpumi* (Helsinki: Työväen Kirjapaino, 1905), 29–41, here 32. See also, e.g., the phrases in the letters from the audience: "työväenasia, eli sosialismi" (labor's cause, that is, socialism), in *Kansan Lehti*, 8 May 1900; "työväen aate eli sosialismi" (labor's idea, that is, socialism), in *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 15 June 1901; "työväenaatteen, sosialismin" (labor's idea, socialism), in *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 12 February 1903.

91. Most famously in a best-selling novel; see Ilmari Kianto, *Punainen viiva* [The red line] (Helsinki: Otava, 1909).

92. *Työmies*, 13 November 1902; *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 13 September 1904; *Kansan Lehti*, 7 February 1905.

93. See, e.g., *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 1 October 1903; *Työmies*, 14 August 1905.

94. *Työmies*, 28 May 1898.

pers.<sup>95</sup> *Socialism* had a taste of the forbidden fruit for the populace. Not only newspapers but also translated socialist literature and traveling agitators converted workers to *socialism*.<sup>96</sup> The converted claimed that the concept of socialism did not sound new when they heard about it for the very first time; rather, it explained explicitly what they had already known instinctively.<sup>97</sup>

Hence, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the abstract concept from abroad had transformed itself into a practical movement. Adherents of *socialism* had become socialists, that is, an ism had found its true representatives and gained the sanction of reality. One clear indicator of this paradigmatic change in the history of the concept can be found in the tobacco market: in addition to “The Working Man” and “Freedom” cigarettes, you could also smoke “Socialists” in the Grand Duchy of Finland starting from 1903.<sup>98</sup>

### The Revolution of 1905 and the Democratization of Concepts

While in retrospect one may observe the gathering of storm clouds much earlier, it was the revolutionary upsurge that caused the hurricane to burst forth. Thus, if the Revolutions of 1848 made socialism a slogan in the German Confederation,<sup>99</sup> for the tsarist borderlands it was the Revolution of 1905 that played a paramount role in the mass circulation of political concepts. While the customary name of the events that transpired from 1904 to 1907 is the Russian Revolution of 1905, a large part of the militancy, strikes, street fights, and other activities of social unrest happened in the urban centers of Russian Poland, which witnessed countless strikes (some of them general), mass protests, street skirmishes, and even an urban uprising (in Łódź). Similarly, other tsarist borderlands were at the forefront of the revolutionary upheaval, but these strikes were masterfully capitalized upon in the Grand Duchy of Finland, and universal suffrage was introduced in 1906, integrating the Finnish SDP into the parliamentary system.

In both cases, however, the revolution ushered new populaces into the political sphere.<sup>100</sup> This process also meant the final democratization of var-

95. *Työmies*, 1 October 1901, 3 July 1903.

96. Soikkanen, *Sosialismin tulo Suomeen*, 161–182.

97. See, e.g., *Työmies*, 7 October 1902.

98. *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 28 March 1903.

99. Schieder, “Sozialismus,” 968.

100. Alapuro, “Vallankumous,” 533; Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Antti Kujala, “Finland in 1905: The Political and Social History of the Revolution,” in *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives*, ed. Jon Smele and Anthony Heywood (London: Routledge, 2005).

ious concepts, supplementing their previous politicization, ideologization, and temporalization. *Socialism* perfectly epitomized those features of the “modern circulation of concepts” as formulated in the seminal contribution by Reinhart Koselleck.<sup>101</sup> As a result, concepts such as *socialism* became an unprecedented force toward action—as a cognitive device explaining the surrounding world, as a call to action, and as a hope for the future. Thus, *socialism* was now an important element of “doing things with words” in a very direct sense. It spurred mass movements onto the revolutionary streets.

Leaflets, which were the main means of distributing political concepts in Russian Poland, now spread all over the social spectrum.<sup>102</sup> Impromptu readings encouraged workers to further explore options and consequently to become party members.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, these leaflets shaped the polemical zeal of contrasting party programs,<sup>104</sup> and not infrequently they were a decisive factor in switching party affiliation.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the concept of socialism used in them acquired an unprecedented significance and capacity to shape political practice.

*Socialism* in the discourse of these leaflets functioned as an umbrella term, a conceptual token signifying a vague set of meanings and values, referring to solidarity, freedom, or lack of exploitation. For instance, one leaflet claims that “socialism began to gather under its banner the entire, large proletarian family, unifying all the suffering, all willing to get rid of the yoke of bondage.”<sup>106</sup> When this happens, “the idea of brotherhood, freedom and equality will triumph—the idea of socialism.”<sup>107</sup> *Socialism* here is a normatively and temporally saturated concept, conveying both a set of values and

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101. Koselleck, “Einleitung,” xiii–xxvii.

102. Władysław L. Karwacki, *Łódź w latach rewolucji 1905–1907* [Łódź in the years of revolution] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1975), 170.

103. Szczepan Michalski, *Wspomnienia* [Memories], State Archives in Łódź, hereafter APŁ KŁ PZPR, t. 11541, k. 6; Feliks Piskorski, *Z nad dobrzanki* (From dobrzanka’s banks), *Kiliński* 3 (1936): 102–103.

104. Antoni Deka, *Ankieta personalna z życiorysem* [Personal survey with a CV], APŁ, KW PZPR, syg. 1958.

105. Maksymilian Brzeziński, “Dzielnica ‘Zielona’ w Łodzi” [The “Zielona” district in Łódź], *Kiliński* 1 (1936): 24; Bronisław Żukowski, “Pamiętniki bojowca” [Memoirs of a fighter], *Niepodległość* [Independence] 1 (1929–1930): 115–116; Franciszek Łęczycki, *Mojej ankiety personalnej punkt 35* [The 35th paragraph of my personal survey] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1969), 66; Stanisław Pestkowski, *Wspomnienia rewolucjonisty* [Memoirs of a revolutionary] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1961), 55.

106. Towarzysze! Towarzyszki! Od lat 17-tu proletarjat świętuje dzień 1-go maja . . . CK PPS, 30 April 1906, State Archives in Warsaw, hereafter AAN, APPS 305/III/34, pdt. 4, k. 26.

107. Towarzysze i Towarzyszki! Cały świat robotniczy święcił święto . . . Łódź Committee of the PPS, 3 May 1906, AAN APPS, 305/III/35, pdt. 6, k. 96.

the future state of society. Often, especially in the early phase of the revolution, *socialism* was opposed to the tsarist autocracy. This is noticeable even in the publications of the internationalist SDKPiL; the Polish concept of socialism tended also to carry a nationalist undertone.

All socialist parties ritually ended their proclamations with slogans like “long live socialism.” A broader analysis, however, exposes quite a revealing bifurcation, hints of which can be detected in earlier party programs.<sup>108</sup> There are two basic subsets of meanings associated with *socialism*. First, socialism could be defined as set of political ideas or just as a movement, something one can adhere to. Second, *socialism* could be understood as a future state of affairs, a world without exploitation, something that will come about in the future as a system of social organization.

The revolution did not lead to a merger of these meanings, but rather clarified the difference. What is most interesting is that these meanings were distributed between socialist parties nonrandomly. Whereas the PPS consequently used the first meaning, associating itself with *socialism* as a movement and encouraging workers to join in, the SDKPiL much more often, and predominantly, stuck to the time-saturated concept of socialism as a future state of affairs. Perhaps the SDKPiL, inasmuch as it was more integrated with international socialist culture and the German SPD, introduced the change according to the Western pattern, whereas more indigenous Polish tradition was still maintained among the PPS writers.

In the political languages of *socialisms* deployed from 1905, or even in earlier programs, it is visible that the PPS was not the party aiming at a “socialist” transformation of society, but rather understood its actions as a movement leading to other goals. The revolution caused yet another split within the socialist movement: the PPS splintered into a more nationalist and militarist Revolutionary Faction and a class-oriented PPS-Left spurring on the mass mobilization of workers.<sup>109</sup> The former gradually abandoned *socialism* and its members were not exceptionally well versed in socialist theories.<sup>110</sup> The latter faction sided more with internationalist *socialism* and fostered the theoretical development of its members. This trajectory was fully confirmed by the

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108. See “Nasz program” [Our program], *Przegląd Robotniczy* [The workers’ review] 1 (1900) and “Szkiec Programu Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej” [Draft program of the Polish Socialist Party], *Prześwit* 5 (1893), in *Polskie programy socjalistyczne 1878–1918* [Polish socialist programs 1878–1918] ed. Feliks Tych (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975), 251–252, 304.

109. Anna Żarnowska, *Geneza rozłamu w Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej, 1904–1906* [The genesis of the split in the Polish Socialist Party, 1904–1906] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965).

110. See, e.g., Józef Piłsudski, “Jak zostałem socjalistą?” [How did I become a socialist?], *Promień* [Ray], nos. 8–9 (1903).

Revolutionary Faction after the revolutionary zeal of 1905–1907 burned out. The core of this party transformed into insurrectionary forces fighting, using military means, for Polish independence and statehood, which was far from their earlier programmatic statements. The PPS-Left, in turn, merged with the SDKPiL, forming the Communist Party of Poland in 1918.

*Socialism* had a twofold meaning in party materials, while the vernacular uses were simpler. It seems that the workers accepted the *socialism*-as-ideology variation. Such a conclusion can be inferred only implicitly from the biographical materials, which were usually written post-factum. The collocations accompanying *socialism* were predominantly “idea of socialism,”<sup>111</sup> “theory of socialism,”<sup>112</sup> or “principles of socialism,” which suggest the ideology trope.<sup>113</sup> There are also singular occurrences of the *socialism*-as-society variation, as in the expression “struggle for socialism.”<sup>114</sup> The distribution of these meanings is not notably party-specific, which confirms the assertion that ordinary workers often defined themselves as members of the socialist movement and only secondarily as adherents of a particular party. All in all, in Russian Poland, the revolution led to the growth of a fractured socialist movement, the ideologization of the concept of socialism from above and its enthusiastic and undifferentiated acceptance from below.

In Finland, the revolution gave *socialism* unparalleled publicity. Just as in Poland, the Great Strike ended preventive censorship, and one could write about *socialism* freely until the Russification measures were reimposed in 1908. Figure 1<sup>115</sup> clearly illustrates this evolution. The peak of 1907 is best explained by the first parliamentary election in Finland—propaganda for and against *socialism* was intense. The discourses surrounding the concept

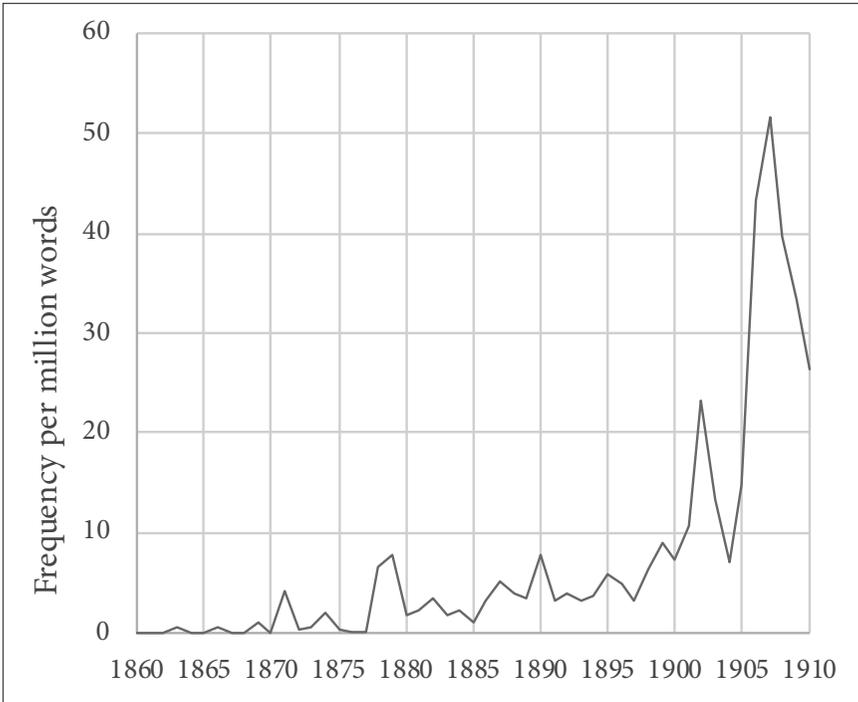
111. Józef Malecki, *Życiorys: Wspomnienie młodych lat* [Resume: Memories from a young age], AAN, akta osobowe działaczy ruchu robotniczego (personal folders of socialist militants), hereafter AODRR, syg. 3788.

112. Marek Rotszyld, biographical materials, AAN, AODRR, syg. 13467.

113. F. [name unknown] Bereza, *Wspomnienia z dni rewolucyjnych czyli przebieg rewolucji z roku 1904 i dalej* [Memories from the revolutionary days during the course of revolution from 1904 onward], AAN, Instytut Badania Najnowszej Historii Polski (Institute for research of the recent history of Poland), hereafter IBNHP, memoirs sent for publication in the journal *Niepodległość*, syg. 357/4 folder 3; Franciszek Kujawa, *Wspomnienie z pobytu mego w byłej SDKPiL i KPP* [My memories from the SDKPiL and the KPP], APŁ KW PZPR, syg. 1923.

114. Józef Nowicki, “Wspomnienia starego działacza” [Memories of an old activist], *Niepodległość* 13 (1935): 37.

115. This figure is based on searching the lemma “socialismi” and the most common word forms of “socialismi” and “socialismo” in the Finnish-language newspaper corpus in the KORP interface of the Language Bank of Finland, korp.csc.fi. The search produced 61,882 matches. The absolute frequency follows the same pattern, rising from zero in 1860 to more than twelve thousand hits in the peak year of 1907.



**Figure 1.** Relative frequency of socialism in Finnish newspapers and periodicals, 1860–1910.

increased rapidly after the revolution. The aforementioned shoemaker Eetu Salin even complained at the end of 1905 that, while a few years earlier nobody had the courage to shout “long live socialism,” in the aftermath of the General Strike even noblewomen wanted to support *socialism*. His conclusion was that there might be too many people fighting for *socialism* in Finland at that time.<sup>116</sup>

His critique was most likely aimed at Christian, nationalist, and theological political actors who tried to adopt *socialism* for their own uses immediately after the revolution. It has certainly been a characteristic of *socialism* as a concept that the word alone is not enough to define its meaning.<sup>117</sup> The Finnish Christian socialist movement was born at the end of 1905. Socialists bitterly described this as a “lukewarm version” of *socialism*.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the Finnish Party that had long been opposed to universal suffrage and advocated conservative *social reformism* now changed its rhetoric radically and

116. *Työmies*, 24 November 1905.

117. Schieder, “Sozialismus,” 923–924.

118. *Kansan Lehti*, 28 December 1905.

even began to talk about *national socialism*. *National socialism* would reckon with the national character of the Finns, unlike the *socialism* in the labor press, which was merely imitating foreign *socialism*.<sup>119</sup> The third contestation of the concept came from the charismatic theosophist Matti Kurikka, who had been one of the central figures in the early labor movement but had been excluded therefrom for his militant political moves and controversial reputation.<sup>120</sup> Following the General Strike, Kurikka established his own newspaper, in which he fiercely attacked the imported “materialist” or “German” *socialism* that had seized the labor movement in the late 1890s. He bemoaned that Marx had been made a demigod in Finland.<sup>121</sup> Interestingly, Kurikka himself was criticized along the same lines by the young Marxist socialist Yrjö Sirola.<sup>122</sup>

Owing to its broad impact, the revolution attracted academic, young men to the movement. These educated adepts of *socialism* were skillful at conceptual analysis.<sup>123</sup> Their knowledge of international socialist theory was useful, especially in arguments against non-Marxist forms of *socialism*, and they quickly rose to high ranks in the party hierarchy.<sup>124</sup> A new, more theoretically sophisticated wind was also blowing in the labor press. For example, one of the biggest labor newspapers changed its name from *The Western Finnish Working Man* to *Socialist* in 1906. Karl Fredrik Hellsten, one of the founding members of the Finnish SDP and originally a carpenter, promised that from then on this newspaper would hire educated journalists instead of unlearned workers, in order to become more informative.<sup>125</sup>

Nonetheless, the most significant change brought about by the revolution took place among popular supporters of *socialism*. People realized that power would not be given, but it could be taken. In both Poland and Finland, the strikes started as a protest against the tsar, but soon revealed domestic, class-based tensions as well. The socialists and nationalists had different visions of democracy.<sup>126</sup> For many workers, the Great Strike meant their first involvement in *socialism*. They would later remember this life-changing

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119. *Aamulehti*, 25 November 1905.

120. Anne Heimo, Mikko Pollari, Anna Rajavuori, Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, Mikko-Olavi Seppälä, and Sami Suodenjoki, “Matti Kurikka—A Prophet in His Own Country and Abroad,” *Siirtolaisuus—Migration* 43, no. 3 (2016): 6–10.

121. *Elämä*, 16 December 1905, 5 January 1906.

122. *Kansan Lehti*, 26 September 1905.

123. For an excellent example, see Kuusinen, “Sosialismin käsite ja maailmankatsomus.”

124. Hannu Soikkanen, “Revisionism, Reformism and the Finnish Labour Movement before the First World War,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 3, nos. 1–4 (1978): 347–360.

125. *Länsisuomen Työmies*, 9 January 1906.

126. Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 115; Brian Porter, “Democracy and Discipline in Late Nineteenth Century Poland,” *Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 2 (1999): 346–393.

event as an empowering experience. The success of strikes appeared in the collective memory as a motivation for further political mobilization in favor of the socialists.<sup>127</sup> The membership rates of socialist parties and trade unions exploded in both Russian Poland and Finland because of the strikes.<sup>128</sup> Thus in quantitative terms, the Revolution of 1905 meant the final breakthrough of *socialism*.

Qualitatively, the revolution had at least a threefold effect. First, the revolution pulled in thousands of new socialists, for whom a precise definition of the concept was not necessary and not even possible. Second, it made the use of the concept more specific among the socialist politicians and intellectuals. Third, it intensified the reactionary discourse used by people who were frightened by the deep social destabilization. With regard to this third effect, however, things unfolded much differently in Poland than in Finland. As a result of the General Strike, the tsar promised the Grand Duchy of Finland a radical parliamentary reform, and one of the most conservative estate-based political systems in Europe was replaced with a unicameral assembly based on universal suffrage. Socialists polled more than 37 percent in the first election of 1907, becoming the largest socialist party with parliamentary representation in Europe.<sup>129</sup> Exceptional in the European context of the time, not only industrial workers but also the rural proletariat voted for the SDP. It is likely that the SDP connected the concept of socialism to land distribution.<sup>130</sup> While Finnish *socialism* was able to secure its position via a stunning electoral victory, Polish *socialism* was met with harsh police repression and the gradual demise of socialist zeal in favor of a more fervent nationalist reaction.<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was to make a contrastive comparison of the conceptual varieties of *socialism* in the western tsarist borderlands. This comparison

127. See, e.g., Władysław Kossek, “Kartki z życiorysu proletariusza” [Sheets from the resume of a proletarian], in *Wspomnienia weteranów rewolucji 1905 i 1917 roku* [Memoirs of the veterans of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917], ed. Zdzisław Spieralski (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1967), 25.

128. Soikkanen, *Sosialismin tulo Suomeen*, 338; Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 72–73.

129. Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 115–117.

130. Sami Suodenjoki, “Mobilising for Land, Nation and Class Interests: Agrarian Agitation in Finland and Ireland, 1879–1918,” *Irish Historical Studies* 41, no. 160 (2017): 200–220.

131. Wiktor Marzec, “Die Revolution 1905 bis 1907 im Königreich Polen—von der Arbeiterrevolte zur nationalen Reaktion,” [The revolution of 1905 to 1907 in the Kingdom of Poland—from the workers revolt to the national reaction], *Arbeit Bewegung Geschichte* [History of workers movements] 3 (2016): 27–46.

has shown that, while the trajectories of the concept of socialism were different in both cases examined, they were nevertheless similar in certain crucial aspects. First, the temporal dynamics of *socialism* in the tsarist borderlands were distinctive. In the Polish case, *socialism* had a longer history, albeit of uneven development, but a long-lasting tradition of political language. The concept entered the Polish political conversation as a self-applied label among émigrés in the 1830s and was constantly contested but not concealed by its adherents, whereas in Finnish *socialism* appeared only in the 1860s as a part of the wider ism family. *Socialism* became a true mass movement in Finland and in Russian Poland during the 1890s, when the first long-running socialist parties were established. The Polish parties had to explain the new concept of socialism through clandestine leaflets and brochures, while the Finns used the legal press. The past legacies of statehood and repressed political freedoms pitted the Polish public more than the Finns against Russian imperial power, and eventually this drive for national self-assertion caused the bifurcation of the Polish socialist movement and hence also the concept of socialism itself.

In both cases, the opponents of *socialism* had long painted the concept with intense disapprobation, and this rhetorical tradition had to be nullified, for example by claiming that *socialism* meant the true religion, true science, and true fatherland. In other words, Polish and Finnish socialists had to imbue *socialism* in the conceptual systems of the ordinary working people. In our interpretation, the main difference between the agitating politicians and mobilized workers was in the level of precision; at the top levels of party politics, an exact definition of *socialism* was needed in order to sort the wheat from the chaff, while the common people were perfectly satisfied with a vaguer concept.

Our comparison reveals that the differences between Polish and Finnish *socialism* were at their highest in the beginning, but the concepts came closer to each other during the course of long nineteenth century, just to bifurcate in practice after 1907. The temporary weakness of the Russian Empire led to the strengthening of the concept in both borderlands. The Revolution of 1905 multiplied the discourses around *socialism*, but at the same time it also launched trajectories that led these *socialisms* along different paths.

The Finnish postrevolutionary concept of socialism was based on the clear-cut division between “true” (Marxian) and “false” (Christian, national, theosophical) *socialisms*, whereas the major dividing lines in Poland were between socialism as a movement and socialism as a future state of affairs, but also between socialism as class internationalism and socialism as a vehicle for independence. This may be explained by the fact that the only Finnish socialist party wanted to act as the guardian of the concept that was so

crucial for its survival and success. It was of the utmost importance for the party intelligentsia that ordinary people would connect *socialism* to the SDP and not to its opponents in the first election of 1907. The correct definition of the concept was not as important to Polish socialist underground parties, since they did not have a similar recognized status in society that would have forced them to protect the orthodoxy of *socialism* from enemies inside and outside the movement. In fact, the PPS, which had earlier used *socialism* as a concept denoting political movement, loosened its traditional connection with the concept when social movement was no longer needed for its goals. The national drive effectively split the party in 1906, and it came back only a decade later with a program complicit with the incentives of the International. The PPS nevertheless supported the creation of the Polish nation-state, which soon appeared to be quite far from being a socialist one. In turn, its rival, the SDKPiL, which had proffered *socialism* as a thing of the future, drifted toward sectarian communism after the revolution.

These post-1905 conceptual histories of *socialism* in the tsarist borderlands are also certainly worth a closer examination. This article serves as a backdrop for the analysis of the period around World War I that divided most European socialist movements into social democratic and communist branches, a state of affairs already seen in the Polish bifurcated socialist movement. The actual effects of the disintegration on the concept of socialism remain unknown. Extending the time frame would possibly also shed light on why Finnish socialists tried a revolution in 1918, while Russian Poland remained relatively calm—a situation that ran contrary to the nineteenth century, when it was always the Poles who rebelled and the Grand Duchy of Finland that was the loyal servant of the Russian Empire.

Admittedly, the “stranger” of *socialism* was not welcomed with open arms when it reached the tsarist borderlands. However, as time unfolded it made many friends. One hint of this familiarity is encoded in the word itself. In both languages, *socialism* eventually established its position in the nationalized form of the word. Still, the stranger could never fully escape its dubious past. When *socialism* was repressed and crushed in Russian Poland after 1905 and in Finland in 1918, old rhetorical compositions were recalled. *Socialism* was (re)constructed as an artificial invention, and delegitimized by having a foreign origin attached to it. The Polish antisocialists blamed the Jews, while the Finnish Whites, after beating the Reds in the bloody civil war, conceptualized *socialism* as a Russian disease and punished workers accordingly in the purification of the newborn nation. *Socialism* has died temporarily many times since then. So far, the concept has always been re-incarnated. It seems to belong to that group of ideas that cannot be killed by bullets.

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