
From ‘Healthy’ Patriotism to the Malvinas Cause: The Argentine Partido Socialista and the National Question

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In the early twentieth century, the Argentine Partido Socialista, the main social-democratic party in Latin America, embraced the concept of ‘healthy patriotism’, based on the social progress of the majority. This paper examines the changes in party identity regarding nationalism in the 1930s by using local sources and global socialism. I argue that the PS underwent significant shifts adopting a ‘bourgeois’ idea of patriotism, which was strongly contested by the party until then. In this line, it played a prominent role in promoting the Malvinas cause, all of which is connected to broader political transformations of that time

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Since the early twentieth century, the Argentine Partido Socialista (PS, Socialist Party) has emerged as the principal social-democratic party in Latin America. In 1904, it achieved the election of the first socialist deputy on the continent, and from that moment onwards, it embarked on an upward trajectory, reaching its zenith in political influence during the 1930s, when it occupied a third of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The PS was the only Latin American member of the Second International and, like most parties affiliated with it, early on developed a conception of the nation as an integrative entity, capable of paving the way for the construction of a world without borders. This was reflected in the assertion of belonging to a transnational movement, without this implying the promotion of activities contrary to the country of residence. In this regard, various authors have referred to the articulation of the idea of a ‘healthy patriotism’, which stood in opposition to that promoted by the bourgeoisie, condemned for being militaristic, expansionist and mystifying (Merbilhaá, 2013; Martínez Mazzola, 2015; Reyes, 2018; Amorebieta y Vera and Guiamet, 2022). Thus, Argentine socialism can be conceptualised alongside the majority of global social democracy within what has been designated as an inter-nationalism (Callahan, 2019; Benclowicz and Poy, 2023) that placed the possibility of abolishing borders in an indeterminate future and defended a patriotism based on the progress of the majority.

This situation, which prevailed until the 1930s, underwent a series of decisive shifts that have not been analysed until now. In this paper, I examine the transformations in party identity concerning the issue of patriotism, considering both the local context and the debates taking place within the ranks of global social democracy. It represents a qualitative change, as from this point the Partido Socialista (PS) not only adopted identifications and positions associated with the liberal variant of ‘bourgeois’ nationalism – repeatedly denounced by socialists – but also contributed to formulating the foundations of the quintessential Argentine national cause to this day. Indeed, in 1934, Alfredo Palacios, the first socialist deputy from the Americas and then senator, introduced a bill ‘To disseminate knowledge among the people regarding Argentina’s right to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands’. His proposal bore a paradoxical quality: a member of a party that still upheld class struggle and perceived itself as part of an internationalist movement invited his conservative and nationalist peers, in a presentation

that extended over three sessions, to construct the cause of the Malvinas as a patriotic endeavour, unrelated to those that socialism had proposed until then for the proletariat. Not only was class-oriented rhetoric set aside, but the expansion of sovereignty was posited over a territory considered usurped a century earlier, a notion rather distant from the ‘healthy nationalism’ as formulated by socialists.

Certainly, Palacios had a particular profile. His concern for personal honour led him to duel on various occasions which resulted in his expulsion from the PS in 1915; on the other hand, he early on leaned towards an ethical, anti-imperialist and national socialism rather than an international one (Herrera, 2018). However, by the 1930s, what is recorded is a broader shift towards a patriotic discourse both within and outside socialism, which far exceeds his individual figure. In this sense, it is pertinent to understand his proposal as part of the evolution of Argentine socialism, which adopted this turn in a very particular political context marked by the global crisis and the advance of the right both locally and internationally. Given the standing of the PS during this period, it can be said that the shifts examined also reflect the transformations experienced by Argentine society at the time. Based on what has been said so far, the work is organised as follows: in the first section, I briefly review the party tensions surrounding the initial positions on patriotism up to 1930; in the second, I provide an overview of global social democracy’s debates regarding the rise of fascism and consider its reception in Argentina; in the third, I analyse the shifts occurring in Argentine socialism during this period, paying attention to the local political context of the early 1930s; and in the fourth, I address the rupture I identify from 1934 onwards. The final section presents the conclusions of the work.

An Unstable Balance: National Identification as Part of Internationalism

The centenary of the May Revolution of 1810 marked a significant shift in Argentine socialism regarding national identity, resulting in the abandonment of anti-patriotic rhetoric. Led by the party of the proletariat, nationalism assumed a concrete and salutary character, capable of promoting institutional improvements – the overcoming of ‘creole politic’ – and social betterment of the population, contributing to the genuine enhancement of the nation. At this juncture, the socialist discourse positioned itself as a continuation of the work initiated in 1810, while simultaneously sharpening its critique of the mystifications and hypocrisy attributed to bourgeois nationalism. This trend was bolstered by the electoral successes that followed the enactment of the Sáenz Peña Law, which allowed the PS to become fully integrated into the political system. From the National Congress, as well as from the streets, the PS would engage in systematic denunciation of militarism (Poy, 2014), one of the quintessential expressions of bourgeois patriotism. The ‘healthy’ nationalism functioned as an internationalist platform insofar as it was conceived as an intermediary station of an international homeland, which, though relegated to an indeterminate future, remained a prominent horizon in the discourse of Argentine socialists.

Alongside the weight of these internationalist identifications, the local political context imposed limitations on the PS’s patriotism during its initial decades of existence. In addition to their rejection of the notion of the homeland in words of the party founder Juan B. Justo - ‘as a strictly delineated, traditional, and sacred entity, imbued with a mysticism that dulls and crushes’ (Justo, 1933: 234), socialist militants could do nothing but denounce the prohibition of internationalist banners, imposed by the oligarchic governments in the context of rising workers’ struggles. This led to a distancing from patriotic emblems, even against the desires of much of the party leadership. A couple of examples will illustrate this issue. For the party congress in 1916, held on the centenary of national independence, an attempt was made to adorn the façade of the venue with red flags and also white and light blue ones. The police did not authorise the display of red insignia, while the inclusion of Argentine cockades within the venue provoked rejection from a significant group of delegates. The well-known leader Enrique Dickmann sarcastically noted that the matter was resolved when someone surreptitiously made ‘the body of the crime’ disappear (Dickmann, 1936: 24). Moreover, on the eve of the congress, the socialist newspaper devoted four and a half pages to inform readers about the content and foundations of the legislative proposals presented by socialist legislators in the last session, aimed at making ‘independence stronger and more effective’ (La Vanguardia, 1916). The proposals, which were of the

most varied nature – including the creation of schools, hygienic housing obligations for foreign companies, a tax on property owners residing abroad and a legal regime for religious orders – illustrated the type of ‘healthy’ patriotism they advocated, counter to the official nationalism that had ascended alongside radicalism. The ambition of President Hipólito Yrigoyen to represent the nation as a whole was correlated with the deployment of a nationalist discourse that frequently turned anti-foreign, particularly in the streets, an observable phenomenon even before the establishment of the Patriotic League during the Tragic Week of 1919. The socialist activism was directly exposed to these chauvinistic manifestations, which presumably favoured a reactive trend towards patriotism in general within its ranks, alongside a strengthening of internationalist identifications, notably more potent among militants and sympathisers with a strong cosmopolitan component, such as the Argentine socialists.

Naturally, scenes of chauvinistic patriotism also impacted the parliamentary group of the PS, although their exposure was more theoretical than material. Instead, in their practice as legislators, they were daily pressured by their peers, who frequently reproached them for their lack of attachment to patriotic symbols. In this context, the leadership sought to demonstrate to their own ranks the lack of antagonism between both symbols, without progressing significantly towards concrete manifestations. During this period, which also encompassed the 1920s – a time when anti-imperialist discourses emerged with a Latin Americanist and anti-Yankee bent (Pita González, 2009) – socialist patriotism advanced more in the realm of discourse and doctrine than in symbols and emotions. By 1924, at the first funeral of a socialist legislator, the red flag covering the coffin led the chief of the regiment assigned to pay official honours to withdraw from doing so. Justo lamented the military’s decision for depriving the event of the blue and white flag (Justo, 1933: 291). This incident and the commentary surrounding it reveal that the national flag was not yet perceived as their own by a considerable portion of the membership. The same sentiment was reflected in the official events held for national holidays, deemed a farce by socialists. The ‘healthy’ patriotism could do without them, as it consisted of fulfilling the everyday activities that ensured the country’s development. This situation prevailed until the late 1920s. Thus, when in 1928 the PS defended its membership before the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) in opposition to the newly split Partido Socialista Independiente (PSI, Socialist Independent Party), it accused its rival of displaying the Argentine flag, something supposedly uncharacteristic of socialism. However, the response was not far from the position previously defended by Juan B. Justo himself: the PSI aligned itself with the German social democracy, which similarly raised the national flag alongside the red one on various occasions (Benclowicz and Poy, 2023). The arguments encapsulate the tensions that ran through the PS regarding the national question and the oscillations that emerged in the heat of the conflict between different sectors. The dispute over membership itself reveals that the socialists attached considerable importance to the International, whose debates and positions they followed with interest.

International Debates in the Face of the Rise of Fascism

During the 1930s, the advance of fascism became the central concern of international social democracy and its primary source of disagreements. In 1931, the LSI held its fourth congress, where urgent topics such as the exacerbation of nationalisms and the threat of a new world war were discussed. The resolution passed by the vast majority of delegates reiterated the positions that the LSI had upheld since its establishment in 1923: to strengthen the campaign for disarmament and the fight against fascism in order to guarantee world peace. However, even at that congress, some delegates, particularly from the French minority, appeared to revive positions largely adopted by the majority of socialist parties in the lead-up to the First World War; they openly introduced the principle of national defence, which was practically opposed to disarmament. Yet, it was the rise of Hitler to power in early 1933 that ultimately underscored the divergences emerging within international socialism. In March of that year, the executive committee of the LSI convened a conference in Paris to debate and review socialist tactics. The text of the invitation cautioned that workers ‘must make no concessions whatsoever to nationalism and fascism ... and must place above all else the interests of the international socialist struggle, which are the same as the true interests of the peoples’ (International Information, 1933a). Essentially, the

idea was to reinforce the internationalist perspective as a means of addressing the nationalisms that were emerging not only in Germany but throughout Europe and, certainly, in Argentina as well.

The PS, coming from the experience of the dictatorship of Félix Uriburu, a nationalist general sympathetic to fascism, attached considerable importance to these events, and *La Vanguardia* (1933a) announced the opening of the LSI deliberations, alongside the party's participation with its own delegate. The most well-known perspectives from the debate that unfolded in what would turn out to be the last assembly convened by the LSI involved a minority led by the Independent Labour Party, advocating for the general adoption of revolutionary tactics, and the position of the International executive, which prevailed by a wide margin and maintained that where democracy persisted, it must be defended (International Information, 1933b). These perspectives found their local counterpart: while the PS leadership clung to the latter, the party's left wing pushed for the former, achieving considerable support among the membership. However, a third position emerged at the Paris Conference of 1933. This was defended by Pierre Renaudel, among others, on behalf of the French minority, which was expelled shortly thereafter from the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO). This faction, which had championed the principle of national defence against disarmament since the 1931 congress, now rejected direct proletarian action against fascism and promoted socialist participation in the current governments as a means of enhancing their influence.

This latter position had its parallel in Argentina within the tactics of independent socialists, who were part of President Agustín P. Justo's governing coalition at that time. However, Renaudel's positions resonated within the PS, which, following Uriburu's dictatorship, formed the Civil Alliance with the Partido Demócrata Progresista (PDP, Democratic Progressive Party). Imposing itself on the left opposition, which began to call for the abandonment of reformist tactics, the socialist leadership defended the necessity of strengthening democratic institutions, which, they argued, had been advanced by 'the founders of our nationality' (*La Vanguardia*, 1931). Here, the proposed identification was with the nation as a whole, which implied at least a postponement of the traditional classist – and internationalist – objectives of the PS, tending to converge with the perspective that would eventually predominate in most social democratic parties. Meanwhile, the French 'neo-socialism' was rapidly leaning to the right. At the congress of the SFIO held shortly before the 1933 Conference, the neo-socialists had targeted internationalism, deeming it a utopian ideal, asserting that socialism should uphold the banners appropriate to this new phase: order, authority and nation. Although the PS would not adopt the anti-parliamentary and authoritarian tendencies of this change of position, it sought more than ever to present itself as a party of order, deeply aligned with the interests of the nation. At this juncture, it did not differ from socialists in other countries who, as noted by Sturmthal, 'fought the Nazis in the name of the existing order, thus unconsciously becoming agents of conservative ideas' (Sturmthal, 1945: 261).

La Vanguardia (1933b) highlighted the figure of Renaudel and regarded Léon Blum as a delegate from the 'extreme left', despite his critiques of the revolutionary path. This characterisation stemmed from his proposal to reject any 'sacred union' with the bourgeoisie and to encourage a popular front with the communists, precisely the opposite policy advocated by the PS leadership. In summary, by 1933, Blum was positioned alongside Adler and Vandervelde in a majority faction within global social democracy that advocated for the strengthening of the internationalist perspective among socialist parties in response to the rise of fascism, thus avoiding policies focused on national issues. In contrast, Renaudel and Adrien Marquet argued that socialism should not only adopt a more aggressive stance against fascism but also embrace a more nationalist approach (Imlay, 2018). This last viewpoint was evident in most of the parties of the LSI, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis. The key issue was that this strengthening of nationalism, which was not foreign to Argentine socialism, involved, at least in this case, a qualitative shift. The 'healthy' nationalism previously championed by the Socialist Party would undergo a significant transformation.

Towards the Nationalist Shift

By early 1932, the dictatorship of Uriburu had withdrawn, and institutional order was being restored. The Civil Alliance of the PS and the PDP denounced the fraudulent nature of the elections that

brought Agustín P. Justo to power, in which the principal opposition candidate, the radical Marcelo T. de Alvear, had been proscribed. This led the radicals to advocate for abstention, which in turn granted the PS an unprecedented presence in Parliament. In 1932, 42 socialist deputies and two senators took office, including Alfredo Palacios, who had rejoined the party during the dictatorship. The regime, which reinforced its legitimacy through socialist participation, began to distance itself from liberalism and adopted an increasingly repressive profile (Benclowicz, 2019), while nationalist groups linked to the dictatorship and some factions of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR, Radical Civic Union) made threats of a coup. One of the challenges facing socialism was the actions of nationalist paramilitary groups. The Civic Legion, in particular, which had been established under the Uriburu government, enjoyed official recognition, a status it retained despite the Socialist Party's protests. In June 1932, the PS called for a 'grand rally' in defence of liberties, denouncing 'local fascism' and highlighting the contradiction between its anti-foreign rhetoric and the fact that it was led by 'Argentinians with foreign-sounding surnames' and funded by foreign companies (La Vanguardia, 1932a). The rally was also attended by the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT, General Confederation of Labour) and independent socialists, who at that time were part of Justo's government. In response to the advance of the right-wing forces and the prevailing political instability, which was also compounded by rumours of radical and communist plots, the PS sought to present itself as a party of order. In this vein, Nicolás Repetto remarked in the Parliament, 'We are not agents of disturbance [...] we have, so to speak, sheathed our grand theoretical notions [...] we have muted our usual demands, proving our understanding and empathy with the political reality of the nation' (La Vanguardia, 1932b).

In addition to displaying extreme moderation, which would ultimately lead to a crisis within the PS itself, the political context was pushing the party leadership towards assuming a broader representation that increasingly merged with the nation as a whole. This shift aligned with the emerging profile of the working class, which had become more nationalised and integrated compared to the early decades of the twentieth century. The political context was also steering the PS leadership towards forming a closer relationship with the liberal tradition, into which they would enrol themselves in response to the advance of the right-wing. Thus, the positions adopted by the party during this period involved the displacement of values associated with social justice in favour of those of liberty, a shift that occurred a full decade before the rise of peronism, which is commonly identified as the defining rupture. In this sense, the years 1932 and 1933 can be considered as a transitional phase. The national day of 25 May played a completely secondary role in 1932, and the same can be said of 9 July, when, instead of promoting the anniversary with a nationalist tone, the socialist newspaper published a piece reproducing a project by Justo from 1915 advocating the creation of primary schools to ensure 'true national independence' (La Vanguardia, 1932c), that is, in line with the 'healthy' nationalism opposed to official nationalism. In this context, it was noted that 'It is known that some serve the country by speaking, and others by their work, just as it cannot be denied that some live off the nation, while others live for it, serving and enriching it through their daily labour' (La Vanguardia, 1932d).

However, the patriotic issue was increasingly stirred up by nationalist groups as a banner against the left. This agitation was not merely rhetorical: by the end of 1932, the legionnaires attacked an anarchist rally and murdered a worker, and in mid-1933 several socialist militants were killed by the police or by legionnaires while participating in party events in the Buenos Aires province; the most notorious case was the murder of the Córdoba socialist deputy José Guevara in September (Iñigo Carrera, 2016). On a broader scale, the situation of the centenary of May Revolution appeared to be repeated; then the PS found itself pressured from one side by nationalist agitation and from the other by the internationalist demands of the anarchists and its own militants. At that time, the Social Defence Law attacked these symbols, which ultimately limited the adoption of patriotic insignia and festivities by the socialists. Now, a police decree issued in 1932 stipulated that only religious or patriotic street parades would be authorised (González Alemán, 2012). The only explicit exception to this rule was the May Day mobilisation, the prohibition of which seemed unfeasible given the significance of the date and the importance of socialism itself. The provision did not ban other public events, but it clearly favoured the activities of right-wing groups. The following year, perhaps in response to the limited reaction from the socialists, the government went further: on the eve of May

Day, it issued a decree 'Regarding the use of flags', which prohibited the use of any flags other than the Argentine one and those of foreign nations with which the Republic maintained friendly relations. In other words, the decree prohibited the flags of the internationalist left.

The government's advance was again successful; instead of challenging it in the name of freedom of expression, the leadership of the PS decided to suspend public events related to the date across the country 'as an affirmation of protest' (La Vanguardia, 1933c). In its place, the party's press organ published, on its May Day edition's front page, a statement from the executive committee and various speeches that would have been delivered if the events had taken place. A year earlier, the front page of the socialist newspaper had featured the declaration of the LSI. The absence of this in 1933 was partially compensated by the still abundant internationalist references in the published texts. The articles revisited classical and contemporary themes; Enrique Dickman elaborated in a positivist tone on the socialist struggle against capitalism, Manuel Palacín discussed the achievements of the working class and its advances and setbacks and an extensive article told the story of the workers' anthem *The Internationale*, which 'moves, through its lyrics and music, all the proletarians of the world', detailing its spread 'beyond borders' and how it 'makes a reality, albeit in a lyrical form, that phrase Marx placed at the end of his famous manifesto' (La Vanguardia, 1933d). However, the internationalist tone of these articles coexisted with a series of discourses that strongly appealed to socialist readers from another standpoint. The advertisements of Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (YPF, State Oil Fields), 'which is exclusively Argentine', being 'The Argentine people, who have formed the capital of YPF, its sole shareholder', competed with 'Energina petrol, unsurpassable and distinctly Argentine', offered by the British oil company Shell-Mex, and with the American Standard Oil, which in 1911 'already had its refinery in Argentina', and had been 'contributing to the strengthening of the nation's economy and industry' (La Vanguardia, 1933e). While these advertisements did not themselves indicate a modification in party line, they were revealing of the spread of nationalist and industrialist ideological content in society in general – alongside YPF, international oil monopolies were attempting to associate themselves with Argentine identity – and also of their penetration among socialist voters, who were, after all, the readers. Another advertisement decried that 'Many Argentine riches ... are going abroad', including both oil and bovine leather, 'the noblest of Argentine products' (La Vanguardia, 1933f). This advance would not take long to extend beyond advertising.

On 1 May 1933, doctrinal reflections associated with a national perspective also appeared, separate from the numerous articles dedicated to the International Labour Day. Under the title 'National Interests and Socialism', the then-young Américo Ghioldi discussed the case of the Spanish socialists, highlighting the element of 'historical and national emotion'; the article's relevance was justified because they were 'comrades of the Socialist International' (La Vanguardia, 1933g). Likewise, a note by Juan Antonio Solari referred to the adoption of the national Constitution of 1853 – which, coincidentally, was also approved on 1 May – highlighting its 'humanist and just' value, even though it did not entirely meet 'our aspirations', which would require a profound reform (La Vanguardia, 1933h). Ghioldi's and Solari's concepts were not new; they drew from the party's long internationalist tradition and still occupied a minor space compared to the purely socialist and internationalist content associated with May Day. However, the government actions in the context of the global economic crisis placed the PS in a new position. The signing of the Roca–Runciman agreement, which according to a significant segment of public opinion was detrimental to Argentina, provided a strong angle for socialist intervention. Thus, on 9 July 1933, the PS could proudly claim not only to have promoted the construction of schools and daily labour in honour of the homeland but also to have defended national independence against the government's pro-British interests and the landowners associated with them. In homage to 'the real independence of the Argentine Republic', the socialists asserted that 'Our internationalism, based on the solidarity of all working people in the world [...] has always been able to reconcile itself with the great national needs of Argentina, and has never accepted, nor will it accept, the dictatorship of any foreign capital, whether disguised or open' (La Vanguardia, 1933i).

On this occasion, 9 July had a greater display than before, including, in addition to the statement mentioned above – published on the front page – the next day's reproduction of a radio lecture on the subject by Solari, who had focused on the anniversary of the Constitution's adoption on 1 May,

and another by Alberto del Castillo. The latter is noteworthy because it had been delivered on 25 May - over a month and a half earlier - and because it addressed an unusual topic considering the traditional approach of the socialist press to these commemorations. Castillo managed to propose a musical inspiration in the events of May 1810, which would have permeated the land and its flag. The soul of Mozart would have reached the country in the form of 'a voice that lulled the thought and action of May, finding in the beauty, purity, and vastness of our soil the harmony that its soul needed'. Music would also manifest itself in the Argentine flag, which 'is the result of a vibration that resonates in the air' (La Vanguardia, 1933j). Thus, the discourses circulating around patriotic dates surpassed the traditional symbolism associated with recognising the political liberation of the young nation and the need, together with the socialists, to pursue economic emancipation, shifting fully into the realm of emotion. This powerful association of the homeland with the sensuous is quite novel in socialist liturgy, which had typically resonated more with internationalist identifications, as expressed in the May Day article about the anthem of the world's proletariat. As noted Cattaruzza (2016), a new political and economic context was facilitating the reinforcement of nationalist discourses in general. The anti-imperialism that had emerged in the previous decade, framed in an anti-North American context, likely contributed to this development. The foundation of the Unión Latinoamericana (ULA, Latin American Union) in 1925, presided over by Alfredo Palacios and associated with the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance), the more moderate Alianza Continental (AC, Continental Alliance) separated from the former, and the more radicalised Liga Antiimperialista de las Américas (LADLA, Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas) promoted by the communists, laid the groundwork for a set of proposals that, in the context of the 1930 crisis, assumed an anti-British character. The rise of nationalism inevitably placed pressure on socialism, leading to modifications in party liturgy and the presentation of Alfredo Palacios' proposed law, which deepens and develops the nationalist line outlined in the 1933 commemorations. And it does so by making the territorial question a central issue.

A New Place for the Homeland

As has been made clear, internationalist references have always occupied a central place in the political identity of Argentine socialism, and the speeches, mobilisations and other activities organised for May Day particularly expressed this identity, reinforcing the idea of belonging to a global movement. Thus, while 'healthy' patriotism was championed on 25 May or 9 July, International Labour Day was an opportunity to demonstrate the PS's transnational commitment. However, by 1934, a different tone could be heard. In his speech for the occasion, Alfredo Palacios called for 'looking to ourselves, returning to the origins of our nationality, and embracing once again the cause of freedom'. This fragment, more fitting for a national holiday, aligned with what Américo Ghioldi had suggested a year earlier regarding Spanish socialism, highlighting the features of the nation to oppose 'all the extremes' that preach 'discord and despotism'. The note is discordant because it refers to a class-based date, at least until that moment an expression of the class struggle, that is, discord. It was precisely this discord that pushed history forward, and for this reason, socialists championed it, particularly on May Day. In the same speech, quoting Jean Jaurès, Palacios openly spoke of 'replacing class struggle with social harmony', proclaimed that 'socialism does not desert the homeland', and called for abandoning 'abstract internationalism' (La Vanguardia, 1934a).

In addition to the pressure exerted by nationalism, the speech hints at the presence of left-wing sectors within the party ranks, who, in this context, called for more internationalism. But the socialist senator went further, urging that the date be placed within the national tradition, referencing Justo José de Urquiza's declaration of 1 May 1851, against the Buenos Aires governor Juan Manuel de Rosas. Palacios' long-standing inclination towards a 'national' socialism has already been discussed, but by 1934, other leaders like Enrique Dickman joined this perspective, praising the 1 May celebrations of 1851 and 1853, when the National Constitution was proclaimed, which had also been evoked the previous year by Solari. These approaches coexist in the socialist newspaper with considerations on the contradictions of capitalism and the global crisis, present above all in the speech of the then main party leader, Nicolás Repetto. But the national issue seemed to gain an unprecedented force on this May Day

of 1934, marking a novelty that would continue to develop throughout the decade – 10 years later, national anniversaries of 1 May would come to take precedence over internationalist commemoration (Martínez Mazzola, 2011). This did not prevent the PS from protesting, without noticing the paradox, that the date ‘has been so distorted in our country in recent years that today it is used for everything’ (La Vanguardia, 1934b). The condemnation was directed at the convocations called by Catholic workers’ circles and conservative groups, although it is clear that the criticism could also be applied to the party itself.

A few days later, Palacios would present his project on the Malvinas. The socialist legislator defended the need to initiate a patriotic campaign among the population to disseminate Argentina’s rights over the Islands, which were largely unknown at the time. The vehicle for this campaign would be the translation, publication and distribution in schools and public libraries of Paul Groussac’s book *Les Iles Malouines*. The initiative clearly marked a break from the principles of ‘healthy’ nationalism that had been advocated by the PS up until that point, which had focused on the social improvement of the nation. On the other hand, it could be argued that the latter was timely in an economically challenging context marked by the severe effects of the Great Depression, even when the PS tended to minimise the impact of the crisis in Argentina (Benclowicz, 2022). Nonetheless, as noted, the idea of reinforcing the nationalist perspective was not absent from the debates within global social democracy at the time. In this sense, Palacios’ initiative, supported by the party, was not far from the ideas of French neosocialism mentioned earlier. This confirms the great ideological fluidity and heterogeneity that prevailed at the time (Halperín Donghi, 2013), as the PS, aligning with the majority of world social democracy, stood opposed to the authoritarian tendencies within that movement, to the point that its advocacy for liberalism ended up overshadowing its class-based stance and even its demands for social justice (Herrera, 2016).

Palacios’ language was frequently that of honour, both in personal matters – evidenced by his duels – and in his defence of workers’ dignity, for which it was necessary to push for laws that improved living and working conditions. Now, this concept was applied to the nation, whose honour had been tarnished by the abuse of power of one of the world’s most powerful nations. As Guber (1999) notes, the loss of the Malvinas appeared as the loss of national dignity, and its recovery as the restoration of honour and justice. For this, it was crucial that the Argentine people were aware of their right, which here was not about social improvement, but about a nation that seemed to move as a homogeneous whole. For the first time, the PS, through Palacios, proposed to build a national cause around a territorial claim. It did so by defending the liberal tradition in which it itself stood, alongside Groussac: governments of that stripe would have guaranteed the continuity of the claim over the Islands. Though not explicitly named, the ideas of right-wing nationalism, which had begun denouncing the links between liberalism, the oligarchy and British imperialism in the wake of the 1930 crisis, hovered over the discourse. Undoubtedly, the new context created by the global crisis was the trigger for a series of initiatives that emerged from the most diverse political spaces, all affected by the rise of nationalism and anti-imperialist discourse. Thus, Malvinas joined the denunciation of British and American meatpacking plants, led by Lisandro de la Torre and supported by Palacios, as well as that of the Roca-Runciman treaty.

But there is more. Palacios constructed an image of Argentina as a unique nation, which, unlike the rest, would not operate based on material interests, as ostensibly did Great Britain or the United States, the two nations responsible for the British occupation of the Malvinas in 1833. ‘We constitute the only nation in the world that can present itself as an admirable model of collective soul, having marked in its relations with other peoples a straight line of idealism driven by justice and honour’ (Palacios, 1934: 127), he asserts in a speech with reminiscences of Arielism, with romantic and modernist components due to his rejection of Anglo-Saxon materialism. His ties to the University Reform and his leadership in the anti-imperialist movement of the 1920s serve as precedents for these positions. However, it is striking that, despite having presided over the Latin American Union, his 1934 intervention does not centre on the subcontinent. Instead, he postulates national exceptionalism, emulating his version of the *kultur/civilization* opposition: the spiritual qualities that in Thomas Mann were German, are here proposed for the Argentines. Thus, in mythical, essentialist terms and disconnected from the social problems of the moment, the Malvinas presentation framed a great national cause for all Argentines. This approach deepens the new identification with the national question that had been emerging. His

speech in the Senate was widely reproduced in *La Vanguardia* (1934c), which also marked for the first time the anniversary of the creation of the Political and Military Command of the Malvinas on 10 June 1829. It could be said that the socialists began to compete with nationalism on its own terrain. The focus on the rights of the dispossessed shifted towards the homeland, which had been unjustly deprived of its territory.

Alfredo Palacios had distinctive political traits, but contrary to what has been suggested, the line he developed at that time was entirely consistent with that of the PS leadership. They were preparing to settle scores with the party's left-wing factions at the 22nd Congress in May 1934, during which the issue of nationalism once again took centre stage. The socialist organ reprinted various excerpts from Justo and other leaders on the subject, attempting to legitimise the adopted policy in the face of calls for a more internationalist and class-based shift from the left, which claimed that the leadership was trying to 'infiltrate nationalism into our ranks'. Ernesto Giudici, among other leaders of this sector, attacked 'the nationalist tendency displayed by the party's leaders' (*La Vanguardia*, 1934d). The core of the debate with the left centred on the revolutionary tactics they wanted to adopt, though the question of nationalism continued to permeate the discussions. The defeat of this sector at the 22nd Congress and, again, at the Extraordinary Congress in May 1935, convened to discuss the party's tactics, cleared the path for consolidating the shift made the previous year.

With left-wing sectors expelled or neutralised after the Extraordinary Congress of May 1935, new advances in that direction can be observed. Regarding 9 July of that year, *La Vanguardia* (1935a) praised the official parades, whose pomp and emptiness had been carefully denounced up until that point. The Malvinas issue resurfaced in the socialist newspaper, which asserted that 'it is a national sentiment' regarding the case of a man born in the Islands who sought to enlist in the army. The article published on the front page stated that the individual 'came to Buenos Aires to fulfil his duties as an Argentine' (*La Vanguardia*, 1935b), now identified with military service by the very party that once made the denunciation of militarism one of its banners.

The list goes on, but it could be said that the circle closed 3 years later, with the establishment of National Flag Day. The new celebration, set for 20 June in honour of its creator, Manuel Belgrano, was supported by the PS, which voted in favour in Parliament – though unsuccessfully proposing that it not be declared a holiday to avoid reducing working days – and welcomed the date through its 24th congress, which was deliberating at that time. Ten years had passed since, in the context of the dispute with the independent socialists, the PS had accused them before the International of displaying the Argentine flag as an illegitimate act. Now, they adhered to this 'pleasant anniversary that will strengthen the sentiment of nationality, imbued with a new meaning' (*La Vanguardia*, 1938). This meaning reached the socialists, who decorated the House of the People – their headquarters – on 20 June 1938, without the protests that had previously been heard. Not only had national symbols been incorporated into party liturgy, but national holidays and Argentine history, in general, were subjects of courses that were replicated in various socialist centres. Even socialist anti-fascism, international by nature, began to be framed in nationalist terms: it was presented as a defence of the national tradition (Bisso, 2007; Friedmann, 2009). Thus, that same year, socialist deputy Enrique Dickmann presented an initial plea that later gave rise to the Investigative Committee on Anti-Argentine Activities, warning that in various German schools, the destruction of the national spirit was being encouraged. The defence of Argentinity threatened by alleged Nazi infiltration would thereafter occupy an increasingly prominent space in the PS's rhetoric, which tended to expand the boundaries of its nationalism and liberalism, to adopt an idea of the homeland very similar to that of 'a rigorously delimited, traditional, sacred entity, of mysticism that brutalises and crushes' (Justo, 1933, 234). The balance with the internationalist and classist imprint that had accompanied the party during its period of greatest influence was left behind.

Conclusions

As demonstrated, by the 1930s there was a significant shift in how the PS conceptualised the national question. From the time of the Centenary of Argentina's emancipation until that point, there had been a balance between a set of internationalist values, identified as inherently socialist, and a 'healthy'

patriotism based on contributing to the social improvement of the nation. This contribution, presented as the socialist input into national development, went hand in hand with the long-term goal of constructing a classless, borderless world. These latter ideals had a prominent place in the political tradition of the PS, to the extent that, despite embracing ‘healthy’ nationalism, the national symbols and patriotic dates were not fully incorporated into socialist liturgy. This is linked to the significant presence of left-wing factions within the party and the need to distinguish itself from one of the primary targets of socialist criticism, the ‘bourgeois’ patriotism inherent in ‘creole politics’.

However, the rise of fascism globally and the growing influence of the right in Argentina, within a context where nationalist sentiments were spreading throughout society, led to a reconfiguration of the PS’s political stance. The experience of the Uriburu dictatorship and the perceived threat of a new coup that would undermine civil and political freedoms contributed to an understanding with liberal sectors at first, and later even with conservatives willing to formally uphold the democratic regime. In this political context, characterised by electoral fraud and the rise of right-wing forces within Justo’s government, the PS – the main opposition party due to the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR, Radical Civic Union) abstention – reached the largest parliamentary representation in its history. This fact also pushed the party towards a broader representation than it had maintained up until that point. In this regard, the PS followed the path already taken by European social democracy, which was at the time embroiled in debates over the best tactics to prevent the spread of fascism. The idea of reinforcing national identifications and combating fascism from that basis gained momentum and attracted a PS that, though marked by strong internal conflicts, would ultimately embrace the nationalism it had previously denounced.

By 1934, a series of shifts had clearly taken place, proposing a new way of thinking about the party’s relationship with the national question, that involved an appropriation of the symbolic and emotional aspects of patriotism and subsumption within the liberal tradition. Palacios’s stance on the Malvinas was the most advanced in this regard, leading the charge for a territorial claim that, in addition to diverging from the notion of ‘healthy’ nationalism, was entirely unprecedented. From this point onward, despite occasional oscillations, essentialist patriotism gained ground, and the PS began to present itself as the guardian of Argentine identity. By the end of the decade, socialism had fully embraced national symbolism, and harmony had replaced class struggle. Beyond May Day, which retained some of its traditional significance, the alignment with the nation became so deep that references to socialist internationalism, once constitutive of the party’s identity, would become almost irrelevant.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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