

The Rhetoric of Community and the Business of Pleasure: the San Sebastián Waiters' Strike of 1920

JOHN K. WALTON AND JENNY SMITH

Summary: Health and pleasure resorts constitute a distinctive, numerous and important kind of industrial town. But they, and the service industries which are central to their economies, have hardly been studied from a social conflict and industrial relations perspective. This paper opens out this theme by analysing a strike in the catering trades in San Sebastián, at the time Spain's largest and most prestigious seaside resort, at the height of the holiday season in August. The course of the strike is charted in its economic and political context, and the reasons for its outbreak, and for an ensuing attempt to escalate it into a local general strike, are analysed. Particular attention is paid to the status in the labour market of the *camareros* or hotel, restaurant and café waiters who withdrew their labour, and to reactions to the strike among local media who were deeply conscious of the importance to San Sebastián's staple industry of sustaining a carefully-constructed image of tranquillity and security. Comparisons are made with British resort experiences in the turbulent years between 1916 and 1921, and further work on this theme is urged, especially for this important period.

On 16 August 1920 the hotel and café waiters of San Sebastián, the capital of Guipúzcoa province in the Basque country of northern Spain and the nation's most important and most fashionable seaside resort, went on strike. The dispute followed a tortuous course over the days that followed, and came to an end on 27 August after a general strike called partly in support of the waiters, and partly to press for the dismissal of the provincial governor, achieved an embarrassingly minimal level of support. The failure of this local general strike brought the flagging waiters' strike down with it.¹

As we shall see, this strike was neither a unique event, nor, in context, a particularly surprising one. Nevertheless, it presents a combination of characteristics which make it worthy of detailed study. Strikes in service

¹ *La Época* (Madrid), 17 August 1920, 27 August 1920; *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* (San Sebastián), 17 August 1920, 28 August 1920. These dates are at variance with the detailed chronology of strikes in Guipúzcoa province supplied by F. Luengo Teixidor, *Crecimiento económico y cambio social: Guipúzcoa 1917-1923* (Leoia, 1990), p. 373, but they agree with his dates in *La crisis de la Restauración: partidos, elecciones y conflictividad social en Guipúzcoa, 1917-1923* (Bilbao, 1991), p. 128. See also L. Castells, "Una aproximación al conflicto social en Guipúzcoa 1890-1923", *Estudios de Historia Social*, 32-33 (1985), p. 289.

industries of this sort were, and are, unusual, although perhaps less so in the Spain of this period than elsewhere and at other times. This particular strike was the first sustained confrontation in this sector in San Sebastián, and the general strike which emerged from it was the first locally-generated event of its kind to take place at the height of the holiday season, when it was particularly threatening to the economy of a city whose stock in trade was providing a leisured and secure environment for the wealthy. The literature on strikes in resorts is practically non-existent, and so is work on the labour relations dimensions of resort economies. Historical research on resorts – which has been undertaken mainly in Britain, France and the United States – has tended to focus on social structure, land-ownership, the building process, and the role of municipalities and private enterprise in the supply and regulation of amenities and entertainments.² The tensions which erupted in overt conflict in San Sebastián at the end of the First World War and in the difficult years which followed, must also have been present in some form elsewhere, and an analysis of their nature and development should help to direct attention to neglected themes in resort settings more generally. This is an important consideration when we bear in mind the importance of resorts in the population profile, urban structure and economic activities of the “developed world”. Moreover, the responses of the press and those in authority to the events of August 1920 in San Sebastián are of interest for the light they shed on the ideological apparatus which might be deployed in a resort setting to underpin, perpetuate and protect an image – and a reality – of social quiescence which was necessary to the competitive success of the resort and its economy in the long run. Social conflicts of this kind thus offer lenses through which we can inspect the ways in which order was maintained and amenity protected in towns which were particularly dependent on a reputation for comfort and security.

This local general strike was not an isolated occurrence, nor did it come out of the blue. Sustained labour unrest, often with revolutionary overtones or intent, was a general theme of the last years of the First World War and the uneasy peace that followed. Spain’s neutrality in the great conflict did not exempt it from this pattern of events, and there were syndicalist as well as socialist traditions on which workers’ leaders could build in the great cities and industrial districts. The belated and limited stirrings in San Sebastián were of little account compared to the upheavals

² See especially J. K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750–1914* (Leicester, 1983), and references cited therein; N. Morgan, “Perceptions, Patterns and Policies of Tourism” (Ph.D., Exeter University, 1992); A. Corbin, *Le territoire du vide* (Paris, 1988); G. Désert, *La vie quotidienne sur les plages normandes du second empire aux années folles* (Paris, 1983); C. Haug, *Leisure and Urbanism in Nineteenth-century Nice* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1982); M. J. Calvo Sánchez, *Crecimiento y estructura urbana de San Sebastián* (San Sebastián, 1983); C. Gil de Arriba, *Casas para baños de ola y balnearios marítimos en el litoral montañoso, 1868–1936* (Santander, 1992).

which had been, and were being, experienced in Barcelona or Bilbao. In world, European or even regional terms – compared with, for example, the heavy industrial areas of neighbouring Vizcaya province – San Sebastián was a backwater. Outside its immediate environs the events of August 1920 occasioned some surprise but little sustained attention.³

Relatively quiescent though San Sebastián and its province were, however, they were beginning to react more positively to socialist and syndicalist militancy elsewhere. Socialist and anarchist-oriented groups had been trying to get a foothold in San Sebastián itself since at least 1890, and occasional strikes are recorded from the turn of the century, especially in printing and the building trades. Some alarm was expressed by the local press in 1901 at a determined initiative at socialist organization; but socialists in this area were no friends of the notion of the revolutionary or potentially-revolutionary general strike which was widely current elsewhere in Spain, and the movements of 1905 and 1911 failed to strike sparks in Guipúzcoa. Nor did the mining strikes of August 1906, which damaged the holiday season in Santander, extend their influence for an equivalent distance in the opposite direction from the Bilbao area into San Sebastián. It was not until the end of 1916 that a general strike, ostensibly in opposition to wartime inflation and shortages especially of food, attracted popular support on a large and turbulent scale in San Sebastián, to the dismay of a local ruling class which was accustomed to a docile workforce and a deferential populace.⁴ The unrest persisted in 1917, generating continuing worry, surveillance and repression on the part of the authorities, and in August San Sebastián briefly responded to the national call for a general strike which arose from the railway dispute of that month. This renewed display of militancy, this time at the height of the holiday season, drew an energetic and emotionally propagandist response from the forces of authority; but the bullfights of the festive period of *Semana Grande* had to be suspended. The strike proved to be a flash in the pan, but it was no less alarming for that.⁵

These events opened the floodgates, and 1918 and 1919 saw recurrent strikes and threats of strikes in a variety of sectors. At the end of May 1920 a further local general strike was provoked by what might under normal circumstances have been an unremarkable traffic incident at Lezo, in the industrial settlement of Rentería a few miles outside San Sebastián.

³ A. Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain* (London, 1990), especially pp. 127–128; Raymond Carr, *Modern Spain 1875–1980* (London, 1980), ch. 6; M. Tuñón de Lara, *El movimiento obrero en la historia de España* (Madrid, 1972), chs 10–11; J. P. Fusi, *Política obrera en el País Vasco 1880–1923* (Madrid, 1975); L. Mees, *Nacionalismo vasco, movimiento obrero y cuestión social, 1903–1923* (Bilbao, 1992); and the works by Luengo Teixidor and Castells cited in note 1 above.

⁴ Castells, “Una aproximación al conflicto social”, pp. 267–273, 283; J. R. Saiz Viadero, *Cantabria en el siglo XX* (Santander, 1988), pp. 136, 139.

⁵ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, pp. 85–90.

But in a situation which now combined rising Basque separatist aspirations with tense labour relations, the behaviour and demeanour of the armed police on this occasion sparked off a major incident. Disturbances spread to the provincial capital, a general strike was declared, and a demonstration which involved the mayor and several members of the corporation of San Sebastián in a peace-keeping role was violently dispersed by the military authorities. This in turn prompted a sustained agitation for the removal of the governor, which was still simmering in August. The events of the summer of 1920 should be seen as the climax of an accelerating rhythm of industrial militancy, increasingly spiced with political unrest. The ground had been well prepared for the events of August.⁶

Meanwhile, San Sebastián's waiters, like those in other Spanish cities, were no strangers to trade union organization and collective action. In Santander, for example, San Sebastián's main rival for the status of Spain's most fashionable resort, the waiters were already well enough organized in 1903 to launch a sustained but unsuccessful strike just before the start of the holiday season. The local union was affiliated to a province-wide organization which aspired to enforce a closed shop.⁷ In San Sebastián itself the waiters' union "La Prosperidad" was sufficiently established in July 1912 to petition the municipality for help in setting up a library.⁸ This request was turned down, with conventional expressions of regret; and "La Prosperidad" turned to more conventional trade union concerns. There were disputes in the hotel industry in the summers of 1918 and 1919, and negotiations between employers and workers' representatives over a formal agreement on wages and working conditions dragged on from October 1919 to the difficult summer of 1920. The waiters were said to be heavily influenced by the small number of very active anarchists who had arrived in San Sebastián by this time, and they were pressing for the introduction of a closed shop, along with several other goals. Entwined with these issues of conflict was a festering dispute over the introduction of the newly-prescribed eight-hour day in the catering trades, which had led to a brief strike of employers in protest in early July.⁹ So the events of August built on a well-established pattern of organization and conflict in a trade where lack of apprenticeship and formal definitions of skill, along with the problems of seasonal employment fluctuations, labour mobility and the scope for employer paternalism, had not prevented the emergence of assertive trade unionism.

⁶ Luengo, *ibid.*, passim; Castells, "Una aproximación al conflicto social".

⁷ *El Cantábrico* (Santander), 23 June 1903. The course of this strike is summarized in J. I. Barrón, *Historia del socialismo en Cantabria: los orígenes, 1887-1905* (Santander, 1987), pp. 209-211. On p. 217 Barrón suggests a foundation date in 1901 for the Unión Cantábrica de Camareros y Cocineros, which was affiliated to the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores.

⁸ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 4 July 1912.

⁹ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 4 July 1920, 7 July 1920; Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 128.

The waiters' strike of August 1920, and the greater local crisis into which it fed, is interesting in itself. Strikes in seaside resorts are unusual enough, especially in the service trades and at the height of the holiday season, to deserve the close attention of labour historians when they do occur; and later in this paper some initial comparisons will be made with similar patterns of conflict at about the same time in the English popular resort of Blackpool. Labour disputes in this sector were far from being confined to Spain, and it is likely that the First World War and its aftermath brought them to the surface in other European countries as well as Britain and Spain, and probably in the United States as well. The whole theme deserves further comparative research. For the time being, however, and in the context of San Sebastián, the conflict is even more important for what it reveals about the social system and dynamics of the city in which it took place, and perhaps by implication those of other "leisure towns". But before we move on to look at the management of order and amenity through this and related lenses, we need to say a little more about what kind of place San Sebastián was, and about the trajectory of the strike and the nature of the conflict.

I

The San Sebastián of 1920 was Spain's most specialized and successful seaside resort. Its population had grown from about 10,000 in the 1840s, when this old seaport and fortress town was just beginning to attract summer visitors to its beaches, to 21,355 at the census of 1877, 37,812 at that of 1900, and 61,774 in 1920 itself. The old town, huddled behind its walls under the fortified peninsula of Monte Urgull, had been destroyed by fire when the British forces captured it in 1813, and rebuilt to a simplified plan in the years that followed. It was less insanitary but also less romantic than the medieval centres of many other Spanish towns. In 1863 the walls were breached, amid scenes of popular rejoicing, and a planned grid of broad streets began to spread across the plain between the River Urumea and the fashionable bathing beach of La Concha. The opening of the railway in 1864 brought San Sebastián much closer to Madrid, and indeed to Bordeaux and Paris, for the town had the good fortune to be on the direct route from the capital to the French border on the western side of the Pyrenees. At the same time a conflict over whether to improve the port and its access from the main railway line, or to lay out public gardens to encourage the visits of polite society, was resolved in favour of the more genteel alternative. The early 1860s constituted the key transitional point at which San Sebastián became committed to specialization in a holiday industry which in Spain was still in its infancy.¹⁰

¹⁰ For the best analysis of these processes, see Calvo Sánchez, *Crecimiento y estructura*.

This was, perhaps, a gamble; but it proved to be a paying decision. In the late nineteenth century San Sebastián became the most popular and fashionable resort of the Madrid elite, and it also attracted a lot of comfortably-off visitors from the northern provinces, from Navarre and Aragón, the Rioja and Castile, as well as drawing considerable numbers of French visitors, especially for the bullfights of the August *Semana Grande*. From time to time there were royal visits, beginning with the young queen Isabella II in 1845; and in 1887 the Queen Regent, María Cristina, decided that here was the best place to bring her infant son, Alfonso XIII, to preserve his delicate health away from the stifling heat of central Spain in the summer months. This decision bore fruit in the building of the Miramar Palace as a royal residence on the sea front, and it meant that San Sebastián became the summer residence of the court. Its beaches were filled with conversational groups of scheming politicians, and the Madrid diplomatic corps followed aristocrats and ministers to this most favoured of the northern beaches. This, above all, was the making of San Sebastián as an elite resort, with its Casino, its opulent theatres and bathing establishments, and its big hotels which became a byword for expense if not always for luxury.¹¹

By 1920, however, San Sebastián's privileged position was beginning to seem a little less secure. The evidence is confused, however. It would be tempting to follow the popular local historiography which suggests that the city's best holiday seasons were those of the First World War, when European and transatlantic high society sought pleasure in one of the few remaining outposts of gaiety and hedonism. The corollary of this would be a post-war decline along the lines suggested by Constancia de la Mora's reminiscence that in 1919, "The World War was over. The Spanish aristocracy swarmed to French seaside resorts for the summer. No fashionable woman could any longer be seen at a Spanish watering-place."¹² The anecdotal evidence for such a pattern is not backed up by the existing statistics, however, although none of the evidence is straightforward. The lists of distinguished visitors compiled by the local authority were already dwindling before the war broke out; but this task was clearly not taken seriously by the compilers, and the decline probably reflects a further waning of interest in an underdefined and impossible task.¹³ The visitor statistics which were also compiled by local government, on the basis of recorded arrivals and departures at the railway stations, present a very different picture. They seem to show fluctuations in the average visitor numbers for August, the peak month, ranging between about 15,000 and 23,000 over

¹¹ J. K. Walton and J. Smith, "The first Spanish seaside resorts: San Sebastián and Santander from the 1840s to the 1930s", *History Today* (forthcoming, 1994).

¹² Constancia de la Mora, *In Place of Splendour* (London, 1940), p. 33.

¹³ Archivos Municipales de San Sebastián (A.M.S.S.), B, 10, I, 394, 4.

the years from 1901 to 1918; but no sustained pattern is apparent, and the war years are unremarkable. What does stand out is a post-war peak, with August figures running at well over 30,000 in 1919–1921 and again in 1923, before returning to 23,000 in the mid-1920s. On this basis, the 1920 season ought to mark the peak of San Sebastián's prosperity as a resort, if we take into account the extraordinary official September average of well over 40,000, which was more than eight times the 1914 figure and nearly five times that of 1917. But these figures were not trusted by the municipal officials themselves, and it is obvious that something went badly wrong with their collection in about 1919, when the September total began to swell in this spectacular way. The August figures probably became tainted at about the same time.¹⁴

More reliable evidence comes from the yield of the provincial entertainment tax which was collected, apparently with great thoroughness and vigilance, from 1915 onwards. It doubled between 1915 and 1920, although no allowance can be made for wartime inflation in the absence of detailed price series for each enterprise. After 1920 the tax yield hovered around or just below this post-war peak, before rising sharply again in 1923–1924. On these figures, which can be broken down month by month to confirm the enduring primacy of August, thereby undermining the municipal visitor counts, 1920 marks the crest of a long rise in entertainment receipts, which is then sustained in succeeding years. San Sebastián may have lost the patronage of some high-spending international personalities after the war, but this was more than counterbalanced by continuing growth in its mainstream holiday market, which was drawn from Madrid and the Spanish provinces. The waiters' strike punctuated a period of steady growth which had continued beyond the war years and was to be sustained subsequently.¹⁵

In 1920 itself, however, San Sebastián's prosperity did not look as secure as this evidence suggests. Apart from the fears engendered by the departure of some of the big spenders, the possible loss of royal patronage was a real fear, although an unspoken one. The king featured prominently in the resort's publicity, but since his coming of age in 1902 he had spent less and less time in San Sebastián. He and his English wife had been lured to Santander by the municipality's gift of a purpose-built summer palace, and their visits to San Sebastián became shorter and more intermittent, especially after 1913. The royal presence was sustained by Queen María Cristina, and San Sebastián remained the summer seat of government for most purposes; but the royal connection as such now rested rather tenuously on the habits and preferences of an elderly widow. This unvoiced

¹⁴ A.M.S.S., B, 10, I, 394, 4 and 6; B. Anabitarte, *Gestión del municipio de San Sebastián* (San Sebastián, 1971), p. 211; *Euskal-Erria* 45 (1901), pp. 424–427.

¹⁵ Archivo General de Gipuzkoa, Tolosa (A.G.G.), JD IT series, files labelled "Impuesto sobre espectáculos" (Entertainment tax). JD IT 3411–8 provide the most important material.

insecurity perhaps made the city's rulers – and many ordinary citizens – all the more sensitive to threats to peace, order and property.¹⁶

The summer season was not, of course, the only source of income for the townspeople. Apart from the fishing community by the harbour, and the jobs in commerce, the professions and local government which went with the city's status as trading centre and provincial capital, San Sebastián had a wide range of industries, not all of which were tied to the needs and whims of affluent visitors. A return of the city's "industries" in 1924 listed 315 establishments. Most were small-scale producer-retailers with at most a handful of employees, but some were substantial, especially the soap, chemical and artificial cement works on the outskirts. Woodwork, metalwork, light engineering and the manufacture of clothing and beverages were most in evidence. Indeed, the holiday industry itself would not have made much of a showing in a list of people's nominal occupations.¹⁷ A guidebook of 1923 listed five hotels of "first category", twelve of "second category", and fifteen of "third category", but this was the most prestigious and well-defined peak of a large iceberg. The same guidebook listed only fifty-one guest-houses, most of which took up a floor in the large blocks of apartments; but this was an absurd underestimate.¹⁸ As early as 1892 a Santander guide had listed 159 guest-houses, in a city whose holiday industry developed later and on a smaller scale than San Sebastián's; and in the Basque resort itself a pattern was already established in the late nineteenth century whereby "employees with small incomes, such as clerks, telegraph operators, caretakers, messengers, policemen and so on" were able to pay their rents for the year through "the industry of taking in guests during the summer", which was "very general among this class of employees".¹⁹ And there must have been many other tradesmen like the draper who told the tax authorities that, "On the first floor of the house I hire out what is known as the front part to two visitors [. . .]"²⁰ Such activities generally went unrecorded in official and even commercial sources; and the same applies to the jobs and incomes generated by the very common practice among the better-off visitors of hiring flats or villas from local property-owners for the holiday season. This helped to fill the "situations vacant" columns in the local press every summer with advertisements seeking domestic servants of all kinds, over and above the demand for seasonal laundry work and the other service jobs in cafés, bars, shops and places of entertainment. Moreover, some all-the-year-round work was created by the need for caretakers and gardeners to look after vacant villas out of season. By 1920, then, San Sebastián had become

¹⁶ Walton and Smith, "First Spanish seaside resorts".

¹⁷ A.M.S.S., B, 10, I, 392, 1.

¹⁸ J. Prats Vázquez, *Guía de San Sebastián* (Barcelona, 1923), pp. 71–82.

¹⁹ *Nueva Guía de Santander y la Montaña, con arreglo al último censo oficial* (Santander, 1892), pp. 27–30; A.M.S.S., B, 10, I, 392, 12.

²⁰ A.M.S.S., B, 10, I, 388, 4.

a classic leisure town in its economic structure and population profile. Even on the official census figures, 48.2 per cent of the "active" population was employed in the tertiary sector, compared with 24.5 per cent for the province as a whole, while there were considerable female surpluses in the population, as befitted a high demand for domestic service.²¹ In spite of the balanced look of the economic and social structure in conventional sources, the holiday industry had penetrated the economy to its core, with many shops and other small businesses depending on the short summer season for their survival. There was a high incidence of seasonal migration and occupational mobility, and without the harvest of the holiday months many – perhaps most – families could not have sustained a bare, adequate or appropriate standard of living. The verdict of the French confectioner Flagey at the turn of the century can also stand for 1920, with very little adjustment for exaggeration, if we bear in mind the importance of the visitor trade as a *contributor to* family economies: "San Sebastián was created almost entirely to lodge a numerous clientèle of bathers and tourists. The exploitation of visitors is its industry, its trade, its principal resource".²²

Successful though the wartime holiday seasons and their immediate successors might have been in some respects, broader economic trends were putting the middling and poorer sectors of San Sebastián society under growing pressure at this time, making the income from visitors during the short summer season all the more important. The war years brought a sustained and substantial fall in real wages, and a short revival in 1919 was followed by a new reverse in 1920; and although these calculations will not take trends in additional holiday industry income into account, the pressures are clear enough. Rents rose particularly rapidly, and shortages of working-class housing led to an increased incidence of overcrowding. There had always been a substantial residue of poverty in San Sebastián, which local government was at pains to conceal or pacify by the strict policing of mendicancy and the ostentatious deployment of charity; but in the years before 1920 the problems had obviously been increasing. San Sebastián's local authorities were sitting on a powder keg, and their situation was made more difficult by the close proximity of the old town, with its relatively high death-rates and tightly-knit working-class and small trader population, to the main resort area and the Casino itself. The poorest people tended to live at a safer distance on the outskirts, admittedly; but the threat of disorder was ever-present, and the disorderly general strike of December 1916 had underlined and driven home this problem. San Sebastián's municipal government had attracted much praise over the years, and with justification, but these were difficult years for the forces of order and stable government in the city.²³

²¹ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 231.

²² E. Flagey, *San Sebastián et sa province* (San Sebastián, 1898), pp. 215–225.

²³ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, pp. 275–309.

II

This, then, is the setting for the events of August 1920. To analyse them effectively we need to clarify the question of exactly who were the waiters in the strike, and what the strike was supposed to be about, before looking at how the conflict developed and where the call for a general strike came from. We can then move on to ask questions about the significance of the strike in the context of the resort economy of San Sebastián.

The strikers were the *camareros* in hotels and cafés, and in the local context, at least, they were clearly an elite group within the service industries, to be differentiated from the *mozos* who did more menial and general work in the lower-grade cafés and bars. The *camareros* waited on customers with some pretensions, and had to sustain an urbanity of manner, and an expertise in presenting and recommending foods and wines, which set them apart. Several pieces of evidence suggest that the ability to organize and sustain strike action was the preserve of an elite of this sort. In the first place, the strike began with 480 men withdrawing their labour, which would match the employment requirements of the high-class hotels and cafés of the resort area, but would not be enough to account for anything like the total number of employees in well over a hundred bars, cafés, taverns and specialist beer-selling establishments in the city. Two or three of the top hotels employed more than twenty waiters each during the season, and if the remaining thirty averaged no more than ten apiece, the great entertainment centres (especially the Casino), the eleven high-class restaurants and the expensive cafés of the fashionable Boulevard and Avenida would easily bring the total up to the number of strikers.²⁴ In July a female columnist in the mildly republican local newspaper *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* suggested that the *camareros* might be among the many working-class occupations which actually earned more than the quiescent and hard-working office workers who had not benefited from protective labour legislation; and she urged them not to ask too much from their employers.²⁵ As strike action got under way another local newspaper commented that the *camareros* were comparatively well off, and at the end of the crisis it provided a much fuller analysis:

The *camareros* of San Sebastián are not much like ordinary working men. They constitute, so to say, the bourgeoisie of the proletariat. But they have made themselves into bankers, so it seems, advancing money on the occasion of several days of partial strikes. A debt of gratitude has obliged the Federation (of trade unions) to reach out and help the *camareros*, their capitalist partners [. . .]²⁶

The *camareros* themselves reinforced aspects of this picture, especially when they made much (rightly or wrongly) of their ability to speak foreign

²⁴ *El Pueblo Vasco* (San Sebastián), 19 August 1920; Prats Vázquez, *Gula de San Sebastián*.

²⁵ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 7 July 1920.

²⁶ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 17 August 1920, 28 August 1920.

languages in this international resort; and the employers tacitly recognized the distinctive and scarce nature of the skills of some at least of the *camareros* by sending away to the distant national capital for strike-breakers.²⁷

All this raises the question of whether, and to what extent, the *camareros*' position in the labour market approximated to that of a "labour aristocracy", as discussed by social historians from Hobsbawm onwards.²⁸ They undoubtedly had distinctive and marketable skills, although without the formal imprimatur which an apprenticeship would have provided. But the crucial question of wage levels is difficult to resolve, complicated as it is by tips and payments in kind. A return of the incomes of shop and office workers ("empleados o dependientes") for the provincial income tax in 1926 includes six *camareros* from San Sebastián's most prestigious hotel, the María Cristina, although their recorded wages were well below the 3,000-peseta threshold at which the tax became payable for most people. None of the other businesses which completed these tax forms included *camareros*, and the wages at the María Cristina were not high. The best-paid *camarero*, a married man, received 1,875 pesetas in 1926, which was on a par with messengers, clerical assistants, poorly-paid shop assistants and female telephonists and typists. If we assume a six-day week throughout the year, 1,875 pesetas works out at six pesetas per day, which was a poor daily rate for a pottery or glass worker or indeed an unskilled labourer.²⁹ The other five, all bachelors, received between 1,500 and 780 pesetas during the year, a rate of pay which spanned from the worst-paid clerical workers to office-boys and page-boys. It would help us to know the ages of these *camareros*, and the information is tantalizing in other ways too. It seems reasonable to assume that these six workers were the small minority who were retained throughout the year, and might therefore be thought to be highly favoured by the management; and their wages might well have been inflated in ways that were hidden from the tax-collectors, by including some or all of the *camareros*' keep. Tips would also provide a bonus of uncertain but probably considerable value. If we adopt these assumptions the wages at the María Cristina are transformed into a much higher standard of living than the bare recorded figures suggest. Whether the hidden extras would justify the "labour aristocrat" label for the *camareros* in San Sebastián's most expensive hotel is still open to doubt. Interestingly, the chefs were very much better paid, with 4,550 pesetas for the head chef, 3,750 for his assistant (both married men) and 2,100 each for three bachelor *sous-chefs*. The married men could hold their heads up alongside cashiers and senior clerks in the local banks at

²⁷ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 20 August 1920.

²⁸ This sentence takes it that Hobsbawm initiated the debate on the labour aristocracy in its modern form; it does not intend to suggest that he created an orthodoxy. See especially E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984), chs 12–14.

²⁹ A.G.G., JD IT 1672; and for day-wages, A.G.G., SM ISM 25/4.

these salary levels, which equated with supervisory roles or junior management. On the other hand, they would have had fewer opportunities to receive tips than the *camareros*.

It seems clear that most *camareros* were seasonal workers who were retained for much shorter periods than the whole year, with unpredictable incomes; and the circumstantial evidence thrown up during the strike suggests that many and perhaps most of them came in from other towns for the holiday season. Such working patterns were not incompatible with a normal expectation of paternalist industrial relations, if workers regularly returned to the same employers; but we lack hard evidence on this. The municipal census or *padrón* lists people who professed an attachment to San Sebastián but were not necessarily permanent residents in it, and no source has yet come to light which offers convincing quantitative information on the balance between permanent, seasonal and itinerant labour in the industry.³⁰ The best evidence on the *camareros*' status is indirect, and suggests that only a few of the most privileged of the retained workers had any real claim to the status of labour aristocrats. We shall see that employers found it possible to replace some of the *camareros* in the cafés with female labour paid at 75 pesetas per month, or perhaps up to three pesetas per working day. This was roughly on a par with other forms of female employment, such as the clothing trades, although not too much should be made of this attempt to evaluate *substitute* labour.³¹ More important is the evidence that it was possible to replace the *camareros* quite readily, but with cheaper labour which would do the job less well. This would put the *camareros* on a par with, let us say, experienced specialist dock labourers. They were men with recognized skills and abilities, but if necessary they could be dispensed with; and the attempts in the local press to portray them as the "bourgeoisie of the proletariat" seem extravagant and propagandist in intent.

Within the *catering* workforce, nevertheless, the *camareros* were indeed an elite group; and the objectives of their strike were in keeping with this self-perception. The issues were complex, and there was some dispute between spokesmen of the contending parties as to exactly what was at stake; but it is possible to unravel the basic agenda.

In part, the strike was a carry-over from the dispute of the previous year, when a threatened strike for the closed shop in mid-August had been averted at the last minute when the employers offered guarantees against arbitrary dismissal and this concession was deemed to be sufficient. After the pressures of the season had subsided, the employers (on their own

³⁰ Padrones list people in alphabetical order on the basis of professed attachment to the city, and give a wide range of census-type information on occupations, ages, marital status, birthplaces and addresses. Several can be found in A.M.S.S., from the 1870s to the 1920s.

³¹ Luengo, *Crecimiento económico y cambio social*, pp. 361, 363.

showing) tried to set up a formal annual agreement and arranged a meeting, with the mayor in the chair (an indication of the perceived importance of the issue), to discuss the idea. But the initiative foundered on disagreement over the annual settlement date. The employers wanted the year to run from 1 January to 31 December, with the agreement being negotiated at a quiet point when they might expect to have the advantage. The union insisted on 15 August as settlement date: not only the height of the season, but its symbolic climax. The employers turned this down on the grounds that it would guarantee an annual conflict at the most difficult and damaging point imaginable; and when no agreement was reached, they withdrew their recent concession about hiring and firing practices. So the 1920 season began in a persisting miasma of mutual suspicion and recrimination.³²

The problem of the local enforcement of the new legislation for the eight-hour day in catering worsened the situation. At the beginning of July the Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Similar Establishments in San Sebastián threatened a general closure of premises in protest, claiming that in a highly-seasonal resort economy it was impossible for them to make a living without imposing longer hours on their workpeople in July, August and September:

In San Sebastián most of the hotels and restaurants could close down in winter to the advantage of their owners. They have remained open until now for various reasons, but especially because the employers would rather suffer a financial loss in exchange for retaining staff who are competent and well-disposed towards the enterprises, counting on the belief that the intensive labour of the summer would indemnify them against the winter losses. Acting on this basis, they kept the number of additional summer employees down to the minimum that was strictly necessary, and as well as avoiding unnecessary waste they were able to maintain the order and discipline to which the permanent staff was accustomed. But if the working day has to be strictly limited to eight hours, the additional workforce in summer will have to be tripled [. . .]³³

The *camareros*, meanwhile, were said to be taking advantage of the new legislation to insist on the enforcement of the eight-hour day in what were, according to the right-wing traditionalist newspaper *La Constancia*, the only months of the year in which they did any work. They were also renewing their demand for a closed shop, which *La Constancia* interpreted as a claim to usurp the management's prerogative of choosing who should work in an establishment. So the eight-hour day exacerbated existing disputes in the industry and further embittered relations between union and managements as the season began, although after a token shut-down (they rejected the label "lock-out") the employers reopened their premises in

³² *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 8 July 1920.

³³ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 4 July 1920.

response to promises of “fervent support” from local officials and politicians for their campaign against the full enforcement of the eight-hour day in seasonal resorts.³⁴

The actual outbreak of the strike on 16 August was preceded by lengthy and sometimes acrimonious negotiations, and real anxiety about the prospect of a full-scale strike in this sector was not being expressed until shortly before it happened. On 14 August *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* told its readers of the danger, and asked the *camareros* to hold off during these special days of summer enjoyment and high season: “We ask you to wait until these days have gone by.” On the following day matters had reached crisis point. *El Pueblo Vasco* printed an address from the hotel and restaurant keepers’ association warning that *camareros* who left work or ceased work would be regarded as having resigned their posts, and offered a summary of the bases of the conflict:

Quite a while ago the *camareros* of the hotels, restaurants and cafes presented some bases for negotiation to the employers, in which they asked for several improvements, such as the allocation of a fixed wage, the abolition of the tipping system and a service charge of so many per cent on the total sales. It seems that the employers have not replied to these claims, and the sense of grievance among the *camareros* has been growing. In the last few days the discontent has visibly come to the surface, and they have reached the stage of discussing strike action.³⁵

This outline is probably reasonably accurate: at this time *El Pueblo Vasco* was at the peak of its local influence and, although it was an organ of the Catholic right, the idiosyncracies of its proprietor included an ability to look imaginatively and with some sympathy at labour questions.³⁶ In the days that followed it provided further information on the issue as presented by both of the contending parties. A hoteliers’ spokesman presented his side of the story. In the first place, the employers had agreed, before the strike broke out, to the replacement of tips by a 12 per cent share of the receipts. The details were to be worked out in October. The employers had made this concession even though they believed that tips made for a more efficient workforce. Beyond this, the hotelier alleged that the *camareros* were demanding that foreign waiters should be limited to 5 per cent of the workforce. He interpreted this demand as meaning that in no *individual establishment* should more than 5 per cent of the *camareros* be foreigners, and he sought to ridicule the idea by suggesting that most hotels would only be able to employ a fraction of a foreigner. And who, he asked, would be able to speak properly to the numerous English, French and German visitors in their own language? Thirdly, the

³⁴ *La Constancia* (San Sebastián), 6 July 1920; *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 4 July 1920, 7 July 1920.

³⁵ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 15 August 1920.

³⁶ A. de Loyarte, *La vida de la ciudad de San Sebastián*, 7 vols (San Sebastián, 1950), 4, pp. 54–55. He also discusses the other San Sebastián newspapers here.

camareros were said to have demanded that before any individual member of staff could be sacked, the whole of the rest of the workforce had to consent to the dismissal. This was presented as an intolerable affront to the sovereignty of management. Finally, the hotelier emphasized that the employers had not been dragging their feet over negotiations, which had been going on through the *maitres d'hôtel* since October in good faith without reaching a settlement. He concluded by blaming the strike on itinerant seasonal workers who had come in from elsewhere and subverted the normally loyal local workforce: a perspective which sits oddly alongside the strikers' alleged demand for restrictions on the employment of foreign workers.³⁷

Three days later, as the threat of a general strike began to loom, the *camareros'* reply was published. They complained that leaving the arrangement of the details of the new wage system to October was "merely letting the time go by", and that the employers *were* dragging their feet. The allegation about limiting the proportion of foreigners was roundly denied:

It is completely inaccurate, for in our proposals nothing at all is said about foreigners, despite the fact that among the Spanish *camareros* a large number speak two, three or more languages.

Nothing was said about the question of the right of dismissal, perhaps significantly, and the assertion that negotiations had been proceeding through the *maitres d'hôtel* since the previous October was dismissed as pure fantasy. On the issue of the strike being fomented by outsiders, the *camareros'* spokesmen replied that several of the delegation who had been to discuss the strike with the governor had lived in San Sebastián "for many years", but they weakened this claim by adding:

Moreover, the meeting took into account, in nominating the committee (to meet the governor), that this should be made up of outsiders in order to avoid the sorrows which these matters very often bring upon families.

This allusion to fears of victimization was followed by an attack on the employers and the governor, who were said to be outsiders themselves. A general tone of frustration and suspicion was conveyed, and the statement ended with a rhetorical flourish which alluded to the general strike threat and concluded, "And all this because of the pride of some of the employers and the incompetence of a governor!"³⁸

We have no means of assessing which of these versions of the dispute was closer to the truth; but what does emerge is that this was an ambitious strike, whose ostensible goals embraced a restructuring of the payment system and a considerable extension of the workers' influence on hiring, firing and the labour process. Whether the leaders really hoped or

³⁷ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 19 August 1920.

³⁸ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 20 August 1920.

expected to achieve their demands, or whether the strike was really intended as a springboard for a general strike directed against the governor, is a question to which we shall return. Meanwhile, the *camareros* displayed impressive solidarity as they pursued the strike with every appearance of determination, despite press comment which alleged that most of the strikers had been intimidated into participating by half a dozen recently arrived agitators,³⁹ and despite their vulnerability to substitution by black-leg labour, which was only too apparent from the very beginning of the conflict.

The employers went all out for victory from the very beginning, although two establishments, the *Lion d'Or* café and the *Bar España*, did break ranks at the outset and accept the strikers' terms.⁴⁰ Substitute labour was immediately recruited, and only a single café, the *Oriental*, actually closed its doors when the strike started.⁴¹ On 17 August *La Constancia* stated that the café terraces looked just as they usually did in mid-August, a statement which could easily have been checked by its readers; and it claimed that "the café owners are receiving offers from people wanting to replace the striking workers, with monotonous regularity", while in the *Hotel María Cristina*, San Sebastián's flagship luxury hotel, non-union waiters were being employed, as would very soon be the case in other hotels and cafés. *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, observing these developments, remarked that "the *camareros*' strike holds a particular danger for the strikers: that of the ease of replacing them with waitresses", as had occurred in a similar strike the previous year in New York and Chicago.⁴² This threat very soon materialized. Female servants and family members were pressed into service, and by 18 August the *Café Oriental* had reopened using five new waiters and several women. Meanwhile a meeting of hotel and café proprietors agreed not to allow any of the strikers to return, and a spokesman expressed himself so well satisfied with female labour that he would never go back to employing men. The *Cafés de la Marina*, *Rhin* and *Norte* were advertising for forty waitresses at 75 pesetas per month plus tips, and the *Café Royalty* also moved into the female labour market. This was apparently a successful initiative: three days later *El Pueblo Vasco* reported that so many would-be waitresses had come forward that managements were setting tests in arithmetic to help in choosing from the embarrassment of riches. This piece of optimism sits uneasily alongside another report that "in some establishments bootblacks, bell-boys and kitchen hands are replacing the strikers", however, and it is noticeable that an attempt to recruit strike-breakers from Madrid was

³⁹ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 17 August 1920.

⁴⁰ *La Constancia*, 17 August 1920.

⁴¹ *La Época*, 17 August 1920.

⁴² *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 17 August 1920.

unsuccessful. The twenty-five men (or twenty, depending on the source) were intercepted by the strikers and persuaded to join them. Clearly, attempts at introducing substitute labour worked sufficiently to keep the cafés in business, but the evidence suggests that it was nevertheless not entirely to the satisfaction of the proprietors. The need to seek reinforcements from Madrid is especially significant.⁴³

This conclusion is reinforced by other evidence which emphasizes the employers' reliance on the goodwill of their customers, who were prepared to serve themselves and their friends and make a joke of this unaccustomed activity. *La Constancia* picked up this theme at the start of the strike:

It was something to see how in the cafés of the Marina and the Rhin the gentlemen lined up in front of the counter and, without hurry or annoyance, giving free rein to the good humoured rivalry between madrileños and zaragozanos, picked up the appropriate ticket before serving themselves or their families with whatever they needed.

On the same day *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* described similar "picturesque" scenes.⁴⁴ We might have expected such behaviour to be transitory, as the substitute labour removed the need for it; but nearly a week into the strike the Madrid press was reporting a continuing pattern of self-service even at the María Cristina itself, where "well-known young men about town take on the task of serving tea to the ladies".⁴⁵ This again suggests that efforts at introducing substitute labour were less satisfactory in practice than the local press liked to make out.

The reaction of the public in more general terms, and especially the visitors, is difficult to gauge. Three years earlier it had been possible for a columnist in *El Pueblo Vasco* to make a joke of a barbers' strike in mid-August, even as the threat of a general strike loomed. He had ascribed the strike to a new policy by the city's advertising and attractions committee, which was organizing interesting strikes so that San Sebastián would not be deprived of the excitement which was on offer elsewhere in Spain:

Thus, the committee has made haste with eager diligence to organise a few strikes. The committee has made sure that they will be presented in the most inoffensive manner and with a picturesque colouring. As has already been seen, the dress-makers' strike was an undeniably novel production [. . .] The committee is justifiably proud that San Sebastián was one of the first Spanish cities in which this sort of revolt broke out, attractive as it always is because of the sex, beauty and youth of the strikers [. . .] The committee now has the honour of presenting this new show, the barbers' strike [. . .]

⁴³ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 19–22 August 1920; *La Época*, 20 August 1920.

⁴⁴ *La Constancia*, 17 August 1920; *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 17 August 1920.

⁴⁵ *La Época*, 23 August 1920.

And he went on to weave fantasies about the picturesque facial hair effects which the strike would bring about, ending with the promise that several further novelties of this kind were in the pipeline.⁴⁶

No such levity was in evidence in 1920: there had been too many ingenious new kinds of strike in the intervening years. *La Constancia*, always the most outspokenly anti-union of the local newspapers, was in no doubt from the beginning that the strikers had no public sympathy. Its headline was, "The public laughs and the strike fails"; and it claimed that the customers were blaming the *camareros* rather than the employers for the strike. In an interesting representation of the San Sebastián visiting public, it also presented the strike as a miserable attempt to make life disagreeable for people of limited means who had saved through the year to come to the resort and enrich the strikers with their tips.⁴⁷ This smacks of special pleading on the grand scale; but the less extreme newspapers soon agreed that the strike lacked popular support and sympathy, although it was not disruptive enough to provoke strong feelings or violent reactions.⁴⁸

In keeping with these circumstances, the response of organized labour to the strike was at first low-key. On 19 August the local Federation of Labour met to discuss the situation, and different reports of the meeting offer different emphases. According to *El Pueblo Vasco* the delegates "showed themselves unanimous in offering the *camareros* the help they were requesting", while nominating a committee of three members to negotiate with the official conciliation body, the local Council of Social Reforms, to try to arrive at an agreement. The chefs' union, which was the closest to the *camareros* in workplace and interests, was said to have offered them economic assistance. And the possibility of a general strike was envisaged if the outcome of the negotiations proved unsatisfactory.⁴⁹ But the San Sebastián correspondent of Madrid's *La Época* put a different slant on matters. The Federation of Labour's committee, on this showing, was to interview the employers and *camareros* to find out about the state of the strike, while the chefs had responded to the *camareros*' request for assistance by agreeing "to offer their services as intermediaries with the employers to bring about a solution to the conflict".⁵⁰ Nothing was said here about a general strike. How these right-wing newspapers obtained their information on the workers' deliberations, and whether each of them had a different source, are matters for conjecture; but there was clearly plenty of room on both sides for the exercise of selectivity and distortion in the presentation of events.

⁴⁶ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 12 August 1917.

⁴⁷ *La Constancia*, 17 August 1920.

⁴⁸ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 18 August 1920; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 17 August 1920.

⁴⁹ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 20 August 1920. For useful comment on the Council of Social Reforms (Junta de Reformas Sociales), see *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 1 July 1920.

⁵⁰ *La Época*, 20 August 1920.

Meanwhile, San Sebastián's rulers had been responding to the situation with a mixture of policing and negotiation. On the eve of the strike both sides met the civil governor, who warned them of the damage a strike would do at this point in the season; but his words were not enough.⁵¹ Such meetings had long been standard practice. As the strike proceeded, the conciliatory machinations of the Council of Social Reforms, chaired by the mayor, went on alongside the characteristic measures for preserving order and restraining strikers who might be tempted to use force. *El Pueblo Vasco* described the procedures on 21 August:

The precautions are the same as on the previous days. Pairs of Civil Guard cavalrymen; patrols in the city wherever the big hotels are. Security police and agents of vigilance, in front of the café terraces.⁵²

This sustained police presence, with the forces of the state and the provincial government very much in evidence, was again a usual feature of the authorities' response to industrial unrest of any kind.⁵³

As befitted this vigilance, the strikers occasionally had recourse to small acts of violence, although they did not match the bomb-laying activities of the San Sebastián tramwaymen during the same summer and their deeds paled into utter insignificance alongside the small change of industrial violence elsewhere in Spain.⁵⁴ There was a flurry of incidents at the start of the strike, as the *camareros* tried to bring pressure to bear by intimidating employers and strike-breakers; but apart from some sporadic stone-throwing, the worst incident merely demonstrated the strikers' lack of support among the customers of the restaurant which was attacked:

In front of the establishment a group of strikers waited, insulting the waitresses. One of the agitators hurled a carboy containing an evil-smelling liquid. The public attacked the strikers and a scuffle developed.

This was put down by the police, who made four arrests. This was the last episode of its kind before the general strike broke out; and a few days later *El Pueblo Vasco* remarked on the lack of violent incidents.⁵⁵

The evidence suggests that the strikers generally remained stubborn and disciplined, as befitted a group whose goals were relatively sophisticated and ambitious, at a time when strikes in the province were invariably directed at basic goals involving levels of payment and Sunday rest.⁵⁶ From time to time the press claimed that strikers were giving up and leaving

⁵¹ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 15 August 1920; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 15 August 1920.

⁵² *El Pueblo Vasco*, 21 August 1920, 24 August 1920.

⁵³ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, pp. 73–132.

⁵⁴ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 29 July 1920.

⁵⁵ *La Constancia*, 17 August 1920; *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 17 August 1920; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 21 August 1920. The quotation is from *La Época*, 17 August 1920.

⁵⁶ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 102.

town, and occasionally claims were more specific. As early as 19 August *La Época* claimed that, "This afternoon all the *camareros* of the Hotel Continental reported for work, with the *maitre d'hôtel* at their head; but they were not allowed in." It also alleged that *camareros* who had come in for the season from elsewhere were returning home.⁵⁷ This latter claim was echoed a few days later in *El Pueblo Vasco*, with the intriguing additional information that the departing *camareros* were visiting their former masters to take a formal leave of them.⁵⁸ All this seems plausible enough, and it is no surprise to see it roundly contradicted by the *camareros'* spokesmen, who insisted that none of their members had deserted the strike but could hardly be expected to say otherwise. What is more remarkable is the report on 24 August, a week into the strike, to the effect that 440 striking *camareros* had attended a meeting to discuss future plans. This is only forty fewer than the number reported at the start of the conflict, and suggests that the rhetoric of the strikers had more substance behind it than the statements of the employers and the press.⁵⁹ A week is, after all, not a long time to sustain a strike; but the lost wages at the height of the season, the opportunities elsewhere and the high visibility of the replacement labour nevertheless make this contested display of solidarity worthy of note.

The future plans which were discussed at the meeting of 440 strikers involved the escalation of the conflict into a general strike; and we now need to ask why this was on the agenda, and why the transition was attempted. A basic outline of events is easier to provide than an explanation; and locally-based historians differ in emphasis in their assessment of events.

As the Madrid newspaper *El Imparcial* noted, the general strike which was declared on 25 August was "in solidarity with the *camareros*" and "the strikers seek the removal of the governor" – in that order.⁶⁰ The problem is to assess which of these themes was more prominent. Were the demands of the *camareros* a significant issue in their own right, or merely a pretext? Of the two academic historians to deal with these issues, Luis Castells seems to lean more towards the former interpretation – essentially that of *El Imparcial* – while Luengo Teixidor leans towards the latter.⁶¹

In the first place, the strike undoubtedly grew out of a sustained concern among some elements in San Sebastián's labour movement to see the removal of Governor Miralles, and talk of a general strike to this end had been bubbling close to the surface ever since the traumatic events of late

⁵⁷ *La Época*, 19 August 1920.

⁵⁸ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 22 August 1920.

⁵⁹ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 20 August 1920, 24 August 1920.

⁶⁰ *El Imparcial* (Madrid), 26 August 1920.

⁶¹ Castells, "Una aproximación al conflicto social", p. 289; Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 128.

May. *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* referred to these sentiments on more than one occasion in early August, before the *camareros'* strike had begun, discussing rumours of a general strike threat and referring to "a dangerous unrest" within the local working class.⁶² But the *camareros'* strike also gathered a momentum of its own, and when *La Constancia*, with its ear remarkably close to the ground, became aware of a plan to build a general strike on the *camareros'* dispute on 18 August, its discussion was couched in terms of the politics of the *camareros'* union itself.⁶³ There was certainly plenty of advance warning of the vote to proceed to a general strike which was taken at a trade union delegate meeting at the socialists' Workers' Centre on 25 August. But *El Pueblo Vasco*, in the immediate aftermath of the strike's failure, preferred to ascribe the decision to a misplaced sense of solidarity with the *camareros*, who had demanded a return for their own donations to other causes, and had browbeaten their colleagues into taking untimely and disastrous action.⁶⁴

Even at the meeting which took the vote, however, support for the *camareros* was less than compelling. Two newspapers are agreed that only nineteen of the 34 affiliated societies were represented at what one calls a "stormy" meeting, and that in the end eleven voted for a strike, four against, and four abstained. Luengo Teixidor tells us that only eleven societies sent representatives, and only the printers, woodworkers and metalworkers supported the strike, apparently calling it on their own initiative.⁶⁵ This last version comes without benefit of footnote, but it does draw attention to the role of the printworkers in the strike. Both *El Pueblo Vasco* and *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* failed to appear, in what was almost the only departure from normality on the days on which the strike was called. In the small hours of the morning a group of *camareros* tried to turn out the workers at a bakery, but they were repelled by the police, and the strike was largely confined to a few construction workers. Soldiers guarded the gasworks, banks and other strategic places, while pairs of civil guards rode the trams as a precautionary measure; but their services were unnecessary. The strike was a complete fiasco.⁶⁶

The failure was partly occasioned by divisions in the labour movement. Apart from the *camareros* themselves, the protagonists of the strike seem to have been drawn from groups within the local socialist movement who had sectional but not city-wide influence. *El Pueblo Vasco* was at pains to acknowledge the restraining role played by San Sebastián's leading socialists:

⁶² *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 8 August 1920, 12 August 1920.

⁶³ *La Constancia*, 18 August 1920.

⁶⁴ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 28 August 1920.

⁶⁵ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 28 August 1920; *La Época*, 26 August 1920, which says that there were 31 federated societies but gives figures which add up to 34; Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 128.

⁶⁶ *El Imparcial*, 27–28 August 1920; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 28 August 1920.

We must do justice to the way the principal *leaders* of local socialism worked hard to convince the presidents of the trade societies of the inopportune nature of the agreement which had been made.⁶⁷

The Basque and Catholic trade union groupings refused to have anything to do with the strike, and even the chefs voted by 67 to 5 against lending any support.⁶⁸ More complex, and more interesting, is the role of the syndicalists, who might have been expected to be involved in a movement of this nature. The curiously well-informed (or possibly inventive) *La Constancia* claimed on 18 August that the *camareros* were flirting with the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, and threatening to leave the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores and change their affiliation if their claims were not treated more sympathetically.⁶⁹ This clearly did not happen, although *La Época's* San Sebastián correspondent blamed "syndicalist elements" for the outbreak of the strike.⁷⁰ The verdict of the CNT's own journal, the Bilbao-based *Solidaridad Obrera*, is revealing in this context:

What we expected has occurred. The general strike, whose agreement was a crazy idea, has collapsed [. . .] All that was needed to show solidarity with the striking workers, and above all the *camareros*, was to exercise a rigorous boycott of public establishments. The general strike which is not revolutionary "or truly general", has no *raison d'être* at this time. Those whose support for the strike was needed were antipathetic towards it; for this reason they did not stop work. If the socialists of San Sebastián wanted to make an effective impact they could have done something else but never a general strike which was always condemned to failure because it did not have the workers' solidarity.

Elsewhere in the same newspaper was a general comment on organized labour in San Sebastián:

San Sebastián's strikes continue in the same way, with a tendency to collapse because those who sustain them have yet to learn to struggle; and what is worse, it seems that they do not want to learn.⁷¹

What emerges from this evidence is a picture of a divided labour force with a limited appetite for sustained struggle and a lot of small-scale factional in-fighting. The *camareros'* cause was attractive to some people in its own right, but more important was the opportunity it provided for dissident elements within San Sebastián's growing socialist movement to pursue their feud with the governor. The two themes should not be kept

⁶⁷ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 28 August 1920.

⁶⁸ Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 128; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 24 August 1920; *La Época*, 26 August 1920.

⁶⁹ *La Constancia*, 18 August 1920.

⁷⁰ *La Época*, 26 August 1920.

⁷¹ *Solidaridad Obrera* (Bilbao), 3 September 1920.

in artificially separate compartments: for example, during the disturbances of late May the hoteliers had gone out of their way to congratulate the governor on his firmness in repressing disorder, and this must have been noticed by those who supported the *camareros'* cause.⁷² But this does not affect the overall picture of a local labour movement whose development was still limited, in spite of a recent wave of strikes and organization, and whose leaders found it difficult to make headway in a generally unsympathetic environment.

How far was this due to San Sebastián's status as a resort, and how far to the customs and culture of the province of which it was the capital? How effectively were conservative and deferential attitudes promoted and built upon by the local media and other institutions? An analysis of press coverage of the strike will help us to resolve these issues; and we conclude with a brief discussion of newspaper responses to the events of August 1920.

III

The labour disputes of the later war and immediate post-war years brought out a formidable barrage of angry rhetoric from San Sebastián's local press. *La Constancia's* rage at the *camareros'* strike is perhaps not surprising, but its detailed content and mode of expression are interesting:

What seems bad to us, is that it is trying to damage the interests of all the people of San Sebastián, that efforts are being made to sink the summer season, which is one of the main sources of wealth in our city; and more than anything else that people have wanted to give a colouring of revolution and lack of consideration to this city with its reputation for peace and hospitality [. . .]⁷³

Earlier in August, *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* had appealed to "an elevated patriotic sentiment and a well-understood duty of hospitality" as well as "a pure sentiment of love for the city and for the duty which reaches out to everyone to defend his material interests" against the forces of disorder which threatened a general strike.⁷⁴ But the most spectacular contribution to this discourse of exhortation came from *El Pueblo Vasco*, which asserted that, "A strike of *camareros* in mid-August presents all the hateful characteristics of a strike of doctors faced with an epidemic", because the hospitality trade was vital to the local economy and the consequences of a strike could be mortal because the waiters' work was linked to all the other "organs of the community".⁷⁵ We shall see that organic metaphors of this sort were intended to carry a powerful charge.

⁷² *El Debate* (Madrid), 29 May 1920.

⁷³ *La Constancia*, 17 August 1920.

⁷⁴ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 8 August 1920.

⁷⁵ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 17 August 1920.

This rhetoric was not new in 1920: it had been deployed, for example, in response to the tumultuous general strike of December 1916 and the tamer affair at the height of the season in August 1917.⁷⁶ Moreover, it had been anticipated by reactions to the political riots at the end of August 1893, when *La Voz de Guipúzcoa* had lamented the stain on the city's "well-founded reputation for culture and enlightenment", which helped to attract the visitors "who come every year to develop our principal source of wealth".⁷⁷ But the deployment of this interesting mixture of appeals to high principle, civic pride and material interests was more systematic in 1920 than hitherto, and probably helps to explain the *camareros'* complaints at their treatment by the press.⁷⁸ It was, at civic level, perhaps a distinctive feature of San Sebastián, although only case studies in other cities, and especially other resorts, will confirm or deny this tentative suggestion. Certainly the press in the rival Spanish resort of Santander has yielded fewer and less remarkable examples.⁷⁹ The phenomenon requires explanation.

San Sebastián depended on its reputation for peace, relaxation and security of life and property for its well-being as a city whose business was pleasure, and whose customers were well capable of taking their custom elsewhere, to Biarritz or Santander or even, closer to home, to Hendaye or Zarauz. As a royal resort with a summer palace, and as, in many respects, the summer capital, the need for a secure image and a secure reality was all the more profound. It mattered deeply when Madrid newspapers led the front page with headlines about social conflicts, as did *El Imparcial* on 26 August 1920 with "General strike declared in San Sebastián". The civic sensitivity to disorder was compounded by an awareness of the proximity of the fashionable resort area and its amenities to the Old Town and the fishing port, and of the attractions of the town for vagrants, beggars and criminal elements. The Casino was literally a stone's throw from the Old Town, with its tall apartments and narrow streets, its population of labourers, fishermen, craftsmen and petty traders, its prevailing use of the Basque language, its relatively high levels of illiteracy, its attachment to lively customs and celebrations which were not yet being marketed as tourist attractions, and its headquarters of the socialist and trade union organizations. The Boulevard, with its ornate bandstand and formal gardens, marked the boundary between this area and the modern, cosmopolitan resort and residential area of the *ensanche*. Care had to be taken to prevent the two areas from interacting in potentially threatening

⁷⁶ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 15 August 1917.

⁷⁷ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 30 August 1893.

⁷⁸ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 24 August 1920.

⁷⁹ But such language is not entirely absent: *El Diario Montañés* (Santander) distanced from the strike movement of August 1917 "Santander, that sensible Santander which wants to live in orderly fashion and work and prosper in an honourable and civilised way; the genuine Santander, that of the Montaña, that of Cantabria [. . .]" (15 August 1917).

or damaging ways; and by the same token the police were active in preventing indecorous behaviour, nude bathing, drunkenness and street begging from gaining a foothold. Poverty was dealt with by an effective mixture of ostentatious charity and repression, and prevented from showing its disturbing face in the streets. The price of economic success as a resort was eternal vigilance.⁸⁰

From time to time, protesting or celebratory crowds would emerge from the Old Town to remind the authorities of the fragility of the enchanted world of the privileged stroller and loungeur of the promenades and beach. The Sagasta riots of August 1893, directed against a prominent visiting politician who had made himself obnoxious locally by failing to restore the traditional Basque liberties or *fueros*, lived long in the memory of local leaders. The Hotel Londres, at which Sagasta was staying, had been besieged by furious demonstrators, and the bandstand in the Boulevard had been attacked during a concert by a crowd of stone-throwing demonstrators, putting fashionable ladies to flight. This in turn was thought to have brought a premature end to the season.⁸¹ Subsequently this episode was held up as an awful warning of the possible economic consequences of unleashing popular passions in the fashionable resort area. The riots which followed the suppression of the *soka-muturra* bullock-running custom in the Old Town main square were a similar warning, although they took place safely in the depths of January in 1902; and the pre-Lent Carnival was always a source of worry about the exportation of unruliness from the Old Town, with regular attempts to control it through a mixture of patronage and repression.⁸² In every strike or other confrontation the Boulevard was an important frontier, and the adjacent streets of the Old Town offered places of refuge for fleeing demonstrators.⁸³

To defuse these tensions, San Sebastián's rulers had recourse to a public rhetoric and discourse which emphasized the calm, polite, cultured, amiable, tranquil nature of the city's population, and called upon it to live up to these ascribed virtues. This rhetoric was adapted and reinforced in press comments on the events of August 1920, and the other conflicts of this troubled period; but they built on an established tradition. This idealized presentation of the nature of the true San Sebastián character went back to the town's earliest days as a resort. Thus a guidebook of 1857:

⁸⁰ Luengo, *Crecimiento económico y cambio social*, p. 68 and *passim*; Calvo Sánchez, *Crecimiento y estructura*; Flagey, *San Sebastián*, pp. 156–157, 164–168, for a graphic contemporary account of the problems, and the limits to the authorities' success even here. The situation in San Sebastián contrasts interestingly with the pattern in English seaside resorts, where the earlier development of working-class demand ensured that problems of order and control were perceived in terms of a threat to peace and amenity from working-class visitors rather than from the local working-class population: Walton, *English seaside resort*, pp. 187–215.

⁸¹ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 28–31 August 1893.

⁸² *El Pueblo Vasco*, 22 December 1916; Castells, "Una aproximación al conflicto social", p. 281; *El Pueblo Vasco*, 15 August 1917, 17 February 1920.

⁸³ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 15 August 1917, offers an example.

The character of the inhabitants of San Sebastián is gentle, affable and affectionate. The geniality with which they receive strangers is natural and has nothing affected about it, whether among the classes who have received a polished education or in those who have had no such advantage.⁸⁴

The author went on to praise the peaceful and orderly demeanour of the inhabitants, and their readiness to defer to the voice or mere presence of authority, in extravagant terms; and where he led, subsequent depicitors of San Sebastián's public face were eager to follow.⁸⁵

The key words which recurred in this sustained (and increasingly self-interested) paean of praise included *culto* (or *cultísimo*), *sensatez*, *honrado*, *nobleza*, *fielidad*: words which reiterated an emphasis on the civilized, peaceable, honest, reliable nature of the local inhabitants, and sought to reassure the visitors that here was a quiet oasis sheltered from the painful social contrasts and dangerous social conflicts which might rage elsewhere. The social climate was presented as being just as temperate as the weather.

This vision of San Sebastián's characteristic virtues was amplified and elaborated at every opportunity in council meetings, public speeches, guidebooks and the press. It was given added power by its association with the city's Basque identity as Donostia, an idealized city in which all were equal and honourable in character if not in wealth, an organism in which the shared interests of the citizens outweighed and transcended all sectional conflicts.⁸⁶ Alfredo de Laffitte, journalist and local politician, articulated these sentiments in *El Pueblo Vasco* in response to the almost simultaneous deaths of two local figures at the start of 1920. Melchior Fagés, "Manish", a well-known Old Town humorist and organizer of burlesques at carnival time, and a humble cab-driver, died just before the Marqués de Roca-Verde, artist, aristocrat and politician on the national stage. Laffitte's musings on this sad coincidence brought out some important themes:

Among the "errikoshemes" there are no classes, and next to the man of substance you find the man of the people [. . .] We cannot forget those past times, creators of equality, in which we were joined together in fraternal union to celebrate our traditional local festivals. The professional and the craftsman joined together to collaborate in the amusing fellowship and elaborate cavalcades, to everyone's delight and in a display of "koskerismo".

The Basque expression "errikoshemes" denotes a local patriot deeply attached to his birthplace and its customs, while "koskerismo" entailed an attachment of this kind to San Sebastián – or rather to Donostia. Laffitte concluded with the thought that San Sebastián mourned all her favourite

⁸⁴ *Manual descriptivo é historico de San Sebastián* (Madrid, 1857), p. 13.

⁸⁵ See, for example, the publicity *Portfolio de San Sebastián* (1903, copy in British Library).

⁸⁶ Also available was the Roman identity of Easo, which was San Sebastián's cosmopolitan avatar, as in the elite society the *Círculo Easonense* which met in the Gran Casino.

sons, "whether they belonged to high society or to the humble sort of people".⁸⁷ The use of the imperfect tense in Laffitte's writings on this theme may suggest a sense that this idealized world has passed away, but it is more likely to reflect his own nostalgia for his lost youth. This local version of the widespread theme of Basque egalitarianism, derived from and reinforced by the shared inheritance of noble status, was still a powerful force in 1920. It was under challenge, and the rhetorical responses to the strikes and other conflicts of these years reflect an awareness of this; but it was still capable of pulling working-class attitudes in a quiescent and deferential direction.⁸⁸

One effect of the deployment of the ideal of Donostia as organic Basque society was to stigmatize trade union activism as something alien, marginal and illegitimate, the preserve of uncivilized outsiders. The attempts to blame the *camareros'* strike on imported agitators who did not understand the paternalistic niceties of San Sebastián's labour relations were part of a larger campaign. An exchange between two municipal councillors discussing the first local general strike, in December 1916, illustrates what was at issue. Sr Lizasoain "observed that as outside elements were the cause of the disorders, the shameful stain falls upon our city, but not upon its inhabitants". Sr Torre, a socialist, responded by calling attention to the mistakes of the authorities and the failure to remedy grievances; and he added, "There were no outside elements, no; what happens here is that the working man is always an outside element [. . .]"⁸⁹ San Sebastián's working-class radicals did tend to come in from other provinces, but this did not invalidate Torre's point: there was no room in the world of Donostia for any acknowledgement of systematic economic conflict, and anyone who took that road was by definition beyond the pale of civilized society and a spiritual outcast from the Basque utopia.

For some of the local elite, however, San Sebastián's claim to embody the virtues of a traditional Basque society was itself highly suspect. The puritanical Catholics of *La Constancia*, in particular, were at pains to denounce the provincial capital's worldliness and immorality; and the city was often at odds politically with the more conservative countryside from which it continued to draw most of its migrants. For the kind of Basque nationalist who eulogized rural independence, strength, Catholic faith and the simple life, San Sebastián's dedication to providing leisure and luxury for the wealthy was impossible to stomach.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 4 January 1920.

⁸⁸ For the limited success of attempts to build vigilance committees based on recreational societies and trustworthy residents to combat strikes, see Luengo, *La crisis de la Restauración*, p. 127.

⁸⁹ *El Pueblo Vasco*, 21 December 1916.

⁹⁰ See, for example, the jeremiads in *La Constancia*, 2 July 1916, on the evils of horse-racing, or 13 July 1920, on the evils of gambling.

Nevertheless, within San Sebastián, and especially in the Old Town, the ideal of Donostia continued to resonate, and the Basque nationalist political revival which was under way in 1920 cannot have harmed it. The image of San Sebastián's civic virtues was still capable of influencing the realities of popular behaviour. But the assertive response of the press to the conflicts which culminated in August 1920 shows an awareness that the *status quo* could not simply be self-perpetuating; and the *camareros'* strike was particularly threatening because it struck directly both at the city's economic organization and at its carefully-nurtured image of civilized hospitality. And it did so through the occupational group which most obviously personified the virtues which the city celebrated, and which therefore betrayed them most woundingly by taking strike action. Hence the disproportionate response to events which would have been of little moment in other Spanish cities in the context of the time.

The failure of the general strike, and of the *camareros'* strike with it, reflects the continuing ascendancy of this hegemonic vision of San Sebastián as an organic community which lived by the sale of its virtues of civility and peace. Not only the local newspapers, but also – and vitally – the Madrid ones, noted how the enjoyment and animation of the holiday season proceeded undisturbed by the strikes.⁹¹ The migrant workers in the crowded working-class districts on the urban fringe were less vulnerable to the blandishments of the propagandists, and it was here, and in the neighbouring industrial settlements, that much of the strike activity took root; but for the purposes of holiday San Sebastián, what mattered above all was to keep the Old Town in order, and this is where the ideal of Donostia was most powerful. What stands out among the sound and fury is the relative social quiescence of San Sebastián; and this was not just a matter of its economic structure. *Camareros*, barbers, dressmakers and a remarkable range of occupational groups were capable of sustaining strikes, but they were seldom capable of winning them, and never succeeded in disrupting the holiday season on which San Sebastián's prosperity was based.

In this respect San Sebastián was probably much like other European resorts, although we lack the detailed studies to confirm or deny this. Most British resorts probably conformed to the picture of Hastings building workers as fictionalized by Robert Tressell in his classic working-class novel *The Ragged-trousered Philanthropists*: downcast, divided, deferential and easily exploited by employers.⁹² Even in an elite south coast resort like Eastbourne, however, there were occasional stirrings, and in the winter of 1887 unemployment in the staple building industry brought more than seventy men into the streets as demonstrators. But this was as far as protest went, and subsequent labour agitation was confined to campaigns

⁹¹ *La Época*, 28 August 1920.

⁹² Robert Tressell, *The Ragged-trousered Philanthropists* (a classic, with many editions).

in support of railway works and tramways. Not until 1913 were the first two Labour members elected to the Corporation. David Cannadine concludes that "working-class consciousness was hardly developed at all".⁹³ In Brighton, the first large specialized seaside resort in the world, the fierce artisan radicalism which had made it a Chartist stronghold in the 1830s and 1840s (like the spa resorts of Bath and Cheltenham) faded away in the mid-Victorian years.⁹⁴ When a visit by King Edward VII in 1908 promised to revive the benefits of royal patronage, the threat of demonstrations in front of his mansion by the unemployed was swiftly defused by the authorities; and despite the presence of an important railway works, Brighton's labour movement did not present a high profile generally in the town, although the General Strike of 1926 was aggressively supported.⁹⁵ What we lack, however, is detailed studies of the First World War and its aftermath in British and other European resorts. The trajectory followed by San Sebastián's labour movement, with all its limitations, suggests that the present picture of quiescence would be modified considerably. Evidence from Blackpool, Britain's most popular and proletarian resort, provides strong support for this view.⁹⁶

Before the First World War Blackpool's labour movement was very limited in scale and impact. Despite the large number of working-class migrants to the town from industrial Lancashire, many of whose family economies combined small businesses with wage labour, the Trades Council formed in 1891 never gained many trade union affiliations and actually ceased to exist for a time during 1902–1903. Trade union organization and effectiveness were inhibited (as in other resorts) by the seasonal nature of the economy, the lack of large employers and the prevalence of complex family economies. But towards the end of the war and in its immediate aftermath the times were more propitious for trade union activity, and inflation gave an added impetus to wage demands, especially when entertainment companies and building firms were seen to be paying handsome dividends. For a while, unsuspected reserves of militancy were tapped; and as in San Sebastián this extended to groups of workers who normally found it difficult to organize. Thus in July 1918 a strike of scene-shifters and stage-hands at the entertainment companies was swiftly resolved in

⁹³ D. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774–1967* (Leicester, 1980), pp. 370–375; and see also V. Bailey, "Salvation Army Riots, the 'Skeleton Army' and Legal Authority in the Provincial Town", in A. P. Donajgrodzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 241.

⁹⁴ T. Kemnitz, "Chartism in Brighton" (Ph.D., Sussex University, 1969); R. S. Neale, *Bath 1680–1850* (London, 1981), ch. 10; O. Ashton, "Radicalism and Chartism in Gloucestershire 1832–47" (Ph.D., Birmingham University, 1980), for Cheltenham.

⁹⁵ E. W. Gilbert, *Brighton, Old Ocean's Bauble* (2nd ed., Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), pp. 216–217, 228.

⁹⁶ J. K. Walton, "The World's First Working-class Seaside Resort? Blackpool Revisited, 1840–1974", *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* (forthcoming, 1994).

the workers' favour, with recognition for the union and pay rises. In August 1920 Blackpool outdid San Sebastián by having a catering workers' strike which extended to all grades of the hotel and restaurant labour force. There were pickets, mass meetings on the beach, and a 500-strong procession through the town: all at the height of the season. As in San Sebastián, this provoked some newspaper rhetoric about the danger of frightening visitors away; but there was no overarching vision of civic patriotism on the model of Donostia. The strike was settled in the catering workers' favour, with new pay scales and recognition for the union.⁹⁷ There was, however, never any suggestion of escalating to a general strike, although in Blackpool as in Brighton the national General Strike of 1926 was to be well supported.⁹⁸ But in general it is clear that this burst of militancy in generally revolutionary times, which extended to unusual and normally disadvantaged trades, was not sustained beyond the early 1920s, in Blackpool as in San Sebastián. The whole subject, even so, calls for more sustained and widespread research.

August 1920 proved to be the climax of San Sebastián's apprenticeship in industrial militancy. The storm, such as it was, had been weathered. The advent of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923 prevented a revival of the labour unrest of the war and post-war years, and it was not until the early years of the Second Republic in the early 1930s that the *camareros* and other groups began to take industrial action again.⁹⁹ The evidence of the entertainment tax returns suggests that the resort continued to prosper as a whole, continuing to combine a top-dressing of foreign visitors with a reliable domestic market drawn from the middle classes of Madrid as well as the provinces. The aristocracy and the politicians continued to be very much in evidence, too. Perceived threats to San Sebastián's prosperity shifted back from industrial conflict to more traditional concerns, as Primo de Rivera banned casino gambling in 1924 and Queen María Cristina died in 1929. The advent of the Republic two years later drew dire prognostications from the right-wing press, which until the Civil War were not borne out by events. In the long run, then, the events of August 1920 did not, in themselves, make much difference to the trajectory of San Sebastián's development as a resort. But that does not mean that they deserve to be ignored. The course, climax, aftermath and context of the *camareros'* strike reveal a great deal about the importance of public image and social tranquillity to the success of an elite resort, and the pains which might be taken to protect them.¹⁰⁰ On a wider stage,

⁹⁷ *Blackpool Times*, 13–20 July 1918, 7–11 August 1920.

⁹⁸ *Blackpool Gazette and Herald*, 8–15 May 1926; Blackpool Trades Council, *Diamond Jubilee History* (Blackpool, 1951), in Blackpool Central Library LM 08 (P), p. 34.

⁹⁹ *La Voz de Guipúzcoa*, 12 August 1931, 19–30 July 1933.

¹⁰⁰ J. K. Walton and J. Smith, "The Origins of Beach Tourism in Spain: San Sebastián and the 'Playas del Norte', from the 1830s to the 1930s", in M. Barke *et al.* (eds), *Tourism in Spain* (London, forthcoming, 1994).

the episode prompts closer investigation of the turbulent years between (especially) 1916 and 1921 in a kind of industrial town, the seaside resort, which has hitherto been neglected by labour historians. The need to extend the agenda of labour history to the service industries is also highlighted. The broad agenda of comparative studies which is opened out by these considerations offers exciting opportunities for further research.