
The British Labour Movement and European nationalism and socialism in the nineteenth century

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Abstract

In the context of the British labour movement's current disassociation from European socialism and socialist organisations, this paper seeks to provide a chronological narrative of the comparatively strong relationship of British radicals and socialists to European republicans between 1789 and 1914. It therefore considers British Jacobinism, Chartism, the relationships with European exiles in Britain after the 1848 revolutions, the role of British trade unionists in the First International, and the relationship of the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation to the Second International in the period before the First World War.

Key words: British radicalism, British socialism, internationalism, republicanism

At a time when the Labour Party and the wider labour movement is divided over its relationship with the European Union, it seems timely to reflect on historical relations between the British radical and socialist movement and radicals and socialists in other countries and with organised international movements. With the current debate focused on membership of the European Union, the wider issue of Labour's relationship with the international socialist movement is largely forgotten and the Labour Party in recent years has been relatively quiescent on wider international policy.

Both the British Labour Party and early radical and socialist organisations within the UK have a much stronger internationalist perspective, which needs to be revisited. While the other articles in this issue of *Socialist History* focus largely on the early twentieth century, this article aims to set these studies within a much longer chronological context. It therefore focuses on the links between English radicals and socialists with

European nationalists and socialists in the period before 1914. It is perhaps significant that there is relatively little recent scholarship by either British or international academics on many of these aspects of our history. Most of the substantive monographs date from the 1960s and 1970s. This article does not deal with wider internationalism, for example the involvement of radicals and socialists in criticism of British colonial policy and imperialism. Nor does it deal with responses to British involvement in wars, whether in Europe or beyond. Moreover, in the period examined here, socialists were not in government in Britain. The first Labour Party representatives entered the government in 1916. The dilemmas faced in trying to operate a socialist policy in government, which have been the subject of an extensive academic literature, are beyond the scope of this study, which looks at the politics of international solidarity rather than the international politics of government.

British Jacobins and the French Revolution

It seems appropriate to start with the French revolutionary period. While there were individual sympathisers with the American independence struggles in the 1770s within the Whig party, including Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke and the radical artisan, Thomas Paine (who, with the support of Benjamin Franklin, moved to the American colonies to publish his influential pamphlet *Common Sense* in 1776), it is only with the French revolution of 1789, that we see the growth of an internationalist radicalism, not just in England but also in Scotland and Wales. The London Revolution Society, established in honour of the English constitution revolution of 1688, sent addresses of support to the French National Assembly. The Society for Constitutional Information was established by radical Whigs, while the London Corresponding Society was established by a group of radical artisans, led by Thomas Hardy, John Thelwall and John Horne Tooke, all of whom were prosecuted in the treason trials of 1794 and acquitted. A group of radical Whigs, including Christopher Wyvill, Sir Philip Francis and George Tierney, set up the Society of the Friends of the People in 1792 to campaign for constitutional reform in Britain, but sought to disassociate themselves from the more revolutionary methods used in France. The more radical and artisan-based Friends of the People in Scotland, led by Thomas Muir, organised a series of conventions to support the French revolutionaries. The third convention in Edinburgh in October 1793 was open to delegates from England, including Joseph Gerald and Maurice Margarot from the London Corresponding

Society. Gerald, Margat and Muir were all transported to Botany Bay in Australia, together with Thomas Palmer and William Stirling. Rather curiously, there is a memorial statue to the 'Scottish martyrs' in Nunhead cemetery in South East London, erected in 1851 following a subscription initiated by the radical MP Joseph Hume. There is a similar monument on Carlton Hill, Edinburgh erected in 1837.

The Welsh moral philosopher and Unitarian Richard Price published a series of polemics in support of the French revolutionaries, as did the Unitarian chemist, Joseph Priestley, only to be attacked by Edmund Burke. Thomas Paine, whose *Rights of Man* of 1791 was a defence of the French revolution, moved to Paris in 1792 where he was appointed a member of the French National Assembly and helped draft the revolutionary constitution. For his attacks on Burke, he was convicted in England *in absentia* of seditious libel. In Paris, as a supporter of the moderate Girondins, Paine was imprisoned by Robespierre and his Jacobin associates. In 1802, Paine moved to the United States where he died in 1807, never having returned to England. Recent studies in the relatively new concept of transatlantic history by Janet Polansky and Peter Linebaugh among others have extended our understanding of connections between British and Irish radicals and revolutionaries in North and South America, though we need to be careful in recognising that the transcontinental experience of a few individuals does not necessarily reflect a wider internationalism.

Owenite and Chartist internationalism and the European utopian socialists

The internationalist dimension of Chartism receives little attention in most literature on the movement. The Owenite movement was also explicitly internationalist. The only substantive study of these aspects is Henry Weisser's study of *British Working Class Movements in Europe 1815-48*. After tracing the accounts of European revolutions in the period after the Napoleonic wars in radical journals, such as Carlyle's *Republican*, Wooler's *Black Dwarf* and Cobbett's *Political Register*, Weisser examines the support of British radicals for the French revolution of July 1830 and the Belgian and Polish revolutions of the same year. This support was mainly journalistic and rhetorical and there is no evidence that British radicals actually actively participated in any of the three revolutions. Nevertheless, the London based National Union of the Working Classes in 1832 held a celebration for the second anniversary of the July revolution, with leading speakers contrasting the French reforms with what

they considered to be a more limited Reform Bill that was being debated in the British parliament. It does not appear that any French republicans participated in the event. William Cobbett gave a series of lectures at the Rotunda on 'The French and Belgian Revolutions and English Boroughmongering', which were later sold as a pamphlet. Radical journalists welcomed Belgian independence but regretted the imposition of a monarchy on the Belgians by the diplomacy of the London Conference. They also supported the Polish uprising against the autocratic Russian tsar. They often had a romantic view of the Polish peasantry, and rather discounted the fact that the uprising was actually led by the Polish nobility, who constituted the main element of the Polish emigration to London once the uprising was crushed.

The writings of Robert Owen had a strong internationalist dimension as evident in his 1832 *Address to the Governments of Europe and America*. In 1834, the Owenite journal, *The Pioneer*, edited by James Morrison,² published an address to the workmen of Nantes, where the tailors had recently established a trade union, arguing that 'The Working Classes of All Nations are Brothers'. The French utopian socialists also had links with English radicals. Etienne Cabet, promoter of the Icarian movement based on his utopian novel *Voyage in Icaria*, lived in London between 1834 and 1839. Some Owenites and Chartists had links with French socialist republicans. Cabet met Owen and collaborated with the Chartist Peter McDouall, who had himself spent time in Paris. There was a small Icarian group in London in 1848, though Icarians focused on establishing new settlements in America rather than in Britain. The Saint-Simonians, followers of the social and political theorist, Henri de Saint Simon, sent Gustave D'Eichthal and Charles Duvreyrier on a mission to Britain in 1833, where they won the support of the Owenite editor of *The Crisis*, J.E. Smith. Two Italian Saint-Simonians ran a lecture course in London, while the Owenite Rowland Detrouisier attended Saint-Simonian meetings. Saint-Simonianism appears to have had little impact on the British working-class movement, though it was to have a significant influence on the thinking of John Stuart Mill. The French libertarian socialist Charles Fourier appears to have had a greater impact, with some of his works being published by the London Cooperative Society. Hugh Docherty, who had collaborated with Fourier in Paris, started a Fourierist journal in London, the *London Phalanx*, as well as publishing an English translation of Fourier's *Passion of the Human Soul* in 1851. Fourier was also taken up by two middle-class women, Sophia Chichester, who sponsored James Pierrepont Greaves' utopian 'concordium' on Ham Common in London

and Mary Hennell, who wrote a comprehensive study of utopian experiments, including those of Fourier, in 1844 – *An Outline of Social Systems*.³

The London Working Men's Association, established in 1836, was led by William Lovett, one of the authors of the Charter of 1838 and a moderate Chartist. Lovett, who focused on the political education of the working classes, was an internationalist and in response to the prosecution of a Belgian working-class leader, Jacob Katz, published an 'Address to the Working Classes of Belgium' in 1836. Leading Chartists contributed to a fund for Katz. The Belgian address was followed by addresses to the 'working class of Europe and especially to the Polish people' in 1838, an address to 'the working class of France' in 1844, and an address to 'the working class of America' in 1846. Bronterre O'Brien, a more militant Chartist who visited France several times in the 1830s, wrote a biography of Robespierre and published a translation of *Buonarotti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality*. The 1839 Chartist convention received an address from a 'Union of French Democrats in London'.

In 1844, Lovett, in conjunction with German, French, Polish and Italian exiles, established the Democratic Friends of all Nations. Lovett wrote early in 1845 an 'Address to the Friends of Humanity and Justice of All Nations'. This was printed by John Cleave and sold by Henry Hetherington and James Watson. The address was also signed by the Polish exile, Ludwik Oborski and the German exile, Karl Schapper. The address focused on the need for free trade and peace. It condemned Eastern European serfdom and American slavery. Like Lovett's other manifestos, it promoted education rather than revolution – moral force rather than physical force. It proposed that 'All men being brethren should surely seek to promote each other's happiness, whatever may be their individual country, creed or colour'.⁴

Lovett was also a friend of the exiled Italian nationalist, Giuseppe Mazzini, whose school for poor Italian boys was near Lovett's coffee shop. Mazzini published a journal, *Apostale Popolare*, and a group of Italian exiles met at the home of the Chartist William Linton. This led to the establishment of the People's International League. Supported by the radical Benthamite MP, John Bowring, who chaired the League's first public meeting, the League's objects as published in April 1846, were

to enlighten the British public as to the Political Condition and Relations of Foreign Countries. To disseminate the Principles of National Freedom and Progress. To embody and manifest an efficient Public Opinion in favour of the right of every People to Self-Government and

the maintenance of their own Nationality. To promote a good understanding between the Peoples of All Countries.⁵

The League was supported by other leading radicals, including Thomas Duncombe MP, and James Stansfield, Peter Taylor, and the Unitarian W.J. Fox, all of whom were to become MPs. Besides Linton, who became League secretary, the Chartists Thomas Cooper and Henry Vincent also sat on the League council. The League had four hundred members, apparently including Charles Dickens, and gave a series of lectures. It had good international contacts, especially in Switzerland.⁶

The most internationalist organisation within the Chartist movement was George Julian Harney's Fraternal Democrats, established in London in 1845. It was more militant than Lovett's organisation which it in effect superseded. Harney had a somewhat romantic perspective on Polish nationalism, but Lovett and Ernest Jones also advocated the Polish cause in their speeches and journalism. The Fraternal Democrats, was an explicitly international organisation, including in its leadership Oborski, Schapper, Joseph Moll and Heinrich Bauer. The German exiles had been in London since 1839 and had established a German Workers' Education Society the following year. Jones and Harney both joined the society. Ernest Jones spoke German, having been born in Berlin, and had lived in Germany until 1839. Harney was also in touch with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx was resident in London from 1849, while Engels since 1842 had lived in Manchester, which was also Ernest Jones' base. The history of the Fraternal Democrats is covered in Schoyen's biography of Harney,⁷ as well as in Weiser's study. For the history of the German exiles in London between 1840 and 1860, there is Christine Lattek's excellent *Revolutionary Refugees*.⁸ Owenites and Chartists would collaborate on welcoming exiles, as was the case when the German utopian communist, Wilhelm Weitling came to England in 1844. Other celebratory events were held in 1844 to celebrate the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille and to 'witness the fraternisation of nations'. In September 1846, the Fraternal Democrats published an address 'to the Democrats of All Nations'. The membership card had 'All Men are Brethren' printed in twelve languages and according to a report in the *Northern Star*, their Drury Lane meeting place was decorated with German, French, Polish and Hungarian flags. Their statement of principles of December 1847 included:

We condemn the 'national' hatreds which have hitherto divided mankind, as both foolish and wicked; foolish, because no one can decide

for himself the country he will be born in, and wicked, as proved by the feuds and bloody wars which have desolated the earth, in consequence of these national vanities. Convinced, too, that national prejudices have been, in all ages, taken advantage of by people's oppressors, to set them tearing the throats of each other, when they should have been working together for their common good, this society repudiates the term, 'Foreigner', no matter by whom and to whom applied. Our moral creed is to receive our fellow men, without regard to 'country', as members of one family, the human race; and citizens of one commonwealth – the world.⁹

The Fraternal Democrats welcomed the Cracow manifesto, issued in 1846 by the republican Free State of Cracow in Poland. The Polish Democratic Society in England, though mostly of noble origin, adopted a social democratic perspective. Demonstrations were organised, funds were raised and a new organisation established – the Democratic Committee for Poland's Regeneration, the leadership of which was shared with the Fraternal Democrats including Harney, Jones, Karl Schapper and the Pole Oborski. The Chartist Feargus O'Connor, who normally avoided internationalist entanglements, became treasurer. Harney applauded the Cracow manifesto 'because it prepares the way for the destruction of class usurpation ... the social and political elevation of the people must now be the grand object of revolutionary struggles'.¹⁰ In September 1846, O'Connor spoke at a banquet for the Fraternal Democrats: 'I have never sought to limit the struggle for liberty to country, creed or colour; for I have invariably declared that I cared not where the country, what the colour, or which the creed, of the patriot was – that if he loved liberty and struggled for it, I would call him brother and take him by the hand'.¹¹

After 1848: European republicans in London

With the exile to London of leading French republicans in 1848, the internationalist links of British Chartists became even stronger. Louis Blanc and Ledru-Rollin, both members of the French republican government, were active in London radical politics. There has been a recent growth in the secondary literature on this period. As well as biographies of Blanc and Ledru-Rollin, Latteck's study provides a detailed analysis of German revolutionary exiles, while a thesis by Thomas Jones¹² provides a parallel comprehensive study of French republican exiles. The most comprehensive study of the relationship between English radicals and

European republicans in this period is Margot Finn's *After Chartism*.¹³ We are also fortunate in the extent of primary sources. The French exiles in London were prolific in their literary output. Blanc published a journal, *Le Nouveau Monde*, as well as a series of almanacs; Ledru-Rollin a book *The Decline of England*, which as a critical study did not enamour him to his hosts. Another group of French exiles in London published a journal – *Le Proscrit*, later *La Voix de Proscrit*. Much of Blanc's work was translated into English – a translation of *Le Droit au Travail* appeared as *The Organisation of Labour* in 1848, while a volume *Louis Blanc on the Working Classes*, by J. Ward, which sought to refute Blanc's 'destructive plan' appeared in the same year. In 1849, in the *Weekly Tribune*, Blanc published a 'Socialist Catechism' together with a 'Democratic and Socialist Almanach' for 1850. What is perhaps most surprising is the extent to which articles published in French exile journals were republished in translation, often within a matter of days, in Harney and Linton's journals, *The Democratic Review*, *The Red Republican* and *The English Republic*. Interestingly, Ernest Jones' *Notes to the People* had little coverage of European republicanism, though did include occasional short contributions from a certain Karl Marx.

The news of Louis Philippe's abdication in February 1848 galvanised the Fraternal Democrats. According to Thomas Frost's memoirs, the members, from a range of European nations, embraced each other and paraded through Soho. Chartist leaders, Ernest Jones and Philip McGrath, were sent to Paris to congratulate the provisional government. Weisser, in his study *April 10: Challenge and Response in England in 1848*, refers to 'the French breeze in Chartist sails'.¹⁴ Finn's work provides a detailed discussion of the response of different components of the Chartist movement to continental developments as well as covering the response of radical MPs and liberal intellectuals, the latter paying somewhat more attention to Mazzini and developments in Italy than to those in Paris.¹⁵ Mazzini was however also taken up by some of the Chartist leaders, notably W.J. Linton, who based much of his *English Republic* on Mazzini's *Duties of Man*. With the defeat of the French republicans in the Paris July days, the enthusiasm of many English radicals and some Chartists such as Feargus O'Connor waned, but other Chartists such as Harney, Thomas Cooper, Linton and Bronterre O'Brien maintained their defence of the French revolutionaries. Harney and Linton in their journals propagated the wide range of French revolutionary arguments, Jacobin, socialist and communistic, as did G.W.M. Reynolds' *Political Instructor*. Celebratory events brought together exiles of different views

from different countries. For example a public meeting to commemorate Robespierre in April 1853 chaired by O'Brien included as invited speakers Louis Blanc, Martin Nadaud, Lajos Kossuth, Ledru-Rollin, the Italian Aurelio Saffi and the French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher as well as Reynolds, Harney, Jones, Linton and G.J. Holyoake, though it is uncertain whether they all actually attended.

In autumn 1854, Ernest Jones and the National Charter Association set up a welcome committee for Armand Barbès, the French republican who had just been pardoned by Louis Napoleon. When it was announced that Louis Napoleon was himself to visit London, this became a 'welcome and protest' committee. A group of French exiles, including Felix Pyat, then joined it, turning it into an international committee which grew to include German, Spanish, Polish and Italian representatives as well as English and French. The committee organised a series of commemoration events; one in March 1856 was attended by Louis Blanc and the Russian socialist, Alexander Herzen. Apparently, Herzen's involvement alienated Karl Marx, who refused to join the group. The active participation of Jones and his fellow Chartists however soon lapsed as they focused on more domestic issues, though the refugee members of the committee continued to meet until 1859.

As mentioned above, Mazzini had long-established links with English middle-class radicals, with the Leicester radicals establishing in 1852 a Friends of Italy group, which also sought to support Polish and Russian nationalists. The Newcastle radical, Joseph Cowen, collaborated with Harney and Holyoake in January 1855 to establish a more militant Republican Brotherhood.

In 1855, Ledru-Rollin, together with Mazzini and the Hungarian Kossuth, established their own revolutionary committee and in September published in London, through Holyoake's press in Fleet Street, a *Manifesto of the Republican Party*. This generated a critical response from Louis Blanc, which was published simultaneously in French and English. The republicans' manifesto advocated a series of insurrections to achieve republican forms of government in their countries. Blanc in his response regretted that the three leaders had not collaborated with their fellow exiles and argued that the public declaration of an insurrectionary intent was 'rather hasty and rash'. Blanc pointed out that republican government was not always democratic: 'Our power lies in the sympathies of all noble intellects ... Our power is in the justice of our cause; wherefore, we must inscribe upon our flag, the clearest possible declarations of principle'. Resenting the attack Mazzini had made on socialists,

he argued for 'Union, but in the sphere of principles first. War against the present, but no veil thrown over the morrow. Action, but subservient to the thought'.¹⁶

The mid-1850s saw an alliance between radical Liberals and former Chartists in support of European nationalists. In Newcastle, Joseph Cowen collaborated with Harney to establish a Foreign Affairs Committee. Cowen, Harney and Holyoake also formed a Republican Brotherhood which collaborated with Louis Blanc and denounced Louis Napoleon III's visit to Queen Victoria in April 1855. The English republicans supported the French refugee community in Jersey, including Victor Hugo, against the threat of deportation. However, militant speeches by Felix Pyat, who attacked both the French Emperor and Queen Victoria, impelled Palmerston to concede to Napoleon's demands to extradite the refugees, since France and Britain were at that time allies against Russia in the Crimean war. The protests against the deportations and the defence of Britain's historic policy of giving asylum to exiles, brought together leading radicals such as Richard Cobden and John Bright and the Chartist Ernest Jones. Some of the radicals got caught up in the Orsini affair in 1858. This was a plot by the Italian republican Felice Orsini assisted by the French socialist Simon Bernard to assassinate Napoleon III. Orsini was an associate of Cowen, Holyoake and Linton. The radical defence of French republicans was successful in that with the failure of parliament to support Palmerston's Conspiracy to Murder Bill, Palmerston's ministry fell, to be replaced by a Conservative administration led by Lord Derby. The Newcastle republican W.E. Adams wrote a pamphlet *Tyrannicide: Is it Justifiable?* (1858), which led to the prosecution of his publisher Edward Truelove. An English jury acquitted Bernard.

British trade unionists and the First International

With the establishment of the London Trades Council in 1860, radical and republican leadership shifted to the trade unions. Around this time, Cowen was still active in Newcastle with his Northern Reform Union, Harney published first the *Northern Tribune* and then the *Northern Reform Record*, both of which were in effect republican journals, while a group of Oxford University-based radical intellectuals including the economist Thorold Rogers and the political scientist Goldwin Smith pursued a Cobdenite free trade internationalism with a republican tinge. It was however the London trade unionists, led by George Howell, secretary of the Trades Council, who rebuilt relationships with European

republicans. Howell and his trade union colleagues, including George Odger and Robert Applegarth, made links with the Comtian positivists, such as Frederic Harrison and Edward Bridges, who had advocated internationalist and republican ideas. Odger was to publish a number of republican pamphlets. In 1862, the London labour leaders established a Working Men's Garibaldian Committee, with a mass meeting in Hyde Park in September chaired by Charles Murray, a boot closer and follower of Bronterre O'Brien, supported by the republican and secularist Charles Bradlaugh, which apparently attracted between 10,000 and 20,000. This was followed by further mass meetings and some rioting. Linton and Cowen were also active in a Central Committee of Friends of Poland established in 1863 to raise funds for the Polish revolutionaries. When the International Working Men's Association (IWMA, also known as the 'First International') was established in London in 1864, it was in fact the result of a call for an international meeting by working class members of the League for the Independence of Poland, not from any initiative by Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels.

In the early years of the First International, there were two foreign policy controversies relating to developments outside Europe, which generated interest among British radicals. The first was the slave riots in Jamaica in 1865, which were suppressed by Governor Eyre. While liberal intellectuals took sides for and against Eyre, the main study of the controversy does not refer to any involvement by either the London Trades Council or the IWMA. The American civil war did however split the emerging trade union movement. The trade union journal *The Beehive*, edited by Thomas Potter and the bookbinders' leader, T.J. Dunning, supported the South, while most other London trade unionists and the IWMA supported the North – one of the IWMA's first statements was an Address to President Lincoln, drafted by Marx. Randal Cremer, the carpenter's leader and member of the IWMA General Council, became secretary of a workmen's committee to support the North and organised demonstrations, collaborating with the radical MP John Bright.

The role of London trade unionists in establishing and managing the International Working Men's Association or First International has received relatively little attention, despite the vast amount of literature on the organisation. There is still only one monograph on the role of British trade unionists in the First International, Collins and Abramsky's *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*,¹⁷ though studies by more recent scholars also recognise the significance of their contribution. George Howell, the London Trades Council secretary, was the first secretary of

the First International's London-based General Council, while Odger was the IWMA's one and only president. Other leading London trade unionists, including Robert Applegarth, Thomas Mottershead, Edmund Dell, William Randal Cremer, Benjamin Lucraft and John Hales were active members together with the O'Brienites Weston and Milner (Howell and Cremer were later to become Lib-Lab Members of Parliament), joining the German working-class exiles Frederick Lessner, George Eccarius, and Karl Jung and the French exiles Auguste Sraillier, Eugene Dupont and F. Lassassie. The records of the General Council show that these trade unionists were not overpowered by the intellectual Marx.¹⁸ Their objective in joining the IWMA was to support their fellow trade unionists on strike in other countries, especially in France and Belgium, and to ensure foreign workers were not brought to Britain to act as blacklegs in strikes by British workers. The London Trades Council had previously had contact with French working-class organisations so they viewed the International as a basis for widening this solidarity action. The British trade unionists combined their work within the IWMA not only with work in their own jobs and their own trade union leadership roles, but also with involvement in domestic reform issues, such as the campaign for electoral reform between 1865 and 1867, which led to the Second Reform Act. The London trade unionists were to continue to play a significant role in the General Council until 1871, when a number severed their connections having disagreed with Marx's position on the Paris Commune. Nevertheless, John Hales, at one time secretary of the General Council, established an English Federation of the International which held its own conferences and issued its own manifesto, adopting a more libertarian socialism than Marx and Engels, together with a new working-class based organisation – the Land and Labour League. The British trade unionists were now focusing on domestic issues, primarily land reform.

However, some British radicals and trade unionists became involved in the international peace movement. The narrative is provided in Paul Laity's *The British Peace Movement 1870-1914*.¹⁹ Hales continued to participate in the international libertarian socialist conferences organised by the Belgian Caesar de Paepe and the Swiss Jura Federation led by James Guillaume. Cremer had promoted an internationalist perspective within the Reform League and had prepared an address from the Reform League to the 'Peoples of Europe', which drew attention to mutual interests and common rights and argued for arbitration to resolve international disputes. The Reform League had initiated joint meetings with the Quaker-led Peace Society. Odger and Cremer had participated in the

International League for Peace and Freedom (ILPF) conference in Geneva in 1867. Cremer, together with Reform League leaders, Edmond Beales (who had a long-standing interest in Eastern European affairs) Colonel Dickson, Ernest Jones (who had written anti-imperialist poetry), Samuel Morley, Peter Taylor and Goldwin Smith, established a British branch of the ILPF. With the outbreak of the Franco-German war in July 1870, Cremer established a Workmen's Peace Committee, initially to oppose British intervention against France. Beales became chairman. Lucraft became secretary. Odger and Mottershead were also involved. The Peace Society actually cooperated with the IWMA which urged workers to unite to end all wars. Gladstone soon declared British neutrality and only intervened to propose a treaty to guarantee Belgian neutrality. However, with the defeat of Napoleon III, while Beales sought to maintain a position of neutrality, Cremer and what had now become the Workmen's Peace Association, in conjunction with the French IWMA council member, Le Lubez, argued for defence of the new French republic. The division came into the open at a public meeting on 10 September 1870 attended by about 3,000 people. The IWMA took a pro-French position, as did the Labour Representation League, the Liberal Party organisation established by Howell which had been established to support working class candidates, including Cremer and Odger in the 1868 election. An IWMA council member, J.J. Merriman then initiated an Anglo-French intervention committee. This body was supported by the Land and Labour League and an International Democratic Association, which supported the Paris Commune. It argued for the release of Irish nationalist (Fenian) prisoners and promoted European federation.

Cremer and the Workmen's Peace Association and their journal *The Arbitrator* continued their campaign for peace and against military expenditure through the early 1870s, collaborating with, but independent of the Peace Society. A WPA meeting in July 1871 was chaired by John Stuart Mill, who advocated a citizen army. In 1872, the WPA was joined by Joseph Arch, agricultural workers' leader and Methodist preacher, who, along with Alexander Macdonald, the miners' leader, would be elected as Liberal MPs in 1874 – the first two working-class members of parliament. WPA propaganda was not limited to the British isles. In September 1875, the WPA organised a conference in Paris, taking a delegation of forty British trade unionists, with Arch as one of the speakers. In fact, Cremer was interested in the possibility of re-establishing an international organisation to replace the defunct IWMA. There was considerable continuity as eight members of the WPA executive had been members of the IWMA

General Council so had good connections with those French working-class leaders who had survived the suppression of the Paris Commune.

The next international issue to draw the attention of British working-class radicals was the Bulgarian independence struggle against the Ottoman Empire, which was slowly retreating from Europe. Half a century earlier, the Greek independence struggle had attracted the interest of British radicals such as Byron and Hobhouse. The Labour Representation League and individual trade unionists such as Thomas Burt and William Newton were strong supporters of William Gladstone, who in contrast with Prime Minister Disraeli, was viewed as an anti-imperialist. Gladstone clearly used the Bulgarian issue as a way of winning back popular support in his attempt to regain the Liberal Party leadership. According to Biagini,²⁰ Gladstone's pamphlet *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, was designed for a working-class audience. In September 1876, a Workmen's Demonstration Committee based in Hackney established by Thomas Mottershead and Alfred Days, promoted a demonstration in Hyde Park, and according to Saab it was this event that made Gladstone realise that the Bulgarian issue could help his own political revival.²¹ The Workmen's Peace Association collaborated with the Peace Society and the International Arbitration Association established by Hodgson Pratt, to issue circulars to their respective members. Gladstone spoke at a meeting of the Workmen's Peace Association in April 1878. The Peckham branch of the Workmen's Peace Association suggested Disraeli should be 'impeached on the grounds of high treason'.²² The Eastern Question Association, initiated by established radicals including Henry Richard of the Peace Society, the Sheffield MP A.J. Mundella, Henry Fawcett and Auberon Herbert, attracted William Morris, at that time still a radical Liberal. Morris wrote a pamphlet for the EQA, *Unjust War: To the Working Men of England*. Morris was to become treasurer of the National Liberal League, a radical artisan group established by Howell and Henry Broadhurst in 1877. Broadhurst, leader of the stonemasons, was elected as an MP in 1880 and was to become a junior minister in Gladstone's government in 1885, the first working-class minister.

The ILP, the SDF and the Second International before the First World War

The Independent Labour Party's links with European socialists in the early years of the Socialist International were quite weak. The focus of Keir Hardie and his colleagues was on developing the domestic labour

movement, with the different socialist groups combining into a Labour Representation Committee in 1900. It was only in 1902 that Keir Hardie visited the continent to try to establish personal contacts with the European socialist leaders. In contrast, the SDF leadership, as Marxists, were much closer to the ideological position of the leading German, French and Austrian socialists. Hyndman and Belfort Bax spoke French and German and contributed to the ideological debates both within the International and in the SDF journal, *Justice*, as well as contributing to European socialist journals. *Justice* gave considerable coverage to European socialist developments and included contributions from leading German theoreticians such as Clara Zetkin. Belfort Bax became deeply embroiled in the debate over Eduard Bernstein's 'revisionism'. Bernstein had collaborated closely with the Fabians while in London, but the ethical socialism of Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden and Bruce Glasier initially appeared somewhat alien to other European Marxists. In 1900 at the Paris conference of the Second International, the SDF claimed both British places on the International Socialist Bureau for Hyndman and Harry Quelch, and it was not until 1904 that Hardie joined the ISB. Thereafter, the ILP seems to have made an effort to engage with European socialist thinking, for in 1905, the ILP's first series of book length studies in socialism, edited by Ramsay MacDonald, included works by Jean Jaurès, Enrico Ferri, Eduard Bernstein and Emil Vandervelde.

Douglas Newton's study²³ traces the trajectory of both the SDF and the ILP in the pre-war years. By 1910, Hyndman and Quelch had become increasingly anti-German and moved to supporting British rearmament, to be opposed by a more internationalist group led by the Russian exile, Theodore Rothstein. Rothstein contacted the German socialist Karl Kautsky, the leading theoretician of the international, to try to persuade Hyndman to modify his position, which Kautsky attempted to do by writing an article for *Justice* against the 'big Navy' argument. This did not however succeed and the difference of view led to a reduction of the SDF's influence within the International. In contrast, the ILP under the leadership of Keir Hardie, after a strained relationship with the German socialists between 1909 and 1911 which partly reflected the German opposition to the ILP's electoral collaboration with the Liberal party, became more active in the International's peace campaign. Hardie, as an anti-militarist, supported the concept of an international workers' strike against war. He was supported by Robert Smillie, who in 1912 became president of the International Miners' Federation. The British Trades Union congress also developed links with European socialist trade unionists, and

the 1913 TUC Congress was attended by Leon Jouhaux from France and Carl Legien from Germany.

The Parliamentary Labour Party was however divided when it came to votes on military expenditure. Several MPs representing shipbuilding areas, some miner MPs, and the chief whip, G.H. Roberts, in August 1912 supported the Government's position of increasing military expenditure. The ILP supported the National Peace Congress in Leeds in June 1913. The ILP also opposed the National Service League's campaign for conscription and compulsory service in the Territorial Army. However as late as March 1914, a number of Labour MPs failed to oppose Naval estimates. British socialists did not expect the Balkan crisis of July/August 1914 to escalate into a war. Hardie and Glasier from the ILP and Dan Irving from the British Socialist Party (the successor to the SDF) attended the International Socialist Bureau meeting in Brussels on 29 July and opposed the suggestion that the next Socialist International Conference planned for late August needed to be relocated from Vienna to Paris. The French socialist leader, Jean Jaurès, was assassinated on 31 July 1914. A large anti-war demonstration was held in London on Sunday 2 August, with speakers from across the Labour movement, and Hyndman joined Hardie on the platform. With the outbreak of war on 4 August, the Socialist International Congress was cancelled. On 5 August, a majority of members of the Parliamentary Labour Party voted to support the British government's request for war credits, at which point Ramsay MacDonald resigned his position as PLP chair. MacDonald's anti-war position was supported by only three other Labour MPs, all ILP members – Keir Hardie, Fred Jowett and Thomas Richardson. Their position was supported by some radical Liberal MPs, including John Morley and John Burns, who both resigned from the Cabinet, Charles Trevelyan, who resigned a junior Ministerial post and Arthur Ponsonby.²⁴

Conclusion

While the extent of the involvement of British radicals and socialists with European radicals and socialists and their active contribution to international organisations is perhaps surprising, given the increasingly domestic focus and even isolationist position of the mainstream labour movement in Britain, this overview raises the question: how far can this involvement be regarded as socialist? Victorian radicals, whether moderate reformers like William Lovett or more militant Chartists such as G.J. Harney and W.J. Linton focused on supporting rebellions against autocratic governments,

as in 1848 in France, but also on supporting nationalists seeking independent states for their nations, most notably in Italy, Hungary and Poland. In the latter cases, these national revolts tended to be led more by aristocrats and the intellectual elite, rather than by socialists or working-class organisations. The extent of the relationships was derived from the fact that England, especially London, was a relatively safe haven for political refugees from Europe. It is only with the establishment of the IWMA in 1864, that there is an increased emphasis on relationships with explicitly working-class-based organisations rather than with liberal republicans and nationalists. This relied primarily on the strength of the French and British trade union movements. In contrast, by the time of the establishment of the Second International in 1889, it was the French and German socialist parties, rather than the trade unions, which formed the basis of international working-class co-operation. Berlin and Paris became more important than London, and issues of national self-determination became superseded by issues of working-class solidarity and collaboration over matters of common interest such as conditions of labour and whether or not socialist parties should participate in governments. With the outbreak of war in 1914, majority Labour parties in the four main nations involved – Germany, France, Austria and Britain – prioritised their own national solidarity over international working class solidarity. In the interwar period, during which Labour had periods of running national governments in all four of these countries, it is perhaps not surprising that national interests were to predominate in each country's approach to international affairs.

Notes

1. Henry Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe 1815–1848*, Manchester, 1975.
2. See *ibid.*, p54. See also unpublished dissertation by John Sever, *James Morrison of 'The Pioneer'*, Oxford, 1963.
3. See Duncan Bowie, *The Radical and Socialist Tradition in British Planning*, Abingdon, 2017, pp64–73.
4. Cited in Weisser, *British Working-Class*, p155; see also William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett*, London, 1876, p308.
5. Cited in Weisser, *British Working-Class*, pp157–158.
6. See *Report of a Public Meeting held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand, on Monday, November 15, 1847, 'To Explain the Principles and Objects of the Peoples' International League'*, London, 1847.
7. A.R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney*, London, 1958.

8. Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German socialism in Britain 1840–1860*, Abingdon, 2006.
9. Cited in Weisser, *British Working-Class*, p140.
10. Cited in *ibid.*, p143.
11. Cited in *ibid.*, p154.
12. Thomas C. Jones, *French Republican Exiles in Britain 1848–1870*. Unpublished Cambridge University PhD thesis, 2010.
13. Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics 1848–1874*, Cambridge, 2003.
14. Henry Weisser, *April 10: Challenge and Response in England in 1848*, Lanham MD, 1983, p5.
15. Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats*, Woodbridge, 2014.
16. Kossuth, Ledru Rollin and Mazzini, *Manifesto of the Republican Party*, London, 1855; Louis Blanc, *Observations sur une récente brochure de Kossuth, Ledru Rollin and Mazzini*, London, 1855.
17. Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, London, 1965.
18. Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CC CPSU (compiler), *Documents of the First International*, 5 vols, Moscow, 1962–1964.
19. See E.W. Sager, ‘The Working-Class Peace Movement in Victorian England’, in *Histoire Sociale – Social History* vol 12, 1979, pp122–144; Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914*, Oxford, 2001.
20. Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone*, Cambridge, 1991.
21. Ann Pottinger Saab, *Reluctant Icon: Gladstone, Bulgaria and the Working Classes 1856–1878*, Cambridge MA, 1991.
22. *Ibid.*, p167,
23. Douglas J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889–1914*, Oxford, 1985.
24. Duncan Bowie, ‘Radical Opposition to the First World War’, in David Morgan (ed.), *Stop the First World War*, SHS OP 37, Wymondham, 2016.