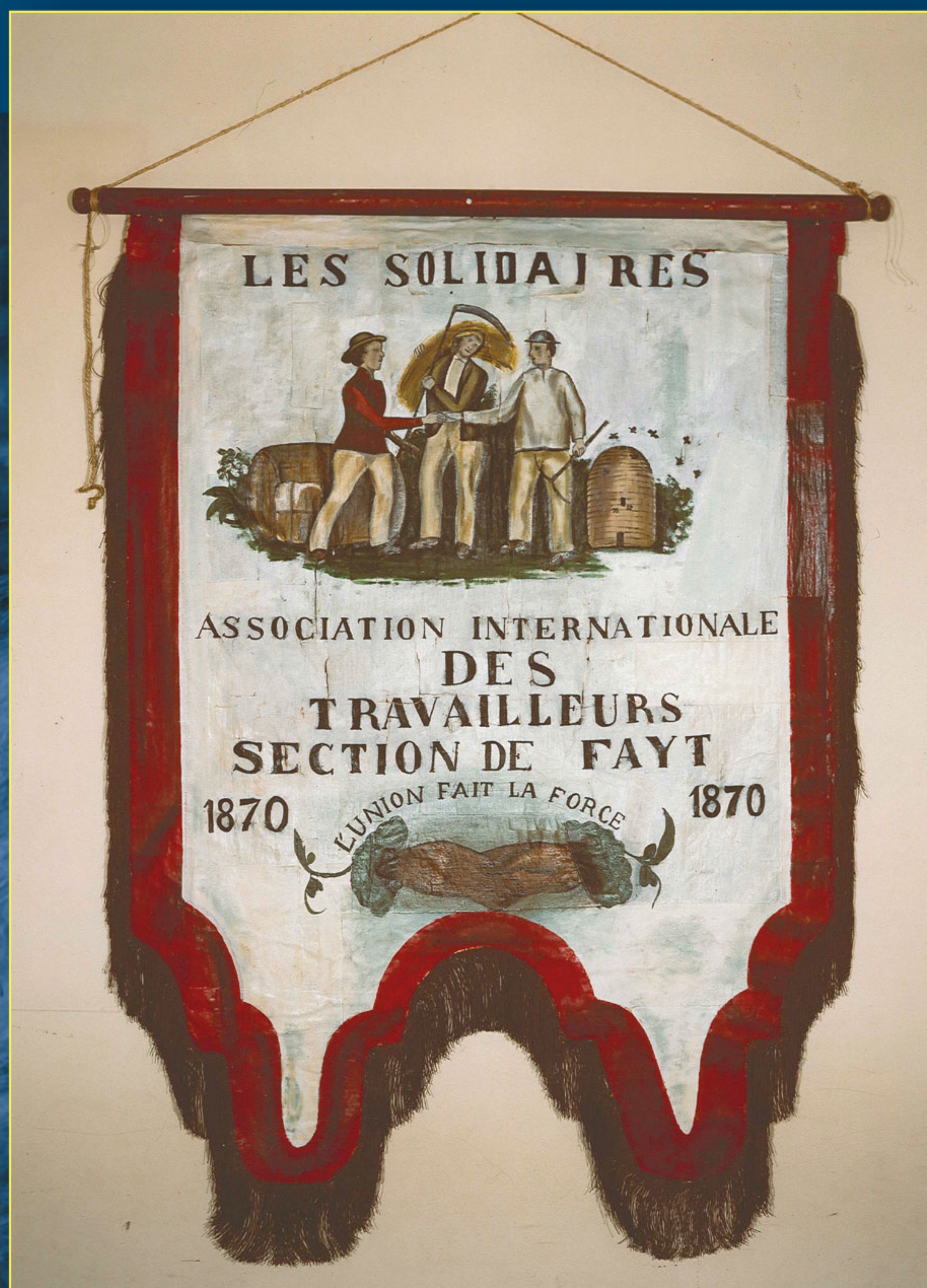


STUDIES IN GLOBAL SOCIAL HISTORY

# “ARISE YE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH”

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL IN  
A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY  
FABRICE BENSIMON, QUENTIN DELUERMOZ  
& JEANNE MOISAND



BRILL

“Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth”

# Studies in Global Social History

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# “Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth”

*The First International in a Global Perspective*

*Edited by*

Fabrice Bensimon  
Quentin Deluermoz  
Jeanne Moisand



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# Contents

List of Figures IX

Notes on Contributors XI

1 Introduction 1

*Fabrice Bensimon, Quentin Deluermoz and Jeanne Moisand*

## PART 1

### *Organisation and Debates*

2 The IWMA and Its Precursors in London, c. 1830–1860 21

*Fabrice Bensimon*

3 Little Local Difficulties?

*The General Council of the IWMA as an Arena for British Radical  
Politics* 39

*Detlev Mares*

4 The IWMA and Industrial Conflict in England and France 54

*Iorwerth Prothero*

5 Transnational Solidarity in the Making

*Labour Strikes, Money Flows, and the First International, 1864–1872* 66

*Nicolas Delalande*

6 The IWMA, Workers and the Machinery Question (1864–1874) 89

*François Jarrige*

7 The IWMA and the Commune

*A Reassessment* 107

*Quentin Deluermoz*

## PART 2

### *Global Causes and Local Branches*

8 Global Values Locally Transformed

*The IWMA in the German States 1864–1872/76* 129

*Jürgen Schmidt*

- 9 **The IWMA in Belgium (1865–1875)** 144  
*Jean Puissant*
- 10 **The First International in Switzerland**  
*A Few Observations* 165  
*Marc Vuilleumier*
- 11 **For Independent Poland and the Emancipation of the Working Class**  
*The Poles in the IWMA, 1864–1876* 181  
*Krzysztof Marchlewicz*
- 12 **Russians in the IWMA**  
*The Background* 193  
*Woodford McClellan*
- 13 **The Italians and the IWMA** 207  
*Carl Levy*
- 14 **1871 in Spain**  
*Transnational and Local History in the Formation of the*  
*FRE-IWMA* 221  
*Albert Garcia-Balaña*
- 15 **Revolutions, Republics and IWMA in the Spanish Empire (around**  
**1873)** 238  
*Jeanne Moisand*
- 16 **The First International in Latin America** 253  
*Horacio Tarcus*
- 17 **Socialism v. Democracy?**  
*The IWMA in the USA, 1869–1876* 270  
*Michel Cordillot*
- 18 **“Sectarian Secret Wisdom” and Nineteenth-Century Radicalism**  
*The IWMA in London and New York* 282  
*Antony Taylor*

## PART 3

*Actors and Ideologies*

- 19 **Karl Marx and the IWMA Revisited** 299  
*Jürgen Herres*
- 20 **The Construction of Proudhonism within the IWMA** 313  
*Samuel Hayat*
- 21 **Professor Beesly, Positivism and the International**  
*The Patriotism Question* 332  
*Gregory Claeys*
- 22 **Bringing Together Feminism and Socialism in the First International**  
*Four Examples* 343  
*Antje Schrapp*
- 23 **Bakunin and the Jura Federation** 355  
*Marianne Enckell*
- 24 **Carlo Cafiero and the International in Italy**  
*From Marx to Bakunin* 366  
*Mathieu Léonard*
- Appendix 1: The IWMA – A Brief Chronology** 379
- Appendix 2: Membership** 387
- Index of Names** 389
- Index of Places** 394
- Index of Subjects and Organisations** 399
- Index of Sources** 403





# List of Figures

- 1.1 Foundation meeting of the IWMA. St Martin's Hall, London, 28th September 1864 15
- 1.2 Address and Provisional Rules of the IWMA, 28 September 1864 (front page). *Address and Provisional Rules of the IWMA*, Westminster Printing Company, London, 1864 16
- 1.3 Delegates to the Geneva Conference 1866 17
- 2.1 Membership card of the Fraternal Democrats 37
- 2.2 George Julian Harney (1817–1897) was the founder of the Fraternal Democrats 38
- 3.1 Attendance of members of the General Council of the IWMA, September–December 1870 53
- 4.1 IWMA poster for a conference on 25–28 September, 1865, i.e. exactly one year after the foundation meeting, which had taken place in the same place, in St Martin's Hall, Long Acre 65
- 5.1 Membership Card, IWMA, 1869 87
- 5.2 Membership card of the IWMA 88
- 5.3 Membership card of the IWMA (Friedrich Engels) 88
- 7.1 Poster for a commemorative meeting for the anniversary of the Paris Commune, London, 1872. The chairmanship of Eugène Dupont can be explained by his long-term involvement in the IWMA. After taking part in the Franco-British meeting of workers in 1862, Dupont had been a member of the association and of the General Council since 1864 124
- 7.2 Call of the federal council of the Parisian branches of the IWMA to the workers of Paris for the 26 March 1871 election of the Paris Commune 125
- 7.3 International democratic association call for a demonstration in Hyde Park, in London, on 16 April 1871 in honour of the French Commune 126
- 8.1 First pages: Trial of the Social Democrats in Germany, 1872. *Der Braunschweiger Ausschuss der Socialdemokratischen Arbeiter-partei in Lötzen und vor dem Gericht von W Bracke. Mit einem photographischen Gruppenbilde*, Braunschweig, 1872 [*The Brunswick committee of the Social Democratic Party in Lötzen, outside the court, by W. Bracke. With a photograph of the group*, Brunswick, 1872] 142
- 8.2 "Trial of the German socialist republicans (Bebel, Liebknecht, etc.) in the assizes court in Leipzig, in 1872" 143
- 9.1 Belgian Sections of the IWMA, April 1868 160
- 9.2 Belgian Sections of the IWMA, April 1869 161

- 10.1 The delegates to the Basle Conference, 1869. This Conference took place from 6 to 12 September, 1869. There were 75 delegates. The flag is that of the local section Engraving based on a photo. The two boys caricaturing Napoleon have been added by the engraver 180
- 14.1 First Congress of the FRE, Barcelona, 1870 237
- 15.1 Photograph of the Founders of the Spanish Regional Federation of the IWMA in Madrid, around 1868–69 252
- 17.1 March of the French Internationalists in New York on 17 December 1871 to honor the Parisian *Fédérés* 280
- 18.1 Riots by the unemployed in New York, 1874 296
- 19.1 *The Civil War in France. Address of the General Council of the IWMA*, 1871. Title page 312
- 22.1 Victoria Woodhull c. 1869 353
- 22.2 Elisabeth Dmitrieff 354

### Images of the front and back cover pages: “La Solidarité de Fayt”

The section of Fayt (Belgium) was mainly made of metal workers. It joined the IWMA in 1869, and it numbered 400 members in 1893. While it was at the same time a friendly society and a consumption co-operative, it played an important part in the creation of the “Union de métiers”, a union which gathered the various trades in metal (1871), in the creation of the first “Maison du peuple” in the country (1872), and after it joined the Parti ouvrier belge (POB, 1885), of the large regional consumption co-op “Progrès de Jolimont” (1886), and then regional and national federations of the socialist friendly societies (1890). It is undoubtedly the first example of a continuity between the IWMA and the POB. It is also evidence of the lack of anarchist rooting, although it joined the federalist international. The preservation of the old banner can be accounted for by this exceptional continuity.

Fayt is a hamlet in the municipality of Seneffe, which was incorporated in that of Manage (1880), between Mons and Charleroi, part of the Centre Region (Hainaut), which went through an industrial boom thanks to the railroad between Manage and Mons.

Sources: « Cornet Fidèle » and « Massart Théophile » entries in Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier en Belgique en ligne : maitron-en-ligne. univ-paris1.fr. Copyright: Bibliothèque et Archives de l'IEV – Brussels

## Notes on Contributors

### *Fabrice Bensimon*

is a professor of British history and civilisation at Sorbonne Université and a member of Centre d'histoire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris 1 – Paris 4). He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at University College London (2016–8).

### *Gregory Claeys*

has been Professor of the History of Political Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London since 1992. A historian of British radicalism, socialism and utopianism from 1750 to the present, he is the author of nine books and editor of some fifty volumes, mostly of primary sources. He has written studies of Robert Owen and Owenism, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill, as well as of utopianism. His last book is *Marx and Marxism* (Penguin Books, 2018).

### *Michel Cordillot*

professor emeritus at University Paris 8, is the author of *Utopistes et exilés du Nouveau Monde* (Paris, Vendémiaire, 2013) and *La Sociale en Amérique* (Paris, L'Atelier, 2002).

### *Nicolas Delalande*

is Associate Professor in History at the Centre for History at Sciences Po (Paris). He works on the history of the state and political economy from a comparative perspective. He has published *Les Batailles de l'impôt. Consentement et résistances de 1789 à nos jours* (2011) and, together with Romain Huret, has edited a special issue on the global history of tax revolts in the *Journal of Policy History* (2013).

### *Quentin Deluermoz*

is Associate Professor in History at Université Paris 13 (Pleiade Research Institute), a Research Fellow at CRH (EHESS) and a member of Institut Universitaire de France. His work focuses on the social and cultural history of order and disorder in the 19th century (France, Europe and Empires). He is the author of *Le Crépuscule des révolutions, 1848–1871* (2012) published in the series « La France contemporaine » (Seuil); and, with Pierre Singaravelou, of *Pour une histoire des possibles, analyses contrefactuels et futurs non advenus* (2016).

*Marianne Enckell*

has published *La Fédération jurassienne* (Lausanne, La Cité, 1971 ; 2nd ed. Genève-Paris. Entremonde, 2012) and *Le Refus de parvenir* (Montpellier, Indigène, 2014), among others. She is active within the Centre international de recherches sur l'anarchisme, in Lausanne.

*Albert Garcia-Balañà*

is Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. He has published on 19th-century social and political Spanish history including *La fabricació de la fàbrica. Treball i política a la Catalunya cotonera (1784–1874)* [The Making of the Factory. Work and Politics in Cotton-Making Catalonia (1784–1874)].

*Samuel Hayat*

is a Research Associate Professor at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS/CERAPS). He works on the history and theory of political representation and labour movements and ideologies. He has recently published *Quand la République était révolutionnaire. Citoyenneté et représentation en 1848* (2014).

*Jürgen Herres*

is a historian working for the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences (BBAW). In 2009 he published an edition of the writings of Marx and Engels in the era of the first international (Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*, Abt. 1, Bd. 21: Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe. September 1867 bis März 1871*), in 2016 (with François Melis) vol. I/7 of the *MEGA* with the edition of the writings of Marx and Engels from February to October 1848 (*MEGA*, Abt. 1, Bd. 7).

*François Jarrige*

is Associate Professor in contemporary history at the university of Burgundy (France). He has published widely on the history of industrial society, the labour movement and technological change, including *Au temps des "tueuses de bras": Les bris de machines à l'aube de l'ère industrielle* (2009); *Technocritiques* (2014), and *La modernité désenchantée. Relire l'histoire du XIXe siècle* (with E. Fureix, 2015).

*Mathieu Léonard*

is a historian and an independent journalist. He has published a history of the First International, *L'émancipation des travailleurs* (La Fabrique éditions, 2011).

*Carl Levy*

is a Professor of Politics in the Department of Politics, Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of 12 edited and single-authored books and over 100 journal articles and chapters in edited volumes. The most relevant, recent publication is Carl Levy and Saul Newman (eds.), *The Anarchist Imagination: Anarchism encounters the Humanities and Social Sciences*, London, Routledge, 2017.

*Krzysztof Marchlewicz*

is Professor at the Institute of History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. His research interests focus mostly on history of the Polish political emigrations and Anglo-Polish relations. He is the author of *Wielka Emigracja na Wyspach Brytyjskich 1831–1863* (Poznań 2008).

*Detlev Mares*

is a lecturer in Modern History at the Institute of History at Darmstadt University of Technology. He has published on Victorian political radicalism and on British history in general, including *Margaret Thatcher. Die Dramatisierung des Politischen* (Berlin 2014, 2nd ed. 2018).

*Woodford McClellan*

is the author of *Revolutionary Exiles: The Russians in the First International and the Paris Commune* (London, 1979). He is at work on a study of non-governmental efforts to combat the Comintern, 1919–1933.

*Jeanne Moisand*

is Associate Professor in contemporary history at the university of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France) and in the Centre d'histoire du XIXe siècle (Paris 1 – Paris 4). She has published *Scènes capitales. Madrid, Barcelone et le monde théâtral fin-de-siècle* (2013) and co-edited *Exils entre les deux mondes. Migrations et espaces politiques atlantiques au XIXe siècle* (2015).

*Iorwerth Prothero*

is a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester. His research and publications are on labour movements, popular radicalism and dissident religion in Britain and France.

*Jean Puissant*

professeur émérite de l'Université libre de Bruxelles, est responsable scientifique de « La Fonderie », musée des industries et du travail de Bruxelles,

et de « Bois du Luc », site minier UNESCO. Collaborateur du *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier en Belgique* (Maitron).

*Jürgen Schmidt*

is researcher at the Humboldt University Berlin at the International Research Centre “Work and Human Lifecycle in Global History (re:work)”. He published widely on the history of work, workers and labour movements including *August Bebel – Kaiser der Arbeiter. Eine Biografie* (2013; English translation in 2018); *Arbeiter in der Moderne. Arbeitsbedingungen, Lebenswelten, Organisationen* (2015); *Brüder, Bürger und Genossen. Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung zwischen Klassenkampf und Bürgergesellschaft 1830–1870* (2018).

*Antje Schrupp*

is a political scientist and journalist located in Frankfurt am Main. She published several books on the political ideas of women, including *Nicht Marxistin und auch nicht Anarchistin. Frauen in der Ersten Internationale* (1999).

*Horacio Tarcus*

has a PhD in History from National University of La Plata. He is a professor at University of Buenos Aires, researcher at CONICET (Argentina) and director of CeDInCI (Centre for Documentation and Research on Left-Wing Culture). He has published, among other works, *Marx en Argentina* (2007) and *Diccionario biográfico de la izquierda argentina* (2007).

*Antony Taylor*

is Professor of Modern British History at Sheffield Hallam University. He has written widely on the themes of British republicanism, opposition to aristocracy, and the expansion of the franchise in Britain. His most recent book is “*London’s Burning*”: *Pulp Fiction, the Politics of Terrorism and the Destruction of the Capital in British Popular Culture, 1840–2005* (Bloomsbury, 2012)

*Marc Vuilleumier*

taught at the university of Geneva. In 1964, for the Centenary conference on the IWMA in Paris, he presented a report on Switzerland. He is the author, among others, of *Immigrés et réfugiés en Suisse. Aperçu historique ; Histoire et combats* (2012).

# Introduction

*Fabrice Bensimon, Quentin Deluermoz and Jeanne Moisand*

## Introduction

In November 1964, a Centenary conference of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) was organised in Paris under the aegis of the CNRS and the Commission internationale des mouvements sociaux et des structures sociales (International Commission for social movements and structures). The organisers, including Ernest Labrousse, had stressed the need for a comprehensive survey, and the conference lasted three days and brought together some 90 participants, including Jean Maitron, Arthur Lehning, Jean Dhondt, Asa Briggs and Marc Vuilleumier. The participants appeared in national delegations – a practice which would probably seem rather curious nowadays. At the same time, this retrospective look at the centenary conference is humbling, since many of its contributions have barely aged. Nearly 500 pages of the proceedings were published in 1968.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the ground covered by this vast collective endeavour was considerable. It provided detailed investigation of the different countries affected by the development of the IWMA (France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Hungary, Russia, Austria, Bohemia, Poland...), in a wide-ranging survey. The institutions of the General Council in London, the nature of the First International's sections and the issue of membership were also addressed. A first summary was drawn, which highlighted the place of skilled artisans in the various struggles of the 1860s, and the unstable “mosaic-like” character of the International and its branches. In their conclusion, these works highlighted the gap between concrete achievements and aspirations, and thus realised the myth born out of the International – a myth which, according to the final report's author, Jean Dhondt, was no doubt of decisive historical importance in the history of the modern labour movement.

So why, in light of such an impressive pedigree, should we re-examine this organisational experiment, however original to the post-1848 world it may have been? There are a few arguments for this.

---

<sup>1</sup> *La Première Internationale: l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*, Paris, 16–18 Novembre 1964 (Paris, 1968).



For a start, research has continued, albeit at a less sustained pace, and with variations between countries. Few major revisions have been carried out for the Northern European area, even though, non-exhaustively, the following studies should be noted: for France, work on the benefits of the 1871 Commune, the many local studies dealing with “the terrible year” and those on political refugees;<sup>2</sup> for Germany, more cultural approaches on social-democracy and works on some of the movement’s key figures;<sup>3</sup> for Switzerland, the research of Marc Vuilleumier and Marianne Enckell;<sup>4</sup> for Belgium, studies by Daisy Devreese, Jean Puissant and Freddy Joris;<sup>5</sup> for the United Kingdom, Henry Collins, Chimen Abramsky and, more recently, Margot Finn;<sup>6</sup> for Spain, Josep Termes’s, Carlo Serrano’s and Clara Lida’s publications in the 1970s, and for Latin America, Carlos Rama’s.<sup>7</sup> The United States has received a lot of attention,

- 
- 2 Marc César, Xavier Verdejo (eds.), *Regards sur la Commune de 1871 en France. Nouvelles approches et perspectives*, (forthcoming); Laure Godineau, “Retour d’exil. Les anciens communards au début de la Troisième République” (unpublished PhD diss., Paris I University, 2000); Paul Martinez, “Communard Refugees in Great Britain”, (unpublished PhD diss., Sussex University, 1981); Thomas C. Jones and Robert Tombs, “The French left in exile; *quarante-huitards* and *communards* in London, 1848–80”, in Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick (eds.), *A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality, Opportunity* (London, 2013), pp. 165–191; Michel Cordillot, *Utopistes et exilés du Nouveau monde: des Français aux Etats-Unis, de 1848 à la Commune* (Paris, 2013). On France, also see: Julian P.W. Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1872: Its Origins, Theories and Impact* (Lanham, 1997).
  - 3 Jürgen Schmidt, *August Bebel. Kaiser der Arbeiter. Eine Biografie* (Zurich, 2013); Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn, 2000).
  - 4 Marc Vuilleumier, *Histoire et combats : mouvement ouvrier et socialisme en Suisse, 1864–1960* (Lausanne [etc.], 2012); Marianne Enckell, *La Fédération jurassienne : les origines de l’anarchisme en Suisse* (Lausanne, La Cité, 1971).
  - 5 Daisy Devreese (ed.), *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l’Association internationale des travailleurs* (Louvain-Bruxelles, 1986).
  - 6 Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (Londres, 1965); Margot Finn, *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics 1848–1874* (Cambridge, 1993). See also: Keith Robinson, “Karl Marx, the RWMA and London radicalism, 1864–72” (PhD., Manchester University, 1976).
  - 7 Clara E. Lida, *Anarquismo y revolución en la España del XIX* (Madrid, 1972); Carlos Serrano (ed.), *Actas de los Consejos y Comisión Federal de la Región Española (1870–1874)*, 2 vol. (Barcelona, 1969); Carlos Serrano (ed.), *Cartas, comunicaciones y circulares de la comisión federal de la Región española*, 7 vol. (Barcelona, 1972–1987); José A. Piqueras, Vicent Sanz Rosalén, “Introduction”, in *A Social History of Spanish Labour. New Perspectives and Class, Politics and Gender*, (New York, 2007), pp. 1–18; Josep Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España (1864–1881)* (Barcelona, [1977] 2000); Carlos M. Rama, *Historia del movimiento obrero social latinoamericano contemporáneo* (Barcelona, 1976).

with works by Hubert Perrier, Michel Cordillot and, more recently, Timothy Messer-Kruse.<sup>8</sup> Pithy syntheses have been written, such as those by Henryk Katz and Mathieu Léonard.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, broader, transnational perspectives have been put forward, as with the proceedings of the conference organised in Amsterdam in September 1985 by Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden, locating the IWMA in the longer duration of labour internationalism, that is to say 1830–1940.<sup>10</sup> To this list should be added the continuation of work started a long time ago, aiming to design reference tools or edit primary sources. Some of these are still being published, e.g. in the first section of the MEGA.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Marcello Musto has edited a sourcebook, including many texts published for the very first time in English, and a long, thoughtful introduction.<sup>12</sup> Readers will find greater details regarding each of these historiographies across this volume's contributions. It should be pointed out, however, that while studies became scarcer in the 1970–90s, the total over a 40-year period is sufficiently large to warrant an update.

However, the reasons for these updates are not only scholarly. Since 1964, the position of the First International in collective memory has deeply changed. Whereas fifty years ago, the IWMA was a controversial object, only a few specialists and political activists are now interested in it. Presumably, the acceleration of economic globalisation and the discourses that accompany it, the decline of socialist and communist ideals, and the flakiness of the trade union organisation have their part in this movement. The traditional political parties of the left, which usually belonged to Internationals when they were created a century or more ago, have moreover long renounced this filiation and are now purely

8 Hubert Perrier, "Idées et mouvement socialistes aux États-Unis, 1864–1890" (PhD., Paris 8 University, 1984); Michel Cordillot, *La Sociale en Amérique: dictionnaire biographique du mouvement social francophone aux États-Unis, 1848–1922* (Paris, 2002); Cordillot, *Utopistes et exilés du Nouveau monde*; Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International. Marxism and the American Tradition, 1848–1876* (Chapel Hill, 1998).

9 Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (Westport, 1992); Mathieu Léonard, *L'émancipation des travailleurs: une histoire de la Première Internationale* (Paris, 2011). The bibliography on the IWMA in each country will be completed in the different chapters.

10 Frits Van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour movement, 1830–1940* (Leiden, 1988).

11 MEGA (Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe) is the complete edition of the works of Marx and Engels, under the aegis of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (*Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*). <http://mega.bbaw.de>.

12 Marcello Musto (ed.), *Workers Unite! The International 150 Years Later* (New York [etc.], 2014).

national parties, for which national anthems and flags have replaced “The Internationale” and the red flag. New protest movements which have emerged since the 1990s have sometimes attempted to do without trade unions and parties, and may therefore have reinforced this trend. At the same time, many assessments that are made today by protest movements were made in similar terms 150 years ago – as the economy is becoming global, so should struggles be. And undeniably, knowledge of the findings, achievements and failures of the pioneers of internationalist protest politics would be useful today. With this in mind, the First International should not be confused with the Second one (1889–1914), which was organised around national socialist parties that were sometimes large, and which set up relationships between their leaderships. Such was not the case of the IWMA which was founded before the development of these parties and which mostly gathered trade unions, associations, individual members and activists. It favoured various forms of solidarity among workers: from the coordination between unions to prevent the international circulation of strike breakers, to the support of political refugees.

So, in such a context, have new perspectives on labour history and new research in the field, since 1964, been fertile for the study of the IWMA? This is what the organisers of the conference which took place in June 2014 and resulted in this book have wondered.

For the 150th anniversary of the 1864 foundation of the IWMA, they invited historians working in the field to tackle the history of the IWMA, examining whether recent historiographic evolutions could be fruitful. Several aspects of the ways in which the new approaches may help re-write the history of the IWMA can therefore be highlighted.

### **Transnational Labour History**

The first development which comes to mind is the emergence of a transnational and global labour and working-class resistance history, with research produced by various institutes across the world.<sup>13</sup> This now-plentiful bibliography has made it possible to break from a largely Western-centric labour history, by bringing to the fore the vigour of social experiments in the rest of the world,

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13 We are using “transnational” while speaking about the IWMA not for the sake of fashion but to insist on the flows and the links between the various branches, rather than the mere juxtaposition of national situations. The work of Amsterdam’s International Institute of Social History on the digitization of records and their promotion can be cited as an example of this.

the basic importance of indentured labour and the more complex geography of international migrations.<sup>14</sup> In political terms, it has highlighted the role of piracies, the importance of entanglements at play in the age of revolutions (1750–1850), the existence of a liberal International in the 1820s–1830s, the flows of anarchist oppositions in the 1890s, and the sustained role of international organisations in the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> It is telling that the IWMA, an organisation centred on European workers, remains on the margins of these new fields.

In this sense, the present volume serves a variety of purposes. On the one hand, it intends to complete the IWMA's initial mapping, by adding geographic areas which have sometimes been neglected, such as imperial spaces, the United States and Latin America (Michel Cordillot, Horacio Tarcus, Antony Taylor). But it will also add to existing national analyses by juxtaposing analyses centred on countries, with studies of flows of people, ideas, technologies and money. The purpose is not to “construct” a fictional homogeneity, but to convey an impression of the actual spaces of exchanges and connections, with their plural polarities.<sup>16</sup> This is the proposition which is put forward here on several occasions, for instance in the case of transatlantic networks in the

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- 14 For instance, to name but a few, Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays toward a Global Labour History* (Leiden, 2008); Alexandro Stanziani, *Labour, Coercion, and Economic Growth in Eurasia (17th–20th centuries)* (Leiden, 2012); Adam Mc Keown, “Global migrations 1846–1940” *Journal of World History*, vol. 15; n°2, (June 2004), pp. 159–189; Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London, 2009), especially Chapters 1–2; Neville Kirk, “Transnational Labour History: Promise and Perils” in Leon Fink (ed.), *Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labour History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 18–22; Charlotte Alston, “Introduction” in “Transnational Solidarities and the Identities of the Left, 1890–1990”, *European Review of History*, 21 (2014), 447–450.
- 15 Thus: Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (New York, 2010); Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, William Max Nelson, (eds.) *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca, 2013); Sylvie Aprile, Jean-Claude Caron, Emmanuel Fureix (dir.), *La liberté guidant les peuples: les révolutions de 1830 en Europe* (Paris, 2013); Fernández Sebastián, Javier, *La Aurora de la libertad: los primeros liberalismos en el mundo iberoamericano* (Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2012). Clément Thibaud et al. (eds.), *L'Atlantique révolutionnaire. Une perspective ibéro-américaine* (Paris, 2013); Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London [etc.], 2005). Steven Hirsch, Lucien Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* (Leiden, 2010).
- 16 Following Pierre-Yves Saunier's propositions: “Introduction”, *Transnational History* (New York [etc.], 2013), pp. 1–21; and “Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux”, *Genèses*, 57 (2004), pp. 110–126.

Hispanic world (Jeanne Moisand, Horacio Tarcus) and of the impact of the Paris Commune (Quentin Deluermoz, Albert Garcia Balañà). Another aspect is to shed light on the idiosyncrasies of local situations and of the specific horizons in which they unfold, in a perspective which articulates the local with the global – an essential concern if one wants to avoid reducing concrete experiences to simple copies of large-scale fluxes. Such richness is made obvious here, in most of the case studies focusing on a given space.

In this process – this is the second point – another landscape emerges, inviting the reader to rethink the very nature of the “organisation” referred to as the IWMA, in order to insist on entanglements between localities and struggles which were sometimes very different, interconnected by complex flows and appropriations. Many aspects are lacking from such an analysis, and a strictly global study would have sought to decentre our gazes further, through a large-scale comparison. But these early elements already constitute an invitation to fully reintegrate the IWMA into the field of studies on transnational labour, political organisations and resistances. It appears as a cornerstone which makes it possible to think about the reconfigurations at work, in modes of economic and political opposition, within the world of the 1860s.

### Another History of the Debates Within the IWMA

Within this general framework, other dimensions should be underlined, such as the more intellectual and political issues. Before the 1964 conference, the historiography of the First International focused on the ideological debates which had resulted in its failure. The 1872 split at the Hague Congress, between one side which remained faithful to the London General Council, presented as Marxist, and another dissident side, presented as Bakuninist, was the focus of attention and informed narratives. Even Max Nettlau, as good a historian of the First International as could be, sought, above all, to establish the responsibilities for its failure, by proving the existence of adverse conspiracies.<sup>17</sup> The 1964 conference marked a transition from a history of ideological struggles to a history of the IWMA's rank and file. This book extends this effort in several directions.

First, it restates the decisive role of popular political cultures, which were especially important among grassroots militants with little or no knowledge of Marx's and Bakunin's writings (Marianne Enckell). In this area, the new vistas, opened up by cultural and intellectual history approaches to politics,

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17 Max Nettlau, *La Première internationale en Espagne (1868–1888)* (Dordrecht-Holland, 1969).

demonstrate how important the contexts in which the IWMA was born are: whether it be a well-established trade union and radical agitation in Britain (Detlev Mares), Belgium (Jean Puissant) and the United States (Michel Cordillot and Antony Taylor); a republican and working-class mobilization with occasional revolutionary leanings in France (Iorwerth Prothero), Spain (Albert Garcia Balañà) and Italy (Carl Levy); or social-democratic expansion in Germany (Jürgen Schmidt). Such anchorage in diverse European political cultures had practical as well as intellectual consequences for the young IWMA. The Internationalists' praxis was often deployed across various battlegrounds – political and trade union based, local and national. These struggles had their own demands and agendas: in 1865, for instance, no IWMA congress was organised because the franchise mobilisation in Britain absorbed all the General Council's energies (Detlev Mares).

The IWMA was rooted in the rebirth of democratic and labour-based political cultures of 1860s Europe. However, this does not mean that the decisive importance of some key socialist and anarchist thinkers in its history should be discounted. In this regard, this volume offers a historicised perspective on Proudhon's, Marx's and Bakunin's role within the IWMA. Proudhon provides a perfect illustration of the interplay between an author's work and a social movement: Proudhon died too early to operate within the IWMA, and his theories only inspired Internationalists insofar as they perceived them to mirror their own associational and cooperative practices (Samuel Hayat). Marx and Bakunin, who, for a long time, were united by the latter's admiration for the former, also sought to influence the ideas and behaviours of the working-class environments which surrounded them. Marx's efforts to promote his views among the London trade union leaders and, through them, to their personnel, had mixed results (Jürgen Herres). As for Bakunin, he dealt with less organised working class circles, such as those who formed the Jura Federation. The latter found in his theories a convenient tool for their fight against the established artisans of Geneva (Marianne Enckell and Marc Vuilleumier), who were both more conformist and more eager to integrate local politics. The men who relayed these thinkers' ideas appear just as important: for instance, Cafiero acted as a Bakuninist apostle in Italy, before providing the first translation of Marx's *Capital* in Italian, simplified and approved by the latter (Mathieu Léonard). Other intellectual currents proved very pervasive at the time the IWMA was founded, even though they subsequently sank into oblivion: this is the case of Positivism in Britain. It was indeed one of its representatives, Edward Beesly, who chaired the founding meeting of the IWMA on 28 September 1864 (Gregory Claeys) (See Figure 1.1).

Lastly, this volume examines debates which are less intellectual but more transversal, and which are present in many negotiations occurring at all levels

of the IWMA. The organisation of the International in economic terms, and the role of the General Council, regional federations and local sections, were debated especially vigorously: tougher rules on membership fees, imposed on the Spanish Regional Federation by the General Council, appear for instance as one of the reasons for the Hague split. Other debates focused on the role of trade unions and strikes. Where no consensus could be reached regarding the proliferation of such disputes or such organisations, the IWMA still operated as an echo chamber which amplified the late 1860s' European strike wave (Nicolas Delalande). Increased mechanisation also generated contradictory ideological stances. In the end, it was those who believed they could solve the problem through the appropriation of machinery by workers who prevailed, rather than those who claimed to revolutionise the way machinery was perceived (François Jarrige).

### The Emergence of an Internationalist Culture

The IWMA thus achieved a mixed synthesis of positions drawn from various grass-root labour and democratic movements. However, it truly engendered a new political culture: labour internationalism, some components of which are examined in this book. There were precedents: as far back as the early nineteenth century, the exchanges enabled by exile and international voluntary work created forms of Liberal, or white, Internationals. Some of their practices could be found in the IWMA, such as the creation of militant networks through exile and migrations.<sup>18</sup> Even before the 1848 revolutions, London witnessed the formation of the first internationalist organisations such as the Fraternal Democrats (1845–48). It then welcomed all the defeated revolutionaries from the Continent (Fabrice Bensimon).

The expansion of “campaign-based” internationalism in the course of the 1860s gave these organisations new shared cultural references: the wars for Italian unity, the American Civil War, the crushed Polish national upheaval, the Irish national struggle and the first Cuban war of independence, all mobilised very wide support in democratic and labour opinions in Europe and the United States (Krzysztof Marchlewicz). They were symbols of a project of universal

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18 Walter Bruyère-Ostells, *La grande armée de la liberté* (Paris, 2009). Gilles Pécout, “The international armed volunteers: pilgrims of a Transnational Risorgimento”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 14, 4 (2009), pp. 413–426; Delphine Diaz, Jeanne Moisand, Romy Sanchez and Juan Luis Simal (eds.), *Exils entre les deux mondes. Migrations et espaces politiques atlantiques au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 2015).

emancipation, and galvanised the support of IWMA militants. However, these national struggles represented potential bones of contention: in 1867, following an Irish national terrorist attack, some of the London IWMA leaders turned their backs on the Irish cause – which Marx supported – to preserve their hard-won respectability in the face of new voters (Detlev Mares). Their abolitionist stance in the United States and Cuba may also have appeared ambivalent. While it testified to the egalitarian aspirations of labour internationalism with respect to racial issues, at a time and in locations where abolitionism had to derive from resolute commitment, it can be objected that the defence of genuine equality with coloured workers reached some limits; for instance, in New York, the cigar-makers' union, set up by Germans who were very active in the local IWMA sections, was closed to Cuban cigar-makers, who were often black or mixed race workers.<sup>19</sup> However, it must be restated that the American sections of the IWMA were among the few political organisations at the time to defend the principle of racial equality, and also to integrate black workers into their demonstrations.<sup>20</sup>

The birth of labour internationalism also rested on some forms of cultural and material organisation, of which several instances feature in this book. For instance, international congresses, occurring yearly in the life of the International, were derived from models of learned sociability (See Figure 1.3). A crossover between these scientific congresses and those of the IWMA, the student congresses celebrated in Belgium in the late 1860s, also paved the way. They contributed to the training and networking of young continental radicals, and were also one of the origins of the setting up of the Belgian IWMA federation (Jean Puissant).

The press obviously played a very important role. Indeed, as several contributions show, it was an essential part of political cultures. In this respect, the volume is an invitation to keep up the task of documenting the IWMA, which was done to a very high standard in 1964. Congress reports and other documents from the Central Council and the IWMA congresses were published and widely used. This might not have been quite the case for the press, including the labour press. And yet, this type of media was booming at the time, and it remains largely uncharted territory, where historians will “lower down ..., here and there, a little bucket.”<sup>21</sup> The digitisation of many periodicals from the period

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19 Ad Knotter, “Transnational cigar-makers. Cross-border labour markets, strikes, and solidarity at the time of the First International (1864–1873)”, *International Review of Social History* 59 (2014) 409–442.

20 Philip Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans. From the Age of Jackson to World War II* (Westport, Connecticut, 1977), pp. 36–42.

21 Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London, 1918), preface.



may make it possible to renew this research even more, though one should remain cautious about the choices and selections that were made, often with various constraints. In the same perspective, the material culture of the IWMA – posters, drawings, etchings, flags, membership cards, faience, embroidery etc. – also remains to be investigated, as restated by Jean Puissant when he presented the photo of a banner from the Fayt section (Belgium), “Solidarity”, from around 1870 (see cover). In his study on Chartism, Malcom Chase thus showed how such material may be used, and there are many ongoing attempts to integrate them into labour history.<sup>22</sup> Lastly, private correspondences may not have yielded all their results yet: they already crystallise a renewed interest, as shown by studies on Marx’s letters but also, here, on those of Johann Philipp Becker, of which there are several thousands (Jürgen Schmidt).

On the opposite political side, there is also scope to further explore accommodation and repression policies on the part of ruling authorities, as well as the IWMA myth, feeding on a powerful conspiratorial imagination,<sup>23</sup> with unexpected effects: whilst it justified the implementation of police and judicial repression, it seems that the knowledge of the activities and idiom of the IWMA was, in some remote places, disseminated more effectively and quickly by the opposing press. Moreover, this myth probably played a role, in retrospect, giving a strong appearance of coherence to this labour internationalism.

### Social Status and Gender Relations

Our last point regards the sociology of militants or, more accurately, of the different groups involved – to various extents – in the history of the IWMA and its development. Studies from the 1960s had already facilitated considerable progress in this respect, in particular by underlining the “high number” of skilled workers and artisans, with a wide range of specialisms, which also varied from one place to the next; their importance also accounted for the organisation’s richness and diversity. Most articles confirm this observation, adding new details here and there regarding specific groups of workers whose respective

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22 Malcolm Chase, *Chartism. A New History* (Manchester, 2007). See also: Katrina Navickas, “That sash will hang you: political clothing and adornment in England, 1780–1840”, *Journal of British Studies*, 49, 3, (2010), pp. 540–565; Mark Nixon, Gordon Pentland and Matthew Roberts, “The Material Culture of Scottish Reform Politics, c.1820–c.1884”, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 32 (2012), pp. 28–49.

23 Jean-Noël Tardy, *L'Âge des ombres: Complots, conspirations et sociétés secrètes au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2015).

labour market had become internationalised – for instance the cigar makers,<sup>24</sup> or the glassworkers, amongst others.<sup>25</sup> But, above all, these articles have extended the study of actors who had only been briefly discussed previously, or somewhat left aside.

Thus, the role of intellectuals, epitomised by Karl Marx's exemplary figure, has now been enriched (Jürgen Herres), and it is possible to grasp complex currents, such as British Positivism, which supported the International's project and contributed to its shaping (Gregory Claeys). Many actors belonging to the "middle classes" – although the term is disputed – played a crucial role, for instance lawyers, journalists and even doctors. No general rule can be discerned; it is the case, rather, that each scene had its own dynamic: a local journalist would command a great deal of respect in one place, whilst in another, workers would reject any intrusion "from above", thereby reinforcing the impression that the IWMA was very heterogeneous in its makeup. Other social groups neglected by historians appear here in sharper focus, amongst them, the peasantry, whose importance was rendered so visible by the global histories of anarchism initiated in 1980s.<sup>26</sup>

Lastly, the place of women remained for a long time a poor relation in the history of the IWMA, as in so many nineteenth-century movements. The 1964 conference did not examine this point. The situation has begun to change, too tentatively, no doubt. Regarding the IWMA, Antje Schrupp has since written a PhD and several other pieces, which she summarises here.<sup>27</sup> Through the itineraries of four Internationalists – André Léo, Elisabeth Dimitrieff, Victoria Woodhull and Virginie Barbet – she shows the contradictions among various sections of an overwhelmingly male-dominated IWMA. The IWMA was one of the rare political organisations of its era admitting women. However, their aspirations to vote, to work, to occupy a full and complete place in political and trade union assemblies and associations, and even to love freely, clashed with a masculine – if not sexist – culture and with the ideal of the male breadwinner, which prevailed in many IWMA sections, for instance those marked by Proudhonism. Antony Taylor also discusses Victoria Woodhull, and several contributions discuss other women – even if this is a question which certainly calls for additional research. Extending the effort started in the 1960s, the sociology of

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24 Knotter, "Transnational cigar-makers".

25 See: Marc Vuilleumier, "Les drapeaux de la Première Internationale en Suisse", *Cahiers d'histoire du mouvement ouvrier*, 31 (2015), pp. 22–44.

26 Jason Adams, *Non-Western Anarchisms. Rethinking the Global Context* (Johannesburg, 2003).

27 Antje Schrupp, *Nicht Marxistin und auch nicht Anarchistin. Frauen in der Ersten Internationale* (Königstein, 1999).

the IWMA has thus been augmented, reaching beyond the mere context of occupations, pointing to a wide range of local set-ups and hinting at the need to further interrogate the meanings of “worker” in this period.

### **Outline of the Volume**

The contributions are gathered in three different parts.

#### *Organisation and Debates*

First, this volume deals with the IWMA as an organisation, and with its activities as such. The IWMA was a meeting place for positions drawn from the bases of various labour and democratic movements. These different opinions didn't merge. However, the IWMA truly gave birth to a new political culture, as mentioned above, that of labour internationalism. This part explores the organisations that preceded the IWMA, and underlines the central role played by London. The confusion between the General Council of the IWMA and its British federation remained throughout the life of the Association (Detlev Mares). Karl Marx thought that the world's centre of capitalism, the one that was most likely to provoke the spark of a world revolution, could not be dealt with as an ordinary national federation. The organisation emerged in the context of large strike waves; something Iorwerth Prothero underlines in his comparative study of France and Britain. These conditions played an important part in many of the debates which took place within the IWMA and its branches: the support for these movements, and the nature of financial structures, meant support for the organisation and its actions (Nicolas Delalande), and the central issue of mechanisation where those who wished to appropriate the machines prevailed, though not without dispute (François Jarrige). Quentin Deluermoz reassesses the multi-faceted impact of the 1871 Paris Commune on the IWMA.

#### *Global Causes and Local Struggles*

Second, the volume reviews the activities of local sections, studying both their local roots and their connections with transnational political cultures: Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Poland (Krzysztof Marchlewicz), Russia (Woodford McClellan), Spain and Hispanic America, Italy (Carl Levy), and the United States. To take just a few examples, Marc Vuilleumier addresses the specificities of the artisan culture in Switzerland. Woodford McClellan and Krzysztof Marchlewicz examine exiles, Russian and Polish ones respectively, thus contributing to a focus on Eastern Europe, although these sections were made of exiles in Switzerland and Britain. The role of European exiles in

the Atlantic extension of the IWMA is then studied by Horacio Tarcus, Michel Cordillot and Antony Taylor. Their anchorage in diverse European political cultures and the mobilities of their actors had obvious practical, as well as intellectual consequences for the young IWMA.

The IWMA also had small groups in the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, Ireland and Austria-Hungary, which are not dealt with here.<sup>28</sup> However, some papers contribute to our knowledge of the IWMA beyond its traditional boundaries. Horacio Tarcus reconsiders what we know about the IWMA in Latin America, while Jeanne Moisand focuses on little-known transatlantic networks in the Spanish Empire, between Spain and Cuba.

### *Actors and Ideologies*

Third, the volume addresses the part played by some personalities and the “ideologies” that were constructed on the basis of their thinking. Jürgen Herres argues that the roles attributed to Marx in the IWMA were sometimes anachronistic and he proposes to historicise Marx once again. Samuel Hayat puts in context another trend of thought: “Proudhonism”, for which he shows the rooting in the French workers’ practices of the period. The part played by some thinkers, who had been forgotten, despite their crucial importance when the IWMA was founded, is recalled – in particular the Positivists and Edward Beesly (Gregory Claeys). Antje Schrupp then focuses on four female thinkers of the International, who were active in France and the USA, while questioning the links between feminism and internationalism. Marianne Enckell then deals with Bakunin, whose activity in Switzerland she recontextualises within the conflicts of local workers. Mathieu Léonard finally proposes a contrasted portrait of Carlo Cafiero, a fervid supporter of Marx, who later shifted to Bakunin’s side, before eventually proposing the first Italian translation of *Capital*. In each case, chapters reaffirm the decisive role of some popular political cultures which were especially important among grassroots militants with little or no knowledge of Marx’s and Bakunin’s writings (Marianne Enckell).

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28 See: Jacques Giele, *De Eerste Internationale in Nederland. Een onderzoek naar het ontstaan van de Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging van 1868 tot 1876* (Nijmegen, 1973); Jens Engberg (ed.), *Den Internationale Arbejderforening for Danmark*, 2 vols. (Copenhague, 1985 and 1992); Sean Daly, *Ireland and the First International* (Cork, 1984); Herbert Steiner, “Die Internationale Arbeiter Association und die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung”, *Archiv für Sozial Geschichte*, vol IV (Hannover 1964), pp. 447–513; Carlos Da Fonseca, *A Origem da 1.ª Internacional em Lisboa* (Lisbonne, 1978); Bernhard Bayerlein, “La Première Internationale au Portugal, vue à travers la correspondance internationale, particulièrement celle avec le Conseil général”, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, *Utopie et socialisme au Portugal au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1982), pp. 479–534.

In the end, the overall assessment outlined here is an invitation to rediscover this landmark experiment, refocus our attention and carry on with research. While it is intended as more than just a – necessarily incomplete – survey of works completed in the last fifty years, each unturned stone suggests what may be started in the years to come. We also hope that readers will find in the present contributions both clear historiographical surveys and original research. They may also – in these days of multifaceted nationalistic withdrawal – find here something of the hope of the men and women of 1864, who believed “the International Union [would] be the human race”.

### Acknowledgements

Several partners made it possible for this conference to take place in Paris on 19 and 20 June 2014, at the Maison de la Recherche of the Université Paris-Sorbonne, and for this volume to be published. The conference was generously supported by the Centre d’histoire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (directors: Dominique Kalifa and Jacques-Olivier Boudon) and the two universities it is attached to, Paris 1 and Paris 4, as well as the ANR funding scheme Utopies 19 (led by Ludovic Frobert) and the Institut universitaire de France. It was organised with scientific support from the Société d’histoire de la révolution de 1848 et des révolutions du XIX<sup>e</sup> (chair: Sylvie Aprile) and the International Institute of Social History (research director: Marcel van der Linden) and the Society for the Study of Labour History (president: Keith Laybourn).

Several people also played an instrumental role. The authors benefited from Michel Cordillot’s immense culture on the topic, both for the organisation of the conference and the publication of proceedings. Detlev Mares and Gregory Claeys reread some texts. Several authors gave valuable advice on the introduction, in particular Michel Cordillot, Marianne Enckell, François Jarrige, Detlev Mares, Jürgen Schmidt and Marc Vuilleumier. The translators, Constance Bantman, Angèle David-Guillou and Thierry Labica, were the indispensable intermediaries, without whom nothing can be done. Katrina Ann Brannon and Callie Wilkinson helped with the editing. Sophie Lhermitte-Blondy did most of the indexing. May all be thanked here.

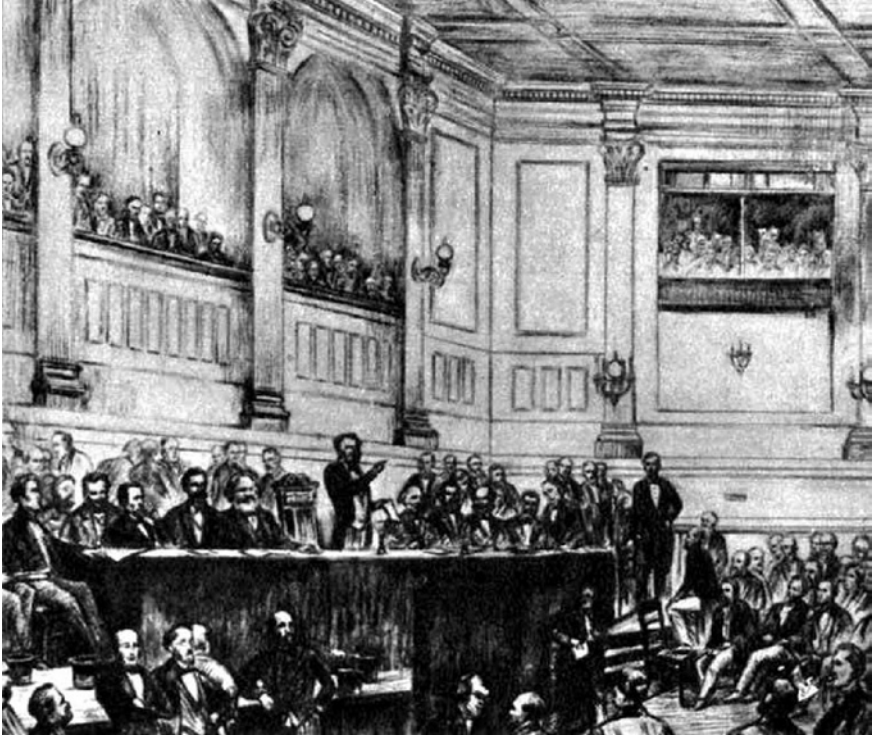


FIGURE 1.1 *Foundation meeting of the IWMA. St Martin's Hall, London, 28 September 1864.*  
PRIVATE COLLECTION.

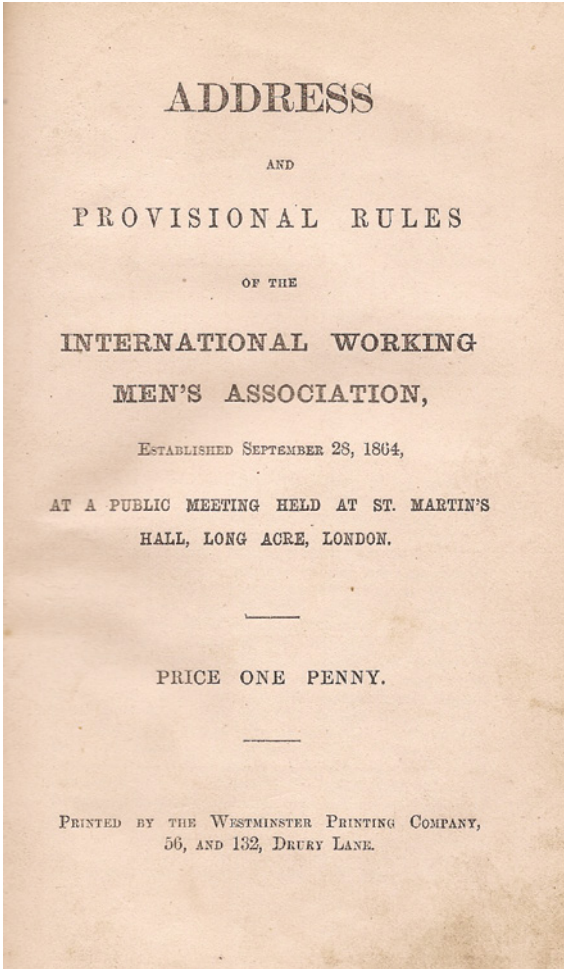


FIGURE 1.2 *Address and Provisional Rules of the IWMA, 28 September 1864 (front page).* Address and Provisional Rules of the IWMA, Westminster Printing Company, London, 1864. PRIVATE COLLECTION OF MICHEL CORDILLOT.



FIGURE 1.3 *Delegates to the Geneva Conference 1866.*





**PART 1**

*Organisation and Debates*





## The IWMA and Its Precursors in London, c. 1830–1860

*Fabrice Bensimon*

The discussion of the origins of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) is as old as the Association itself. Right from its beginnings, the founding members defined what they saw as its origins. Since then, and in particular with the development of a scientific study of the IWMA in the twentieth century, several questions have been raised. The first is the militant origins in the various steps to the founding of the association on 28 September 1864. Who were these activists? Did the scheme of an international association of workers originate long before, or just recently? Was it a linear or rather a protracted progress? What were the meanings that were given to “internationalism”? Another question relates to the longer-term assessment of the growth of working-class internationalism: did it exist, and if it did, according to what patterns did it develop? A possible third question is the study of its fortune: why was the IWMA so different from previous attempts?

Two broad approaches have been used. The “internal” one, best exemplified by the work of Arthur Lehning, has been the minute research on individuals, on the small groups of refugees, trade unionists and political activists whose ideas and commitments led to the creation of the IWMA.<sup>1</sup> A more “external” approach has consisted in addressing the issue of why *this* association in particular was so successful, while others had failed before: were economic circumstances different? Had labour markets changed? Had working-class practices been transformed in Britain *and* on the continent? And so on. In a paper given at the 1985 conference in Amsterdam for the 50th anniversary of the International Institute of Social history (IISH), Marcel van der Linden thus offered a “structural” interpretation for the rise and fall of the IWMA.<sup>2</sup> “Whereas

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\* This paper has benefited from the readings and advice of Michel Cordillot, Quentin Deluermoz, Jürgen Herres, Detlev Mares, Jeanne Moisand and Iorwerth Prothero, who are warmly thanked here.

1 Arthur Lehning, *From Buonarrotti to Bakunin. Studies in International Socialism* (Leiden, 1970).

2 Marcel van der Linden, “The rise and fall of the First International: an Interpretation”, in Frits Van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour movement, 1830–1940*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1988), 1, pp. 323–335.

hitherto the rise and fall of this organization was usually and to a large extent accounted for in terms of contingent factors, and ‘voluntarist’ choices made by its leaders”, he wished “to stress the more or less anonymous forces that played a role in this process.”<sup>3</sup> Namely, in the economic sphere, the dramatic growth of industrial output and of world trade; the formation of nation-states; and the making of national organizations, trade unions in particular.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and combining the two helps shed light on a number of issues. While other contributions insist on the context of the making of the IWMA and on the reasons for its relative success, this paper focuses on its *internal* pre-history. In particular it tries to address the protracted question of what defined internationalism, and in particular what made it different from cosmopolitanism and from the international solidarity, e.g. with Poland, which existed before. The reference to London does not imply that there were no origins of the IWMA elsewhere – had it come solely from London, the IWMA would not have proved as influential among workers internationally. This simply means that the focus is London and Britain, which happened to be the birthplace of the IWMA, though its parent organisations came from various places. It seems that the amount of novel work concerning the late 1850s has been rather limited since Lehning’s 1938 text. This will be rather briefly discussed after a longer and more detailed analysis of the pre-1848 period and the Fraternal Democrats in particular.

### Exiles, Migrants and Internationalism in London before 1848

Why did London play a key part in the origins and the making of the IWMA? Above all, because it was the capital of political exile. If we compare the state of research today with 1964, we can say that on this point several significant works have supplemented our knowledge. Bernard Porter has studied how London became, especially after 1848, the main centre for political asylum in the world.<sup>4</sup> Although Britain did nothing to smoothe the exile of republicans and socialists, it was a liberal country, where many people felt attached to this policy of hosting the victims of foreign tyrannies – at a time when British radicals were proud of the liberties granted by the constitution of their country. It was also a powerful state, which made it easier than for countries such as Belgium or Switzerland to resist the pressure of France, Austria, Prussia or whatever regime was unhappy with the activities of its unruly subjects on British soil. Our knowledge of the lives of the refugees has now much improved.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in mid-Victorian Politics* (Cambridge, 1979).

Several monographs and edited volumes have tackled the social history of groups of exiles, in particular Sylvie Aprile and Thomas C. Jones on the French, Rosemary Ashton and Christine Lattek on the Germans, Juan Luis Simal on the Spanish and Maurizio Isabella on Italians.<sup>5</sup> Miles Taylor and Margot Finn have referred to the interactions between various refugees and groups and former Chartists, and they have shown how the latter's presence contributed to redefine British radicalism. These works document the rich associational life of exiles, including their lesser known members, as well as the interactions between the members of various groups. The bulk of this research focuses on the post-1848 era, when thousands went to Britain following the 1848–1849 revolutions. But from the 1820s, Germans, Italians, Spanish, Frenchmen or Poles found refuge in Switzerland, Belgium, France and above all Britain.<sup>6</sup>

Another dimension was the circulation of ideas. Early socialist thinkers, like Charles Fourier, Saint-Simon, Robert Owen and later Étienne Cabet conceived systems that relied on universal brotherhood. Gregory Claeys has argued that Owenism played a significant part in the genesis of internationalism, in particular in the 1840s with the Owenite Association of All Classes of All Nations (founded in 1835), which had branches in the United States and correspondence with France, Belgium and Germany.<sup>7</sup> Under the incentive of some of their followers, several texts were translated which facilitated the diffusion of radical and socialist thought, e.g. Bronterre O'Brien's translation of Buonarroti's *History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (1828) in 1836.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Sylvie Aprile, *Le Siècle des Exilés. Bannis et proscrits de 1789 à la Commune* (Paris, 2010); Thomas C. Jones, "French republican exiles in Britain, 1848–1870" (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2010); Thomas C. Jones and Robert Tombs, "The French left in exile: *quarante-huitards* and *communards* in London, 1848–80", in Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick (eds), *A History of the French in London: liberty, equality, opportunity* (London, 2013), pp. 165–191; Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: exile and asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1986); Juan Luis Simal, *Emigrados. España y el exilio internacional, 1814–1834* (Madrid, 2012); Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (London, 2005); Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions, Refugees in Mid-Victorian England* (New York, 2003).

6 Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question*; Delphine Diaz, *Un asile pour tous les peuples ? Exilés et réfugiés étrangers dans la France du premier XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2014).

7 Gregory Claeys, "Reciprocal dependence, virtue and progress: some sources of early socialist cosmopolitanism and internationalism in Britain, 1750–1850", in Frits Van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour movement, 1830–1940*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1988), 1, pp. 235–258.

8 Filippo Michele Buonarroti, *Bonarroti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality; with the author's reflections on the causes and character of the French Revolution*. Translated by Bronterre [James Bronterre O'Brien] (London, 1836).

Lehning identified the 1830s as a primary period of intercourse, when some working-class newspapers started reporting on foreign labour movements, e.g. *L'Écho de la fabrique* in Lyon (1831–1834), *The Poor Man's Guardian* in London (1831–1835). In 1836 William Lovett's "London Working Men's Association" drafted an *Address to the Belgian Working Classes* which may have been the first written statement of working-class internationalism, starting: "*Fellow Producers of Wealth* –, We are of opinion that those who produce the real wealth of any country (by which terms we mean the food, clothing, habitations, and all the great essentials of human happiness) have in reality but *one great interest*".<sup>9</sup> Similar addresses sent in the following years to the "workers" of various nations testified not only to the concern of setting up connections between organizations, but also to existing contacts. Following the repression of the 1830–1 Polish uprising, the Polish cause had featured prominently in the manifestations of international solidarity. Hundreds of Poles had emigrated to Britain – by 1845, there were some 500 of them on British soil.<sup>10</sup> Many belonged to the small landowning nobility. But others were democrats; and Poland became the most important *cause célèbre* in radical circles in Britain, as well as France.<sup>11</sup> The British public was outraged by the reported brutality of the Russians against the Poles, against Polish women in particular.<sup>12</sup>

The 1840s may nevertheless be considered a turning point. *L'Atelier* (1840–50), Cabet's *Populaire* (1841–51) and the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (1844) in Paris, the *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842–43) in Köln, the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* (1830–46 and 1848–51) in Zürich, the Owenite *The New Moral World* in London and Leeds (1834–45), George Jacob Holyoake's *Movement* in London (1843–45), and the Chartist *Northern Star* in Leeds and London (1837–52) all reported on foreign labour movements. These newspapers can help us assess the larger impact of movements which have often been only thought of as national; for example *L'Atelier* and *Le Populaire* did not just deal with Chartism: they celebrated it and tried to find inspiration in it. In France, by 1843, feminist thinker Flora Tristan (1803–44) was trying to set up the Union ouvrière, which she wanted to be an international organization. In London, numbers

9 *The Working Men's Association of London to the Working Classes of Belgium* (London, 1836). This was published in *The Constitutional* (London, 12th November 1836), and is reproduced in appendix in Lehning, *From Buonarrotti to Bakunin*, pp. 210–214.

10 Krzysztof Marchlewicz, "Continuities and Innovations: Polish Emigration after 1849", in Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions*, p. 105.

11 Henry Weisser, "Polonophilism and the British Working Class, 1830 to 1845", *The Polish Review* (1967), 2, pp. 78–96; Henry Weisser, "The British Working Class and the Cracow Uprising of 1846", *The Polish Review* (1968), 1, pp. 3–19.

12 E.g.: *Northern Star* (15 June 1844), p. 6.

of refugees and migrants had swollen. Contacts between radicals, republicans and socialists multiplied and led to the creation of organizations of exiles which, in turn, led to the creation of the Fraternal Democrats (FD, 1845–8), presumably the first international organization.<sup>13</sup>

The German Democratic Society, the London Chartists and, to a lesser degree, French and Polish refugees, were instrumental in the founding of the FD. A small group of French neo-Babouvists, the Société démocratique française (SDF, 1835?–48), had met in London. Camille Berrier-Fontaine (1804–82), a former secretary of the Central committee of the republican “Société des Droits de l’homme” and a friend of Cabet, led the SDF in 1840–5, before being succeeded in 1845–8 by Jean Juin (b. 1797), alias Jean Michelot, who informed the French police.<sup>14</sup> This group met in the Red Lion, a pub in Great Windmill Street, in Soho which was the district where many exiles lived. From 1840, the Red Lion also became the meeting place of the better-known “Deutscher Bildungsverein für Arbeiter”, which became famous as the Communisticher Arbeiter-Bildungsverein (CABV) or Communist Workers’ Educational Society (1840–1919).<sup>15</sup> This was primarily composed of German artisans in London and was led by Joseph Moll, Heinrich Bauer and above all Karl Schapper. Several of its leaders had been involved in the 12 May 1839 rising in Paris, led by Auguste Blanqui, Armand Barbès and Martin Bernard, and were therefore acquainted with French exiles.

In 1844, Owenite and “Moral force” Chartist William Lovett had founded the “Democratic Friends of all Nations” with continental refugees like Schapper, Ludwik Oborski (1787–1873) and Berrier-Fontaine as members. Lovett rejected the class struggle and his scheme was more of a humanist internationalism. Little is known about this group, apart from the fact that Lovett soon resigned from it, that it was short-lived and that only two documents it penned have survived.<sup>16</sup>

13 Henry Weisser, *British working-class movements and Europe. 1815–1848* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 134–171; Salvo Mastellone, “« Northern Star », Fraternal Democrats e *Manifest der Kommunistische Partei*”, *Il pensiero politico*, 37, 1 (2004), pp. 32–59; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), Ch. 9.

14 François Fourn, *Etienne Cabet, ou le temps de l’utopie* (Paris, 2014).

15 Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, p. 25.

16 Christine Lattek, “The beginnings of socialist internationalism in the 1840s: the ‘Democratic Friends of all Nations’ in London”, in Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour movement*, 1, pp. 259–282. Lattek noted (p. 260) that these two documents were: “The Democratic Friends of All Nations, Meeting at No. 20 Great Windmill Street Haymarket; On the first Wednesday of every month at 8 o’clock in the evening”, signed by Carl Schapper (19 October 1844) and printed in the *New Moral World* (2 November 1844); and the eight-page pamphlet, “*All Men are Brethren*”. *An Address to the*



Christine Lattek has described it as a “bridge and a transition between earlier forms of republican and democratic cosmopolitanism and later socialist internationalism”.<sup>17</sup> But its impact was far more limited than the FD. By 1845, while the SDF was probably declining, the CABV was soaring. Thanks to the economic migration of “tramping artisans”, even more than political exile, it went from about 30 members to some 300 early in 1847, “with another 160 in a branch founded in Whitechapel in July 1846, and eventually reached a strength of 700” before 1848.<sup>18</sup> It included members from various countries where German was partly spoken: Swiss, Dutch, Scandinavians, Czechs and Hungarians.<sup>19</sup>

The creation of the FD resulted from contacts between these organisations and British Chartists, especially two leaders with “internationalist” beliefs: Ernest Jones, who had grown up in Germany and had a great knowledge of continental affairs, and above all George Julian Harney (see figure 2.2). Born in 1817 into poverty, Harney had been educated in what he described as the “radical school of the thirties”.<sup>20</sup> A Chartist since the birth of the movement, he had become a full-time organiser and the sub-editor of its main paper, the *Northern Star*. When the *Star* moved to London in November 1844, it settled in Great Windmill Street and the favourite pub of the board was the Red Lion.

Although the FD were probably created in 1844 and then held a meeting against the Russian Czar visiting Britain, their official birth dates from 22 September 1845, with the meeting of reportedly “more than one thousand” that was held to commemorate the establishment of the first French Republic, with some British, German, French, Italian, Polish and Swiss members.<sup>21</sup> Toasts were taken to Young Europe, to Thomas Paine, to the “fallen Democrats of all countries” and to those of England, Scotland and Ireland, to transported Chartists; democratic songs in all languages were sung. The meeting brought

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*Friends of Humanity and Justice among all Nations, by the Democratic Friends of all Nations* (London, 1845). Parts of this were quoted in William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London, 1967), pp. 256–257.

17 Christine Lattek, “The beginnings of socialist internationalism in the 1840s”, p. 282.

18 Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary refugees*, p. 32.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

20 David Goodway, “Harney, (George) Julian (1817–1897)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); A.R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge; a Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958).

21 See extensive report on the meeting by Engels, *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform* (1846), reproduced in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (London, 1975), 5, pp. 3–14; *The Northern Star*, 411 (27 September 1845). See also: Salvo Mastellone, « ‘Northern Star’, Fraternal Democrats e *Manifest der Kommunistische Partei* ».

home the idea that a fraternization of the nations was only possible through a union of the workingmen, the proletarians alone being capable of fraternization. From then on, several meetings of the FD gathered hundreds to celebrate French revolutionary events or the German Hambach Festival late in May.

This leads us to the nature of the “internationalism” of the FD. Where did it come from? And what did it mean? This idea of a workingmen’s union did not come from the French: like most French republicans, the SDF considered their republic *the* model, although it largely debated Chartism and what could be learnt for a possible uprising in Paris, and also advocated a “universal brotherhood of the people” of France and Great Britain.<sup>22</sup> In Britain, most radicals and Chartists, e.g. Feargus O’Connor, were long convinced that freedom was a preserve of the English constitution. Among Italians or Poles, national sentiment often predominated. Two more reliable sources for the internationalism of the FD are the Germans and Harney. Harney reported on and debated foreign affairs, denounced British colonial enterprises and advocated the unity of workers across Europe – he was the inspiration and the driving energy of the FD. The CABV was dedicated to seemingly innocuous education purposes, but was in fact subordinated to the secret League of the Just, led by Schapper and by Weitling, and which supervised its “functions and public proclamations” and “used it for agitation, discussion and recruitment”.<sup>23</sup> In June 1847, the League became the “League of the Communists”. Late in November 1847, Marx and Engels attended the second Congress of the Communist League (29 Nov.–8 Dec.), held in the Red Lion, which famously directed them to write a statement, which became the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, published in February 1848 with its famous conclusive call: “Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!” This evolution in the meaning of internationalism, from a form of universal brotherhood, to a working-class war cry, was replicated once more in the IWMA.

Having an international organization, i.e. including people from different countries, did not equate with internationalism.<sup>24</sup> For the FD as for many other

22 See the address to the 1839 Chartist Convention with an internationalist message in the mode of the Thomas Paine: “Democrats of Great Britain! Our two countries were many years rivals ... We desire with all our hearts, the intimate union of the nations – the most civilised in the world – the result of which would be liberty. We wish for the universal brotherhood of the people”. *The Charter* (28 July 1839), p. 428, quoted in Henry Weisser, *British working-Class Movements and Europe* (Manchester, 1975), p. 86.

23 Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, p. 26.

24 *Address of the Fraternal Democrats assembling in London to the working classes of Great Britain and the United States* (4 July 1846); *The Democratic committee for Poland’s regeneration, to the People of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 7 December 1846); *The Fraternal*

radicals, the Polish cause was an essential one and they supported the Polish insurrection in 1846. Of course, supporting foreign causes was not synonymous with internationalism either. But the FD also opposed the possibility of war between Britain and the USA on the Oregon question in 1846 – “No vote! No musket!” they claimed. They advocated the gathering of a Congress of Nations to settle international disputes.<sup>25</sup> And in January 1848, when there was an invasion scare in Britain, they denounced it, opposing the idea of wars, and adding: “While denouncing international wars, we do not share the sentiments of those who consider all war unjustifiable. We, on the contrary, assert that as long as tyranny reigns there can nor should be peace between the oppressed and the oppressors.”<sup>26</sup> This advocacy of “physical force” as well as class struggle meant that the “moral force” Chartists did not join and founded instead in 1847 a “People’s International League” which advocated internationalism along Mazzinian lines. In September 1847, the FD issued a manifesto which asserted democratic as well as internationalist principles:

We condemn the “national” hatreds which have hitherto divided mankind, as both foolish and wicked. [...] Convinced, too, that national prejudices have been, in all ages, taken advantage of by the 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, or to whom applied. Our moral creed is to receive our fellow men, without regard to “country”, as members of one family, the human race.<sup>27</sup>

This support for harmony and peace between states and an end to war prevailed as well among some free-traders, e.g. Richard Cobden, Frédéric Bastiat or Arlès-Dufour. But Harney and most FD members went further, with this emphasis on the common interests and the fraternization of workers regardless

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*Democrats (assembling in London) to the Democracy of Europe* (7 December 1846); *Address of the Fraternal Democrats assembling in London, to the members of the National Diet of Switzerland* (13 December 1847); *Principles and rules of the Society of Fraternal Democrats*, n.d.

25 *Address to the Working Classes of Great Britain and the United States on the Oregon Question*, printed in *Northern Star*, 7 March 1846; *Address of the Fraternal Democrats assembling in London to the working classes of Great Britain and the United States*, 4 July 1846. These tracts are also in the British Library, 1852.e.4.

26 “The Fraternal Democrats assembling in London to the proletarians of France”, *Northern Star* (5 February 1848), p. 8.

27 *Principles and rules of the Society of Fraternal Democrats* (London, 13 December 1847).

of nationality, fighting together against their rulers: “The cause of the people in all countries is the same – the cause of labour, enslaved and plundered labour”.<sup>28</sup> Harney was coming close to the formulation of Marx and Engels and the League of the Communists. Thus, it can be argued that on the eve of the 1848 revolutions, Harney and the FD had moved to positions close to the “worker’s internationalism” that could be found in the *Communist Manifesto*, which was drafted late in 1847 and early in 1848. After 1848, Harney would advocate for “The Charter and something more”, i.e. rely on continental socialism so as to complement the Chartist agenda. In 1850, his paper *The Red Republican* would publish the first English translation of the Marx and Engels’s *Manifesto*.

The FD had branches outside London – about 20 –, as can be understood from the reading of the *Northern Star*. By December 1847, they had a set of rules, membership cards, and conditions for membership (see figure 2.1). They were able to gather thousands, e.g. on the Polish question on 25 March 1846 when, as a police report to Guizot informs us, among the workers attending: “2,000 stayed until the end, and another thousand was renewed at least four times from eight o’clock to midnight”.<sup>29</sup> They were not an international working-class organization proper: their membership was cosmopolitan, but mostly in Britain. But their formal structure with an international committee including representatives of affiliated national sections, was both new and something the IWMA reproduced.

Some continental newspapers such as *La Réforme*, *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur Gesellschaftlichen Reform* or *Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung* in Brussels reported on their meetings. Since 1846, Marx had a scheme of establishing an international correspondence committee to keep the socialists in France, Britain and Germany aware of their respective ideas. Late in 1847, Harney, alongside Marx and Engels, who were now in Brussels, tried to set up an international organisation. This decision was, in a way, a response to the Free Trade Congress held in Brussels in September 1847.<sup>30</sup> The FD had contacts in France and Belgium, but this was short-lived: the French and the Germans who had been involved returned home to take part in the 1848 revolutions. The FD did not disband immediately. They elected a delegation of three (Jones, Harney and Philip McGrath) who

28 *Northern Star* (14 February 1846).

29 « ...2000 restent jusqu’à la fin, l’autre mille se renouvelle au moins quatre fois de 8 heures à minuit... ». Rapport transmis par le préfet de police à Guizot (26 mars 1846), Archives nationales, Fonds Guizot, 42 AP/57.

30 See [Friedrich Engels], “The Free Trade Congress at Brussels”, *The Northern Star* (9 October 1847) with an editorial note: “From Our German Correspondent”. Reproduced: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/09/30.htm>.

went to Paris with Schapper, Moll and Bauer to hail the February revolution and congratulate the Provisional Government. They suffered not just from the departure of many of their foreign members, but also from the general decline of Chartism following 1848. In April 1848, in the context of the continental revolutions and of a revival both of Chartism and of Irish agitation for repeal, the government accused foreign agitators and Parliament passed an Alien Act, which led to the FD only having British members. Although they survived until 1854, they never truly recovered from 1848.

### **From the Flotsam of Revolutions to a Working-Class Upturn (1848–1860)**

However, the flotsam of the 1848 revolutions was followed by a new influx of refugees in London. By 1852, there were possibly 4,500 French refugees in London – and still 1,000 in 1853 – as well as 1,300 Germans and 2,500 Poles and Hungarians.<sup>31</sup> While refugees were under the surveillance of the authorities, they could generally keep on meeting and editing newspapers. A fraction of the British population was very attached to this right to asylum; this was obvious on several occasions, including the mobilization against the eviction of Simon Bernard, in 1858, following the Orsini bombing against Napoleon III. While the “forty-eighters” were bitterly divided, they wrote to and read one another. Moreover they were able to assemble in various opportunities that the radical social life of London in the 1850s offered: clubs, banquets, public meetings, “soirées” as well as funerals.<sup>32</sup>

As André Combes and Boris Nicolaevsky have argued, there was also among the freemasons a sociability of exiles which transcended their political cleavages.<sup>33</sup> Combes noted that Talandier and other members of the “Commune révolutionnaire” belonged to the lodge of the “Philadelphes”, in London, which blossomed and, following the paths of exile, tried to set up freemason’s

31 Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question*, p. 16.

32 See Iorwerth Prothero, “Chartists and Political Refugees”, in Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from European Revolutions*, pp. 209–233; Sylvie Aprile, *Les Siècle des exilés*.

33 André Combes, « Des Origines du Rite de Memphis à la Grande Loge des Philadelphes, 1838–1870 (d’un Rite ‘mystique’ à une Obédience révolutionnaire) », *Chroniques d’Histoire maçonnique*, 34 (1985), pp. 39–62; Boris I. Nicolaevsky, “Secret Societies and the First International”, in Milorad Drachkovitch (ed.), *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864–1943* (Stanford, 1966), p. 36 ff.

lodges abroad, in Brussels, New York (Pelletier and Berjeau), Geneva and even Ballarat (Jean-Marie Ballaguy), in Australia.<sup>34</sup> Claude Pelletier, the founder of the lodge in New York, was also one of the founders of the International Association in the US. Victor Le Lubez, a future member of the General Council of the IWMA, was also a freemason. So was Auguste Séraillier (b. 1840), who was later trusted by Marx as his man in Paris during the siege of Paris and the Commune. Séraillier had married Eugénie “Jenny” Berjeau (b. 1842), the daughter of another exile, Jean Berjeau, a freemason who was one of the main organisers of the « Société fraternelle des démocrates-socialistes », which was founded in 1850 and was most likely of masonic origin.<sup>35</sup> But these meetings were inherently secret, and it is unlikely that much else will be known about them in the future.

The International Committee (IC, 1854–6) and the International Association (IA, 1856–9) were typical examples of this associational life among radicals in London. Founded by Chartists to welcome Armand Barbès who had been pardoned by Napoleon III, a committee was extended to protest against the Emperor’s visit to Britain. The “welcome and protest committee” created in the autumn of 1854 transformed into an “International Committee” in February 1855. It was headed by British Chartists, German and French refugees, one Spanish representative and announced the joining of Poles and Italians.<sup>36</sup> The IA was founded on 10 August 1856 at the John Street Institution. It was dedicated to “social revolution” and the “emancipation of the proletariat” and even denounced “fraternity” as a “silly illusion where society is founded on classes and castes”.<sup>37</sup> It opposed Mazzini and any union of the classes in support of democracy and national independence. It gathered four national groups: the French group of exiles named the “Commune révolutionnaire”, who, around Félix Pyat and Alfred Talandier, objected to Ledru-Rollin and Louis Blanc, whom they saw as partly responsible for the defeat of the 1848 revolution; the German CABV with Karl Schapper; the waning Chartists under the leadership of Ernest Jones; and the Polish Socialists (Gromada Rewolucyjna Polska) with Oborski, a former leader of the military branch of the patriotic society in

34 See Combes, « Des Origines du Rite de Memphis à la Grande Loge des Philadelphes », pp. 50–51.

35 I owe this information to Michel Cordillot.

36 *People’s Paper* (21 October 1854, 20 January 1844), quoted in Margot Finn, *After Chartism*, p. 136.

37 *To the Republicans, Democrats and Socialists of Europe* (London, 1858).

Warsaw and who had already been a member of the FD.<sup>38</sup> On both the IC and the IA, we don't know much more than what was already in Lehning's detailed 1938 piece.<sup>39</sup> The main activities of these associations were the celebrations of the traditional calendar of radical anniversaries: the first French Republic, the Polish rising in 1830, the days of February and June 1848.<sup>40</sup> The IA declared that both men and women were entitled to equal rights and its membership was open to women, which was quite unique by the late 1850s. French socialist and feminist refugee Jeanne Deroin was invited to address the Association and argued that a democrat could not object to equality between men and women.<sup>41</sup> Although they did not always agree, participants insisted not only on brotherhood among the people, but also on the "tyranny of capital." The IA had a "Central Council" – something the IWMA would reproduce – and it published a bulletin before it faded in 1859. The number of 1848 exiles diminished in Britain, in particular among the French following the 16 August 1859 amnesty. The last convention of the National Charter Association had met in 1858 and several leaders were moving towards liberalism, e.g. Ernest Jones himself. In 1861, with the Prussian amnesty, some German refugees also were repatriated.<sup>42</sup> As Michel Cordillot has shown, the IA also managed to take root in the US up until the time of the Civil War, among German and French exiles; it had branches in New York, Boston, Cincinnati and Chicago.<sup>43</sup>

Lehning wrote that the IA might be regarded as "the first international organization of a proletarian and socialist character, and forms the last and most important link in the series of international manifestations during the three decades prior to the foundation of the First International".<sup>44</sup> This should probably be nuanced as there were disagreements in its ranks, including on the socialist agenda. Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky offered a slightly different assessment. "The influence of the Association remained small and it died almost unnoticed in 1859", they wrote – "rather a herald of the future than

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38 B. Cygler, *Pulkownik Ludwik Oborski. Szermierz wolności 1789–1873* [Colonel Ludwik Oborski – An Advocate of Freedom] (Gdansk, 1976).

39 Reproduced in Lehning, *op. cit.*

40 Margot Finn, *After Chartism* p. 137.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

43 Michel Cordillot, *Utopistes et exilés du Nouveau Monde. Des Français aux États-Unis de 1848 à la Commune* (Paris, 2013), pp. 171–187.

44 Lehning, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

a thing of actual flesh and blood".<sup>45</sup> Its influence was definitely very limited beyond its own ranks, but it was important among exiles. In the USA, for instance, all the leaders of the IA were later those of the IWMA branch.

The link between the refugee culture and the IWMA was obvious in the interest in foreign affairs: Italian unification, the abolition of serfdom in Russia, the American civil war were issues which raised the interest or resulted in the mobilization among large sectors of the working class. The issue of Poland continued to remain important, as exemplified by the 22 July 1863 meeting when five French delegates – including Tolain –, all future founders of the IWMA in France, came to take part in a meeting of support in London. The 1863 Polish uprising led to the creation of the National League for Polish Independence, which demanded Franco-British intervention in support of the Poles. This support of foreign movements of liberation was not necessarily in support of peace, as many wanted intervention against reactionary forces. Another example was in April 1864, when tens of thousands of Londoners hurried to greet Garibaldi when he briefly visited Britain, and another committee in Paris also sent a delegation to London.

More "external" factors led to the success of the association which was founded on 28 September 1864. Following the improvements in transport, the rise in migration flows, and the gradual development of a European labour market, the recruitment of workers abroad to break strikes became more common in the 1850s. Attempts to prevent this had existed since the strikes of the tin-plate workers in Wolverhampton in 1851 and Birmingham in 1853.<sup>46</sup> In 1860, Parisian workers contributed to the strike of the London builders; in 1861, the same went for bronze workers and others. The 1862 meeting between French workers visiting the Exhibition in London and British trade-unionists took place against this background, when activists felt the need for more international solidarity. This could also be seen in the address *To the workmen of France from the working men of England* published in the *Beehive* of 5th December 1863. However, as Marcel van der Linden has pointed out, this was a typically British

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45 Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (London, 1965), p. 12. On the relationship between Marx and London radicalism, also see: Keith Robinson, "Karl Marx, the IWMA, and London Radicalism, 1864–1872" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1976).

46 Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical artisans in England and France, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 116.



text.<sup>47</sup> In France, the workers' population included more independent artisans and far fewer industrial wage-earners than in Britain – and Tolain's response insisted on the subversion of the artisan by big business rather than solidarity in strike action.

To come back to the initial point of origins and precursors, this paper has argued that we should not neglect the part played by militant groups and by individuals, i.e. assume that the IWMA *was bound* to be created because of the development of trade unions in Britain, because of the mid-Victorian boom of the 1850s and 1860s, because the grip of repression under Napoleon III was getting less tight or because of the international exhibitions. The distinction between “external” and “internal” causes should be made with caution. As we have seen, exiles interacted with British radicals. British radicals interacted with unionists and workers all over the country. On occasions, exiles could even be involved in workers' struggles, as was for example the case of Friedrich Lessner, who played a leading part in a tailors' strike in 1866.<sup>48</sup> Social, cultural and political factors combined in the process. Both refugees and militant workers were able to break new ground: they transformed the experience of workingmen's struggles into a new type of organization, and they related abstract internationalist beliefs to real movements into an influential structure. The legacy of the FD and the IA played a critical part. In fact, the legacy of the IA did not reside so much in its influence among the working class. In many respects, it was probably less influential than the FD had been. What these various groupings (FD, IC, IA) bequeathed to the IWMA can be summarized in a few words.

Many of those who played an important part in its construction were younger or had a different story: George Potter (b. 1832), William Randal Cremer (b. 1828), Henri Tolain (b. 1828), Eugène Varlin (b. 1839), Benoît Malon (b. 1841), César de Paepe (b. 1841) and James Guillaume (b. 1844) are just some examples. At the same time, some early internationalists had died, such as Joseph Moll. Others had emigrated like Julian Harney or Heinrich Bauer; and some exiles also refused to join, e.g. Mazzini, Louis Blanc or Babouvist worker Joseph Benoit, as they still believed social classes should unite and therefore opposed the class content of the grouping which was clear from the beginning. But the link between the period of the 1840s and the 1850s and the IWMA was made by

47 Marcel Van der Linden, “The rise and fall of the First International: an Interpretation”, p. 331.

48 Lessner, *Sixty Years in the social democratic movement. Before 1848 and After. Recollections of an Old Communist* (London, 1907), p. 35.

other exiles and early internationalists, e.g. Alfred Talandier (1822–1890), Victor Le Lubez (1824–1896), who asked Marx whether he could find a “German workman” for the 28 September 1864 meeting, which took place in the same hall where the International Association had been founded nine years earlier;<sup>49</sup> Johann Georg Eccarius (1818–99), who was the “German workman” Marx found, and who had lived in London since 1851, and of course Marx himself; tailor Friedrich Lessner (1825–1910), who had been a member of the CABV and the League of the Just since he first came to London in 1847 and was a member of the General Council of the IWMA;<sup>50</sup> Friedrich Sorge, who had been a German member of the IA in the US; former Chartists like Alfred Walton (1816–83),<sup>51</sup> George Odger (1813–77) or George Howell (1833–1910); former Owenites like John Weston; former FD like Karl Schapper and Ludwik Oborski; former leading members of the IC G.E. Harris and J.B. Leno, etc.

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The continuities, in men, ideas, places and practices were thus essential in the making of the IWMA. However, the IWMA was different from both the FD and the IA, and neither of these groups stood at its direct origin. These international organizations were the examples of a certain globalization of working-class radicalism, a political globalization “from below”, which was made despite, or even against governments as well as the social and cultural elite. Until the 1850s, these organizations still relied on the practicalities of the cultural globalization which was at work among liberal elites and literary milieus: contacts in exile, correspondence networks; newspapers; the translation of articles or books. When it was founded, the IWMA still relied on these practicalities. But unlike the FD or the IA, it did not limit its activities to propaganda or education. It was framed in a different period of time, when migration flows and the hiring of foreign labour posed new problems, when workers’ trade unions, struggles strikes in particular, multiplied in Britain, France, Belgium or Switzerland. This working-class upturn was central in convincing Marx, who had refused to be involved in the gatherings

49 Letter of Marx to Engels (4 November 1864).

50 Frederick Lessner, *Sixty Years*.

51 Detlev Mares, “A Radical in Wales. Alfred A. Walton and Mid-Victorian Welsh Popular Radicalism”, *Welsh History Review*, 21 (2002), pp. 271–291.

of the 1850s, to throw himself headlong into the new association.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, with the membership of unions and branches across Europe, the IWMA was soon not just cosmopolitan but truly international, something its predecessors had never managed.

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52 “I knew that on both the London and the Paris sides real ‘powers’ were involved this time, and so I decided to waive my customary standing rule to decline any such invitations”, Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels (4 November 1864).



FIGURE 2.1 Membership card of the Fraternal Democrats.  
PRIVATE COLLECTION.



FIGURE 2.2 *George Julian Harney (1817–1897) was the founder of the Fraternal Democrats.*  
PRIVATE COLLECTION.

## Little Local Difficulties?

### *The General Council of the IWMA as an Arena for British Radical Politics*

Detlev Mares

On 11 December 1869, the Swiss Internationalist journal *L'Égalité* leveled grave charges against the General Council of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA): "Even if the Council in London administers the particular affairs of Great Britain perfectly [...], it certainly neglects issues that are of extreme importance from a general perspective of the International."<sup>1</sup> The anonymous author of the article took particular exception to the General Council's recent statements on the Fenian question, which concerned the amnesty for Irish revolutionaries in British gaols and at the time was hotly debated in British radical circles.<sup>2</sup> For the author of *L'Égalité*, the issue of Irish independence only was a "local political movement" with no general relevance to the universal aspirations of the International. Since the General Council seemed to have slipped into the role of a "regional council of the English sections of the International", the solution of the problem seemed obvious: liberating the General Council from its involvement in British affairs by creating a separate Federal Council for the International's affairs in the British isles.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 This quote and the following references to *L'Égalité* are taken from: [Paul Robin], *Réflexions, L'Égalité*, No. 47, 11 December 1869, p. 1 (my own translations). Important sections of this article are quoted in Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA<sup>2</sup>), vol. I/21, pp. 1481 and 1484. The original excerpts read: "Si le Conseil siégeant à Londres administre parfaitement les affaires particulières de la Grande Bretagne [...], il est certain qu'il néglige des choses extrêmement importantes au point de vue général de l'Internationale." The further terms quoted in the paragraph are "mouvement politique local" and "Conseil régional des sections anglaises de l'Internationale". For the origin of the article see Robert Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy, We Invoke It. The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland, Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 125–127.
  - 2 The Fenian Brotherhood had been founded in 1858 by American-Irish advocates of Irish independence as a secret organization whose fight against British rule culminated in an attempted uprising in 1867, see Patrick Quinlivan, Paul Rose, *The Fenians in England 1865–1872. A Sense of Insecurity* (London, 1982); John Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 1994). For the Fenian uprising of 1867 and ensuing debates also see below, Section 1 of this chapter.
  - 3 In accordance with contemporary usage, the terms "English Federal Council" and "British Federal Council" are used interchangeably in the following pages. In the period under

The Swiss Internationalists had a point – the organizational structure of the IWMA in Great Britain was an exception to its general design. When the association was founded in 1864, the General Council was established in London as “an international agency between the different co-operating associations”.<sup>4</sup> It was meant to act as a centre of administration and communication, entitled to initiate discussions across the association and to take practical steps when labour disputes or political crises arose. The General Council was supposed to coordinate the work of the national bodies which were established in most countries with connections to the International. Only the British situation was different; a separate national branch was considered unnecessary since the General Council was based in London and could adopt the functions of a British section.

Karl Marx vigorously defended the existing arrangements against the charges raised by *L'Égalité*. Writing in the name of the General Council, he argued in January 1870 that “only England can act as a *lever* in any seriously *economic* revolution”.<sup>5</sup> In evidence, he presented Britain as the only country in which a capitalist form of production had taken hold and where trade unions existed with “a considerable degree of maturity and universality”. The General Council would have to be foolish to transfer its hold on this great lever for a proletarian revolution to a regional British council. Moreover – Marx argued –, the very strength of the British trade unions would impede the work of a British Federal Branch of the IWMA. If in existence, it might be squeezed between the General Council and the powerful trade union bodies, losing all authority in the process. Marx’ defence of the status quo culminated in a striking plea for British

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discussion, such a council did not exist, thus alleviating the discussion of the need to adopt geographical precision in terminology.

4 [Karl Marx], *Provisional Rules of the Working Men’s International Association* (1864), no. 6, printed in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/20, pp. 13–15, 14.

5 Karl Marx, *The General Council to the Federal Council of French Switzerland*, quoted from the translation by Andy Blunden in <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1870/french-switzerland.htm> (accessed 3.3.2015). Marx’s original French text can be found in: Karl Marx, *Circulaire du Conseil Général de l’Association Internationale des Travailleurs au Conseil Fédéral de la Suisse Romande du 1 janvier 1870*, quoted in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, pp. 159–165; the quotations in the paragraph above in their original French form (italics in the original): “l’Angleterre seule peut servir de levier pour une Révolution sérieusement économique” (p. 161); “un certain degré de maturité et d’universalité” (ibid.); “L’Angleterre ne doit pas être traitée comme un pays auprès des autres pays. Elle doit être traitée comme la métropole du capital.” (p. 162). Marx also included the text of the *Circulaire* in his “Confidentielle Mittheilung” to the Social Democrats of Braunschweig, printed in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, pp. 220–227.

exceptionalism: “England can not be considered simply as one country among many others. It must be treated as the metropolis of capital.”

Thus, for Marx, British affairs were all but local concerns; they were the crucible where the ingredients of universal revolution were mixed. Here were the roots of the general importance of the Irish question: Any successful social revolution would have to start by destroying the entrenched power of English landlordism. The weak link in its chain of power was Ireland – if landlord power collapsed in Ireland, it would – Marx assumed – also collapse in England. In contrast to *L'Égalité*, Marx maintained that support for the Fenians was of general importance since rebellion in Ireland offered the first grasp at the lever of universal social revolution: “Therefore the International Association’s attitude to the Irish question is absolutely clear. Its first need is to press on with the social revolution in England, and to that end, the major blow must be struck in Ireland.”<sup>6</sup>

The exchange on the institutional structure of the IWMA in Great Britain between *L'Égalité* and Karl Marx was, of course, part of a much wider debate going on between Internationalists in French-speaking Switzerland and the General Council. The article in the Swiss journal had been written by Paul Robin, a close associate of Michail Bakunin. The dispute marked the beginning of the great power struggle between Marx and Bakunin for the heart and soul of the International.<sup>7</sup> For Bakunin’s anarchist supporters on the editorial board of *L'Égalité*, there was no point in trying “to improve the existing governments”; all energy had to be directed “at radically *suppressing* them, and to replace the current political, authoritarian, religious and legal state by a new social organisation assuring to everyone the *complete product of his work and all that follows from it*.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the political activities of the Marx-dominated

6 Quoted from <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1870/french-switzerland.htm> (accessed 3.3.2015). For the French original see Karl Marx, *Circulaire*, quoted in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, pp. 159–165, 163: “Donc la position de l’Association Internationale vis-à-vis de la question Irlandaise est très nette. Son premier besoin est de pousser la révolution sociale en Angleterre. A cet effet il faut frapper le grand coup en Irlande”.

7 From 1869, the Russian anarchist revolutionary Michail Bakunin (1814–1876) started to build a power-base from the International’s sections in French-speaking Switzerland against Marx’s dominance. From the Bakuninists’ perspective, the General Council was a tool in the hands of Marx. The dispute turned increasingly acrimonious, with hardening ideological front-lines and personal recriminations, leading to Bakunin’s exclusion from the International in 1872, but also contributing to the association’s decline, see e.g. Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men’s Association* (Oakland, 2015).

8 My translation of: [Paul Robin], *Réflexions*, *L'Égalité*, No. 47, 11 December 1869, p. 1 (italics in the original): “Nous ne saurions trop répéter que l’intérêt des travailleurs n’est pas de



General Council within the current structure of the state were viewed with fundamental suspicion. But although the ideological confrontation extended to a wide range of issues, matters of organization were part and parcel of the conflict between Marxian centralism and Bakunist federalism; soon, the Federal Council of French-speaking Switzerland was to split into two opposing camps at La Chaux-de-Fonds, with the anarchist challenge to Marx' leadership becoming clear for all to see.<sup>9</sup>

The article in *L'Égalité* in December 1869 constituted a tactical move in an impending conflict rather than an attempt at a disinterested description of structural flaws in the International's set-up. Still, it is worthwhile to take the arguments seriously. Might it not have been true that the focus on British affairs prevented the General Council from paying full attention to the requirements of Internationalist organization elsewhere? Did not Marx himself implant a seed of failure into the IWMA by directing its strategy towards a social revolution in Britain, which – as we now know – did not happen? Did British popular radicals gain undue prominence in the International due to their easy recruitment into the General Council?

In order to answer these questions, I will probe into the validity of the Bakunist remonstrations, addressing the two main areas of concern broached by *L'Égalité*: the General Council's proclamations on the Fenian amnesty question and the lack of a separate British Federal Council. The first issue provided the occasion for Robin's attack; the latter one calls for a closer look at the role of British trade unionists inside the IWMA, since it was they who inspired Marx's hopes for a social revolution in England and his plea for leaving British affairs in the hands of the General Council.

### The Fenian Question in the General Council

The Irish question should have been a topic where the International came into its own. One impulse for the founding of the International had been proclamations of solidarity with oppressed nations. The association had grown out of sympathy meetings for the Polish insurrection of 1863; at about the same time,

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*s'efforcer d'améliorer les gouvernements actuels, mais bien de concentrer toute l'énergie possible à les supprimer radicalement, et à remplacer l'Etat politique, autoritaire, religieux et juridique actuel par l'organisation sociale nouvelle assurant à chacun le produit entier de son travail et tout ce qui s'en suit.*"

9 For the evolving conflict between Marx and Bakunin and the role of French-speaking Switzerland see Jürgen Herres, "Einführung", in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, pp. 1159–1162.

British workers had supported the anti-slavery stance of the Northern states in the American Civil War and they had been enthusiastic about Giuseppe Garibaldi, the hero of Italian independence. Marx should have found strong support for his condemnation of British rule in Ireland, which had been kept in a semi-colonial state since the union of 1801. Indeed, when the Irish question became a topic of discussion in the General Council of the International, there were strong sympathies for Irish Home Rule and Irish attempts to fight for it.

During the 1860s, there were two major occasions for discussions of the Irish question among British popular radicals and, for that matter, in the General Council of the International, in 1867, when a short-lived Fenian insurrection raised issues of Irish independence, and in 1869, when the British prime minister William Ewart Gladstone refused to grant amnesty to all Fenians in British prisons. However, on these occasions, it was not only Swiss Internationalists who harboured doubts about the General Council's involvement in the Irish question. Rather than bearing out Marx' hopes, the discussions on Ireland revealed fault-lines within British radicalism itself.

On the one hand, there were Internationalists such as the journalist Peter André Fox, who in 1867 presented the General Council with a resolution stating "Ireland's right to autonomy"; in the same year, John Hales, who was to play a prominent role in the final years of the International, argued that Ireland deserved the same kind of sympathy that was accorded to other nations struggling for their freedom.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, there were opposing voices among the British members of the General Council. In 1869, Thomas Mottershead, representative of a small weavers' union, claimed that Ireland should not be independent since it was needed as a bulwark against France. Moreover, he had found Irish workers too little supportive of initiatives of English workers.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Engels, Marx made fun of Mottershead's John-Bull-attitude<sup>12</sup> but there were further voices which saw Irish aspirations with reservations. In 1872, William Harrison Riley, editor of the *International Herald* newspaper, conceded the Irish right to self-government; at the same time, he chided the self-serving national character of Irish agitations and demanded self-government for all the people in the world.<sup>13</sup>

10 Minutes of the General Council (26.11.1867), printed in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, p. 531; Séan Daly, *Ireland and the First International* (Cork, 1984), p. 184. On John Hales see Bernard A. Cook, "Hales, John", in Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*, 3 vols in 4 parts (Brighton [etc.], 1979–1988), 3, pp. 373–376.

11 Minutes of the General Council (23.11.1869), printed in MEGA<sup>2</sup> I/21, p. 732.

12 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 4 December 1869, printed in MEGA<sup>1</sup> III/4, p. 253.

13 William Harrison Riley, "The Fenian Prisoners", in *International Herald*, 2.11.1872, p. 4.

The Irish question had become particularly vexing in 1867, when the Fenians made their bid to achieve an independent Irish republic by force. Their uprising was quickly defeated by British forces, but in September 1867 a policeman died when the Fenians tried to liberate some of their imprisoned comrades from a Manchester prison. At first, the Irish revolutionaries received expressions of sympathy when three of their members were executed for the liberation attempt. However, in December 1867, twelve local people died and many were injured when the Fenians attacked Clerkenwell Gaol in Eastern London. This assault cost them a lot of sympathy in British radical circles. Violence was not generally seen as a political method to be applied in a constitutional state such as Great Britain. A heated debate on the Irish right to violence ensued.<sup>14</sup> But as far as the debate among British members of the International was concerned, the General Council was sidelined in this major political dispute – the most excited discussions took place in the leading circles of the Reform League, a body set up by British radicals in 1865 to mount a campaign for suffrage extension. George Odger, a leading member of both the Reform League and the International, publicly expressed his sympathy with the aims of the Fenians. This caused an outcry of protest from both working-class and middle-class radicals in the Reform League who refused to condone political violence. Odger had to issue a statement explaining his condemnation of violent political means, although he still defended the Irish claim to independence.<sup>15</sup>

Marx was dissatisfied with such proclamations of political moderation, but for Odger and many of his fellow radicals, condemnations of political violence were an essential ingredient in their bid for political respectability. Workers' movements easily faced the accusation of causing mayhem and advocating social upheaval. Among others, the reform struggle of the 1860s was an attempt by working-class radicals to underline their trust in the British constitutional order and to demonstrate the perfect capability of the working class to participate in the regular political life of the nation. This was not just strategy, but it reflected the self-conception of British working-class radicals as rational and respectable men who demanded their fair share of political participation.<sup>16</sup>

14 See the documents from the Reform League printed in John Breuilly, Gottfried Niedhart, Antony Taylor (eds), *The Era of the Reform League: English Labour and Radical Politics 1857–1872. Documents Selected by Gustav Mayer* (Mannheim, 1995), pp. 264–277.

15 [George Odger], *Mr. Odger's Speech, Delivered to the Council of the Reform League in explanation and defence of certain Remarks made by him on the subject of Fenianism* (undated pamphlet, Reform League Papers, Howell Collection, Bishopsgate Institute, London). On Odger see Fred M. Leventhal, "Odger, George", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter: ODNB), vol 41, pp. 495–496.

16 See Keith McClelland, "Rational and Respectable Men: Gender, the Working Class, and Citizenship in Britain, 1850–1867", in Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *Gender and*

The refusal of Fenian violence thus was supported by the central tenets of the reform movement of the 1860s. Labour radicals stubbornly followed their chosen course, without giving the General Council of the International the opportunity to alter their basic attitude. For the International, this meant that the General Council was unable to move beyond broad proclamations of support for the Irish right to autonomy; the debates on the Irish question petered out when its urgency diminished. The scope for action was limited rather than expanded by the politics of the British element on the General Council. Thus, in fact, Marx' rationale behind the focus on the Irish question got mired in the intricacies of British radicals' considerations. The General Council had the worst of both worlds from it: Neither did the focus on Ireland strengthen the political clout of the IWMA, nor did it bear out the hopes Marx had invested in British working-class leaders. This latter result, though, should not at this time have come as a big surprise. Right from the first moves of the IWMA, many British members of the General Council had shown a capacity for using the IWMA for their own purposes. In particular, this was the case with some trade union leaders.

### Trade Union Leaders in the IWMA and the Lack of a British Federal Council

The article in *L'Égalité* had pointed out the fact that every country was represented in the IWMA by a national Federal Council – save Britain. There had been several attempts at forming such a national body, notably by John Hales, who occasionally brought up the idea in the General Council. However, each time the suggestion was refuted.<sup>17</sup> Marx still clung to his conviction that England would be the lever for a coming revolution and used his influence in the General Council to thwart any attempt at changing the institutional set-up of the International in Britain. Besides, by thus empowering the General Council, he had no qualms about empowering himself. When he interrupted his work on *Capital* for several years to commit his time and energy to the International, he expected to hold the steering-wheel of the future revolution in his own hands. Some members of the General Council represented important British

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*Class in Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 1996), pp. 280–293; Detlev Mares, “‘Criminally senseless’ Ritual and Political Strategy in Mid-Victorian Popular Radicalism”, in Jörg Neuheiser und Michael Schaich (eds), *Political Rituals in Great Britain 1700–2000* (Augsburg, 2006), pp. 75–91.

17 Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (London, 1965), pp. 85 and 190–191.

trade unions.<sup>18</sup> Marx intended to exert his personal influence over these “work-er kings” and repeatedly boasted to Frederick Engels that the International was a “mighty engine” in the hands of the two friends.<sup>19</sup>

At first, Marx’ optimism seemed justified. Several important working-class bodies were set up in London in the 1860s with the participation of members from the General Council of the International. When the Reform League was founded in 1865 to campaign for manhood suffrage, its secretary George Howell was just one of a number of members from the General Council. Internationalists were also instrumental in creating the Land and Labour League, set up in 1869 to foster the idea of land nationalization as a cure for social ills. In these and other cases,<sup>20</sup> Marx tended to see the British associations as the “creations”<sup>21</sup> of the International. Temporarily, he even thought that the mighty London Trades Council (LTC) which had been established in the wake of a great builders’ strike in 1860, was in “our [meaning, his and Engels’] hands”.<sup>22</sup> Among others, the LTC-secretary George Odger was a member – and for several years the President – of the General Council.

However, the British working-class leaders failed to consider themselves creatures of the German doctor who had emerged from more than a decade of study in the British Library. Many of the British contingent on the General Council were leaders of the most powerful trade unions of their time, within Great Britain and beyond. As Jürgen Herres has pointed out in his comprehensive introduction to the edition of the Council minutes, British trade unionists were perceived as role-models in much of Europe. Trade unions had become

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18 Several dozen unions affiliated to the International, but it is difficult to provide a clear estimate of union membership. The aggregate numbers amounted to several thousands, but active commitment to the association can hardly be distinguished from mere formal membership. In any case, the membership fees of these unions were of great importance for the notoriously precarious finances of the International. For a list of affiliated unions see Collins/Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 81.

19 See Karl Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer, 29 November 1864, printed in MEW, vol 31, pp. 428–429; Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 11 September 1867, printed in MEGA<sup>1</sup> III/3, p. 420. Marx was particularly interested in the leaders of the so-called new model unions, big societies which amalgamated workers from trades such as bricklayers, engineers and carpenters into powerful centralized bodies. The London leaders of these unions were famously dubbed “the Junta” by Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1894).

20 See Detlev Mares, *Auf der Suche nach dem “wahren” Liberalismus. Demokratische Bewegung und liberale Politik im viktorianischen England* (Berlin, 2002).

21 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 26 December 1865, printed in MEGA<sup>1</sup> III/3, p. 299 (in the German original: “Gründungen”).

22 Collins/Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 63.

well-established and well-funded organizations in Britain before significant union-building had as much as started in many countries on the “Continent”. The very terms “strike”, “meeting” or “trade union” were adopted into several European languages, the forms of union solidarity were eagerly copied.<sup>23</sup> The British trade unionists on the General Council were well-versed, assertive working-class politicians, with a network of connections into middle-class radicalism, and they self-confidently expressed their views on political and social issues in speeches, print and personal meetings with members of parliament. They were above all interested in the International’s potential to act as a transnational agency during labour disputes, for example helping to prevent industrialists from importing foreign strike breakers into their country.

However, some of the trade unionists also were the standard-bearers of formerly Chartist ideas of political participation. Chartism had been a broad umbrella movement for democratic reforms in the 1830s and 1840s, with its main focus on the demand for an extension of the suffrage into the ranks of the working class. After 1848, the mass movement lost steam.<sup>24</sup> Some of its supporters moved on into other areas of activity, such as trade unionism, seemingly signaling a new generation of moderate, even submissive labour politics. However, since the 1980s, historians of British popular radicalism have refuted earlier claims that the mid-Victorian generation of working-class leaders was an opportunistic labour aristocracy, led astray into the realms of false consciousness by the lure of personal respectability accorded to them by members of the middle class. A broader picture has emerged, showing the state flexible enough to offer the promise of social reform and political participation, while the British constitution provided a weapon that could be wielded in support of radical demands for reform. Shared values rather than raw class conflict shaped the politics of mid-Victorian working-class radicalism.<sup>25</sup> These

23 Jürgen Herres, “Einführung”, in MEGA I/21, pp. 1131–1139. For an Anglo-German comparison see Christiane Eisenberg, *Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften. Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1878 im Vergleich* (Göttingen, 1986).

24 From the wealth of literature, see Malcolm Chase, *Chartism. A New History* (Manchester, New York, 2007).

25 The labour aristocracy approach informs Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics 1861–1881* (London [etc.], 1965). The revisionist account was first developed by Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982* (Cambridge [etc.], 1983), and Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge, 1992). For the most recent treatment see James Owen, *Labour and the Caucus. Working-class radicalism and organized Liberalism in England, 1868–1888* (Liverpool, 2014), esp. pp. 24–60. For biographical information see Fred M. Leventhal, “Howell, George” in ODNB, vol 28,

values also kept alive Chartist ideas of political participation. In the early to mid-1860s, a very active group of radical London trade unionists used virtually every opportunity to set up political bodies in order to start a broad movement for suffrage extension in the Chartist tradition. Among these, many were also to be found in the International. Apart from George Odger and George Howell, this applies to Robert Applegarth and William Randal Cremer from the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.<sup>26</sup> If the history of the International is integrated into this new framework of analysis, we find that many British unionist found the IWMA a useful tool in their attempts to organize a broad movement for suffrage reform. In fact, the demands of this campaign shaped their relationship with the General Council; rather than being a “parent body”<sup>27</sup> to British radical associations, the General Council became an arena for British radical politics.

The rather unscrupulous utilization of the IWMA by some British trade unionists on the General Council can be seen at work in their struggle for dominance in the reform movement. Metropolitan working-class radicalism of the 1860s was hampered by the personal and political conflict between the leaders of the London Trades Council (LTC) and George Potter, the editor of the weekly newspaper *The Bee-Hive*. In contrast to the more risk-averse leaders of the LTC, Potter supported strike actions of small trade unions and founded the London Working Men's Association, a rival to the Reform League in the struggle for suffrage extension.<sup>28</sup> The majority of the British members on the General Council were in the anti-Potter camp. For them, the International served as a welcome instrument in their attempts to wrest power and influence from their old enemy Potter. In particular, this meant destroying Potter's hold on the *Bee-Hive* and getting the paper into the hands of the leaders of the London Trades Council.

As early as November 1864, the General Council adopted the *Bee-Hive* as the official organ for publications of the International. At the same time, the General

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pp. 498–500; John Saville, “Applegarth, Robert”, in ODNB, vol 2, pp. 299–300; Matthew Lee, “Cremer, William Randal”, in ODNB, vol 14, pp. 143–144.

26 For the precursors of the Reform League and post-Chartist radical politics in general see Mares, *Suche*; Margot Finn, *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics 1848–1874* (Cambridge, 1993); Antony Taylor, “Post-Chartism: Metropolitan Perspectives on the Chartist Movement in Decline 1848–80”, in Matthew Cragoe and Antony Taylor (eds), *London Politics, 1760–1914* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 75–96.

27 Collins/Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 86.

28 On Potter see Stephen Coltham, “George Potter, the Junta, and the Bee-Hive”, *International Review of Social History*, 9 (1964), pp. 391–432; 10 (1965), pp. 23–65; Alistair J. Reid, “Potter, George”, in ODNB, vol 45, pp. 19–20.

Council resolved to establish a fund to buy up shares in the Bee-Hive-Newspaper Company. The obvious aim of this measure was to take the paper over. Marx reported this plan to “swamp the old majority”<sup>29</sup> in the *Bee-Hive*-company to Engels in December 1864. This has made some authors assume that Marx was the driving force behind the takeover scheme.<sup>30</sup> This may or may not have been the case. But it is absolutely clear that the LTC leaders hardly needed Marx to hatch this idea. They had already tried – and failed – to do the same in 1863;<sup>31</sup> thus, it seems much more likely that they unapologetically used the International for their own purposes.

This suspicion is confirmed by the further steps the General Council took in its attempts to establish its own paper after the takeover bid for the *Bee-Hive* had failed. By acquiring a less influential paper and renaming it *The Commonwealth* in 1866, the International finally seemed to have succeeded in acquiring its own press organ. However, the precarious financial situation of the *Commonwealth* required additional funding, which only could be procured from Liberal radicals, such as Thomas Hughes, Peter Alfred Taylor or Arthur Miall. They belonged to a group of middle-class politicians with close connections to the LTC leadership. Marx was not amused by middle-class Liberals gaining a foot-hold in affairs connected with the International. He managed to get his confidant George Eccarius accepted as one of the editors of the *Commonwealth*. Marx himself doubted his friend’s ability for the job. Indeed, Eccarius quickly became unpopular with his British colleagues for whom he seemed just a less diplomatically sophisticated version of Marx himself.

The further history of the *Commonwealth* reveals the true intentions of the LTC leaders: They wanted to use the paper as the press organ of the Reform League – again, the reform campaign emerges as the core interest of British working-class radicals. They were happy to receive support from the International in their attempts to dominate the reform movement, but they did not want the International or Marx himself to dominate their politics. When Marx was on holiday in Margate in March 1866, they used the opportunity to force Eccarius out of the editorship of the *Commonwealth*.<sup>32</sup>

With the reform campaign gathering steam, most LTC leaders lost interest in the daily affairs of the International. Their regular attendance on the

29 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 2 December 1864, printed in MEGA<sup>1</sup> III/3, p. 210.

30 Collins/Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 63; Coltham, “George Potter”, p. 397; Stephen Coltham: “The Bee-Hive Newspaper: Its Origins and Early Struggles”, in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History. In Memory of G.D.H. Cole* (London, 1960), pp. 174–204, 202.

31 Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, pp. 48–50; Coltham, “Bee-Hive Newspaper”, p. 200.

32 Collins/Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 67.



General Council slackened. After the passing of the Reform Act in 1867, they even made their peace with George Potter. Although the *Bee-Hive* now published the statements and minutes of the International for a while, most of the leaders of the reform movement did not resume their active work on the General Council. George Howell is a case in point. He may have hoped to become editor of the *Commonwealth*. When he failed in this ambition, he ceased to attend the General Council, devoted his energy to the Reform League and moved on to become one of the founders of Liberal-Labour alliances in forthcoming elections.<sup>33</sup>

When *L'Égalité* published its attack on the General Council in December 1869, it did not mention the role of British trade union leaders in the International. But it might have done so – their actions made sure that at least part of the energies of the General Council were devoted to affairs that only were of “local”, British interest. Instead of transcending the British situation for moves directed at a universal application of internationalist principles, the General Council was drawn into local power struggles which did nothing to strengthen the world-wide clout of the IWMA.

### Conclusion

The examples of the discussions on the Irish question and – even more so – of trade unionists’ political activities merge into a coherent narrative that presents British working-class radicals as autonomous political actors who managed to use the General Council for their own purposes. Rather than strengthening internationalist politics in Britain by doing without a separate British federal council, the General Council got dragged into the minefield of intrigues in London radical and labour politics, without being able to fundamentally alter their course. Of course, reading through the General Council minutes or the congress reports of the IWMA, the scope of the International’s activities appears much wider, as indeed it was. It would be a crude exaggeration to present the association as being exclusively devoted to British affairs. And yet, they were very prominent in the work of the General Council, both in terms of membership and preoccupations. If Marx’s expectations of social revolution had been correct, this favouring of the British dimension would have been adequate. As it was, the charges of *L'Égalité* did not lack plausibility.

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33 Fred Marc Leventhal, *Respectable Radical. George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics* (London, 1971).

After many trade unionists had lost interest in the General Council, only few of them remained committed members of the IWMA. For a while, Robert Applegarth, influential general secretary of the powerful Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, became active in the association and kept close contact to Marx. By the early 1870s, however, only George Odger remained from the prominent British founders of the International, until he resigned from the General Council in acrimony over the publication of Marx' pamphlet on the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*.<sup>34</sup> On the General Council, Marx was left with some reliable supporters from London clubland, such as the O'Brienites, but they only commanded a small metropolitan following.<sup>35</sup> They were not the "worker kings" anymore who had prompted Marx to devote himself to the International (see Figure 3.1).

By 1871, it was clear that Marx' strategy had unraveled. When British sections and a British Federal Council were finally established after the London conference of 1871, this marked the first time that the IWMA started to build up a noteworthy presence in Britain outside the metropolis. But as far as Marx was concerned, this new stage in the development of the International indicated his disappointment with the association. He gave in to Hales' demands for a British Federal Council since he had abandoned his expectations of an imminent revolution in England. Instead, he invested his hopes in the new labour parties that started to emerge in some countries on the Continent, the German Social Democrats in particular.<sup>36</sup> Although some English branches showed initial signs of considerable energy, their work and the activities of the Federal Council soon became entangled in the power struggles between different factions that heralded the end of the International. They never developed into a powerful political force.<sup>37</sup>

When *L'Égalité* published its accusations against the English focus of the London centre of the IWMA, this had been part of the emerging struggle between the Jura Federation and the General Council, between Bakunin and Marx. Yet the questions of the Swiss Internationalists do not seem unjustified:

34 See Detlev Mares, "Odger, George (1813–1877)", in Keith Gildart and David Howell (eds), *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, vol. XIII (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 292–300, 294–295.

35 For the connections between London clubland and the International see Keith Robinson, "Karl Marx, the IWMA, and London Radicalism, 1864–1872" (Ph.D., Manchester, 1976).

36 See Wolfgang Schieder, *Karl Marx als Politiker* (Munich, 1991), pp. 97–117.

37 See Henry Collins, "The English Branches of the First International", in Briggs and Saviile, *Essays in Labour History*, pp. 242–275; Detlev Mares, "Transcending the Metropolis: London and Provincial Popular Radicalism, c. 1860–1875", in Cragoe and Taylor, *London Politics*, pp. 121–143, 136f.

The International was meant to be a globally acting and thinking organization. Marx' attempts to combine this general direction with a focus on Britain failed. Would a Federal Council have been better placed to deal with British matters? Would it have left the General Council and the International more successful? These can only be moot questions. But it is evident that the English situation never evolved into the stepping-stone to revolution, as expected by Marx. Considering the importance of Great Britain in the mid-Victorian period and beyond, Marx had a point in maintaining the "trans-local" and trans-national importance of British developments. But the most important British members of the International remained inward-looking and showed no interest in the wider aspirations that – in their different ways – both arch-enemies, Marx and Bakunin, harboured for the IWMA. The British contingent of the International did contribute less to making it a powerful political instrument than expected by Marx. But although this gives plausibility to the charges leveled by *L'Égalité*, the British members at the same time never locked the International in confrontations that would spell the end of the association itself. Compared to the devastating effects of the Bakuninist claim for dominance, their reluctant Internationalism seems harmless enough. It indicated the self-sufficiency of mid-Victorian working-class radicalism which might make good use of an international labour organization but did not fundamentally depend on it in their struggles for reform.

*Attendance of Members*  
*from September to December 1870*

	September			October			November			December		Pres.	Abs.
	6, 13, 20, 27	4, 11, 18, 25	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	6, 13, 20	27, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31	7, 14, 21, 28	4, 11, 18, 25	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	6, 13, 20				
Applegarth		+	+								2	14	
Boon	+	+	+	+						+	5	11	
Bradrick	+			+	+	Out of town					3	13	
Caird				+							1	15	
Coker		+				+					2	14	
Coarvis	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	16	No	
Engels				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	11	1	
Fales J.	+	+		+	+	+				+	6	10	
Fales W.	+			+	Out of town						2	14	
Harris	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	4	
Iung	+	+	Ill								2	4	
Lapatine		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Out of town	10	4
Lesmer	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	4	
Lucraft		+	+	+						+	4	12	
Marx	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	15	1	
Milner	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	4	
Motherhead		+									1	15	
Murray				+	Went to America						1	15	
Maurice	Ill										No	16	
Edger											No	16	
Parnell	Out of town										No	16	
Pfander		+			+	+	+	+	+	+	8	8	
Reid				+							1	15	
Stepney	Out of town									+	+	+	
Townshend	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	4	
Weston	+	+	+								3	15	
Zabietti											No	16	
Robin										+	+	+	
Kohl										+	+	+	

FIGURE 3.1 Attendance of members of the General Council of the IWMA, September–December 1870.

## The IWMA and Industrial Conflict in England and France

*Iorwerth Prothero*

The International Working Men's Association (IWMA) was established by groups in London and Paris as a radical association expressing a familiar radical internationalism and asserting both the importance of peace, international harmony and national liberation to working people and the importance of working people in achieving these goals. In the former city it continued an ongoing phenomenon of radical associations embracing both Londoners and foreigners,<sup>1</sup> and operated as one of several overlapping openly radical associations, whereas the different political regime in France led the group in Paris to operate much more cautiously and avoid such overt politics (see figure 4.1). Nevertheless it was because of its radical political nature that the London Society of Compositors rescinded its original decision to send a delegate to the first conference in Geneva.<sup>2</sup> Yet the IWMA also included trade union figures of national importance and reputation and sought trade union support, and for a while its main activity was the co-ordination of international action in support of strikes in England and France. This aspect of the IWMA should be related to the nature of trade unionism at the time.

Trade unionism took different forms, and we need to identify three distinct kinds of industrial action.<sup>3</sup> The workplace was a site of social relations, involving informal hierarchies, privileges, rights, conventions, customs and roles, and most work-related conflicts were confined to single workplaces in response to behaviour and actions that transgressed established ways, including changes in work organization, and involved no formal organization. In addition, secondly, there were also more formal supra-workplace organizations, and societies and clubs consisting of workingmen in the same trade (*corps de métier*) had for a long time been important elements in the world of

1 Iorwerth Prothero, "Chartists and foreign political refugees", in Sabine Freitag (ed), *Exiles from European Revolutions. Refugees in Mid-Victorian England* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 209–233.

2 Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick [hereafter, MRC], London Compositors' Society MS 28/CO/1/8/9/1.

3 There is a full discussion of these points in Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), Chs 3–4.

labour in Britain and France. They varied in both form and in functions, such as benefits, placement, tramping, arbitration, negotiation, and sociability, usually embraced a minority of their trade and were generally small. They often came into conflict with particular masters but also often expressed the internal hierarchies, rifts and conflicts that characterized the workforce. Trade societies were thus rivals and tended to oppose other societies in the same trade, often seeking to corner employment in workshops exclusively for their own members. This could make co-operation and united action among rival trade societies very difficult, so that it tended to be easier on non-work issues, such as politics, or questions of general importance to the world of labour, such as the legality of workingmen's societies or strikes.

There was, however, a third aspect of trade unionism, in the form of combinations for improvements on a much wider scale than individual trade societies. Whereas societies in the same trade were rivals and usually hostile to one another on questions of placement, closed shops or demarcation, they might unite with one another on certain issues that concerned and would benefit them all. Thus it was well established for artisan and building trades and some newer skilled trades (such as engineering) to take advantage of favourable situations to make general demands on which they all could unite, usually over pay but sometimes hours or certain issues specific to the trade. Such combinations involved members of rival societies and also men in no society at all in a temporary alliance for a specific goal which ended after the success or failure of the movement. The demands usually met resistance from the employers and often led to large strikes. These combinations were not led by trade societies, although sometimes existing benefit societies did start a special fund to be drawn on if the combination resulted in a strike. More often a combination created a new organization meant only to last until the specific issue was settled, such as ostensible benefit societies, temporary "united" and "consolidated" orders or societies in England and *sociétés de résistance* in France, the leaders of which were often not active in any permanent trade organization and were frequently radicals. These combinations tended to take place in waves at similar times of economic recovery in England and France and often aroused great alarm among propertied classes and even "moral panics" in the belief that they were motivated by dangerous new socialist or republican ideas and directed by sinister, subversive organizations.

Trades on strike might receive help from other trades in the same area or from members of the same trade in other areas, but some disputes involved a particularly wide degree of support, not usually because of the size or intrinsic importance of the combination but because of the means used to break it. These included employers' lock-outs, imposition of the "document" (a signed

renunciation of labour organization), or refusal to employ anyone unless he provided a “discharge note”, “quittance paper” or *livret* signed by his previous employer; they also included measures by government or other authorities such as arresting strikers, refusing relief to strikers’ families or providing government workmen as strike-breakers. These abuses of power by employers and partisan actions by authorities aroused great emotion, broadened industrial conflicts, and often radicalized them. While radicals and socialists seeking working-class support tended to regard trade and benefit societies as laudable organizations of the poor and possible bases for support, they were not usually so happy about backing workers in wage disputes. They were much readier to condemn repression of strikes and combinations by the authorities, and even abuses of authority by employers.<sup>4</sup> It was also this same aspect that was most likely to arouse wider trade union protest. Thus Paris trades and radicals rallied in support of the great carpenters’ strike of 1845 for a uniform daily rate when the authorities arrested strikers, raided two trade clubs and seized their funds, refused passports to striking carpenters wishing to leave Paris on tramp, and supplied military carpenters to work for the masters. This had an important effect on labour politics in Paris in 1848. In 1859 a movement in the London building trades was met by the employers with a general lock-out which provoked a huge campaign of support for the men among the trades and the radical clubs; it was as radicals that Cremer (carpenter) and the ex-Chartists Howell (bricklayer) and Odger (shoemaker), all later leading members of the IWMA, became prominent in the campaign and then in trade unionism.

Under the authoritarian Second Empire radical and trade union action in France was dangerous, but there was some relaxation in the 1860s as the regime tried to channel working-class activity in non-political social welfare directions to detach it from republicanism, and these provided some limited openings for action. Since benefit societies (*sociétés de secours mutuels*) were encouraged, trade societies often took this form. As a Paris composers’ society told their London brethren, “they had previously been obliged to have their Society enrolled as a Benevolent Institution only – as any society for the maintenance of wages is not tolerated by the laws of France.” When they prepared a combination for higher wages they established a separate secret fund.<sup>5</sup> When the regime allowed and encouraged co-operative societies these could also provide a haven for trade unionists and radicals, as they had under the Second Republic. At the first IWMA conference:

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4 *Ibid.*, pp. 109–111, 162–165, 309.

5 MRC, London Society of Compositors, 58th. Quarterly Report (Aug. 1862), MS 28/CO/1/8/7/1, fos 45–47, 55–57.

Citizen Tolain said that in Britain, thanks to the genius of British liberty, the class movement manifested itself by a policy of resistance, whereas in France by reason of the shackles imposed upon the organization of the working classes, a strike has only been a rare and extreme measure and co-operation has been there deemed to be the only means of working class emancipation.<sup>6</sup>

Plebeian radical mobilization was successful through building on existing social relationships, shared structures of communication, and community ties built up by routine interaction and conversation. Taverns, cabarets, pubs, cafes, coffee-houses, dance-halls and chapels were all important channels of such sociability and sites of neighbourhood social clubs, but so were workshops and trade clubs (which usually met in cafes and pubs). Thus workplaces and trades formed vital bases for wider movements, including political mobilization, and plebeian radicals in both countries therefore often sought and gained the support of occupational groups, as members and as participants in demonstrations. In London in the 1860s trade union support was gained by the over-lapping National League for Polish Independence, Working Men's Garibaldi Committee and, especially, Reform League. It was generally recognized that trade union support was essential to a successful popular movement in the capital. When a meeting to set up a new radical association in 1864 was not a success Holyoake attributed this to a failure to canvass the trades, while Marx recognized that "without the TRADES UNIONS NO MASS MEETING is possible."<sup>7</sup> It was therefore inevitable that when the IWMA was founded in London it would seek and gain trade union support there.<sup>8</sup> The Paris section of the IWMA similarly sought support from trade societies in the city and gained enough financial contributions from them to send delegates to the IWMA conference at Geneva. A few trades even affiliated, notably the bronze workers and bookbinders.<sup>9</sup>

Although at the time of the foundation of the IWMA there were suggestions that an international association could stop blacklegs coming from abroad, this was not emphasized or envisaged as the main activity.<sup>10</sup> But the

6 *Working Man* 25 May 1867, p. 9.

7 *English Leader* 9 July 1864, p. 4; Marx to Engels, 1 Feb. 1865, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (London, 1987), 62, p. 74.

8 E.g. *Bee-Hive* 29 April 1865, p. 1; *Commonwealth* 8 Sept. 1866, p. 8; *Working Man* 10 Aug. 1867, p. 9.

9 Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris [hereafter, APP], Internationale à Paris, Ba 439, 4812.

10 *Bee-Hive* 5 Dec. 1863, p. 1; Michel Cordillot, *Aux Origines du Socialisme Moderne. La Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'Exil* (Paris, 2010), p. 33; Julian P. Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1872* (Lanham, New York and Oxford, 1997), p. 23; Knud



favourable economic situation in the mid-1860s and the legalization of strikes in France in 1864 meant that the formation and growth of the IWMA coincided in both countries with waves of combinations of unprecedented scale. Given its membership it could not be unaffected and became for a while involved in mobilizing international support for strikes and preventing the importation of strike-breakers from the Continent into England.

The IWMA, in fact, did not initiate these practices. On the Continent there were links between trade societies that crossed national boundaries, fortified by migrant workers, especially through the artisan practices of tramping along established networks and receiving help from local clubs.<sup>11</sup> In the 1850s there were attempts at bilingual trade journals, such as the printers' *Guthenburg* and shoemakers' *Innovator/Innovateur*. In 1852 the London Society of Compositors sent help to the Paris Typographical Society. London was also the main destination of continental political refugees, the greatest component being French, including a number of working men.<sup>12</sup> The Paris compositor Louis Vasbenter was an associate of Proudhon under the Second Republic until he fled to London, where he was able to find work at his trade and be admitted to the compositors' society. He acted as interpreter when in 1862 two delegates came from the Paris compositors, and the London society again agreed to send funds to help their general strike.<sup>13</sup> In 1864 the Limoges potters struck and appealed to the Staffordshire potters for support, and through the efforts of the political exile Talandier their case was taken up by the radical and pro-trade union newspaper the *Bee-Hive* and the London Trades' Council.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover the recruiting of foreign blackleg labour was also established practice in England, such as during the strikes of tin-plate workers in Wolverhampton in 1851 and Birmingham in 1853, and in London among tailors and pianoforte-makers in 1850, gas-stokers in 1859, and bakers in 1872, as well as the cigar-makers.<sup>15</sup> As a result there were attempts to counter this practice.

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Knudsen, "The strike history of the First International", in Fritz Van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830-1940* (Leiden, 1988), p. 309.

11 Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 55-56.

12 Sylvie Aprile, *Le siècle des exilés. Bannis et proscrits de 1789 à la Commune* (Paris, 2010), pp. 107-112, 122-124.

13 MRC, London Society of Compositors, Quarterly Reports, 16th. (22 May 1852), 18th. (7 July 1852), 58th. (Aug. 1862, fos.41-63), 59th. (Oct. 1862, fos 15-16), MSS 28/CO/1/8/3, 1/8/7/1, 8.

14 *Bee-Hive* 18 June 1864, p. 4; 25 June 1864, p. 5; 16 July, p. 5; 23 July, p. 7.

15 *Trades' Advocate and Herald of Progress* 12 Oct. 1850, p. 127; *Reynolds's Newspaper* 3 Aug. 1851, p. 6, 10 Aug, p. 14; *People's Paper* 12 May 1855, p. 4; *Times* 28 March 1861, p. 10; 10 April, p. 11; *Workman* 5 July 1861, p. 2; *Tichborne News* 6 July 1872, p. 3.

The London type-founders struck in 1850 and wrote to the founders' club in Paris to try to prevent French workmen coming to replace them, and the Paris society circularized all type-foundries in France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Switzerland to this end.<sup>16</sup> During the great London builders' strike of 1859 "the employers threatened to import foreign workmen in mass. The English workmen immediately wrote to all the foreign working men's associations," but their failure to stop foreign blacklegs led to the defeat of the strike,<sup>17</sup> although some Paris building workers did send help.<sup>18</sup> In Paris in 1864–5 69 trades chose the best time to present demands and strike, and the London hatters and saddlers sent aid to their fellow trades.<sup>19</sup>

The composition of the IWMA in London meant it was drawn in, and some trades affiliated during disputes, such as pattern-drawers and basket-makers. But it was not involved in the Limoges and Paris disputes of 1864–5, and the turning-point, as is well known, was its support for the London tailors' strike of 1866. The London tailors had launched combinations in the mid-1830s and mid-1840s to raise wages and check homework, in both cases radicals playing a leading role, Chartists on the latter occasion forming a national union.<sup>20</sup> Tailors' combinations in British and Continental towns were nearly always in April at the start of the brisk season, the time of "that spirit of independence – amounting pretty nearly to defiance, – which inspires our class at this season, and prepares them for anything."<sup>21</sup> Tailors' clubs tried to enforce a uniform agreed stint or "log", a list of the times it would take a skilled workman to work different articles. The log could then act as the basis for calculating a man's pay at a uniform hourly rate. In the mid-1860s there were new tailors' combinations, the provincial tailors coming together in an Amalgamated Tailors' Association, while the skilled tailors in the bespoke shops of London's West End formed their own London Operative Tailors' Protection Association, with an executive composed entirely of radicals, including the former Chartist

16 *Red Republican* 17 Aug. 1850, pp. 65–67.

17 *Working Man* 25 May 1867, pp. 9–10.

18 Cremer, Odger, *Bee-Hive* 16 July 1864, p. 5.

19 Prefect of Police to Minister of the Interior, 26 Jan. 1866, Archives Nationales, Paris [hereafter, AN], Rouher Papers, 45 AP 6, 3; Jean Vial, *La Coutume chapelière. Histoire du mouvement ouvrier dans la chapellerie* (Paris, 1941), p. 169.

20 T.M. Parssinen and I.J. Prothero, "The London tailors' strike of 1834 and the collapse of the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union: a police spy's report", *International Review of Social History*, 22 (1977), pp. 65–107; I.J. Prothero, "London Chartism and the trades", *Economic History Review* 24 (1971), pp. 212–213.

21 *Tailor* 6 April 1867, p. 406; Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century London. John Gast and his Times* (Folkestone, 1979; Abingdon, 2013), p. 301.

Peter Henriette. In April 1866 they presented their demands for a uniform log for good quality work and a rise of a penny an hour in the time rate used for calculating pay. The masters responded with a refusal and a general lock-out. This was just the sort of action that would provoke wider support for a strike, because the dispute “was not simply a question of wages, but one of better treatment towards the men.”<sup>22</sup> Thus provincial tailors rallied to the support of London, as did the IWMA. In such London disputes it was normal for the masters to secure blacklegs in Germany, but in this case, while the Amalgamated Tailors prevented recruitment in the country, the IWMA helped prevent it in Hamburg and Berlin, “thus stopping the usual resources of the employers.” Aid also came from the Paris tailors. The London masters quickly gave in and conceded a penny-an-hour rise.<sup>23</sup>

This victory had a tremendous impact and new branches were formed of the Amalgamated Tailors in the provinces and London Operative Tailors in the Home Counties. But it also raised the prestige of the IWMA and the value of its international contacts in industrial conflicts. It gained trade society, trades’ council and TUC support, and members later looked back on the IWMA as an organization established by and for trade unions.<sup>24</sup> Some, like the carpenters’ leader Robert Applegarth even saw its role as an educational one, promoting British ways, labour organization and liberty by encouraging the formation and spread of trade unions in Europe which would moreover raise wages and reduce both the pool of cheap blackleg labour and the cheap goods competing with British production. Odger rejoiced that “on the continent they are raising up trade societies on the model of our English ones.”<sup>25</sup>

The Paris section then went on to establish *chambres syndicales*, trade committees to organize workers for collective bargaining and negotiation, which were now tolerated by the government.<sup>26</sup> The turning-point here was the strike

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22 Lawrence, *Bee-Hive* 21 April 1866, p. 5.

23 *Workman's Advocate* 23 Dec. 1865, p. 5; *Commonwealth* 10 Feb. 1866; p. 6; 31 March, p. 6; 7 April, pp. 4,6; 14 April, p. 6; 28 April, p. 6; *Bee-Hive* 28 April 1866, p. 5; *Working Man* 1 May 1866, p. 7; *Tailor* 8 June 1866, p. 128.

24 *Commonwealth* 8 Sept. 1866, p. 8; APP, Internationale, Ba 439, 1172; Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (London, 1965); Knudsen, “Strike history”, p. 311.

25 Applegarth, *Times* 15 Sept. 1869; Odger, *Commonwealth* 2 June 1866, p. 6; Cremer, *Working Man*, 25 May 1867, pp. 9–10; Jung, *Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners' Monthly Report* July 1869, p. 149; Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 91.

26 Varlin, *Mutualité* 15 Oct. 1866, p. 324; Varlin, *Marseillaise* 20 April 1870, p. 2; Albert Richard, « Les Débuts du Parti Socialiste Français », *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* 11 (1897), p. 69; Jacques Rougerie, “Sur l’histoire de la Première Internationale”, *Le Mouvement Social* no.51 (1965), p. 37.

early in 1867 of the Paris bronze-workers, a strongly organized trade affiliated to the IWMA. The employers tried to crush them by a lock-out, which made the dispute the sort likely to arouse wider support, and aid came from other Paris trades, from the provinces, and also from London through the agency of the IWMA. The consequent rumours of inexhaustible English funds led the masters to give in.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile the Paris tailors, encouraged by the triumph in London the previous year, formed their own combination for a uniform log, in preparation for which they formed a benefit society to collect subscriptions for a fund, and a strike followed in 1867, again in April.<sup>28</sup>

During the London tailors' strike and lock-out in 1866 the West-end employers had managed to have some work done for them in other sectors of the industry by struggling small masters desperate for orders and journeymen working at home, for whom these new better-paid orders were "quite a little harvest for them." After the strike the London Society sought to prevent this happening again during a future attempt to gain a log, and therefore opened new branches around London and even in Brighton to check work being done there for London firms, and made great efforts to organize outworkers in London, including women and East European Jews. As part of this strategy they also affiliated to the IWMA and strengthened contacts with the Paris tailors in the hope of checking foreign blacklegs.<sup>29</sup> When the Paris tailors' strike occurred the London tailors acted to stop work being done in London for Paris masters and also sent their president and secretary over to Paris to conclude a formal alliance with the Paris tailors for mutual support. The Paris strike succeeded and the men gained a ten per cent rise and pay for basting, and this success was widely attributed to extensive English support – there were rumours that English tailors had sent 200,000 francs. The London tailors then called a new general strike for a log, in April as ever, and they in turn now received help from tailors in Paris and other towns in France, while the IWMA raised funds on the Continent and America.<sup>30</sup>

27 *Commonwealth* 9 March 1867, p. 1; 6 April, p. 1; *Working Man* 6 April 1867, p. 3; Cordillot, *Aux Origines*, pp. 36–42; Archer, *First International*, pp. 82–83; Knudsen, "Strike history", p. 313.

28 *Working Man* 1 March 1867, pp. 5–7; 6 April, p. 3; *Commonwealth* 9 March 1867, p. 4; 29 June, p. 4; *Tailor* 20 April 1867; Operative Bricklayers' Society, *Annual Report 1866–7*, p. 63; MRC MS 78/OB/4/2; Webb Collection of Trade Union Manuscripts, Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, A 11, fo 51; Keszler, *Des grèves, à propos de celle des ouvriers tailleurs en avril 1867* (Paris, 1867) p. 47.

29 *Tailor* 8 June 1866, p. 128; 16 Feb. 1867.

30 AN, Graces, BB 24 720, Feb.–March 1868; *Tailor* 1 June 1867, p. 110; 13 July, p. 194; 20 July, p. 209; *Commonwealth* 13 April 1867, p. 4; 4 May, p. 5; 8 June, p. 5; *Working Man* 13 July 1867, p. 7.

The successes of the Paris tailors and bronze-workers confirmed the possibilities of help from across the Channel and gave the French IWMA great prestige. Trade societies joined, membership shot up, and the Paris branch went on to issue appeals in support of other groups on strike. When in 1868 the Genevan building workers struck the IWMA committee in Paris, the leading figure in which was by now the bookbinder Varlin, prevented the recruitment of blacklegs and in two weeks raised 10,000 francs among the Paris trades, which saved the strike from defeat.<sup>31</sup> But the committee was now prosecuted and imprisoned and the IWMA was crushed in France. Moreover, in England, despite the help from abroad through the IWMA, and the outrage among trade unionists and radicals at the arrest of peaceful picketers, the London tailors' strike of April 1867 was defeated and their temporary combination ended.<sup>32</sup> In 1868 British trade union affiliation to the IWMA also fell, although they still responded to appeals for aid.<sup>33</sup>

The IWMA did revive in France 1869 under the leadership of Varlin, Malon, Richard and Aubry as a small, radical organization, but then gained a new importance through the great wave of combinations and strikes all over the country in 1869 and 1870. In many of them members of the IWMA took leading roles and the IWMA was swept along and developed systematic aid. Encouraged by exaggerated and unrealistic hopes of support from England, combinations and trade societies gave their adherence to the IWMA, some resistance societies joining just before they went on strike, although it is not clear what their membership amounted to. The Paris leather-dressers' strike of July to December 1869 aroused particular support among Paris trades and radicals because of the masters' use of the document, and the ever-active Varlin managed to group them in a Federal Committee of Working Men's Societies, officially separate from the IWMA but with the same leaders and using the same premises. Similar federations were formed in Lyons and Marseilles, and in the increasingly extreme wave of radical public meetings in Paris the speakers condemned the collusion between government and employers against strikes.<sup>34</sup> A panic developed, encouraged by the regime, in which the hand of the IWMA was seen in every strike. In truth the strike wave was not initiated or led by the IWMA, rather the strikers pushed the IWMA.<sup>35</sup>

31 Archer, *First International*, pp. 113–114.

32 *Tailor* 27 April 1867, pp. 41–42; 4 May, p. 54; 1 June, p. 110; *Working Man* 4 May 1867, pp. 4–6.

33 Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx*, p. 173.

34 Alain Dalotel, Alain Faure and Jean-Claude Freiermuth, *Aux origines de la Commune. Le mouvement des réunions publiques à Paris 1868–1870* (Paris, 1980), pp. 264–269.

35 Archer, *First International*, pp. 151–166, 197–203, 207, 211–223.

In the process the policy on strikes changed. Up to 1868 the IWMA gave support not to simple strikes for higher wages but in the sort of conflicts that would anyway have provoked wider aid among the trades, notably when lock-outs were imposed on the London tailors, Paris bronze-workers and Genevan building workers. The Paris bronze-workers were engaged in a number of disputes and strikes from 1864, but it was only with the lock-out in 1867 that the other trades and the IWMA rallied to their support. At the time of the Roubaix spinners' strike in 1867 against employers' regulations and machinery the Paris section of the IWMA confined itself to condemnation of the oppressive regulations, police actions against the strikes and the workers' machine-wrecking.<sup>36</sup> It did not support the many efforts at the time to improve wages or hours, such as the tailors' strike and the building trades' combination in Paris in 1867. While in 1869–70 it continued to be involved as before when there were lock-outs, such as of the Basle ribbon-weavers, or attacks on strikers by police or troops, such as at Charleroi, Seraing, St.-Etienne and St. Aubin, the situation had changed. Up to 1868 strikes had tended to be offensive ones among the more skilled artisan, building and engineering trades for improvements, but from 1868 the worsening economic situation provoked food riots, machine-wrecking and defensive strikes among less skilled industrial workers, especially in mining and textiles, which were more spontaneous, poorly organized and more violent. There was a greater readiness to support strikes against reductions than those for rises. and as branches in the provinces and Paris were swept along they moved to a blanket support for all strikes, most of which failed.<sup>37</sup>

The extent of the adherence of the French strikers to the IWMA and of its own independent strength is doubtful, especially after arrests in April and May in Paris and Lyons removed its leadership. This opened the way to dominance by the Blanquists, who, sensing the imminent fall of the Empire after the Victor Noir protests, had started joining the IWMA sections. Their concern for revolution left little interest in trade unions or the Paris trades' Federal Committee, which were moreover badly disrupted by the war, and so the involvement of the IWMA in trade unionism in France ended.<sup>38</sup> At the same time the IWMA in London also lost its trade union element as the inability of Continental workers' societies to prevent strike breakers coming to London became clear,<sup>39</sup>

36 *Working Man* 6 April 1867, pp. 4–5; Archer, *First International*, pp. 84–85.

37 Archer, *First International*, pp. 84–85, 142, 152, 202; Knudsen, "Strike history", pp. 313–315; Michelle Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève en France 1871–1890* (Paris, 1974), pp. 77–78.

38 APP Ba 439, Blanquistes, ff. 9–19; Archer, *First International*, pp. 209–210, 246–248.

39 APP, Internationale, Ba 435, 1172.

and its basis thenceforth increasingly lay in the metropolitan ultra-radical republican clubs and societies.

The IWMA had begun in England and France as a political organization, although the nature of the Second Empire meant that in France its politics had to be concealed and activities were channelled into fields that were or became allowed, such as club, education, benefit society, Exhibition delegations, elections, co-operation and trade organizations. In its early years the IWMA was small, weak and little known, but its survival came through support for strikes, whereby it achieved an important, if temporary juncture between political radicalism and trade unionism. Since this came through building on and furthering established practices, such as radical mobilization through workplaces and trade clubs, wider trade combinations, occasional support for these among other workers on particular kinds of issue, and trans-national support and aid, it is continuity that is most apparent. Nevertheless, it was original in creating a permanent international labour organization that mobilized international support for strikes and widened the range of strikes that were supported. In 1867 it achieved a peak in membership, importance and notoriety, when it secured support from trade unions hoping in England to prevent strike-breakers from the Continent and in France to receive extensive English financial aid. As the former did not materialize English trade union affiliation fell away. In France it was the strikes of 1869–70 that revived the IWMA from near-extinction and moved it into a blanket support for all types of strike, but this was in an unfavourable economic situation. Strikes did not succeed, the unrealistic hopes of English wealth could not be met and the General Council in London, overwhelmed by the volume of appeals, reacted against the rash and ill prepared strikes. While success in strikes caused the rise of the IWMA, failures led to its decline.





## Transnational Solidarity in the Making

### *Labour Strikes, Money Flows, and the First International, 1864–1872*

*Nicolas Delalande*

The International Working Men's Association (IWMA) was established during a period marked by an increase in the globalization of trade, information and political cultures.<sup>1</sup> It was one of the first international organizations (along with the Alliance israélite universelle and the International Committee of the Red Cross, among other examples from the early 1860s) to establish cross-border relations of solidarity among subaltern groups.<sup>2</sup> The promoters of the movement wanted to move beyond sentimental calls for brotherhood in order to establish real, effective solidarity between workers in different countries.<sup>3</sup> To do so, the organization planned to pool resources and workforces, thereby blocking the concentrated power of capital. Mobilizing workers' money was therefore one of its first tasks. Given that not all workers were properly educated or organized at this point, it was vital that flows of money could both

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- 1 This text has been translated from the French by Susannah Dale, thanks to research credits granted by the *Scientific Advisory Board* of Sciences Po Paris and by the programme Emergences of the Paris City Council. The original research and quotations were based on the French versions of the minutes of the General Council of the IWMA, published in the 1960s by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (*Le Conseil général de la Première Internationale, 1864–1866. La conférence de Londres 1865* (Moscou, 1972) and three other volumes covering the 1866–1871 period, published between 1973 and 1975). When possible, I have used the English versions of the same documents for the quotations referred to in this article, but it has not always been feasible, for some of the English volumes published by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism do not include all the quotations mentioned in the French ones. Therefore, footnotes always mention when quotations are directly translated from French documents.
  - 2 Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *The Mechanics of Internationalism. Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford, 2001); Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Malden, 2004); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2010); Madeleine Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (Darmstadt, 2009).
  - 3 See the official report of the General Council, Geneva Congress (1866), in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents publié sous la direction de Jacques Freymond* (Genève, 1962), t. 1, p. 30.

enable the IWMA to function and support the social struggles that were on the increase between 1864 and the early 1870s. This paper thus focuses on the organizational use of resources within the IWMA, and what this reveals about the links, both vertical and horizontal, that were formed between the General Council of London and local sections from its establishment up until the Paris Commune. The hypothesis therefore consists in following the money trail in order to gain a better understanding of the moral economy of this early experience of workers' internationalism. Money matters, as economic sociology has clearly demonstrated, are by no means crass material issues devoid of ideological, social or moral implications. On the contrary, analysing them allows us to gain a practical understanding of the principles that guided the IWMA leaders as well as the contradictions that concerned and divided them.<sup>4</sup>

Having consulted reports of the General Council of London from 1864 to 1871, records of conference decisions from 1866 to 1872, and some of the many printed sources from the period, we shall highlight the recurring debates that motivated the IWMA in the area of fundraising and money flows.<sup>5</sup> Week after week, the members of the General Council faced problems that forced them to put their political principles to the test. What contribution should each member make? Should supporters be sanctioned for late payment? Was it possible to organise a Europe-wide system of loans to support strikes? How could they ensure these loans would be repaid and lead to proper reciprocity? Should workers be helped with a donation, a subscription or a free loan? These were all issues the IWMA had to resolve through their day-to-day experiences, in London or in local sections, and they were reflected in the theoretical discussions taking place in conferences on the subjects of credit, justice, centralism and decentralization. Above all, they encouraged people to think of the IWMA as an ephemeral and fruitless experiment with the aim of constructing a kind of workers' State, which could raise resources then centralize and redistribute them. Naturally, the anti-authoritarian branches of the organization strongly opposed this perspective; nevertheless, it formed a key part of the theoretical and practical debates that marked the existence of this exceptionally ambitious organization between 1864 and 1872.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Viviana Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money* (Princeton, 1994).

5 This article mostly builds upon examples taken from the French context (as far as strikes are concerned). A wider enquiry based on other European strikes and money flows is in progress.

6 Even the antiauthoritarian Bakunin found it necessary to build an "International state of millions of workers", Basle Congress (1869), see Association internationale des travailleurs, *Compte rendu du IV<sup>e</sup> congrès international tenu à Bâle en septembre 1869* (Bruxelles, 1869), p. 80.

### The IWMA's Resources: An Idol with Feet of Clay

The supposed wealth of the International Working Men's Association gave rise to a number of myths. Its opponents were concerned by the organization's absolute power and suspected it of raising vast sums of money right across Europe in order to finance strikes and destabilize the authorities.<sup>7</sup> Governments, informers and spies sought to alert the public to the risk posed by the First International, whose stated aim was to pool workers' resources in order to block those accrued by the holders of capital.

#### *Behind the Myth*

The members of the General Council were more aware of the limited resources at their disposal and fully realised the exaggerated and far-fetched nature of these stories. At the General Council of August 1869, Marx expressed his amusement at an article published in the London issue of the French police publication, *L'International*, which accused the IWMA of exercising a "universal dictatorship" and of being "now occupied in filling its cash-box and as soon as that was accomplished it would decree its laws".<sup>8</sup> Likewise, in the report he drew up a few weeks later for the Basle Conference, he mentioned the rumour that the Swiss authorities had sent "a messenger" to London "on the fantastic errand of ascertaining the dimensions of the International general 'treasury-box'".<sup>9</sup> If the General Council members seem to have distanced themselves from these accusations, it was because they had no illusions about their inglorious financial situation. In fact it rather suited them to let the authorities believe they were omnipotent. It was better to appear wealthy and intimidating than to publicly acknowledge their limited means. The General Council therefore did nothing to counter the stories that were circulating in that regard, except to refute the notion that they were encouraging strikes from London.

This issue became more complex when it came to calling for subscriptions from members: would this not advertise their poverty and make them appear weak to the authorities? Hit hard by unemployment, in November 1866 campaigners in Lyon demanded, through Eugène Dupont, that a subscription be launched right across Europe. The General Council chose to refrain, fearful

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7 See for instance the well-known account given by the French spy Oscar Testut, who infiltrated the Lyons section of the IWMA (*L'Internationale. Son origine, son but, son caractère ...* (Paris, 1871 [3rd ed.]) pp. 61–62).

8 Minutes of the General Council, 10 August 1869 (*Documents of the First International, 1868–1870* (London [etc.], 1974) p. 139).

9 *Documents of the First International, 1868–1870*, p. 328.

that such an action would expose the organization's weaknesses.<sup>10</sup> The same issue was raised in the summer of 1870, when the General Council lacked funds to distribute the speech Marx had written on the subject of the Franco-Prussian War. Some members suggested establishing a subscription in order to build up a printing fund. The General Secretary of the Council, a German named Johann Eccarius, was opposed to the move: "This would mean telling the public that we are short of funds, and this would reduce our importance, which depends largely on the belief that we have considerable sums at our disposal, and would bring no money in at all. The worst thing we can do is to tell the public and the governments that we are poor". The IWMA's reputation and the fear it instilled in the authorities was, indeed, a question of belief. Hermann Jung added, "If we reveal our poverty, the press will not respect us as it does now; people believe we are powerful because they think we have a great deal of money".<sup>11</sup> In the same vein, in February 1871 the activist Auguste Serrailier, in France at the time, refused to deny the rumour published by *Le Figaro* that the Bonapartist authorities had given the First International a sum of 200,000 francs, for fear of making people realise that the IWMA was not as wealthy as it seemed. The organization exercised the same caution when publishing the number of supporters. Marx deemed it preferable not to "reveal [...] the true strength [of the movement], because the public still thinks that the active members are far more numerous than they really are".<sup>12</sup>

For several years, the Council simply did not have a clear idea of the state of its finances, which it managed approximatively as needs required. As in any organization, the financial question nevertheless constituted a real power issue. It was not until the spring of 1870 that several members of the Council spoke of the need to establish a finance committee. They had some figures on the revenue and spending of the General Council for previous years, but an accumulation of unpaid debts (the Geneva Conference of 1866 had led to a debt of 40 pounds, of which only 21 had been repaid four years later, in 1870<sup>13</sup>) was making the situation unclear, particularly when each conference incurred further expenses that were scarcely covered by the payment of subscriptions. It was not uncommon to see Council members put their hands in their own pockets to keep the operation afloat.

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10 Minutes of the General Council, 6 November 1866.

11 Minutes of the General Council, 26 July 1870 [translated from the French version].

12 Minutes of the General Council, 20 December 1870, p. 82 [translated from the French version].

13 Minutes of the General Council, 9 August 1870.

In the summer of 1870, the task of improving the Association's financial management was placed on the agenda. No sooner had the finance committee been appointed – made up of Mottershead, Lucraft and Harris – than it came under fire. All three men defended themselves by condemning the lack of rigour and professionalism they had observed in the running of the accounts. They expressed surprise that an organization as ambitious as the IWMA could have such a flawed accounting system. Mottershead stated that “the books are managed in such a negligient fashion that one blushes just to look at them”, while Harris considered that “the books are not kept as is done in business and would be condemned in the courts”. The local sections, too, were highly critical of the “Council's too-primitive accounting” when they were asked to approve it during conferences.<sup>14</sup> The Council could not be sure of the total amount of debt it had to repay or the number of subscriptions that had not yet been paid by the sections. A few months later, a discussion was held on the possibility of reducing the Council's general expenses, at the initiative of a new finance committee (made up of Boon, Hales and Serrailier). It was suggested that the salary of General Secretary Eccarius should be lowered; this was set at 15 shillings and was a burden on the Council's budget. The General Council was divided into those who thought the First International should be managed according to the voluntary activism model (Hales stated that “there are thousands of people who have devoted their lives to a movement without expecting any payment”) and those for whom its ambition and international dimension required specific skills that should be matched with appropriate payment. The tension between voluntary engagement and professionalism affected the General Council itself, which had to address directly the issue of a fair salary for its Secretary. For Milner, who condemned “the cheese-paring economies of the Manchester school”, competence came at a price: “The Secretary's work should not be measured according to ordinary business rules. The Association's Secretary must be a capable man known throughout Europe and America, and just finding such a man requires money”.<sup>15</sup>

In 1870–1871, there was no doubt that the organization's management needed to become more professional by appointing a finance secretary, but such a move clashed with a founding principle of the IWMA, which had been established on the basis that workers were best able to determine their own

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14 See the 9th session of the London conference, 22 September 1871, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 2, p. 211 [translated from the French].

15 Minutes of the General Council, 18 October 1870 [all quotations translated from the French version].

destiny.<sup>16</sup> This sociological premise was, however, the cause of the organization's problems, and several Council members observed that finances were too serious a matter to be entrusted to unqualified individuals. This ambiguity could be clearly seen in the choice of finance secretary: Marx and Friedrich Lessner suggested that Engels, who had just joined the Council in September 1870, should take up the position; Engels refused, however, believing that "only workers should be appointed for anything related to finances", unlike Marx, who thought that "a former trader is the best person for the job".<sup>17</sup> The organization continued to swing between a workerist principle and a logic based on professional competence. The London Conference of September 1871, rather belatedly, established a kind of compromise: it acknowledged the need to hand the accounting over to a specialist, who would be monitored by an inspection committee made up of workers.

*The Payment of Subscriptions, between Voluntary and Compulsory Participation*

The Association's fragile financial situation could be explained by the difficulty it experienced collecting subscriptions from the different sections. Its European-wide approach was entirely new. It was no longer a question of providing occasional support to workers in another country when they were hit by conflict or disaster, but rather of paying an annual subscription that proved that the local sections supported and were part of a developing organization. The Council, keen to increase the Association's membership, faced a dilemma: when dealing with societies that wished to join, if it focused too much on the need to contribute it ran the risk of scaring off those with limited resources; on the other hand, granting membership to societies that did not contribute could weaken the organization, whose numbers were increasing faster than its resources. As General Secretary Eccarius explained at the London Conference of 1871, "there are many more sections that feature in the minutes than in the accounting books".<sup>18</sup>

The International's ability to collect outstanding subscriptions was a recurring problem between 1865 and 1872. Certainly, workers in England and on the continent were accustomed to making regular contributions to mutual benefit

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16 See for instance how Marx explained this mismanagement at the London conference, 9th session of the London conference, 22 September 1871, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 2, p. 212.

17 Minutes of the General Council, 18 et 25 October 1870 [translated from the French version].

18 *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 2, p. 177 [translated from the French].

societies, which were often based on interpersonal exchanges and communities of businesses. The IWMA, meanwhile, had brought about a change on an unprecedented scale: workers now contributed remotely to an organization based in London, whose leaders were little known and whose management during the early years had been far from exemplary. Relationships based on trust and shared experience were essential for facilitating an automatic contribution from members. Furthermore, IWMA subscriptions were implemented on two levels: workers had to contribute to the section to which they belonged (the subscription amounts varied considerably according to the resolutions adopted<sup>19</sup>) and to the General Council, which required an annual payment of one pence to cover its costs. Like any federal organization, the First International had problems distributing resources between local sections and the central branch. Incidentally, this was one of the clear causes of the conflict that was brewing between Marxists and Bakuninists in the late 1860s. While ideology played an obvious role, purely organizational factors should not be underestimated. The General Council was afraid that sections with a high degree of local autonomy might emerge, including on a financial level. Marx thus inserted a hand-written remark in the version of the resolutions of the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy that he was annotating, on the subject of the subscriptions collected by that section: "New taxes absorbing our own contributions!".<sup>20</sup> The General Council was constantly reminding the sections of their financial duty, which must be performed if the London centre was to continue doing its job.

The subscription fee, both individual and collective, was also a source of disagreement. On a number of occasions, discussions took place to determine whether it was right to establish a set fee for each supporter in those societies requesting collective membership of the Association, or whether it was possible to adjust the fee according to their size, relative wealth and professional singularity. The theoretical amount paid to the General Council, initially set at 3 pence then 1 pence, was only of value on paper. There was a fierce debate on the matter at the Geneva Conference of 1866. Lawrence, the London representative, argued for a certain amount of flexibility, which was necessary to avoid frightening off the English societies; the French Proudhonians, on the other hand, argued for an uncompromisingly egalitarian approach, fearing that those same societies, the richest in Europe, might be given preferential

19 Oscar Testut mentions monthly subscriptions ranging from 10 to 60 centimes for various French sections (Lyons, Paris, Rouen and so on), *L'Internationale, son but*, p. 60.

20 *Le Conseil général de la Première Internationale, 1868–1870* (Moscou, 1974), Karl Marx's remarks on the program of the the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy.

treatment. For Ernest-Édouard Fribourg, from Paris, there was “an inequality of rights, because there is an equality of duties”.<sup>21</sup> He, too, concluded that all members should pay the same amount.

In practice, the General Council showed great pragmatism, and when a society with hundreds or even thousands of members joined the Association it usually received a discount on the average subscription fee per member. This solution seemed preferable to a hard-line approach that could discourage trade unions from taking part in an organization whose usefulness, they believed, was not always apparent. When the London *Deutscher Arbeiter Bildungs Verein*, comprising 1800 members, announced its plan to join the First International, it offered to pay two pounds a year to the General Council (which was equivalent to a quarter of a penny per member, in other words four times less than the amount established in the resolutions). To those who took exception, Marx replied that justice did not consist in “making everyone pay alike whatever his means might be”.<sup>22</sup> In reality, and despite the Council’s objurgations, large societies wishing to join the Association were invited to set their own joining fee, much like the Birmingham trade unions in October 1870, who were only told what the carpenters and joiners, for their part, were contributing.<sup>23</sup> The Council’s main concern was avoiding a scenario in which a society joined without paying any fee at all, and it reminded all its correspondants of this, particularly those in Germany, in December 1868. Any amount would do, even if it was lower than those laid down in the official resolutions. It is worth noting that these debates on the fairness of contributions were taking place at every level of the Association and workers’ movement. The Parisian bronze workers, on strike in March 1867, faced the same issues when trying to establish the daily contribution that each worker should make to the strike fund. Some argued for unchanging, flat-rate fees, while others preferred proportionality, which was considered to be a fairer way of taking account of different people’s salary levels.<sup>24</sup> Once again, the IWMA’s theoretical debates on distributive justice (particularly on the subject of taxes<sup>25</sup>) were put to the test in the practical task of managing the organization and social movements.

21 Geneva Congress, 8 September 1866, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 1, p. 55 [translated from the French].

22 Minutes of the General Council, 15 December 1868 (*Documents of the First International, 1868–1870*, p. 53).

23 Minutes of the General Council, 18 October 1870.

24 *Historique de la grève du bronze en 1867*, Paris, typographie de Gaittet, 1867.

25 Cf. Geneva Congress, 1866, Section 7, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 1, p. 35.



Naturally, the First International was not the only organization to face these difficulties. Based on free participation and with no real enforcement authority, the organizations of civil society were required to develop sophisticated methods in order to raise funds among their members. Turning solidarity into action demanded know-how and a particular way of doing things that would encourage people to hand over their money. During its first years of existence, the First International focused in particular on mobilizing English societies. On 28 November 1865, "Citizen Jung made an appeal to the British members to be up and doing to collect money for the Congress and declared that the *dolce far niente* [delightful idleness] of the British members paralysed his efforts among his own countrymen in London and Switzerland".<sup>26</sup> Several decades later, Kautsky also recalled that inculcating the practice of contributing among its members was one of the First International's major challenges.<sup>27</sup>

Although the leading members of the First International were creating an entirely new organization, they sought inspiration in existing efforts, including from outside the world of labour. In the minutes of the General Council, it is not uncommon to find references to the fundraising practices of religious or philanthropic associations, which some members were keen to imitate. In 1865, several English leaders cited the example of Robert Owen's movement in order to propose that a commemorative medal should be created for the London Conference of 1865. Others, including Marx, were more sceptical and opposed the move on the grounds that the organization was still in its infancy and had done nothing special to commemorate.<sup>28</sup> Although rejected, this proposal nevertheless shows a desire to develop material links between the organization and its members. A more conventional method consisted in launching appeals for contributions, even of very small sums, which other organizations were already doing. In 1865, the radical English campaigner William Cremer is recorded as stating that, "as it was by collecting pence that the religious bodies raised the greater part of the money for propagandism, [...] in this instance we might with benefit borrow their plan of action. There

26 Minutes of the General Council, 28 November 1865, p. 119 [translated from the French version].

27 « The payment of regular contributions was a thing to which the workers had first to grow accustomed. On the Continent at first it would have been easier to get up a riot than to get them to pay affiliated contributions », Kautsky quoted by H. Collins, « The international and the British Labour movement: origin of the international in England », in *La Première Internationale. L'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), p. 37.

28 London conference, 25 September 1865, minutes reproduced in *The General Council of the First International, 1864–1866. The London Conference 1865* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 231–250.

were hundreds who would give one penny but would not give a shilling".<sup>29</sup> During its first years, the Association was open to any means of raising funds, no matter how insignificant.

Gradually, however, the IWMA refined its methods of collecting subscriptions, particularly by devising increasingly bureaucratic measures. Members were required to obtain a member's card when they joined the organisation, which was provided in exchange for payment of the subscription fee (see Figures 5.1–5.3). The London Conference of 1871 took this reflection on the link between membership and subscription even further. To counter the high number of outstanding debts that was weakening the International's finances, conference attendees decided to establish a committee responsible for thinking of new ways of raising money. The system proposed by the committee consisted in encouraging each member of the Association to affix an annual stamp worth 1 pence to his member's card, which would renew his membership. If they failed to do so, members would not be admitted to the following conference. Engels was among those who argued in favour of imposing strict sanctions (including exclusion) against those who did not meet their obligations.<sup>30</sup>

Methods also changed within the Council. Sections that remained in debt were monitored more closely and issued with frequent reminders. Citizen Morris proposed setting up a blackboard in the Council room listing societies that were late to make payment. This desire to impose sanctions and control the IWMA's income more efficiently was part of a more general hardening of the relations between the organization's different divisions. A few years earlier, Marx had seemed a good deal more pragmatic with regard to this issue, believing that financial matters should not deter societies from joining the International. In 1870–1871, however, faced with the Bakuninist threat, there was a change of tone. The Spanish representatives at the Hague Conference of 1872 were the first to bear the brunt of this. Suspected of having Bakuninist links, they were informed that their mandate could only be validated on the condition that they cleared all of their outstanding subscription payments. After lengthy negotiations, the Spanish representative Rafael Farga i Pellicer consented to give some money to the president of the congress in order to obtain the validation of his compatriots' mandates.<sup>31</sup> The First International adopted uncompromising practices for collecting subscriptions just as its internal divisions were becoming more marked: in this specific case, the

29 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

30 *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 2, p. 189.

31 The Hague Congress, 1872, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 2, p. 338.

requirement to meet financial obligations served as an ideological call to order for sections considered suspicious.

### **Strike Money: Transnational Solidarity within the First International**

The money collected by the General Council in the form of annual subscriptions as a means of financing its activities in fact represented only a small fraction of the money transfers made between the different bodies of the First International. As well as vertical transfers from the sections to the Council, which helped strengthen the organization and meet general costs (rent, salaries, correspondance, printing, congresses), there were a great many horizontal transfers between sections; the General Council was aware of these without necessarily monitoring them. Money circulated across borders, from one section to another, in the form of aid and donations to finance the strikes and resistance to lockouts that were frequent between 1865 and 1871 in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy.<sup>32</sup>

The Council's role was not clear, however. It centralized knowledge of social conflicts and financial requests issued by particular sections, and functioned much like an international observatory capable of sharing and disseminating, via its national representatives, information on the state of the mobilizations that were underway. This informative role was coupled with the power to call upon sections, particularly those in England, to come to the aid of workers on strike, thereby creating the conditions for transnational solidarity between workers. However, the Council itself had never really been in a position to manage flows of money, apart from on a few rare occasions, in a way that would guarantee equalization on a European scale. The difficulties it encountered were practical as well as theoretical: the conflict between centralists and federalists ran through the very core of the organization, and some feared that the Council had taken on the characteristic functions of a State, which consisted in collecting and redistributing resources. The well-known ideological differences between Marxists, Proudhonians, Bakuninists and Blanquists materialised on very specific issues: the circulation and control of money were

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32 Knud Knudsen, « The Strike History of the First International », in Frits Van Holthoorn and Marcel Van der Linden (ed), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 305–322.

indicators of the type of solidarity that the International wanted to develop between European and American workers.

*The Role of the General Council: Information and Coordination*

Very soon after the establishment of the IWMA and the support shown for the Leipzig typographers in 1865, calls for help flooded in from across Europe, which put the General Council in an awkward position. For many societies, federations and committees on the continent, the highly organized British trade unions were seen as sources of money to be called upon in times of strike.

The requests received in London appeared to be based on a misunderstanding. Much like the authorities and police services, which had an entirely false notion of the IWMA's available income, the sections on the continent imagined that the Association had considerable financial reserves and would have no trouble providing funds. In fact, with a few exceptions, the First International did not have its own budget for assisting strikers on the continent. Its role was limited to researching, writing and distributing communications, and acting as a go-between for continental sections and British sections. Indeed, the organization's leaders were reluctant to respond to the increasing numbers of requests for help (particularly given that the Council saw its role as being far broader than just registering and supporting strike movements), but they saw these requests as a positive sign because they were proof of the interest that the Association was sparking among workers from different areas and nationalities of Europe and the American continent. However, they were also a source of weakness and incoherence in so far as the London Conference members wanted to be able to coordinate the different strike movements rather than make a scattered response to their emergence. Furthermore, it seems to have been difficult for them to make too many requests to the English societies, whose relations with the First International had never been straightforward, without draining their resources and enthusiasm. On several occasions, particularly from 1868–1870, the General Council was concerned about the number of conflicts (strikes or lockouts), which were all too often improvised and badly organized. The calls for help were evidence of both the hope people placed in the IWMA and the weakness of the strike committees, which did not have sufficient local resources to put up a sustained fight against their employers. The Geneva section, which issued many requests for help in 1869 and was frustrated by the lack of response, was thus criticized for its tendency to provide uncoordinated support for a large number of small strikes that did not have enough funds to take long-term action. For the members of the General Council, transnational solidarity should go hand in hand with proper

coordination among strikers themselves, who were supposed to receive support from local resistance societies and well-prepared strike funds. Ideally, the General Council would hope to be consulted before a strike broke out, although in reality this almost never happened.<sup>33</sup> At the beginning of 1870, there were so many requests, coming from Belgium and Germany in particular, that correspondants were asked to inform people that there was no possibility of obtaining financial aid from London under existing circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

More often than not, the General Council's role was limited to disseminating information and establishing contact between delegations of strikers and English societies, although many of these did not necessarily need the Council's mediation, as there was already a high level of solidarity between professional groups.<sup>35</sup> On several occasions, the General Council published communications in support of European strikers such as the Belgian miners of Marchiennes in February 1867, the Parisian bronze workers the following March, the puddlers of Seraing, in Belgium, in April 1869 and the building workers of Geneva in June 1870. These texts were circulated in the many newspapers affiliated with the International, through national representatives and in workers meetings. They were intended to mobilize overseas sections and raise funds (as well as preventing attempts by employers to import foreign workforces in order to break the strikes). However, Marx was concerned by the large number of these communications. During the Creusot strike of 1870, he stated that "from everywhere money was sent, and it would have a bad effect if London sent only words".<sup>36</sup> To his mind, the General Council's role could not be limited to incantation. It also had to prove its ability to provide concrete support for movements that needed it.

### *Transfers and Redistributions*

Even though its financial contribution was limited, the General Council played an important part in establishing contact between striking workers, be they French, German, Belgian or Swiss, and those who were the most likely to come to their aid – in other words the English workers.

The Parisian bronze workers' strike of 1867 is the most symbolic example of the Council's *modus operandi* during the period. A Parisian delegation was dispatched to London in March 1867 in order to shore up support and help.

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33 Minutes of the General Council, 6 and 13 April 1869.

34 Minutes of the General Council, 4 January 1870.

35 Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1894), p. 218.

36 Minutes of the General Council, 26 April 1870 (*Documents of the First International, 1868–1870, op. cit.*, p. 229).

The three bronze workers' representatives, assisted by several members of the General Council, were received by around 20 English societies, which agreed to provide them with donations and loans. The presence of the General Council was not a decisive factor but it did make the Parisian workers' request easier, because it enabled information to be passed on effectively to the various societies and gave the delegation a more official status.<sup>37</sup> This was also the case on other occasions, for example during the Geneva building workers' strike and the Basle ribbon workers' strike in 1869. The Parisian foundry workers sent their own delegation in June 1870. Making the trip to London, although not a requirement for a successful strike movement, became a necessary stage for these conflicts that lasted a long time and called for large sums of money. The General Council was fortunate to have several trade union representatives among its members and was able to provide accommodation for those who made the journey from the continent. The funds that were raised, while not vast, were far from insignificant. According to the minutes of the General Council, English societies approved financial support in the form of donations and loans to the sum of 58 pounds (1450 francs) for the Parisian bronze workers (who also received donations and loans from Marseille, Lyon, Bordeaux, Geneva, Lausanne, etc.), although it is not clear whether or not the full amount made it as far as France.<sup>38</sup> A breakdown made for the Sotteville-lès-Rouen strike of 1869, for example, showed that of 2500 francs collected, 500 came from London, in other words one fifth of the overall resources.<sup>39</sup>

How much freedom did the Council have to direct the money transfers that linked European workers' societies together? On a number of occasions, its members tried to expand its role of merely passing on information and relaying local requests in an effort to redirect flows of money from one region to another. This was especially true when the Sotteville-lès-Rouen workers' strike broke out at the beginning of 1869. Marx and Robert Applegarth recalled that the carpenters and joiners from London had lent the Parisian bronze workers 20 pounds in the spring of 1867. Considering the money had not yet been repaid, they proposed instructing the bronze workers to transfer an equivalent

37 *Historique de la grève du bronze en 1867*, p. 49; Minutes of the General Council, 12 March 1867; *Le Courrier français*, 10 and 17 March 1867.

38 Statistics based on the minutes of the General Council, 12 et 19 March, 2, 9 and 16 April 1867.

39 Publication of the « Cercle d'études économiques de l'arrondissement de Rouen », General Assembly of 7 February 1869, in *Les révolutions du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, 1852–1872*, 9 vol., (Paris, 1988), v, *L'AIT en France*.

amount to the textile workers of Normandy. On that occasion, the General Council tried to supervise the allocation of cross-border loans between societies as a means of avoiding having to launch further appeals for financial support. The money lent to the continent could stay there as long as it was being used to fund strikes. Johannard, authorized by the General Council, went to Paris himself in order to recover the 20 pounds from the bronze workers and take the money straight to Normandy. For Applegarth, every time the English societies “had advanced money to any body of men on the Continent it had always been with recommendation of the International, in fact he considered the money has having been lent to the International and hence he thought we were perfectly justified in transferring it from one body to another”.<sup>40</sup> In this spirit, the International could act as a kind of clearing house for workers, ensuring that the sums lent matched the loans requested. This notion offended some people, as can be seen from the debate on resistance funds that took place during the Basle Conference of September 1869. While everyone agreed on the need for a more widespread use of this type of structure, which underpinned collective movements, the anti-authoritarians were concerned that a super-State might be established within the International, coordinating resistance funds and controlling the management and transfer of money. For the Belgian delegate Eugène Hins, for example, resistance societies should first and foremost be “a trigger for decentralization, since the different centres will differ by industry, which shall, in a way, form separate States, and shall permanently prevent a return to the old form of the centralist State: this will not, however, prevent another type of government for local relations”. The Frenchman Julien Fruneau, a representative of the carpenters, echoed his feeling: “What he fears above all is the creation of a State, which he wants nothing to do with”.<sup>41</sup>

The money transfers carried out under the aegis of the IWMA also encountered technical and material obstacles. Delays in decision-making and relaying were not always adapted to suit the timescale of strike movements, the outcomes of which could change from day to day. Information took time to circulate (it is worth noting that the Council was very concerned about postal costs, which were a *sine qua non* condition for an international organization of its kind<sup>42</sup>) between the continent and London, and English societies were keen to gather members together in order to hold votes before sending any money.

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40 Minutes of the General Council, 5 January 1869 (*Documents of the First International, 1868–1870*, p. 58).

41 Association internationale des travailleurs, *Compte rendu du IV<sup>e</sup> congrès international*, pp. 145–146 [translated from the French].

42 See Cremer’s proposal for uniform postal fees in Europe, Geneva congress, 8 September 1866, in *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, t. 1, p. 57.

The time taken to reach a decision explains why certain sums of money that had been voted on were sometimes approved too late, after the strikes had already ended. Even if the decision was made quickly enough, it also took time to physically transfer the money, especially in a context in which the national police were watching closely over the activities of members of the International. The organization of transnational solidarity therefore depended on the technical, social and police infrastructures that conditioned it. The loan approved by London mechanics for Parisian foundry workers in 1870 is a good example of this. The General Council welcomed the decision but was unsure of the wisest way of transferring the funds to Paris. It ruled out the postal services on account of the police checks and tense atmosphere in the French capital. The only possible solution was to send an envoy to take the money in person; according to the Council, this was both the safest and most likely way to have a positive impact on the strikers' morale, as it would be a physical and human sign of the solidarity that was being shown towards them.<sup>43</sup> On other occasions, however, the intermediaries who were supposed to transfer the money were not entirely trustworthy. The Belgian workers, who were promised considerable sums of money following the Seraing violence, complained that they had only received 200 francs and had no news of the correspondent who had been given the task of handing over funds.<sup>44</sup> Transnational solidarity came up against the harsh limitations that the States tried to impose on it, as well as the difficulty of establishing networks of trust that were completely reliable on a European scale.

*The Moral Economy of Solidarity between Workers: The Ethics of Reciprocity*

Beyond the General Council's intervention, the practice of providing assistance, loans and donations to other sections established a transnational solidarity that linked the different sections to one another through aid and funding. The IWMA thus provided a framework for developing ways of using money for transnational campaigns, which formed long-distance bonds of solidarity between groups that did not know each other personally. As the historian Marcel Van der Linden pointed out, solidarity during this period was, by nature, fundamentally "sub-national", because there was no national organization that could centralize exchanges and conversations.<sup>45</sup>

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43 Minutes of the General Council, 12 July 1870.

44 Minutes of the General Council, 16 November 1869.

45 "It is important to note that all cross-border solidarity in these cases was at a sub-national level. Because no national trade unions as yet existed, international contacts were always between local organizations in different countries. It was in fact a 'sub-national



When a section took the decision to come to another section's aid, it would generally vote on two types of assistance that were very different in terms of their form and the social links they entailed. Straightforward *donations* did exist, but always represented a lower sum of money than the amounts *lent* between sections. In April 1870, for example, the Antwerp cigar makers expressly requested to be given loans rather than donations.<sup>46</sup> Most importantly, solidarity between workers should not resemble charity; rather, in the International, it was established according to the model of free loans and credit, which was the Proudhonians' favoured model. Here we find a connection between the theoretical debates of the International, which focused in particular on the use of credit as an instrument through which to promote workers' autonomy, and the mutual aid practices it helped to foster between European workers.<sup>47</sup> To raise the funds they needed, the sections could either vote to lend part of their capital – if they had any – or else organize subscriptions or meetings at which the participants were asked to contribute. In this way, the International was able to expand throughout Europe the practices of mutual aid and credit that already existed at local level. Despite everything, the Proudhonians, who were opposed to strikes, were optimistic about the possibility of creating a federation of workers' banks under the auspices of the First International. Even Pierre Denis, editor of *Le Courrier français*, eventually conceded: "If all the workers in Europe were organized into societies as the English are, it is quite clear that strikes would become useful by establishing solidarity between them".<sup>48</sup>

The circulation of loans helped to forge an ethics of reciprocity between the European sections. Free credit had to be reimbursed at some point in the near or distant future. Naturally, the sections did not sign a formal contract for the amounts they owed each other, but the fact that the money was forwarded under the International's supervision strengthened a mutual feeling of obligation and solidarity. The language used by the sections that received loans provides a clear illustration of this by highlighting the notion of a moral and financial debt. Below is the Paris bronze workers' expression of gratitude to the English sections that came to their assistance:

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internationalism", Marcel Van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden, 2008), p. 270.

46 Minutes of the General Council, 4 April 1871.

47 See for instance Association internationale des travailleurs (section de Rouen), *Grève du Creuzot*, 1870, 2 p. (signed: E. Aubry, 6 April 1870).

48 *Le Courrier français*, 17 March 1867 [translated from the French].

We have contracted a material debt and a debt of gratitude, whose solidarity is felt by all our members, and it is clear that if any of us were to forget what they owe the rest, by leaving our society before we are completely free of it, they would be reviled by our comrades who remain loyal to their commitments. Their regret at their own failing would be added to the pain they would feel to be rejected by the rest. We hope that we shall not be afflicted by such a desertion, and that all our comrades shall honour the moral and financial commitments that we have contracted for our common emancipation.<sup>49</sup>

In the end, the bronze workers did not repay the English workers the loan until two years later, in 1869, after several reminders from the General Council, which expressed its concern on a number of occasions with regard to the effect that their late payment might have on London societies that they might hope to mobilize for other causes (for example, to support the Geneva strikers in January 1868<sup>50</sup>). However, the financial circuit did not stop there: the Council members (Jung, Dupont and Lucraft) who were appointed to return money to the professional societies of London were, in exchange, given the task of recovering the contributions that those same societies still owed to the Council in anticipation of the Conference being held in September 1869.<sup>51</sup> The International thus appears to have been structured by a dense network of debts, from section to section, from sections to the Council and vice versa.

A more systematic analysis would enable us to precisely map the series of loans and repayments that were being sent in all directions. To return to our previous example, in May 1869 the Parisian bronze workers hastened to launch an appeal to come to the aid of the Belgian victims of Seraing and Le Borinage, right at a time when they had voted in favour of the principle of reimbursing English societies. There was no doubt that benefiting from a loan during a struggle increased the likelihood that the recipients would provide a loan themselves in other circumstances, not necessarily directly to those who had initially lent the money, but to any workers who identified with the International's cause. On the other hand, if the credit relation only extended in one direction, with no reimbursement of any loans, then the cycle of financial transfers could be brought to a halt. When asked to help the Parisian bronze workers in March 1867, the London mechanics chose to decline the request:

49 *Historique de la grève du bronze en 1867, op. cit.*, p. 29 [translated from the French].

50 Minutes of the General Council, 21 January 1868.

51 Minutes of the General Council, 17 August 1869.

they stated that they had lent considerable sums of money to the Parisian stonemasons over the previous months but had not yet been repaid.<sup>52</sup> Even though sanctions could not be imposed on societies that did not meet their moral obligations (in the absence of a coercive authority, a role that, strictly speaking, the General Council did not play), the impact was immediately apparent: the chain of reciprocity was broken and the solidarity that had been established was temporarily put on hold.

The sections of the First International saw the provision of loans as a more egalitarian practice than making donations, and one that was more respectful of different groups' autonomy. Nevertheless, relations of dependence did feature in this climate of reciprocity. The case of the women silk workers of Lyon, on strike in the summer of 1869, is enlightening: they eventually joined the International in order to benefit from the assistance it promised them. This example shows that the leaders of the International were trying to create an exclusive network of solidarity: only those who expressly decided to join could benefit. In this case, the provision of aid was not free from strategic considerations.<sup>53</sup>

### *Aid and Solidarity for the Oppressed*

Loans gave way to donations in the most desperate cases. The IWMA's register also emphasized a fraternal aid for oppressed workers, which was part of the wider context of developing philanthropic transnational practices, which flourished in the nineteenth century (a precedent had been set, for example, by the Greek uprisings in the 1820s, the deportees of 1851 and, nearer in time to the 1860s, the emergence of the international humanitarian movement<sup>54</sup>). The register of donation and solidarity was more explicit in dramatic situations involving arrests, deportations or violence. It was no longer a question of loans or mutual aid, but rather a feeling of humanity towards "brothers" who were victims of the repression of bourgeois States. In 1867, for example, there was a call for help from the Belgian miners of Marchiennes, who had been repressed by the army. The General Council, which disapproved of their methods, nevertheless found it difficult not to show concern for their wives and orphaned children. The principle of a general subscription was rejected, but an appeal was launched, expressing the English societies' feeling of moral and organizational superiority over their Belgian counterparts: "The moral influence that

52 Minutes of the General Council, 2 April 1867.

53 Claire Auzias and Annik Houel, *La grève des ovalistes. Lyon, juin-juillet 1869* (Paris, 1982).

54 See for instance Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre. Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton, 2011).

would result from some financial assistance for widows and orphans, coming from abroad, would strengthen the courage of the entire working class and would lead to communications and exchanges of ideas that would give our brothers on the continent a better idea of how to wage labour struggles, and of the kind of organization and education our armies need".<sup>55</sup> The aid, which was given in the form of a donation, served the veiled function of instructing and moralizing the less well-organized workers on the continent. In April 1867, the attitude of the Parisian bronze workers towards the Roubaix spinners was similar: they condemned the Northern workers' immaturity and use of violence, which could not fail to incite repression by the authorities, while sending them money in order to "relieve these innocent heirs of a past of ignorance and poverty".<sup>56</sup> The General Council also launched appeals to support the puddlers of the Seraing iron factory in April 1869,<sup>57</sup> and for the benefit of the families of German campaigners arrested at the beginning of 1871.<sup>58</sup>

The most dramatic example, however, was the influx of refugees from the Paris Commune to London following the massacres of the bloody week in May 1871. The General Council felt compelled to provide assistance to the campaigners, considering the scale of the violence that had been inflicted on them. Even so, implementing that aid proved challenging. A relief fund was established but it was soon clear that it was not sufficient to deal with the large number of refugees who were coming to the Council in June and July 1871. A General Council delegation went to the House of Commons in an effort to raise funds from members of parliament who supported the workers' cause. The solidarity expressed by the English public seemed limited, which saddened Engels: "It is now clear that there is nothing more to gain from the middle bourgeoisie by way of assistance for the refugees and that it is obvious what the working class is made of. [He believed that] the working class of England had behaved in a disgraceful manner; though the men of Paris had risked their lives, the working men of England had made no effort to sympathise with them or assist them. There is no political life in them [...]; if they wish to do nothing, let their behaviour be known".<sup>59</sup> International solidarity among workers had not yet been achieved.



55 Minutes of the General Council, 26 February 1867 [translated from the French version].

56 *Historique de la grève du bronze en 1867*, *op. cit.*, p. 53 [translated from the French].

57 *Le Conseil général de la Première Internationale, 1868–1870* (Moscou, 1974), pp. 274–279.

58 Minutes of the General Council, 3 January 1871.

59 Minutes of the General Council, 8 August 1871 [translated from the French version].

Money issues surface almost everywhere in the archives and printed sources of the International Working Men's Association. In order to take a stand against capital – which was already deeply internationalized in the 1850s and 1860s – and make their demands known, the workers had to be able to share their resources beyond borders. The sociotechnological context of the 1860s lent itself very well to this: news travelled more quickly thanks to mail services, telegraphs and the rise of cheap newspapers; people and money could also circulate more easily. The different workers' movements were already in contact with one another before the creation of the IWMA in 1864, but its existence manifestly strengthened their connections. The General Council by no means controlled or organized events, but it did play a part in putting people in contact and circulating information, which enabled mechanisms of solidarity to develop where they had previously been lacking. The proliferation of strikes and conflicts in the years from 1867 to 1871 was accompanied by the more frequent use of loans and donations between sections, with or without the intervention of the IWMA's central bodies. These flows of money, which passed through multiple channels, produced bonds of solidarity and interdependence, particularly at a time when, with the exception of the British trade unions, European labour movements were still in their infancy at national level. Paradoxically, although the Proudhonians quickly became the minority in the International, their ideas appear best suited to describe the practices of free credit that had become widespread among the different sections. The transnational flows of money complemented the resources collected locally, and also reveal a sharing of doctrines and techniques in the area of mutual aid. However, money matters are never straightforward, and power struggles inevitably arose, including within the IWMA. In the end, the very nature of the First International, an organization with a transnational agenda, was put to the test: the ideological conflicts that split the organization apart could not fail to undermine its ambition to centralize and redistribute the monetary resources of the labour movement.

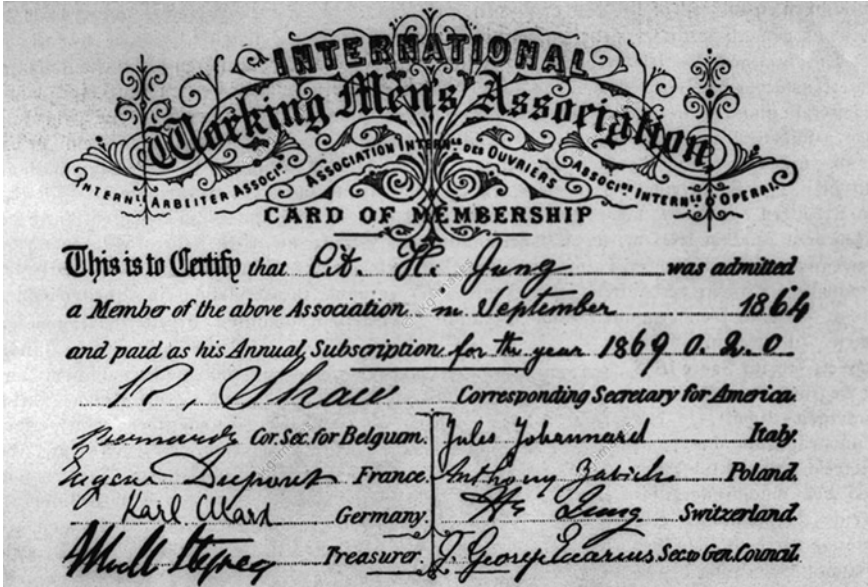


FIGURE 5.1 Membership card, IWMA, 1869.

This 1869 membership card was Hermann Jung's; he paid two shillings ("0.2.0") for his annual subscription. Among the names signing the card, one can identify Hermann Jung, himself, acting as corresponding secretary for Switzerland; Robert Shaw, who was the secretary of the London housepainters and, in the General Council, acted at various times as secretary, corresponding secretary for America (1867–9) and treasurer; Bernard was corresponding secretary for Belgium (1868–9); French instrument-maker and exile Eugène Dupont (1831–81) was corresponding secretary for France (1865–71); Karl Marx was corresponding secretary for Germany from 1864 to 1872; Cowell Stepney, the nephew of Lord Caernavon, was treasurer in 1868–70; French exile and a salesman of artificial flowers Jules Johannard (1843–1882) was corresponding secretary for Italy in 1868–9; Anthony Zabicki was corresponding secretary for Poland (1866–71); Thurigian tailor Johann and exile Georg Eccarius (1818–1899) was a central figure of the General Council from 1864 to 1872, for which he served as secretary from 1867 to 1871.

COLLECTION: IISH AMSTERDAM.

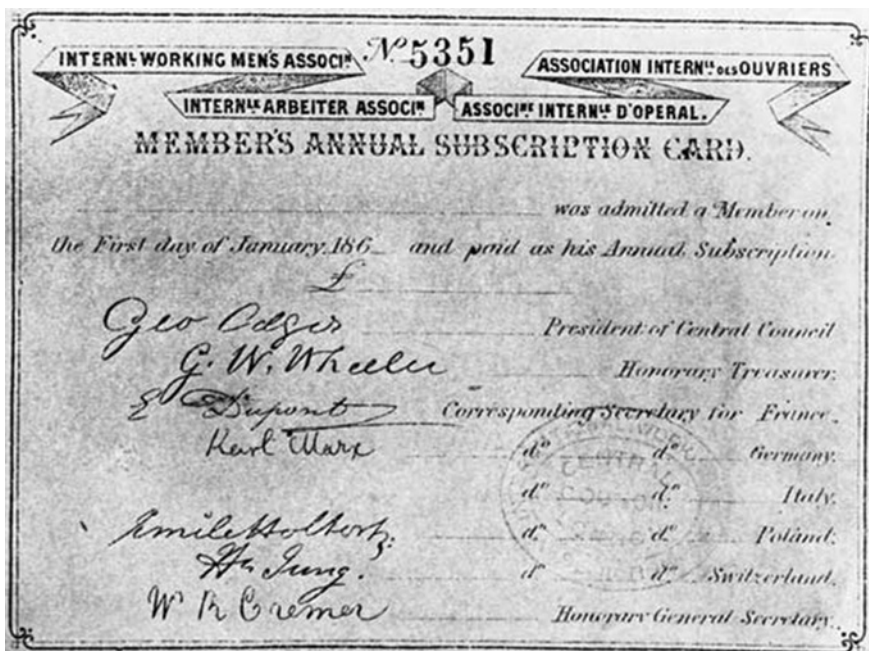


FIGURE 5.2 Membership card of the IWMA.

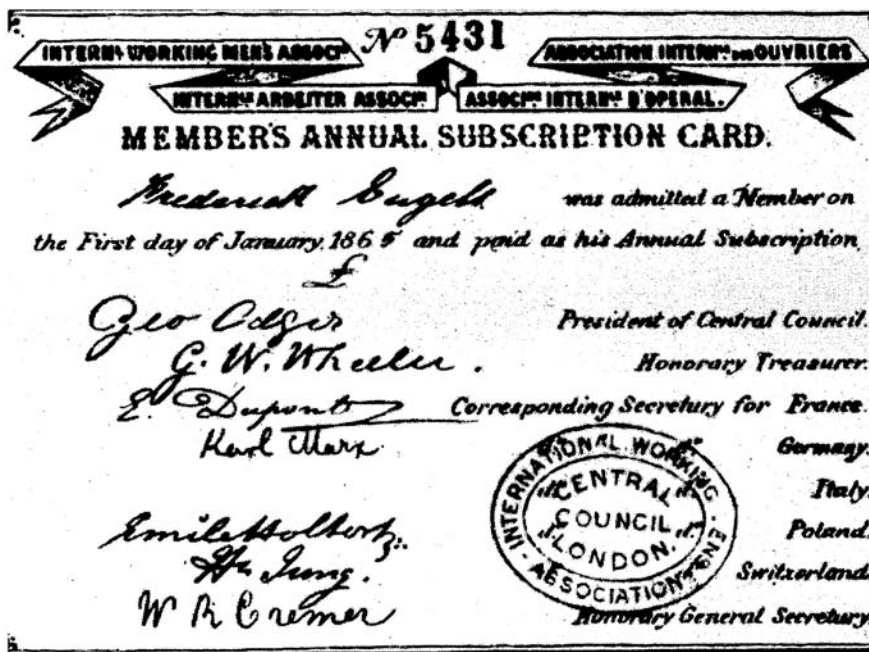


FIGURE 5.3 Membership card of the IWMA (Friedrich Engels).

## The IWMA, Workers and the Machinery Question (1864–1874)

*François Jarrige*

Translated by *Constance Bantman*

“Factory nigger,  
Mine slave,  
Field vassal,  
Powerful people, rise up!  
Worker, seize the machine,  
Take the land, peasant!”  
Charles Keller, “Le Droit du travailleur”,  
then “La Jurassienne” [1870].



In October 1864, soon after British and French workers declared their wish to create an international labour association with sections in all European countries, temporary statutes and a statement of principles were adopted. In this “inaugural address,” written by Karl Marx, several paradoxes stood out from the start: the organized labour movement, in spite of the waves of repression which had followed the failed 1848 revolutions, was being slowly revived, strikes were on the increase and the cooperative movement was spreading. However, “the misery of the working masses has not diminished,” even as Europe was experiencing “an unheard of development of industry, and an unheard of expansion of imports and exports”.<sup>1</sup> This paradox – greater wealth

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\* I would like to thank Fabrice Bensimon, Quentin Deluermoz and Jeanne Moisan for encouraging me to write this text in spite of my initial reluctance, and Michel Cordillot for his close reading and highly valuable feedback.

1 Written by Karl Marx between 21 and 27 October 1864 and published in the booklet *Address and Provisional Rules of the Working Men's International Association, Established September 28, 1864, at a Public Meeting held at St. Martin's Hall*, in London, in November 1864. A French translation was published in the *Journal de l'Association internationale des travailleurs*,



twinning with ever more intense exploitation – made the IWMA necessary, as an international structure meant to restore the balance in the power struggle between capital and labour:

In all countries of Europe it has now become a truth demonstrable to every unprejudiced mind, and only decried by those whose interest it is to hedge other people in a fool's paradise, that no improvement of machinery, no appliance of science to production, no contrivances of communication, no new colonies, no emigration, no opening of markets, no free trade, not all these things put together, will do away with the miseries of the industrious masses; but that, on the present false base, every fresh development of the productive powers of labor must tend to deepen social contrasts and point social antagonisms.

In this founding text, the promise of liberal political economy was rejected as pointless and illusory. In the regime of all-encompassing competition, “improvement of machinery” and “development of the productive powers of labor” could not deliver the dreamed-of emancipation, and in fact they increased inequalities and exploitation. The IWMA, “this child born in the Paris workshops and nursed in London”, as the oft-repeated saying goes, came to life in a period of rapid industrial transformations coupled with the labour movement revival, especially in Britain and France, Europe's two leading industrial nations. The London Trades Council was set up in 1860 following the large-scale 1859 building trades strike. In France, while labour disputes remained more discreet, Napoleon III's Second Empire started loosening its grip: a resounding typographers' strike took place in Paris, and that same year, the French authorities allowed crafts to elect their delegates to London's International Exhibition independently. In 1862, legislative elections saw the first “working class candidates” and on 25 May 1864, Napoleon III finally made workers' associations legal.

The IWMA was born in this period of renewed working-class agitation, which was manifested by the publication in France of the “Manifesto of the Sixty”, an ambitious programme of demands written in February 1864 by the sculptor Henri Tolain ahead of by-elections, but also in a phase of intense industrialization and economic globalization. The Association was intended

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Romance section, 28 January 1866, and reprinted in Jacques Freymond (ed.), *La Première internationale. Recueil de documents* (Geneva, 1962), vol. 1, p. 6; see Maximilien Rubel, “La Charte de la Première Internationale: Essai sur le ‘Marxisme’ dans l'Association internationale des Travailleurs”, *Le Mouvement Social*, 51 (1965), pp. 5, 37.

as an answer to these challenges, to stimulate practical solidarity and allow worlds of labour to face the profound damages of capitalism. Decisions were made quickly, including against importing blacklegs. There were also sharp debates and controversies regarding work and its transformations. So far, the history of the IWMA has largely been written from an organizational viewpoint; the practical questions with which protagonists were concerned on a daily basis, such as hygiene, work rhythms or mechanization, have received little attention.<sup>2</sup> And yet these questions were constantly at play in the organization, filling up its congress discussions, shaping interactions between theorists and labour leaders and the worlds of labour which they addressed. The purpose of this article is to shed light on these debates and contacts by exploring the paradoxes which went along with discussions over the machine question within the IWMA. The Association, wavering between social conflicts and wariness towards the new production tools, and the possible futures of a fully mechanized society, was at the heart of the advent of a new industrialist imagination.

### The Machine Question and the World of Urban Crafts in the 1860s

Throughout the nineteenth century, debates over mechanization, its effects and the conditions for regulating it, took place in labour and socialist movements. The 1850s and 1860s in particular witnessed accelerated industrialization: in several crafts, mechanization was discussed in great depth and was a source of concern. Even though local situations were very diverse and varied widely, the workers who joined the International during the 1860s sometimes belonged to these industries which were most endangered as a result of industrial transformations. H. Collins underlined this with respect to British workers such as tailors, shoemakers, bootmakers and ribbon makers, who joined the IWMA in droves because “they feared mechanization and were not able to defend themselves”.<sup>3</sup> Marc Vuillemier made the same observations regarding the strategic role of Swiss clockmakers threatened by the progress of mechanized factories, at the expense of small workshops.<sup>4</sup> While a degree of

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2 Even though this stake was certainly mentioned in all overviews of the IWMA's history, see for instance Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (Westport, CT, 1992), p. 34, or Mathieu Léonard, *L'Emancipation des travailleurs, Une histoire de la Première Internationale* (Paris, 2011), p. 114.

3 In *La Première Internationale: l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), p. 45.

4 While in the more industrial Alemannic Switzerland, the IWMA became implanted only very tentatively, it was above all in the Swiss Jura mountains, where small rural workshops

caution remains in order on this point, it is beyond doubt that the mutations of capitalism, crystallized notably in the debates over free trade and mechanization, were a foremost concern for the IWMA. By joining this great, inspiring international organization, some protagonists sought support to counteract the threats which their craft faced. While the decision to join the IWMA or not depended on complex motives which remain unexplored, the correlation between an industry's degree of industrialization, the labour market's local situation and the proportion of members seems unquestionable.<sup>5</sup> The issue of motives therefore remains essential, even though it will probably never be fully elucidated and it would be absurd to reduce it to craft protection, since ideals and desires of emancipation played just as important a part.

The machine question cannot be approached exclusively from congress declarations and theorists' writings – it must also be approached from below, through the answers brought by workers from different industries. While the era of violent insurrections against machines had stopped, there remained sharp conflicts over labour industrialization and its forms; sabotage and various incidents testify to enduring distrust on the part of craft workers and homeworkers towards machines.<sup>6</sup> And yet, in 1861, in a text which inaugurated the labour movement revival, its signatories – many of whom were among the founders of the IWMA in France – claimed that “the point is not to destroy machines, these beautiful products of science, but to organize things in such a way that everyone may benefit from them.”<sup>7</sup> The IWMA was an important stage in the long process whereby the labour movement came to domesticate industrial and technical transformations. While the working class riots of old gave way to different forms of acceptance and arrangements, technical change was increasingly conceived as a source of progress and emancipation. However, concerns remained locally, most often in a diffuse and muted way. Far from surrendering to unanimous enthusiasm, workers expressed widely diverse positions, which were more or less critical. In many crafts – the clothing industry, printing, building – the machine question remained preoccupying. In London, in 1859 and 1860, the introduction of labour-saving technologies

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prevailed, that the number of affiliates was the greatest. See Marc Vuillemier, “La Première Internationale en Suisse”, in *La Première Internationale*, pp. 233–234.

5 See Daisy Eveline Devreese, “L'Association Internationale des Travailleurs: bilan de l'historiographie, perspectives de recherches”, *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 25–26.

6 See François Jarrige, *Au temps des tueuses de bras. Les bris de machines à l'ère industrielle (1780–1860)* (Rennes, 2009).

7 *L'Organisation des Travailleurs par les corporations nouvelles* (Paris [etc.], 1861), p. 6.

which “to a great extent, rendered the demand for manual labour unnecessary”, led to recurring complaints and conflicts, even if the stakes varied considerably from one craft and one region to the next.<sup>8</sup>

In the reports written following their visit to London’s 1862 International Exhibition, the French delegates from the various worker corporations frequently echoed these debates. They castigated the effects of machines while fending off accusations that they were hostile to progress and “creative genius.” Thus, the woodworkers’ delegates criticized “the machines [which], whilst sophisticated, were certainly not without flaws,” just like this “new mechanical device invented to cut veneer,” which gave “detestable results.”<sup>9</sup> As for wall-paper printers, they observed that “machines have multiplied extraordinarily in France and abroad.”<sup>10</sup> Printers also discussed mechanical progress fearfully. In both London and Paris, the mechanization of the printing trade was already well under way, and attempts to make composition automatic continued. But far from celebrating such mechanization, the typography delegates first lauded the progress of “manual screen press printing” which, “being forced to fight against machines”, saw its efficiency increase; they regretted that printing had to forsake “the calm and regular paces which it enjoyed in the past, and which made it possible for the worker to rely on a guaranteed task, with profits that could be counted ahead,” in order to adopt a “feverish rapidity” which tended to become the norm.<sup>11</sup> In 1862, tailors and milliners also observed that workers “have everything running against them: dire poverty, competition, and even machinery. Indeed, sewing machines, which are increasingly widespread, are now creating new obstacles for them! Small employers cannot use them or only get very minor benefits from them, but the large producers gain very substantial advantages from them.”<sup>12</sup> In their reports, these skilled urban craftsmen called for the right to organize; their ideal was to become independent small employers, forming associations among themselves in an egalitarian republic of crafts.

A few weeks after associations were made legal in France, in May 1864, and even while the IWMA was being set up in London, the Paris bookbinders, led by

8 Cited in Marcel van der Linden, “The Rise and Fall of the First International : An Interpretation”, in Frits van Holthoon, Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement: 1830–1940* (Leyden, 1988), p. 330.

9 Délégations ouvrières à l'exposition universelle de Londres en 1862, *Rapport des délégués ébénistes, publiée par la commission ouvrière* (Paris, 1863), pp. 7, 9.

10 Rapports des délégués imprimeurs en papiers peints, des délégués pour les papiers de couleurs et de fantaisie, publiés par la commission ouvrière (Paris, 1863), p. 6.

11 *Rapports des délégués de la Typographie suivi du nouveau Tarif* (Paris, 1863), pp. 16, 22.

12 *Rapports des délégués tailleurs et des délégués chapeliers* (Signé: Leyraud, Besson) (Paris, 1863), p. 29.

Eugène Varlin, started a fight in June for the working day to be brought down to 10 hours, extra hours to be paid another 25%, and night work abolished. In a memorandum, the strike committee justified these claims by the increase in output resulting from “the extension of machine use.”<sup>13</sup> The mechanization of work did indeed entail such an increase in offer that “rich people are not enough for orders,” “workmen therefore need a pay which is high enough to purchase, and the time which is needed to own.” Faced with the risk of over-production, workmen mobilized to increase salaries and cut the workday – the only way to soften the devastating effects of mechanization. The bookbinders’ strike was a success at first, and employers were forced to give in in late September as orders piled up; Varlin came out of the struggle with real prestige and found himself placed under police surveillance.

Sewing machines also triggered endless debates throughout the 1860s. Thus, in 1866, the Manchester tailors asked for working hours to be cut, and rates to be increased in order to cope with their growing use in the clothing industry.<sup>14</sup> In the shoe industry, the introduction of sewing machines had already caused a sustained conflict in Northampton in 1858.<sup>15</sup> After visiting the Singer factory in the US, a manufacturer had secretly introduced one during the winter of 1857, resulting in the setting up of an “anti-machine committee” in charge of organising the strike. Shoemakers then committed to “resisting through all legitimate means the introduction of machinery in shoe and boot factories” across Northamptonshire. In 1858, they set up a mutual aid society and entered negotiations with the manufacturers.<sup>16</sup> The dispute dragged on for months but the workers were eventually forced to give in and accept to work at the machines, in exchange for a pay rise. As early as 1865, 1,500 sewing machines were in operation in Northampton and the trade unions’ initial opposition had evolved into negotiated cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

In France, where the penetration of sewing machines was slower, the shoemakers’ delegates to the 1867 Exhibition also denounced “machine over-use”; they criticize the coarseness and heaviness of products made by the

13 Michel Cordillot, *Eugène Varlin, chronique d'un espoir assassiné* (Paris, 1991), p. 32.

14 *Le Conseil Général de la Première Internationale, 1866–1868* (Moscow, 1973), p. 32.

15 R.A. Church, “Labour supply and innovation 1800–1860: The Boot and Shoe Industry”, *Business History*, 12/1 (January 1970), pp. 25–45, pp. 32–35.

16 Church, “Labour supply and innovation 1800–1860” p. 36.

17 On the topic of the shoemakers’ work industrialization after 1850, see Alain Cottereau’s comparative study, “Problèmes de conceptualisation comparative de l’industrialisation: l’exemple des ouvriers de la chaussure en France et en Grande-Bretagne”, in Suzanne Magri and Christian Topalov (eds.), *Villes ouvrières, 1900–1950*, (Paris, 1990), pp. 41–80.

machines.<sup>18</sup> In the delegates' reports just as in the debates of the 1867 workers' commission, which brought together the delegates elected by the 118 Parisian trades in order to represent them at London's Universal Exhibition, the issue of machinery was discussed frequently. As shown by Michel Cordillot, the debates within this commission were "of a high standard," and largely reflected the "concerns of Paris's labour aristocracy in the face of the structural changes [...] which they dreaded as so many threats."<sup>19</sup>

### Watchmakers and Weavers Facing Mechanical Production

Quite far from these elite urban workers, other workers' groups – some of which played an important part in the early days of the IWMA – were confronted with mechanization in the late 1860s. In the Swiss Jura's mountains as in some textile-producing regions, workers and small employers often regarded innovations as "suspicious" and "dangerous". The IWMA's implantation took place just as the debates over machinery were raging. In Switzerland, notably, steam machines were first adopted with great caution in fitters' workshops, since their high cost, dangerousness, and their great consumption of wood and water made them look suspect.<sup>20</sup> Watchmaking had developed in the nineteenth century as a reaction to demographic growth and a complement to agricultural work and cattle farming. In these tough mountains, the spread-out workshops in the context of the domestic system known as *établissage* hosted skilled workers making a high-value product in an environment which was usually family-based.<sup>21</sup> But during the 1860s this system encountered growing difficulties due to the competition from goods produced at a low cost in the United States' large mechanized factories. Such a crisis and questioning of the domestic system of industry, where men worked scattered

18 Cited by Cottureau, "Problèmes de conceptualisation comparative de l'industrialisation", pp. 41–80.

19 Michel Cordillot, "La commission ouvrière de 1867", in *Aux origines du socialisme moderne* (Paris, 2010), p. 61.

20 Jean-Marc Barrelet, "Les résistances à l'innovation dans l'industrie horlogère des montagnes neuchâteloises à la fin du XIXe siècle", in *Innovations technologiques et civilisation (XIXe–XXe siècles)* (Paris, 1989), pp. 215–228 ; François Jéquier, "Le patronat horloger suisse face aux nouvelles technologies (XIXe–XXe siècles)", *Bulletin du centre d'histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise*, 1 (1977), pp. 23–69.

21 See Marianne Enckell, *La Fédération jurassienne: Les origines de l'anarchisme en Suisse* (Lausanne, 1971) ; and in particular Mario Vuilleumier, *Horlogers de l'anarchisme. Emergence d'un mouvement : la Fédération jurassienne* (Lausanne, 1988), pp. 281–282.

in various sites, made workers and small employers hostile. The first Jura-based sections of the IWMA actually took up this viewpoint and the watchmakers prided themselves on the fact that “manufactures have not yet been organized here,” whilst calling for an “energetic” fight against the use of machinery and mechanized manufacture which threatened their autonomy and lifestyle.<sup>22</sup> These watchmakers were not hostile to technology as a rule – they themselves had brought in considerable innovations and introduced several mechanized tools in order to perfect home production, but these innovations – which often remained secret – aimed primarily to reinforce *etablissage* by perfecting the work of scattered domestic workers rather than by bringing them all together in large concentrated factories more quickly. The fight against mechanized methods was first a fight for the preservation of home production as opposed to encasement within a factory, which the workers saw as an attack upon their family lives and freedom. Joining the IWMA was meant to offer additional resources in this fight.

In the textile industry, which had been really caught up in the violent struggles against machinery in the first half of the nineteenth century, the denunciation of technical change – charged with speeding up the pace of work and putting pressure on wages – also persisted, as mechanization intensified, under the impact of international competition. Jacques Rougerie insisted on this “obvious” fact – that, outside Paris, Marseilles and Lyons, it was “essentially in textile regions that the [International] Association” had taken root in France.<sup>23</sup> Whether it was the surroundings of Rouen, Reims, Troyes, the North (Roubaix), or the East (Mulhouse), it was in these territories shaped by textile work that the IWMA became established, and especially the oldest ones, where scattered work persisted and mechanization slowly took shape.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in the Roubaix area, the first major wave of mechanization started between 1856 and 1866. While the 1860 Anglo-French Free Trade treaty increased competition and led producers to embrace mechanization, the equipment was quickly transformed: in spinning, the number of self-acting mule overtook “traditional looms” while in weaving “mechanical looms” supplanted home-based technology.<sup>25</sup> As early as May 1858, some weavers had launched

22 *Enquête ouvrière faite par l'Association internationale des Travailleurs*, Section de Sonvilliers, in *La voix de l'Avenir*, n. 7, (8, 17, and 24 February 1867), cited by Vuillemier, *Horlogers de l'anarchisme*, p. 283.

23 Jacques Rougerie, “Les Sections françaises de l'Association internationale des travailleurs”, in *La Première Internationale*, p. 113.

24 For a precise and still very helpful table of the sector's mutations at the time, see Claude Fohlen, *L'Industrie textile au temps du Second Empire* (Paris, 1956).

25 Archives Départementales du Nord, M581–160: état dressé par le Commissaire de police de Roubaix en septembre 1862.

a petition asking for steam powered weaving looms to be banned. Within a few weeks, several hundreds of signatures were collected and brought to the Legislative authority. But the deputies of Northern France succeeded in defeating the initiative, arguing that “the onward march of French industry must be maintained at least at the same level as that of neighbouring powers”.<sup>26</sup> Whereas rural weavers tried to protect their way of life and autonomy by accepting wage cuts rather than enrolling into the new mechanized factories, textile sector employers imported Belgian migrants to populate the new factories and work with the machinery. In order to further increase yields, in parallel, industrialists sought to increase discipline and fines and to force the workforce to keep several jobs at the same time – a widespread practice in England. Faced with such hardened conditions, the Roubaix workers stopped work in March 1867; during a spectacular riot which made a strong impression on public opinion, they destroyed the machinery and wrecked the factories.<sup>27</sup> A few weeks after that stoppage, a small local section of the IWMA was set up in Roubaix, structured around Charles Lécuse.<sup>28</sup>

The riot in Roubaix, which happened just after the Paris bronze metal worker strike, was part of a wave of strikes, supported by the IWMA, and triggered many debates within the organization. The direction of the Paris section of the International declared its solidarity with the Roubaix workers, while firmly disapproving violent acts and destructions. A press statement was published on 24 March to publicize the support of the IWMA to the strikers and – modest – financial help was quickly collected in Paris, Lyons and Rouen. In its address to the “Roubaix workers”, the Paris correspondents invited all IWMA members to “bring [their] material and moral support” to the strikers, these “suffering brothers,” whose “fair grievances” must be taken into account. But at the same time, they disapproved of violence and put forward an interpretation which depicted the conflict and its violent acts centred on a rejection of technical progress as archaic: “Whatever your fair grievances may be, nothing can justify the acts of destruction of which you have made yourselves guilty. Just think that machinery, which is a work tool, must be sacred for you, just think that such violent acts jeopardize your cause and that of all workers. Just think that you have just provided the opponents of freedom and the slanderers

26 Firmin Lentacker, “Un épisode de la Révolution Industrielle: Ouvriers à demeure, ouvriers immigrés dans l’industrie cotonnière de Roubaix de 1857 à 1864”, *Revue du Nord*, 69/ 275, (oct. – dec. 1987), pp. 767–775.

27 Archives Nationales, F12 4652: rapports de Préfet du Nord, mars 1867; regarding this strike, see F. L’Huillier, *La Lutte ouvrière à la fin du Second Empire* (Paris, 1957), p. 177.

28 See Cordillot, “La section française de l’Internationale et les grèves de 1867” in *Aux origines du socialisme moderne*, pp. 33–56.



of the people with weapons," they wrote.<sup>29</sup> For the French IWMA representatives, such violent acts were proof of the lack of education and the oppression weighing upon workers, and only the spread of "economic education through conferences, meetings, pamphlets, papers" could put an end to it.

### The IWMA and the Debate about Machinery

Even if the adoption of machinery was far from being the only cause for conflicts at the time and if the struggles caused by mechanization gradually vanished, the machine question continued to trigger complaints and protests. It provided the background of many struggles over wages or the length of the workday, all the more as conditions became even harder in 1867. It was therefore expected for the IWMA to take a formal stance over these questions by offering answers likely to qualify the destruction which went along with "the advance of production forces."

When it appeared in the 1860s, the IWMA inherited the debates which had already taken place among the first socialist generations. In the 1840s, when conflicts erupted sporadically, socialist adopted positions towards machinery which were often ambiguous: they castigated their devastating effects whilst suggesting domesticating their future use for the benefit of proletarians.<sup>30</sup> Proudhon, for instance, bemoaned the effects of technical change which is degrading for workers "by downgrading him from the status of an 'artisan' to that of a 'labourer'".<sup>31</sup> Far from being enthused by machinery, he emphasized its "antinomies" and ambiguities: "Machines promised us an increase of wealth; they have kept their word, but at the same time endowing us with an increase of poverty. They promised us liberty; I am going to prove that they have brought us slavery" by instituting the wage system. Indeed, for Proudhon, "wages issued in a direct line from the employment of machinery". At the same time, however, Proudhon asserted the optimistic vision of the increase of general

29 *Le Courrier français* (24 March 1867), p. 5 cited by Cordillot, "La section française de l'Internationale et les grèves de 1867", p. 44; *La Liberté* (24 March 1867), signed by Tolain, Varlin, cited by Michelle Perrot, *Les Ouvriers en grève, (1871-1890)*, 2 vols., (Paris [etc.], 1974). See also L'Huillier, *La Lutte ouvrière à la fin du Second Empire*, p. 17 ; and Cordillot, "La section française de l'Internationale et les grèves de 1867", p. 44.

30 Regarding socialist debates and analyses of machinery in the first half of the nineteenth century, see François Jarrige (ed.), *Dompter Prométhée. Technologie et socialismes à l'âge romantique* (Besançon, 2016.).

31 Pierre Hauptmann, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: sa vie et sa pensée, 1809-1849* (Paris, 1982), Part 1, p. 773.

welfare which should eventually be expected from it. For him, machines were actually “the symbol of human liberty, the sign of our domination over nature, the attribute of our power, the expression of our right, the emblem of our personality.”<sup>32</sup> Already in the 1840s, Marx had rejected these concerns and stated the benefits of machinery, which was to give birth to the proletariat and the future communist society free from competition.

In the first IWMA congresses, the machine question still triggered recurring debates, which testified to ideological and political fault lines splitting the organization in its early years of life. It was in 1866 that the first actual IWMA congress was organized, in Geneva: debates were then dominated by the French delegation heavily influenced by Proudhonism, distrust towards strikes and the call for “mutualism”, even if, as early as the 1867 Lausanne congress, this “Proudhonian” influence seemed to recede. At the Brussels congress running from 6 to 13 September 1868, the “collectivists” prevailed, the legitimacy and necessity of strikes were asserted and the call for collectivism carried the day, even if such divides are slightly reductionist and do not fully account for the diverse positions being expressed.<sup>33</sup> In each of these early congresses, the machine question repeatedly came to the fore.<sup>34</sup> Thus “machines and their effects” were debated at the 1866 Geneva congress, along with discussions about the reduction of working hours, the division of labour and the extinction of the wage system. The following year, during the Lausanne congress, the Frenchman François Chemalé read a report focusing on “the impact of sewing machines on the lives of female labourers”.<sup>35</sup> But overall, regarding these issues, the “Congress merely restated the declaration voted the previous year in Geneva.”

It was during the third congress, organized in Brussels in 1868, in the wake of the Roubaix insurrection, that the machine question was debated most overtly and in greatest detail. This decisive congress took place from 6 to 13 September 1868, and brought together delegates from Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Spain. The programme included eight questions, the second of which dealt specifically with the “impact of machines on the wages and situation of workers.” It had initially been raised with the IWMA General Council in London in January 1868, and had then been placed

32 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *System of economical contradictions: or, The Philosophy of Poverty* (Paris, 1846), Chap. IV : “Of Machinery”, transl. by Benjamin Tucker (1888). Available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/philosophy/>.

33 Annie Kriegel, “L’Association internationale des travailleurs (1864–1876)”, in Jacques Droz (ed.), *Histoire Générale du socialisme* (Paris, 1997 [1972]), vol. 1, p. 616.

34 James Guillaume, *L’Internationale, documents et souvenirs* (1905), vol. 1.

35 Oscar Testut, *L’Internationale, ses origines, son but, son caractère, ses principes, ses tendances, son organisation, ses moyens d’action, ses ressources, son rôle* (Paris, 1871), p. 131.

on the agenda of the Brussels congress. Marx initiated the General Council's proceedings with a study of the "consequences of using machinery under capitalism".<sup>36</sup> During the meetings on 28 July and 4 August, he returned to the ideas which he had developed in the first volume of *Capital*, which had been published in German the previous year. A resolution was eventually adopted on 11 August. Georg Eccarius, who was close to Marx at the time, was in charge of presenting it to the congress during the 9 September 1868 session.

The Marxian analysis of machinery has generated much writing and led to occasionally contradictory interpretations; in fact, Marx's analyses regarding the long-term dynamics of capitalism must be distinguished from his ideas about the immediate effects of machinery for workers. In the very short term, Marx acknowledged, machinery caused many tragedies and increased the proletarians' destitution. The introduction of automated weaving looms, for instance, led to the disappearance of the former manual textile workers, in England just as in India, where rural workers were "destroyed" by the cotton fabrics now mass produced in Manchester's mechanized factories.<sup>37</sup> However, in spite of such temporary distress, Marx concluded that in the end, machinery fostered the advance of productive forces, accelerated class antagonisms and the capitalist system's contradiction, and therefore prepared the latter's overthrow and its replacement with "a new society."<sup>38</sup>

Marx's text was widely circulated in the wake of the congress; the IWMA served as a diffusion channel for the analyses which he had put forward the

36 Karl Marx, "On the consequences of using Machinery under Capitalism" (28 July 1868), in Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW), (1985), vol. 21, p. 382, available online: <https://marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1868/machinery-speech.htm>. The context in which Marx's speech was first published can be found in the transcript of the General Council's session published in *The Bee-Hive* on 1st August 1868, and in a pamphlet published in London the following year: *The IWMA. Resolutions of the Congress of Geneva, 1868, and The Congress of Brussels, 1868* (London, 1869). A French version also appeared in several papers: *Le Peuple belge* (11 September); *La Liberté* (13 September); *La Cigale* (20 September); *La Tribune du Peuple* (8 November 1868); and *L'Egalité* (24 April 1869); in German, the resolution appeared in the *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* dated 19 September 1868 and in the *Arbeiter Zeitung* (New York) dated 16 August 1873, and it was also published in Spanish and Italian. Recently this text and the most valuable documents of all the currents of the IWMA have been published in English: Marcello Musto (ed.), *Workers Unite! The International 150 years later* (London [etc.], 2014).

37 Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. 1), Chapter 15: "Machinery and Modern Industry". Available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm>.

38 *Ibid*; see Paul S. Adler, "Marx, Machines, and Skill", *Technology and Culture*, 31, 4 (Oct. 1990), pp. 780–812.

previous year in *Capital*, especially in Chapter 15, which is entitled “Machinery and Modern Industry”. It was actually in relation to the topic of machinery that the first allusion to *Capital* appeared in the IWMA debates. During the discussions which took place in Brussels on 9 September 1868, Lessner, a German tailor in exile in London, read extracts from Marx’s work, “in which this question is extensively dealt with”, he claimed.<sup>39</sup> During that congress session, Steens, reporting on behalf of the “machinery committee,” read out three reports written by the sections from Brussels, Liège and the Paris bookbinders. Lessner, Coulon, Pellerin, Eccarius, Cohn, Scheppler, Hins, Steens, Tolain, de Paepe, Murat, Tartaret, Theisz and Brismée took part in the debate about the impact of machinery and more specifically the usefulness of mutual help societies to face them.<sup>40</sup> The congress concluded that machinery, like all other work tools, should belong to the workers themselves and be used for their benefit.

During the debates, various speakers took up Marx’s analysis, distinguishing between short- and long-term effects and discussing strategies to regulate ongoing transformations. The report presented by the Brussels sections thus stated directly that “the social wound is spreading as a direct result of inventions and discoveries.” Unlike employers who relied on machinery to increase their profits, the report explained, “the workers, appalled to see steam supplant human strength, and machines obliterate millions of workers, had nothing but loathing for the hellish genius of the worsening of their destitution in present society, and the destruction of these tools of death and exploitation.” The Liège section’s report also asserted that “in contemporary society, the introduction of machinery is detrimental to most, and propitious to the exploitation of workers”.<sup>41</sup>

And yet, during the debates, the workmen’s delegates gradually came round to the views upheld by socialist thinkers for a few decades – starting with Marx – regarding the neutrality of techniques and the benefits to be expected from them in the socialist society of the future. They distinguished between the phase of introducing machinery, that of transition and their “role in the future.” The IWMA’s goal was to create “a society made of federal and solidary associations”, where capital would no longer be a source of exploitation but “accumulated work”; in this ideal society, machines would no longer engender misery, but

39 “Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils de documents*, p. 297”.

40 Among the many published accounts from these debates, see Oscar Testut, *Association Internationale des Travailleurs* (Lyon, 1870), p. 155; or Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, pp. 291–300.

41 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils de documents*, pp. 291–292, 295.

rather “increase everyone’s wellbeing.” Instead of “cursing machinery,” the delegates repeatedly asserted, workers should carry their “hatred and anger” “higher,” attacking “the social anarchy” entailed by capitalism.<sup>42</sup> This was the statement of a theory which was to prove quite influential: techniques are neutral, it is their misuse in the context of the capitalist system which makes them dangerous. While a consensus regarding the long-term beneficial impact to be gained from machines seemed to emerge, there was nevertheless a debate between the French Tolain and the Belgian De Paepe regarding the immediate course of action to be adopted. Whereas the former considered that no resolution needed to be taken regarding the machinery question, since it was “the current system” in its entirety which should be transformed, the latter, in contrast, insisted that intervention was necessary: “here, the cold logic of the political man can no longer satisfy the worker. They talk to him pointlessly about progress, usefulness for the future, he sees that machinery is pushing him out of the workshop, and he will long be dead before machines bring about any progress in his brethren’s condition. Workers will therefore decide to fight against the so-called rule of machinery, just as he fights against the law of offer and demand through strikes.”<sup>43</sup>

De Paepe rejected Tolain’s solution, as the latter seemed to advocate “abstention” and called for active resistance: “in the current situation, there is cause, for workers organized into mutual aid societies, to intervene in the introduction of machinery in the workshops, so that this introduction may only happen with some guarantees or compensation,” that is to say by imposing clauses pertaining to qualifications, the duration of work, the identity of the workforce in charge of working these machines. In the discussion which followed this proposition, the Belgian Brismée actually noted how effective “the opposition from mutual aid societies to new inventions” proved, and cited the example of “mechanical typesetting which in practice, it had never been possible to introduce.”<sup>44</sup> The French François Murat also supported this proposal, pointing to the previous year’s violent strike in Roubaix, somewhat hastily depicted as “resulting from the introduction of new machinery”: the upheaval would

42 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils de documents*, p. 295.

43 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils de documents*, p. 298: about the Belgian De Paepe, a keen reader of the socialists, a typographer-corrector who worked in various Brussels printing works and set up the local IWMA section in 1865, see *Entre Marx et Bakounine, César De Paepe: correspondance présentée et annotée par B. Dandois* (Paris, 1974).

44 *Ibid.*, p. 300; regarding this machine and the constant debates which went along with its development, see François Jarrige, “Le mauvais genre de la machine. Les ouvriers du livre et la composition mécanique en France et en Angleterre (1840–1880)”, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 54–1 (Jan.–March 2007), pp. 193–222.

have been avoided if the workers had been organized in powerful mutual aid societies able to negotiate and regulate the introduction of new methods. The machine controversy eventually led to an analysis of strikes and working-class strategies of action. The delegates, finding it impossible to agree on a shared resolution, concluded with a moderate position: "let us conclude that at least in theory machines ought to belong exclusively to the workers."<sup>45</sup> In the end, the congress came to an uncertain conclusion which was an attempt to synthesize the different positions: "Concerning machines, the Congress declares that they must belong to workers and work for their benefit, that it is through association and mutual aid that the producer must come to own them himself. But that there is cause, from this instant, to intervene into the introduction of machines in workshops so that this gradual transformation of tools may only be effected along with serious guarantees or fair compensation for workers."<sup>46</sup>

### The IWMA and the Waning of the Machinery Problem

As the Brussels congress drew to a close, the machinery problem had therefore been solved in appearance by being postponed, adjourned to the future collectivization of the means of production and local negotiations among workers organized into mutual aid societies and employers. Thanks to the association, the union of workers and the multiplication of cooperatives, the IWMA finally mobilized the machine question to justify its existence. In the face of the morbid effects of mechanization in the system of general competition generated by the promotion of free trade, only the alliance of workers across nations could actually offer a solution. The machine question, thus solved, quickly disappeared very widely from the debates of the IWMA.

The fourth congress, which took place in Basel in September 1869, no longer discussed that question. Even as that congress enshrined the growing power of the organization and its commitment to support workers' struggles, from then on the debate was dominated by the questions of inheritance and landed property, a resolution in favour of "collective ownership" of the land was actually adopted by the majority in spite of opposition from a few French Proudhonians who feared that the IWMA might scare off agricultural workers as a consequence. During these discussions the machine question only remained in the background, the woodworker and former Chartist Benjamin Lucraft asked

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45 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils de documents*, p. 340.

46 According to the resolution voted by the congress – see Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, p. 179.

for instance for “the land to become the property of the state” and for “the working class to seize political power” and “turn Parliament into a working-class Parliament.” Following the old Chartist logic, in this technocratic state, instead of being left to the peasants’ obscurantism, “farming of this land [would be] led by Parliament, by the nation’s Council, and intelligent men would apply themselves to perfecting agricultural machinery.” But these views were strongly opposed by the journalist Amédée Langlois, Proudhon’s friend and executor, who denounced such a technocratic and authoritarian conception of the state, “bullying into work, enlisting workers in squads, under the command of engineers, foremen, instituting a strong hierarchy.”<sup>47</sup> The machine debate was increasingly swallowed up into the controversy between the champions of collectivization and “anti-authoritarian” socialists, it was gradually subsumed by the tensions opposing the advocates of political action and those emphasizing workers’ autonomy, those wanting a collectivization of the means of production and, control by the state and those calling for them to be appropriated by workers. It was no longer productive machinery and industrial techniques which were discussed, but rather the political machinery of the state, perceived with growing defiance by the anti-authoritarian or federalist branches forming at the time.

Besides, other, more urgent stakes came to the fore in the early 1870s: the Franco-Prussian war, the Paris Commune, extending beyond European borders, the national question, repression and exile – all of this led workers in the process of organizing to turn their backs on a struggle which seemed doomed to fail. Instead of challenging mechanization, it was preferable to use political ways and press for collectivization. The fifth congress scheduled to take place in Paris in September could not be held; the period was busy with scissions, divisions and personal feuds. As the conflict between Marx and Bakunin escalated, the IWMA’s Romand federation split up, the Jurassian sections seceded during the April 1870 congress in La Chaux de Fonds. During the September 1872 Hague congress, the delegates ended up voting in favour of expelling Bakunin and his supporters. A week later, the latter reacted by congregating in Saint-Imier, in Switzerland, in order to enshrine the break and create an “anti-authoritarian” International. In parallel, the IWMA extended to new territories, with sections being set up in Portugal, Spain, Romania, Denmark, but also Northern America. In these young or rural countries, industrialization was barely getting under way and triggered fewer complaints over mechanization,

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47 See *Compte-rendu du ive congrès international: tenu à Bâle, en septembre 1869* (Brussels, 1869); Freymond, *La Première internationale, recueil de documents*, vol. II, pp. 3–13; Léonard, *L’Emancipation des travailleurs*, p. 159.

even if the situation in Catalonia would deserve closer scrutiny. In the United States, the chaotic way in which the economy picked up following the Civil War contributed to making work abundant and the machinery question a relatively secondary issue.

After 1871, only the Swiss watchmakers seemed to remain opposed to machinery and factories. But the Jura Federation affiliates were now pressing for workers to accept a process which seemed unavoidable. Thus, they proclaimed that “workers’ associations are powerless when it comes to preventing the introduction of machinery in industry; they may delay it a little, and that’s all; sooner or later the association of capital comes to prevail upon the workers’ resistance and the rule of machinery is established.”<sup>48</sup> Since the late 1860s, the rule of machinery had indeed settled in Switzerland: in 1871, a new mechanical watch factory was set up in the region of Le Locle; the industry’s crisis became more acute after 1874, American watches made in huge mechanized factories with hundreds of workers now flooded markets previously controlled by the Jura workers.<sup>49</sup> In this context, the fight remained bitter and, in 1873, several workshops were blacklisted again by Swiss workers: this happened in La Chaux de Fonds and Geneva, where “several workshops ... were blacklisted due to the use of machinery.”<sup>50</sup> But far from being supportive of these disputes, the Jura Federation affiliates opposed them with mounting vigour. As employers started introducing machines in order to try and compete with the Americans, IWMA militants sought ways of solving the machine issue while avoiding strikes. Even though these disputes in order “to preserve current working conditions” and this “war from workers against machinery” were legitimate, and although fitters were, without a context, allowed to pursue this course of action, their strategy now appeared as a dead end.

It was neither “out of ignorance nor out of hatred for industrial progress” that workers now opposed mechanization, but because of “the ill effects arising from machinery and the division of labour.” The stake was therefore to reduce these ill effects whilst retaining the benefits of mechanized production. However, there was only one way to achieve this goal: “Machines, and all work equipment in general, must no longer be the employers’ property, but become

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48 *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne de l’Association internationale des travailleurs*, 14 (13 July 1873), p. 2.

49 Whereas in 1872, Swiss watchmaking still exported 366,000 watches to the United States, the figure collapsed to 65,000 just as American production soared. See Vuillemier, *Horlogers de l’anarchisme*, p. 285.

50 “Congrès des monteurs de boîtes (dimanche 22 juin 1873)”, *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne de l’Association internationale des travailleurs*, 14 (13 July 1873), p. 1.



the workers' collective property." Consequently, "the true aim of workers' societies must be, not to oppose machinery, but to become the owners of machinery and all tools themselves. And this is the only way of ensuring that our modern society does not end up reconstituting a caste of slaves which would be a thousand times more wretched than Roman Empire slaves and America's niggers."<sup>51</sup> In the end, Jura Federation members opposed defensive strikes, which were rejected as being ineffective; they analyzed mechanization by adopting the new collectivist rhetoric which had come to prevail within the IWMA. But while the "Marxists" increasingly emphasized the role of the State as an agent for this collectivization, Jura Federation militants defended their local appropriation by workers' associations.

Between its beginnings and its gradual dismantlement in the mid-1870s, the IWMA discussed mechanization and its effects in great detail. But while before 1870 it was a very heated and recurring debate, it waned after that date, pushed to the background by the pressing matters of the day. The definition which gradually came to dominate portrayed machines as a set of neutral tools and instruments, which, in capitalist hands, were sources of oppression, but indispensable means of emancipation for the future. Since techniques were neutral, first and foremost, it was their modes of appropriation which ought to be discussed; the stake was not to blame the new industrial trajectory anymore, but to have it benefit workers through the intervention of production cooperatives or the state. The consideration of the machine question sheds light on both the trajectory and stakes of the IWMA, it followed its first steps, shaped interactions between the organization's top tier and grassroots, between delegate workers and the crafts in all their diversity. It determined the hopes of workers who saw the organization as the tool which they needed to regulate and soften threatening transformations. Therefore, the IWMA was at once a remarkable device to fight inequalities and resist industrial capitalism, and one of the venues where the use of machines in the worlds of labour was gradually accepted. For reasons which differed from those of employers, the IWMA was won over to the promises of mechanization, which it saw – as Marx did – as a tool of emancipation and the prerequisite of equality in affluence.

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51 *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne de l'Association internationale des travailleurs*, 14 (13 July 1873), p. 2.

## The IWMA and the Commune

### *A Reassessment*

*Quentin Deluermoz*

Translated by *Angèle David-Guillou*

The formidable insurrection, which the bravery of our army has just defeated, has held the entire world in such anxieties and terrified it by such horrifying infamies that I feel it is necessary to rise above the horror it inspires in order to untangle the causes which made it possible [...] Alongside parodist Jacobins [...] one must place the leaders of a now regrettably infamous society called “The International”, whose action was perhaps even more powerful than that of its accomplices, because it relied on numbers, discipline and cosmopolitanism.<sup>1</sup>



This excerpt, from a circular sent by the French Foreign Affairs minister, Jules Favre, to Western embassies, may illustrate the dual questioning this contribution raises.

First of all, it revives the problem put forward to politicians, exiles and historians from 1871 onward: what was the real significance of the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) in the Commune events?

Secondly, it also suggests that this interrogation is not new and has been previously researched: the circular, and the extract here considered, are systematically referred to by most of the studies on the Commune and on the IWMA. Consequently, we may ask ourselves whether more findings still lie ahead.

Whatever the answer might be, we will first take a look at what has been done, the conclusions, more or less definite, which have been drawn, and the questions that remain unanswered. Thenceforth, we will be able to examine, modestly, other potential research leads.

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<sup>1</sup> Circular issued by Jules Favre, Foreign Affairs minister, 6 June 1871.

## Case Closed?

The corpus produced on the subject is appropriately considerable, the fruit of an international endeavour, structured around research meetings, centres and programmes. Overall, it is located within the scope of social and economic history, of a labour history focused on organisational structures and the labour movement, of Marxist or Marxian questionings, and of a great attention to facts, attested by numerous, meticulous publications of archival documents.

For this paper, we have drawn upon some of this vast continent's landmark analyses, starting from the first writings of Samuel Bernstein in 1941 up to the large endeavours of the 1960s and 1970s–1964 colloquium, 1971 colloquium, publications of the *Mouvement Social*, the work of Alexander Lehning, the *Jalons pour une histoire de la commune de Paris* and the extensive bibliographical venture led by the Maitron – to which can also be added the more recent general studies on either the IWMA or the Commune. With surveys, primary sources and general studies so readily available,<sup>2</sup> we can consider what historians' responses to J. Favre's horrified opinions have been.

With regard to the links between the organisation and the Parisian events, between the IWMA and the Commune, things appear to be more or less well established. Revived after the 1867–1868 strikes, the French IWMA found itself very weakened in 1870, in particularly following imperial repression. At

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2 Serge Bernstein, "The First International on the Eve of the Paris Commune", *Science and Society*, 5/1 (1941), pp. 24–42; id. "The Paris Commune", *Science and Society*, 5/2 (1941), pp. 117–147; Jacques Rougerie, Maximilien Rubel (eds.), "La Première Internationale", *Mouvement social*, 51, January–March 1966; "Colloque universitaire pour la commémoration du centenaire de la Commune de 1871, Paris, 21–23 mai 1971", *Mouvement social*, 79, April–June 1972; *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968); Jacques Rougerie, Tristan Haan, Georges Haupt, Miklos Molnar (eds.), "Jalons pour une Histoire de la Commune de Paris", *International Review of Social History*, 17/1–2 (1972); Julian P.W. Archer; *The First International in France, 1864–1872, its origins, theories and impact* (Lanham [etc.], 1997); Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement. The Socialism of Skilled Workers, 1830–1914* (Berkeley [etc.], 1976). Jean Maitron, *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français, 1964–1997* (online: biosoc.univ-parisi.fr); Arthur Lehning, *De Buonarroti à Bakounine* (Paris, 1977); Matthieu Léonard, *L'Emancipation des travailleurs. Une histoire de la Première Internationale* (Paris, 2011); Michel Cordillot, *Aux origines du socialisme moderne. La première internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'exil* (Paris, 2010); Michel Cordillot, "L'Association internationale des travailleurs des travailleurs du mouvement ouvrier moderne (1865–1871)" in Michel Pigenet, Danielle Tartakowsky (eds.), *Histoire des mouvements sociaux en France* (Paris, 2012); Jacques Rougerie, *La Commune de 1871* (Paris, 2009); Robert Tombs, *Paris, Bivouac des révolutions* (Paris, 2014); Laure Godineau, *La Commune de Paris par ceux qui l'ont vécu* (Paris, 2010).

that time membership in France reached several dozens of thousands, spread across different centres – Paris, Rouen, Lyon, etc.–, to which had to be added non-affiliated sympathisers.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless this dynamism appeared to be slowing down around the outbreak of the July 1870 war, although, it seems, the phenomenon mustn't be overestimated concerning grass-root organisation in Paris. In London, the General Council, at first cautious about the military events, opposed the war of “conquest”, especially after the proclamation of the Republic on 4 September and Prussia's declaration of intent to annex Alsace-Lorraine. The General Council welcomed the advent of the Republic – 9 September address – whilst affirming its non-engagement until peace had been reached. Meanwhile, in Prussia, the Brunswick committee opposed the war – 5 September declaration –, before being suppressed by the Prussian authorities.

The Parisian sections of the IWMA were very active during the siege, alongside other organisations to which they were more or less closely linked: vigilance committees and the central committee of all twenty Parisian *arrondissements*, garde nationale and even some district councils such as that of the seventeenth<sup>h</sup>, etc. In an important article,<sup>4</sup> Jacques Rougerie showed that the journey from November 1870 to May 1871 consisted of complex ebbs and flows. If Blanquists dominated certain sections from November onward, by contrast the other sections remained mainly republican – in the sense that they favoured a democratic and social Republic – or associationist.

It is also well known that IWMA's members played almost no role in the events of 18 March, which was a popular and spontaneous movement. These men, who for the large part belonged to the qualified trades of the capital – shoes, bronze, Paris articles and employees –, were nevertheless present at the structural level of the Paris insurrections: thirty-two out of ninety-two at the Commune Council – intendency for Varlin, postal service for Theisz, education for Vaillant. They could also be found amongst the officers of the *garde nationale*.<sup>5</sup> Their role within the *Commission du travail* and towards the reorganisation of work relations particularly stood out: the creation of local trades councils, organisation of women's work, enabling of the development of labour associations, etc. But there, as elsewhere, time was short for this

3 Jacques Rougerie, “Les sections parisiennes de l'AIT” and Jean Maitron, “Les effectifs de l'AIT”, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*.

4 Jacques Rougerie, “L'AIT et le mouvement ouvrier à Paris pendant les événements de 1870–1871”, *Jalons pour une Histoire de la Commune de Paris*, pp. 3–102.

5 Léonard, *L'Émancipation des travailleurs*. During the trials some would say that “it is enough to say that we are in the International to be directly recruited amongst the officers”.

Commune, which only “babbled a system”.<sup>6</sup> Mostly, it appears quite problematic to describe this role and associate it to only one affiliation: did these men only act as “Internationalists” during the Commune? Was this their sole identity within insurrectional Paris, and if so what conclusions can be drawn? The question has notably been raised with regard to the famous schism of 1 May between a “minority” and a “majority”, following the proposal to create a Committee of Public Safety. For a long time it was assumed that Internationalists mainly belonged to the “minority”, opposing the “Jacobins” and “Blanquists” of the “majority”. In fact, a detailed analysis of the votes suggests a more nuanced view: if the majority of the “minority” was made of Internationalists, the majority of Internationalists voted on the side of the “majority”.<sup>7</sup>

The General Council was closely following the events, but with certain circumspection. The choice of holding elections on 26 March elections, and most of all the Parisian patriotic feeling – a rerun of 1789–1794 –, surprised many, in particularly Karl Marx. Even Auguste Serrailier, boot-maker and member of the French International, who acted as an intermediary between London and Paris, noted this patriotic fever, that affected even local internationalists. Support from the General Council thus remained constant but distant, all the more that the address aimed at proclaiming this support was not immediately known, due to Marx’s illness. The activity of the General Council intensified after the events, especially as it had to respond to the attacks from the British, American and French press.

At the French national level, what were the relations between the IWMA and the provincial communalist movements? Here again, the role of the International has been explored, but perhaps less thoroughly than in the case of Paris. Maurice Moissonnier, who researched the Commune in Lyon at great length, wrote a national history of those movements, illustrated with a comprehensive map, in the *Jalons*. This overview was later refined by more localised surveys and by comparative studies by the like of Louis Greensberg and Michael Hanagan.<sup>8</sup>

6 Jacques Rougerie J, *La Commune de 1871* (Paris, 2009).

7 Rougerie, “L’AIT et le mouvement ouvrier à Paris pendant les événements de 1870–1871”, p. 68.

8 Maurice Moissonnier, “La Province et la Commune”, *Jalons pour une Histoire de la Commune de Paris*, pp. 151–182; Maurice Moissonnier, *La Première internationale et la Commune à Lyon, 1865–1871* (Paris, 1972); Michael P. Hanagan, *Nascent Proletarians: Class Formation in Post-Revolutionary France* (Oxford, 1989); Archer, *The First International in France*; Louis M. Greenberg, *Sisters of Liberty. Marseille, Lyon, Paris and the Reaction to a Centralized State, 1868–1871* (Harvard, 1971).

The role of Internationalists and their affiliates in Marseilles and Lyon, Rouen and Saint-Etienne has also been identified. In Bordeaux, in a less favourable context, the members of the section of the IWMA were wavering between joining and rejecting radical republicans, especially at the time of the elections. But their ideas and a certain attraction for the Commune permeated some battalions of the *garde nationale*, as revealed in April.<sup>9</sup> Some of the surveys also suggest that a section created in Martinique may have played a role in the September 1870 insurrections in the south; this point must be further investigated.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, the variety of situations is noted and the conclusion is often the same: members of the local sections of the IWMA seldom played a decisive role in the initiation of the insurrections, whether it was in September 1870 or in April 1871, and the demarcations with the other active groups – radical republicans, liberal republicans, qualified and unqualified workers, national guard, etc. – were permeable and uncertain. Nevertheless, Internationalists could, as they did for strikes, share their organisational and political expertise as well as their concern for the lot of the working-class. The importance of their role varied depending on the militants, their past political trajectories and local balances of power.

What we would today refer to as the transnational dimension of the subject is also well documented. Monographs on individuals – Fränkel, Lavrov, Cluseret, etc.–, but also on countries and specific geographic zones are available. By their reinterpreting of various political and national contexts – Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Poland, Romania, Georgia, the United States and Latin America – these studies expose the ways in which the local sections of the IWMA echoed and relayed the republican experience of September 1870 and later the communalist endeavour of March 1871.<sup>11</sup>

Thus in Spain, according to Carlos S. Serrano, the Commune was applauded by both the republicans, who saw it as the illustration of the Federal Republic, and by the Internationalists, closer to Bakunin and Proudhon, who instead

9 Jacques Girault, *Bordeaux et la Commune, 1870–1871: mouvement ouvrier et idéologie républicaine au moment de la Commune de Paris* (Périgueux, 2009.).

10 Marcelo Segall, “En Amérique latine, développement du mouvement ouvrier et proscription”, *Jalons*, pp. 325–369. The section is mentioned at the 1865 London conference, then in the report of the 1866 Lausanne conference. It does not appear in any work written after the insurrection; see for instance Gilbert Pago, *L’Insurrection de Martinique, 1870–1871* (Paris, 2011); and Silyane Larcher, *L’Autre citoyen. L’universalisme républicain et les esclaves émancipés de la Caraïbe française (XVIIIe–XIXe)* (Paris, 2014.).

11 See *La Première Internationale, l’institution, l’implantation, le rayonnement*; and *Jalons*.

highlighted its social dimension.<sup>12</sup> Internationalists also organised marches to demonstrate their support – in Budapest in May 1871, as well as in London and Geneva.<sup>13</sup> Some even defended the Commune in front of their legislative chambers: August Bebel, who was both an Internationalist and an elected member of the Reichstag – in the specific backdrop of the creation of the German social democracy<sup>14</sup> – stood in defence of the Parisians, in Germany, on 25 May, in a speech that has remained famous.

In addition, many more studies exist on the subject of exiles.<sup>15</sup> Individuals, their organisations, activities, surveillance and integration in local society are known, in the case of Switzerland, England, Belgium and the United States.<sup>16</sup> The is true of Latin America, too, although in less detail: Mégy, Chardon, Fribourg, as well several local activists in Marseilles, Lyon, Le Creusot and Bordeaux, travelled there following the revolutionary reflux, and contributed to the creations of sections – in Argentina on 28 January 1872, but also Chile, Mexico, etc.

Finally, the effects of the Commune events on the IWMA have equally been scrutinised. These include the demonising of the organisation, having suddenly become the centre of all attention, its mistaken for Bakunin's Alliance programme, and perceived association with the secret societies of the first nineteenth century – the Charbonnerie, Marianne, etc. Another focus has been the governmental offensives arising from the Favre circular – whether they were direct, as in France, Spain and Portugal, or resulted in surveillances and pressure in Germany and Austria-Hungary. The measures put in place with

12 Carlos S. Serrano, "L'Espagne, la Commune et l'Internationale", *Jalons*, pp. 222–239.

13 Marc Vuillemier, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*; Jiri Koralka in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*; for the London meetings, see the minutes of the General Council.

14 Ernst Engelberg, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*. See also Roger Morgan, *The German Social democracy and the first international 1864–1872* (Cambridge, 1965).

15 Sylvie Aprile, *Le Siècle des exilés : bannis et proscrits de 1789 à la Commune* (Paris, 2010); Regarding Commune exile, see the PhD dissertation of Laure Godineau, *Retour d'exil. Les anciens communards au début de la Troisième République* (PhD, Paris 1 University, 2000). See also Thomas C. Jones, Robert Tombs, "The French left in exile: *Quarante-huitards* and Communards in London, 1848–80", in Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick, *The French in London. Liberty, Equality, Opportunity* (Londres, 2013).

16 Vuillemier in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*; Jan Dhondt, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*; Michel Cordillot, *Révolutionnaires du Nouveau monde: une brève histoire du mouvement socialiste francophone aux États-Unis, 1885–1922* (Montréal, 2009).

regard to refugees reflected latent Euro-American divisions of opinion: Spain agreed to facilitate extraditions whereas Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States refused, not without facing opposition, to review their asylum laws, often under the conjugated effect of liberal traditions, pressure groups and movements of opinions for the most appalled by the “horrors” of the Commune, but still rejecting any reappraisal.

Post-Commune local contexts are also documented: trade-union walkouts in London; debates between Mazzini and Garibaldi in Italy; developments in Spain after the Valence conference (marked by the influence of Bakunin, although less absolute than originally thought); repercussions in Latin America, etc. On the whole, the studies conclude on a collapse of the IWMA in France and Great Britain, and of a surge in Italy, Spain, Belgium and the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Following a similar line of thought, the question of the role of the Commune in the collapse of the IWMA in 1872 has of course been examined. The incendiaries and execution of hostages – the Versailles massacre having been almost completely removed from media discourse – impacted on the legitimacy of local struggles, bringing about debates between republicans and socialists, the reversal of a liberal opinion that was more benevolent before, and a redefinition of internationalist socialism. Further “structural” interpretations were put forward to explain this failure. According to Marcel Van der Linden, the collapse of the IWMA was not so much due to the Commune or to the internal Marx/Bakunin dispute – which, most studies agree, crystallised a much more complex field of debate – but was in fact the consequence of structural modifications: the Franco-Prussian war dynamic; nationalisation and growing government control, as exemplified by the German and Italian cases, and the economic crisis. In this regard, the IWMA, as well as the Commune, was a specific moment in the history of labour, within general external conditions.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, a large body of research can be found, from which two aspects emerge. First of all, the gap between, on one side, the small number of members and results, and, on the other, the strong symbolic weight of the IWMA – according to Jan Dhondt, for instance, the “myth of the IWMA” would have encouraged a growing sense of class consciousness. Secondly, the idea that in this untoward collision between the IWMA and the Commune resides the origins of modern socialism – more complex than first anticipated. Thus

17 See the studies by Molnar and Dhondt, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*.

18 Marcel Van der Linden, “The rise and fall of the First International: an Interpretation”, in Frits Van Holthoorn, Marcel Van der Linden, (eds.) *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830–1940* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 323–335.



Jules Favre's question had already been answered forty years ago. With few marginal exceptions, most of this answer derives from what appears to be a conscientious collective historical endeavour. And if these conclusions are marked by questionings typical of the periods that produced them, they gave rise to contradictions and debates and are certainly worthy of mention; at a time when historical objects are "transnationalised", doing so allows us to highlight the fact that an important body of work is indeed available. Supplementing more recent works on movements of rebellion and large-scale opposition, many dealing with the French revolution of 1848 and the anarchist movement after 1880,<sup>19</sup> these studies conveniently point out that the 1848–1880 period is as important a field of research, and that existing data can still be analysed and discussed. So my second point is: do further questions remain to be asked? Can other approaches, sometimes even already suggested by the studies themselves, be considered?

### The 1860s' "banners of revolt"

Until more detailed analyses are produced, four lines of investigation can be suggested. The first would concern the organisational dimension of the IWMA, notably on the Parisian front. As noted before, much is known about the affairs of the IWMA during the Commune, but there are gaps in the sources; thus, it is still difficult to apprehend intermittent and lesser-known protagonists or their trajectories. Nonetheless, it is possible to reassess the interactions between the sections of the IWMA and other political and paramilitary organisations – *garde nationale*, vigilance committee, clubs, and district authorities – in order to explore their role in the events' dynamic. The question is particularly pertinent as to the *modus operandi* of mobilisation. This aspect has been considered in the case of other revolutions, such as Mark Traugott's famous "organisational hypothesis", apropos the "*garde mobile*" of 1848,<sup>20</sup> and Haim Burstin's anthropological analysis of the ebbs and flows of "revolutionary energy" during the French revolution.<sup>21</sup> The fluctuations in sections' membership, during the

19 Peter Linebaugh, Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000); Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London [etc.], 2005).

20 Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848*, (Princeton, 1985).

21 Haim Burstin, *Révolutionnaires. Une anthropologie politique de la révolution française* (Paris, 2013).

1869–1871 period, could be considered in this same perspective. We would then be able to understand how these organisations reacted to the political crisis, but also how they were used, and the way in which their role were constantly redefined. The best way to do this would be to research the micro-history of an *arrondissement* or a neighbourhood sufficiently documented in the period 1870–1871. Such studies are lacking, a few exceptions notwithstanding.<sup>22</sup> A case study, even if too circumscribed, can nevertheless make it possible to envisage the level of observation required. On 11 May 1871, a group of people was sent by Théophile Ferré, deputy public prosecutor of the Commune, to take control of the Champs-Élysées police station, in the 8th *arrondissement*. In this very hostile “reactionary” district,<sup>23</sup> the new officers carried out several searches in the houses of imperial dignitaries – including that of the Duke of Rivoli, chamberlain of the Empire, at 8 rue Jean Goujon – and sent their belongings to *La Monnaie*. The fact that Démophile Coussat, *commissaire de police* (chief superintendent), shoemaker and militant, was also an Internationalist, was probably not a coincidence: this affiliation, the revolutionary path and discipline, as well as the faith which, at least superficially, these would seem to imply, were likely to have enabled the pursuit of actions of this kind on hostile ground, far from local reasoning and based on the inter-knowledge of working class neighbourhoods logics of the North East.<sup>24</sup> Thus, membership of the International could have an impact on intermediary structures in the insurrectional Paris. This helps better comprehend the relations of power, suspended and constantly recomposed, that beset the Commune, sometimes on the smallest of scales.

Perceived from the point of view of these complex processes, the growing divergences with the General Council, itself involved in a trajectory of its own, appear even more obvious: experiences and expectations dissolved, whilst a link remained, at least on the London side. These distortions call for a reappraisal of the structures of the IWMA: no longer a fixed and controlled framework, but a driving belt between several initiatives, constantly in the process of being defined and crystallised. Thereupon, it would be interesting to look more closely at the modalities of contact between the Parisian sections, and

22 Iain Chadwick, “*Revolutionary Neighbourhoods and Networks during the Paris Commune of 1871*” (PhD., University of Oxford, 2011) ; Robert Tombs, “*Prudent Rebels; the 2nd arrondissement during the Paris Commune of 1871*”, *French History*, 5:4 (1991), pp. 393–413 ; For 1848, a good illustration of this approach can be found in Laurent Clavier, “*Quartier’ et expériences politiques dans les faubourgs du nord-est parisien en 1848*”, *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle*, 33 (2006), pp. 121–142.

23 Archives de la Préfecture de Police, DB 511. Report by Billot, former superintendent.

24 Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre, 8J, 3<sup>e</sup> conseil, dossier 976 “Coussat”; and Archives Nationales (AN), BB 24, 852.

between the sections and the General Council in London. The minutes of the General Council reveal that information was transmitted orally, via individuals who managed to travel, such as Serrailier who made the return journey, by mail, but also, and mostly, by the press, which undoubtedly represents an essential aspect of the period. This meant that London members had to be extremely cautious at all times. On 14 February, the General Council received news of Serrailier through a report published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. And on 25 April, Marx described the chaotic journey of a letter written by Lafargue, which he had only just received:<sup>25</sup> it was sent outside of the fortifications, slowed down by the disruptions affecting the railway system, controlled by Prussian and French authorities... In addition to vertical networks, horizontal networks between sections also seemed to be in place: in 1870, the German section in Paris provided the IWMA section in Budapest with a German edition to inform them of the trial of the Association in France. Did these networks survive during the Siege and then the Commune? Were there many of them?<sup>26</sup>

A second group of interrogations would relate to what might be called “intellectual history”. The aforementioned research of the 1960s and 1970s clearly suggest looking into that direction. One of the recurrent approaches consisted in opposing the “socialist” views of the IWMA with regard to the “romantic revolutionaries” of 1848 and the “liberal republicans”, thus suggesting strict typologies and sometimes even value judgements. With regard to the Commune, as it seems impossible to establish a clear ideological line, it is often presented as an ideological mishmash, exemplified by the famous 19 April poster and by the multiplicity of opinions amongst its elected representatives.

But these perspectives have been criticised, from the great colloquia onwards, in favour of more complex gradations. At the level of the IWMA, ideas were manifold and the vote, by a majority, of the general orientations during congresses – collectivist after 1866, etc. – at no time implied a definitive “conceptual clarification”, neither in London, nor at the local level. In addition, it would be incorrect to associate the ideas and beliefs of Parisian IWMA militants as well as of other people involved in the revolutionary movement, under the Commune, to Proudhonist ideas only. Jacques Rougerie suggests other intellectual links:<sup>27</sup> the ideas of Charles Renouvier, J. Favvety and C. Pecqueux, whose propagations and interpretations remained to be defined, in view of the lack of research on the Second Empire labour milieu. Other worlds of

25 *Minutes of the General Council of the First International.*

26 Tibo Erenyi, in *La Première Internationale, l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement.*

27 Rougerie, “L'AIT et le mouvement ouvrier à Paris pendant les événements de 1870–1871”, *Jalons* ; Rougerie, *La Commune de 1871.*

references must be considered. Most of the actors involved in the International or the Commune were, and this is unique, qualified workers, with specific work ethics and regulation cultures that would need to be identified.<sup>28</sup> The same would have to be done in respect to the vocabularies of moral economy and of the “*bon droit*”, both particularly mobilised.<sup>29</sup> Then, probably, gestures, in addition to discourses, should be put under scrutiny: the use of searches, sometimes led by Internationalists, was also a political act, fully part of the concrete republic embodied by the Commune and justified in the clubs by the expression “diminish the castle and elevate the worker’s home”.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the events resulted in resurgences and discontinuities:<sup>31</sup> this is how must be understood the strong presence of a democratic and social republic project in 1848 and of the French revolution of 1789–1794 – even if these references could lead to several interpretations. Thus, we must ask whether a language, an interpretation and even a voice specific to Internationalists were in effect, at least amongst the eldest ones, and what type of cross-influences were created?

It could be useful to focus more specifically on encounters. The Work Commission, for instance, was placed under the control of Internationalists who acted in favour of a unionisation of the means of production. But they were confronted, in their enterprise, by numerous petitions of workers – the society of tallow chandlers, the society of saddlers<sup>32</sup> – who used a language close to that of 1848: technical demands mixed with general values; will to associate; patriotic language, etc. The elected representatives, who belonged to a not-so-dissimilar background, had to respond to the pleas of those trades, and encourage them. The exchanges must have been complex, on such a malleable terrain, and studying them would contribute to a better understanding, *in situ*, of the multiple expectations and definitions then at stake.

Similarly, it would perhaps be interesting to closely follow the utilisation and significance of certain expressions, such as the language surrounding the idea of “class” and of “workers’ emancipation”. The latter had been in use since

28 Following previous research on the world of urban trades, Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500–1900* (Aldershot, 1997); Yves Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise: 1848–1914* (PUL, 1977); Jean-Louis Robert, Danielle Tartakowsky (eds.), *Paris le peuple: XVIIIe–XXe siècle* (Paris, 1999).

29 Quentin Deluermoz, “La Commune et le vol, ou les périmètres mouvants de la propriété au XIXe siècle”, in Frederic Chauvaud, Arnaud-Dominique Houte, *Au voleur!* (Paris, 2014).

30 “Abaisser le château et élever la chaumière”.

31 Michèle Riot-Sarcey, “Temps et histoire en débat”, *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle* (2002), pp. 7–13.

32 See Jacques Rougerie, *Paris Libre, 1870–1871* (Paris, Seuil, 2004).

the 1840s, and was palpably present in 1848<sup>33</sup> and, later on, in 1871. But were there inflexions in these usages, notably after the great wave of strikes in the 1860s and the presence, even if only symbolic, of the IWMA? This was what the 1848 revolutionary Joseph Benoît suggested when he complained, in 1869, about the multiplication of strikes and the discourse on class struggle related to the International. Referring to the organisation he observed that: “it was only later that the International Society became involved in politics and social reform by exaggerating those issues [...]. It pushed workers in the direction of strikes and its action was preponderant”.<sup>34</sup>

Surprisingly, numerous studies of this kind were published about the 1830s and 1840s, in France (on utopian socialism), and most of all in Great Britain (around Chartism and its language<sup>35</sup>). The Commune and its discursive profusion could well be scrutinised through the lens of the type of questioning then raised – concentrating less on theoretical publications and more on the web of texts available, and refusing to take for granted the existence of a link between social status and language. With this approach in mind, it would also be of interest to reconsider the impact of the events in the radicalising of positions, both in Paris and London. The General Council, it is known, was driven by this situation and asserted itself against it too. Undoubtedly, beyond a more typical history of ideas, there is enough here to revisit the thoughts and beliefs of the different protagonists involved, whether workers or not, revolutionaries or not, and interrogate from this angle the ideas, thus put back “in context”, related to the IWMA.<sup>36</sup>

A third investigative path could rethink the transnational perspective. As we have seen, much research has been done on the echoes of the Commune via the IWMA, on the roles of exiles in the dissemination of the sections after 1871, and several national histories of the sections of the IWMA have been published. Nevertheless, as far as we are aware, there is no general study on the

33 Rémi Gossez, *Les Ouvriers de Paris, 1: L'Organisation, 1848–1851* (Paris, 1968); Jacques Rougerie, “Le Mouvement associatif populaire comme facteur d'acculturation politique à Paris de la Révolution aux années 1840 : Continuité, Discontinuités”, *Annales Historiques de La Révolution Française*, 297 (1994), pp. 493–516; Maurizio Gribaudi, *Paris, ville ouvrière. Une histoire occultée (1789–1848)* (Paris, 2014).

34 Joseph Benoît, *Les Confessions d'un prolétaire* (Lyon, 1968), p. 269.

35 Michèle Riot-Sarcey, *Le Réel de l'utopie : essai sur le politique au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1998). See also the research by ANR Utopie 19 ; Gareth Stedman Jones, “Rethinking chartism”, in *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 90–178; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: a new History* (Manchester, 2005).

36 In reference to the suggestions made by the School of Cambridge.

repercussions of the Commune as a whole, even if several relevant points can be made.

The first point relates to the trajectories of Internationalists, notably of the few who also played a role during the Commune. Many of the latter were already akin to the international struggles of the post-1848 years. The most famous of them, Cluseret, was on the side of the “*gardes nationales de l'ordre*” in 1848. He settled in Algeria, took part in the Italian wars, the American Civil War and the Fenian movement in Ireland in 1866, and later reappeared in the Lyon and Marseilles Communes, before becoming a general under the Paris Commune. It was also the case of Dombrowski, a Polish national and a protagonist in the Polish insurrection of 1863, who arrived in France in 1865, and of many other, lesser-known activists. This said, all French Internationalists, including some of the most influential ones like Eugène Varlin, did not share the same experience. Similarly, all Republican volunteers were not Internationalists, far from it; in fact, many moved away from the social question to remain anchored in a system based on military heroism, typical of the first nineteenth century. But it is obvious that there were also direct connexions between these movements; they would need to be looked at again.

It is possible, secondly, to push forward the study of the impact of the Commune; if the sections of the IWMA acted as relays, they were not the only ones. In Spain, as previously noted, support for the Commune often came from workers and republicans, at least for a time. In Chile, only liberal Francophiles, such as Eduardo de la Barra, opposed conservative landowners. In Romania, the proclamation of a Republic, and later of the Commune, shook the general population to such an extent that it worried Prussia. It had a particular resonance amongst liberals and the supporters of a national liberation opposed to Carol I, before his socialist inkling softened their fieriness.<sup>37</sup> The trajectories were multiple. The questions of temporal depth and of the adaptation to fluid national configurations have been highlighted by Alberto Garcia Balaña in this volume, in the case of Spain, and, for the United States, by Michel Cordillot who followed the trails of French migrant refugees between both countries in the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> The Commune, Sphinx-like, was a “crossroad”,<sup>39</sup> subjected, from the month of March, to the most varied appreciations and appropriations on a global scale. Thus we must confront a misty landscape of multiple, heterogeneous situations, which are connected, more or less, to one

37 Georges Haupt, “La Roumanie”, *Jalons*, pp. 477–489.

38 Cordillot, *Révolutionnaires du nouveau monde*.

39 See Robert Tomb's conclusion at the Narbonne colloquium, 2011 (organised by Marc César, Laure Godineau, Xavier Verdejo).

another. This perspective does not necessarily imply an undermining of the particularities of the Paris Commune – the kinds of “bottom-to-top” politics that were implemented, or the strength of the myth of the French capital – on the contrary, it sheds a new light on them and makes a place for reassessment.

The global histories of the nineteenth century are, for the most part, embarrassed by the Commune. Considered too unlike the post-1848 movements and the revolutions of the twentieth century, it is sometimes described as a *hapax legomenon*.<sup>40</sup> In fact, as we have seen, it appears to be an event of international dimension moored to a larger movement of republican and social struggles affecting the years 1840–1880. The IWMA acted as a material and discursive articulation, original but not unique, between these experiences. We can observe, by the way, that little has been said about the colonies and the imperial sphere – either regarding the addresses emanating from the IWMA or the tangible consequences of the Commune. Yet an insurrection, opposing former slaves, from before 1848, against white landowners, shook Martinique in September 1870; and during the essentially republican troubles in Algiers, the Commune seemed to have served as a reference, before the perception of its social dimension led, here again, to a dissociation.<sup>41</sup> Was the IWMA interested in these events? It did not appear to be present in those territories, even if the question persists, as we have seen, in the case of Martinique. Does this suggest a difference in attitudes or is it just that this dimension has not been scrutinised as closely? In any case, more needs to be done in this field, too.

Finally, the concept of “temporality” must be tackled. Indeed, one problem arises today from the wave of studies flagged earlier in this article: their rather teleological nature. Of course, it is not the case for all the authors, and the analyses are often more subtle. But this general trend exists and it is palpable, for instance, in the remarks on the “lack of maturity” of the workers or in the investigation of the “modern” aspects of the labour movement. It is true that everything then seemed to go in that direction: the image of the Commune, between dusk and dawn; the idea of a First International which precedes the Second; the historiographical questionings of the 1960s and 1970s; and even the theoretical tools, as those of Charles Tilly on the repertoires of action.

40 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München, 2010); Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Maiden [etc.], 2004); Fabrice Bensimon, “L’Internationale Des Travailleurs”, *Romantisme*, 163 (2014), pp. 53–62.

41 On the subject of Algiers, see Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer Aix, F80 1682. Vuillermoz, Algiers’s Mayor, signed “*Commune d’Alger*” (“Algiers Commune”) in January. This communal dimension was suggested in a letter from Algiers’s Prefect to the French Home Secretary, 8 April 1871; the impact of the Commune in Constantine was also noted by the Prefect of Constantine in a letter dated 18 April 1871. A more detailed research is ongoing.

In an interesting text on nineteenth-century Marseilles dockworkers, which includes the Marseilles Commune, W. Sewell Jr. denotes the predominance of this teleological narrative in labour history, and looks for ways of avoiding it.<sup>42</sup> For that purpose he considers three types of “temporality”: routines (that which repeats in time), trends (long-term tendencies) and events (which are irruptions and potential displacements of structure). Of course, these three temporalities are always intertwined; they are observational tools that should enable the development of less orientated temporal analyses.

In this perspective, the binomial Commune-IWMA may represent a genuine opportunity. There is a trend, the development of the IWMA and its sections, and an event, the Commune, thus a means, precisely, to displace the focus. Consequently, the period could be approached not from the point of view of its origin but of its specificity, with the temporal discontinuities it involves.

Therefore, it would be necessary to re-evaluate the Commune “event” itself, following the works started by J. Rougerie and R. Tombs. Studies show that even if this perception increasingly prevailed in 1869, it was indeed the Commune that in reality elevated the IWMA to the status of an international issue after April-May 1871. The Parisian episode, with its traumatising images of incendiaries, the massacre of hostages and their echo in the press, was the source of the stereotypical idea of a monstrous Commune-IWMA coupling, which later became the object of so many investigations. Such post-event re-qualifications are known.<sup>43</sup> Besides, the Commune and its repercussions triggered, as we have seen, a series of recompositions within the field of social and political conflicts, with infinite local variations. But such readjustments also affected governmental politics; we have cited the reluctance to change the rights of asylum in certain countries. Further aspects should also be looked at: police cooperation, as it became stronger after 1848, around The Great Exhibition in London;<sup>44</sup> the question of the usage of passports, at the centre of numerous diplomatic discussions; and the wielding of liberal international law, which witnessed profound displacements in the 1860s.<sup>45</sup> The Commune, and its association with the IWMA, is only a small piece of a much larger reconfiguration,

42 William H. Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005).

43 Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1990).

44 For Germany, for instance, see Matthieu Deflem, “International Policing in nineteenth-century Europe: The Police Union of German States, 1851–1866”, *International Criminal Justice Review*, 6 (1996), pp. 36–57.

45 Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, Conn., 2007); Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914 the Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice* (Princeton, 2012); Rachel Chastil, *The Siege of Strasbourg* (Harvard, 2014).



which brought forth latent tensions. As a current study of diplomatic archives suggests, the influence of its image is perhaps not yet perfectly known.<sup>46</sup> In Brazil, for instance, both chambers voted a “solemn declaration” to express the “horrifying feeling inspired by the anarchy that destroyed most of the French capital” and to welcome “the victory of civilisation and Christianity”. Thus, the global nature of the Commune should be investigated: “global”, in that it was part of a vast transnational and transcontinental force field; “event”, in that it created a series of displacements, a “change of structure” – to use W. Sewell’s vocabulary –, but one which mainly affected state institutions. It modified, without being its only impetus, previous socio-political configurations.<sup>47</sup>

Those questionings logically call for the previous period to be reconsidered, notably from 1848 to 1871. Historians have somewhat neglected its European and imperial dimensions, with the assertion of political measures oscillating between liberalisation and authoritarianism, leaning towards nationalisation and government control, with heterogeneous mutations of the forms of industrialisation, the rise of the press, commerce and the intensification of the French and British colonial endeavours. In these conditions, the perpetuation of the democratic struggles after 1848, and the assertion of social conflicts, took on a different tonality, partially crystallised in 1870 and 1871. Hence the “banners of revolts” did not wait until the 1880s to be exhibited, and the singularity of the IWMA experience is made extremely apparent. Here stretches an entire field of investigation that must be pursued for this fascinating period. The aim would be to more acutely restore the ways of seeing, the possibilities of action, the modalities of the conflict, and the adjusted hopes of each actor. This would benefit existing interrogations of the relations between the Commune and the IWMA, and enrich our understanding of the period directly following.

Those last suggestions may illustrate the underlining driving force of the second part of our argument: perhaps have we only applied to the object here at stake the forms of historical investigations renewed since the 1980s – namely the rejection and assignations of predefined categories (highbrow/

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46 This study is based on French, English and American archives. See here: Centre d’Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, 573 PO/A/47, Rio de Janeiro, départ, 1870–1871. There is in fact a double-faceted confusion here: between the Alliance and the IWMA, and between the IWMA and the Commune. The social imaginary of conspiracy, in the first nineteenth century, apparent in the Favre circular, could be further studied in its various forms: both disconnected from facts and extremely efficient; see Jean-Noël Tardy, *L’Âge des ombres : Complots, conspirations et sociétés secrètes au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2015).

47 Naturally, these recompositions had an influence, after, on the signification and the symbolic impact of the Commune for the labor movement.

lowbrow, working-class/bourgeoisie), the articulation between practices and representations, the study of actors and their actions, the issue of scales, connected analysis, etc.? So the relation between the IWMA and the Commune has become multiform, suggesting, from this initial tension, new interrogations about each phenomenon, as close as possible to the level of the protagonists. This is continuing the displacements researched in the course of the 1970s. The referential background is not only historiographical: what we call today the end of ideologies, the mutations of the rule of historicity, the disintegration of social movements in favour of more heterogeneous and reticular struggles, the assertion of the globalisation and of “emerging countries” influence this way of seeing. The great investigations of the 1950s and 1960s can then, in return, help minimise the anachronism implied by our contemporary outlook, reminding us of the importance of the economic dimension, the function, even if limited, of organisations and their militants, the role of German speaking countries and of central Europe, and therefore the meanings of the effort that went into this search for unity, beyond the diversity of situations. Many a survey are still to be led in order to understand the multiple and complex connections which existed between the IWMA and the Commune – and the world it revealed – starting with the documents already unearthed and others which must be tracked down. Whether this collective endeavour will be as intense as the one we have described, is less certain.

**LIBERTY, EQUALITY, SOLIDARITY,  
FRATERNITY.**

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**Anniversary of the 18th of March, 1871**  
(COMMUNALIST REVOLUTION OF PARIS.)

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The International Federal (French) Section of 1871  
invites Democrats of all countries to assist at a

**COMMEMORATIVE MEETING,**  
WHICH WILL BE HELD ON

**Monday, March 18, 1872,**  
AT 8.30 P.M., AT THE  
*New Hall of Science,*  
CLUB AND INSTITUTE,  
142, OLD STREET, CITY RD.

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THE CHAIR WILL BE TAKEN BY  
**CITIZEN DUPONT,**  
EX-MEMBER OF THE COMMUNE OF PARIS.

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*Speeches delivered in French will be translated into English.*

**ADMISSION TWOPENCE.**

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<i>Orators :</i>	<i>Members of the Commission :</i>
LANDECK, Delegate from the Commune of Marseilles.	A. DUPONT.
LEVERDAYS.	B. LANDECK.
COMBATZ, Chef de Legion.	LAROQUE, Member of the Central Committee.
VESINIER, Member of the Commune.	E. E. METARD. DEBORD.

FIGURE 7.1 *Poster for a commemorative meeting for the anniversary of the Paris Commune, London, 1872. The chairmanship of Eugène Dupont can be explained by his long-term involvement in the IWMA. After taking part in the Franco-British meeting of workers in 1862, Dupont had been a member of the association and of the General Council since 1864.*  
PRIVATE COLLECTION.

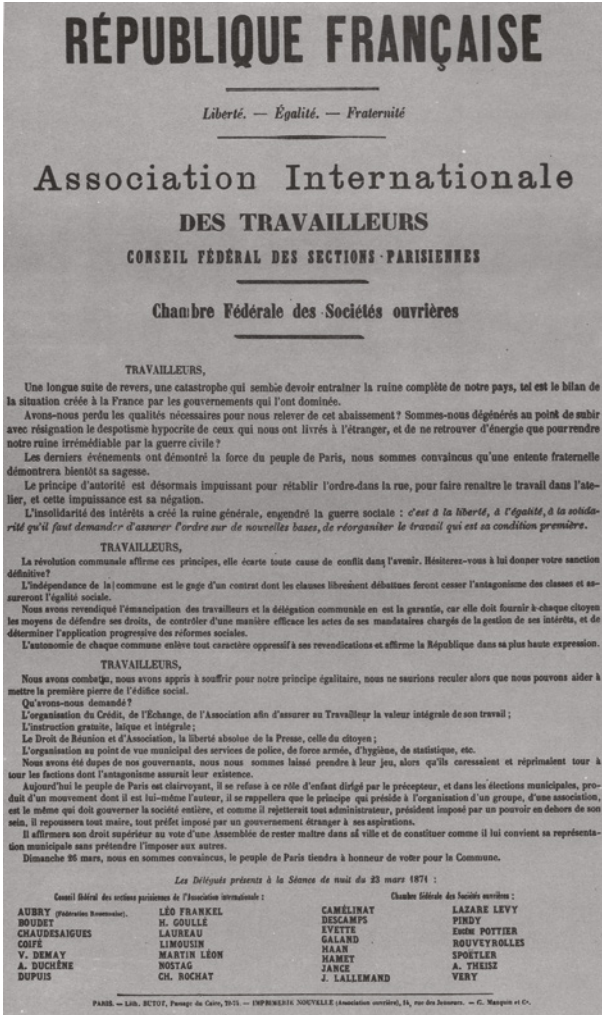


FIGURE 7.2 *Call of the federal council of the Parisian branches of the IWMA to the workers of Paris for the 26 March 1871 election of the Paris Commune.*

(APPEL DU CONSEIL FÉDÉRAL DES SECTIONS PARIISIENNES DE L'AIT AUX TRAVAILLEURS DE PARIS POUR LES ÉLECTIONS DU 26 MARS 1871).

INTERNATIONAL  
**DEMOCRATIC ASSOCIATION**  
 Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

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A GREAT  
**REPUBLICAN  
 DEMONSTRATION**

WILL BE HELD IN  
**HYDE PARK**  
 SUNDAY,  
**APRIL 16, 1871,**  
 IN HONOR OF THE  
**French Commune.**

*Chair to be taken at 4 o'clock.*

**WORKMEN**, attend in your thousands and show your sympathy with your French Brethren, who are now struggling to emancipate Labour and to found a  
**REAL REPUBLIC!**

A Procession with Bands and Banners will leave Finsbury Square at half-past 2 o'clock, via Old Street, Clerkenwell Green, Fleet Street, Pall Mall and Piccadilly.

A **PRELIMINARY MEETING** will be held on Clerkenwell Green on Sunday Morning, April 9th, at 11 o'clock.

**Long Live the Universal Republic, Social & Democratic!**

By Order of the Council { S. OLIVER  
 { GUY HAYLER } Hon. Secs.

FIGURE 7.3 *International democratic association call for a demonstration in Hyde Park, in London, on 16 April 1871 in honour of the French Commune.*

COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK.

**PART 2**

*Global Causes and Local Branches*





## Global Values Locally Transformed

*The IWMA in the German States 1864–1872/76*

*Jürgen Schmidt*

As in other parts of “the Continent”, the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) was in no way a mass movement in the German states in the 1860s. Indeed, starting with its very organizational model, it seemed that, at first glance, the German labour movement was in danger of reverting to its pre-1848 beginnings when secret societies set the tone. In February 1865, in a letter to Ludwig Kugelmann, Karl Marx suggested to build – according to the French model – local “societies” as starting points for agitation, “no matter how many members are on site”. Due to (Prussian) association laws, direct membership to the International Workingmen’s Association (IWMA) was not possible for organizations. So these very small organizational nucleuses – for example in Berlin the section only had less than ten members – gave the impression of clandestine, insignificant sects. Although the two major political currents of the labour movement, Ferdinand Lassalle’s General German Workers’ Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein* ADAV) and, until the mid-1860s, the still liberal oriented and dominated Federation of German Workers’ Associations (*Vereinstag deutscher Arbeitervereine* VDAV), only had about 4,000 to 5,000 and 17,000 members respectively, these organizations appeared to be mass movements compared with the International Working Men’s Association.<sup>1</sup>

In such conditions, how could the ideas of the IWMA become influential? How could global values become part of a larger movement within a national frame? First of all, the international organization did not develop into a closed cast; on the contrary the very few members of the IWMA joined other (labour)

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1 K. Marx to L. Kugelmann, 23 February 1865, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 43 vols (Berlin/GDR, 1956–1990), vol. XXXI, p. 455; Karl Marx, “The Fourth Annual report on the General Council of the IWMA” (*The Times*, 9 September 1868), in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: *Gesamtausgabe*, 114 vols in IV sections (Berlin, 1975ff.), vol. I/21, p. 85 (hereafter *MEGA*); see in general Jürgen Herres: “Einführung”, in *MEGA* I/21, pp. 1125–1228, 1139ff. and Svetlana Gavril’cenko *et al.*, “Einführung”, in *MEGA* III/13, pp. 641–677, 670f.; see also for association laws in Prussia Herres, “Einführung”, p. 1144. For the number of members see as overview Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn, 2000), pp. 39–43. See also fn. 35 of this chapter.



associations. They were marching towards a civil-societal orientated associational model. They made use of the public sphere, tried to convince workers with arguments and actions of the validity of their international approach. This was the first basic pillar. The second basic pillar that the IWMA could win influence within the German states, was its transnational roots and connections. The article will analyse in its central chapter the forms of circulation of ideas and practices and how the ideas of the IWMA (emancipation, participation, solidarity) were adapted to local surroundings and milieus. But first of all some additional factors which helped establish the IWMA's values and shaped its transnationality have to be emphasized, too.

### Transnational Migration, Private Networking and Individual Protagonists

The IWMA in Germany did not start from scratch. Not only the two aforementioned workers' organizations already existed, the formation of the IWMA with its transnational and international character was facilitated by four other factors. *First*, in the pre-1848 years, labour migration and political exile were important for the first German labour organizations. German journeymen followed well-known routes which led them to France, Great Britain, the Habsburg Monarchy and Switzerland. Abroad, they met political refugees from Germany, came in contact with political ideas of nationalism as well as socialism, democracy and republicanism.<sup>2</sup> Organizational models as well as mobilization processes could be learned. In France, in the 1830s, the German socialist "League of the Outlaws" (*Bund der Geächteten*) adopted the pattern of organization of the French "Society for Human Rights" (*Gesellschaft der Menschenrechte*).<sup>3</sup> From British Chartism one could learn what impact the organization of broad public meetings could have. After 1848, these centres of migration and exile – especially Paris and London – lost some of their influence on the development of German workers' organizations. But

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2 Wolfgang Schieder, *Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Die Auslandsvereine im Jahrzehnt nach der Julirevolution von 1830* (Stuttgart, 1963); see Sigrid Wadauer, "Paris im Unterwegs-Sein und Schreiben von Handwerksgelesen", in Mareike König (ed.), *Deutsche Handwerker, Arbeiter und Dienstmädchen in Paris: Eine vergessene Migration im 19. Jahrhundert* (München, 2003), pp. 49–67, 53f.

3 See the source in Verein für Frankfurter Arbeitergeschichte e.V. (ed.), *Frankfurter Arbeiterbewegung in Dokumenten 1832–1933. Volume 1: Vom Hambacher Fest bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg 1832–1914*. Arranged by Judit Pákh (Frankfurt/Main, 1994), p. 48.

the ideas and traditions survived. Individuals remained abroad and could connect their activities with newcomers – for example, in London in the late 1850s in the “Communist Working Men’s Education Association” (*Communistischer Arbeiterbildungsverein*, CABV).<sup>4</sup> All in all, the foundation of the IWMA in London in September 1864 was deeply rooted in a long tradition of international contexts in places of exile.

*Second*, cross-border contacts became essential to the German branch of the IWMA, because its coordination centre was in Geneva. In the 1860s, Johann Philipp Becker was in Geneva the central figure for the German IWMA. Becker was an activist of the 1848 revolution in Germany who became a socialist.<sup>5</sup> He was the organizer of the new association. His section founded in Geneva at the end of 1864 was the first branch of the IWMA on the Continent. He built a dense network of correspondence. By December 1871, the number of letters written by Becker for the IWMA reached 4,281. Becker remained in contact with “more than 500 organizations and people in about 170 places in Europe and the USA”; about one third of this network was situated in the different German states.<sup>6</sup> Becker was also the propagandist of the idea of internationalism. Karl Marx was impressed by Becker, “whose propaganda fever sometimes elopes with his head”.<sup>7</sup> Especially with the foundation of the monthly journal *Der Vorbote* (*The Herald*) in January 1866 he widened the spacial scope of the readership. They could read news about the development of the IWMA and strike activities from all over Europe and the USA. The Central Committee of the group of German speaking sections was able to distribute 1,500 copies of the journal from the end of 1868 onward.<sup>8</sup> In addition, a functioning distribution system

4 Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (London [etc.], 2006), pp. 174, 199ff.

5 Roger Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International 1864–1872* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 63–96; see also Hans-Werner Hahn (ed.), *Johann Philipp Becker: Radikaldemokrat – Revolutionsgeneral – Pionier der Arbeiterbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1999) (especially the chapter by Daisy E. Devreese: “Ein seltener Mann’. Johann Philipp Becker und die Internationale Arbeiter-Association”, pp. 113–128).

6 Rolf Dlubek, “Die Korrespondenz Johann Philipp Beckers als Präsident der Sektionsgruppe deutscher Sprache der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation”, in Jürgen Herres/Manfred Neuhaus (eds), *Politische Netzwerke durch Briefkommunikation: Briefkultur der politischen Oppositionsbewegungen und frühen Arbeiterbewegungen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 117–176, 121–125.

7 Karl Marx, “Confidentielle Mittheilung” an den Braunschweiger Ausschuss der SDAP, March 1870, in *MEGA* I/21 pp. 220–227, 223 (“dessen Propagandaeifer zuweilen mit seinem Kopf durchbrennt”).

8 Dlubek, “Korrespondenz”, p. 124.

for information in general was built, so that it was in August 1870 possible to smuggle 15,000 copies of the address of the General Council of the IWMA on the Franco-German war to Germany and to France.<sup>9</sup> Becker's network was feasible and able to work even under pressure. And so, these activities created an imagined unity of workers beyond the nation state. The rather abstract aim and purpose of the First International, that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves",<sup>10</sup> became "real" and vivid through narrating the development of the IWMA in the world.

But, *third*, transnationality needed spearheads and bridgeheads in the German states, too. Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, Berlin and Leipzig, became central contact points. Liebknecht, who was seventeen years younger than Becker, also participated in the 1848 revolution. After the revolution Liebknecht went via Switzerland and France in 1850 to London into exile. In Britain's capital he came in the same year in contact with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – a life-long connection which was pivotal to Liebknecht's political and economic thinking. This friendship was never free of tensions and misunderstandings. But Engels had to admit that Liebknecht – after his return to Prussia, following an amnesty of political refugees – was the "only reliable connection [...] in Germany" the IWMA had.<sup>11</sup> In Berlin and Leipzig Liebknecht was able to convince members of two existing labour organizations ADAV and VDAV of the relevance of socialist internationalism. However, in the fragmented, small labour movement in Berlin, full of rivalries between different individuals and political opinions, it was very difficult to find support and to create a basis for the IWMA.<sup>12</sup> Marx and Engels reacted angrily at the little progress the association made.<sup>13</sup>

In 1865, Liebknecht was expelled from Berlin by the Prussian authorities and moved to Leipzig in Saxony. Leipzig became in the long run the place where Liebknecht had his biggest success. There, he was able to develop and

9 J.G. Eccarius to K. Marx, 24 August 1870, in *MEGA* I/21, p. 1600.

10 Provisional Rules, September/October 1864, in *MEGA* I/20, pp. 13–15; in German language in Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED/Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der KPdSU (eds), *Die I. Internationale in Deutschland (1864–1872): Dokumente und Materialien* (Berlin/DDR, 1964), pp. 13–16.

11 F. Engels to K. Marx, 7 August 1865, in *MEGA* III/13, pp. 521f. For Liebknecht see Wolfgang Schröder, *Wilhelm Liebknecht: Soldat der Revolution, Parteiführer, Parlamentarier* (Berlin, 2010).

12 Lothar Petry, *Die Erste Internationale in der Berliner Arbeiterbewegung* (Erlangen, 1975).

13 See Liebknecht's response: W. Liebknecht to F. Engels, 30 August 1865, in Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, edited by Georg Eckert (The Hague, 1963), p. 62.

organize a labour organization which followed the rules and statutes of the IWMA in Germany. He arrived in Leipzig in August 1865. “Things are better” than they occurred, he let Karl Marx and Johann Philipp Becker know: “Until now I only have twelve members [...] but these new members incorporate the entire board of the 500-member-strong workers’ education association and other influential democrats”.<sup>14</sup> Here indeed Liebknecht did not exaggerate the development of the movement, as he found in August Bebel an important follower of his ideas.

Liebknecht met Bebel at a time when Bebel had already made his first steps towards socialist attitudes. Until 1865, Bebel followed liberal ideas of self-help and upward social mobility by saving, education and good work – ideals that were prominent and dominant in the VDAV. But, due to, first, his experience that from a certain point on individual advancement could stop and, second, to his failure at mediating a harsh strike conflict in Leipzig, Bebel was in a period of re-orientation. Liebknecht was impressed that a craftsman like Bebel could make such a political career in the VDAV – not only at the local, but at the national level. With Bebel and other members of the VDAV as followers of the IWMA, Liebknecht had made a big contribution to the IWMA because the association now had the possibility to win a mass movement (in relative terms compared with the very small sections).<sup>15</sup>

This was finally realized at the Nuremberg meeting of the VDAV in September 1868 when the left wing part of this workers’ association decided to adopt the statutes of the IWMA. “The social question is a global question”, stated the writer Robert Schweichel at the meeting to convince the delegates about a future program. The program of the IWMA would be the best, “because it expresses the demands of the workers with sharpness and clarity and because one requires a flag for the entire working class in the whole civilized world”.<sup>16</sup> The IWMA now had an organizational basis within Germany and became part of the social-democratic movement. A year later, when the SDAP was founded as a successor of the internationalist branch of the VDAV, it was, however, also expressed clearly by August Bebel that a direct and formal participation

14 W. Liebknecht to Karl Marx, 14 April 1866, W. Liebknecht to J.P. Becker, 8 February 1866, quoted in Schröder, *Liebknecht*, pp. 157ff.

15 Jürgen Schmidt, *August Bebel: Kaiser der Arbeiter. Eine Biografie* (Zürich, 2013), pp. 67ff.; Wolfgang Schröder, *Leipzig – Die Wiege der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Wurzeln und Werden des Arbeiterbildungsvereins 1848/49–1878/81. Mit einer Dokumentation der Tätigkeitsberichte* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 140–146.

16 Bericht über den Fünften Vereinstag der Deutschen Arbeitervereine, in Dieter Dowe (ed.), *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Vereinstage deutscher Arbeitervereine 1863–1869* (Berlin [etc.], 1980), pp. [150]ff.; Schröder, *Leipzig*, pp. 179–197.

of the new SDAP in the IWMA was not possible due to German association laws. The IWMA now had stable contact partners and partner organizations within the German states, but direct membership was still only possible for individuals and so dependent on personal engagement for the internationalist idea.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, traditions of socialist internationalist thinking can be traced back to the pre-revolutionary years 1848/49. But Friedrich Engels' work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published in 1845 in Germany, and the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847–8 were not present any more.<sup>18</sup> Marx and Engels were forgotten voices in Germany. The fact that Marx and Engels did not stand in the first row of known intellectuals in Germany before the mid-1860s, does not mean of course that we should neglect their role in an article describing the situation of the IWMA in Germany. First of all, from the organizational perspective Marx took on, within the IWMA's General Council in London, the role of the "corresponding secretary" for the German labour movement.<sup>19</sup> In this position he was "responsible" for reporting to the General Council about the development of the IWMA in Germany. But with regard to the concrete organizational work in the German speaking countries, he never played as central a role as the local organizers Becker, Liebknecht and Bebel – even though the section of Solingen in the Rhineland asked Marx to send a portrait of him to decorate their meeting place.<sup>20</sup>

Marx' role (and that of Engels) was that of a provider of ideas and advice abroad. He was mainly involved in the formulation of the statutes of the IWMA which were read and discussed in Germany – and in 1869 became part of the SDAP. In addition, in Johann Philipp Becker's *Der Vorbote* Marx' *Das Kapital* was promoted again and again as required reading for the workers to understand the economic system in which they were living. The influence of this should, however, not be overestimated. Even August Bebel never got very familiar with this text and for most workers it remained a closed book. About 700 copies had been sold by 1870.<sup>21</sup> But especially Bebel and Liebknecht were able to popularize the main ideas of Marx and thus Marx became the reference point of the early German labour movement: "It is necessary that

17 For the relations between the IWMA and Lassalle's ADAV see Morgan, *Social Democrats*, pp. 34–62, 165–167; *MEGA* I/21, pp. 1458f.

18 W. Liebknecht to K. Marx, 3 May 1865, in *Die I. Internationale in Deutschland*, p. 56.

19 Julius Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, 3 vols. Third Edition (Berlin [etc.], 1978), vol. 1, p. 114; Herres, "Einführung", pp. 1162–1169.

20 Section Solingen to K. Marx, 6 April 1869, in *Die I. Internationale in Deutschland*, p. 325.

21 *Der Vorbote*, Nr. 4ff., April 1867ff.; Herres, "Einführung", p. 1210.

the I. W. [M.] A. is represented there [in Nuremberg 1868] either by you or by [Johann Georg] Eccarius; but if ever possible, by you, because no one else has the same authority”, Liebknecht wrote to Marx.<sup>22</sup> And Bebel wanted to impress the leading figure in London with his self-confident prognosis that at the Nuremberg meeting “success is indubitable”.<sup>23</sup>

### Values, Ideas and Actions of the IWMA in Germany: Chances and Boundaries

Social movements would never become social movements if they depended on individual leading figures and their ideas alone. Linkage of very different individual, social, economic, cultural and political conditions and requirements was needed, that as result in a cross-section of all these factors a movement such as the labour movement could emerge. Structural changes and developments like industrialization and urbanization, the expansion of wage labour, the rise of ideas and language of class, new forms of working class actions, the growth of cultural paradigms specific to workers and formed by them, have to be considered, but cannot, however, be discussed and described here at length. But it is noteworthy to mention that people like Becker, Liebknecht, Bebel, Marx and Engels were influential due to their ability to build communication networks of strategic importance. Therefore both were needed: the individual leading figures and their ideas on the one hand, and the above-mentioned changes and structures and out of them resulting experiences as sounding board, as resonant cavity, on the other hand. Ideas, structures and experience had to be to a certain degree in accordance with each other to build the basis of a movement and its organizational framework. If we take this model as starting point, it is possible to describe the success and boundaries of values and actions of the IWMA in Germany.

Three points will illustrate the success of transferring international and global values. *First*, the idea of emancipation – so prominent in the IWMA founding documents – could be transformed easily at the local level because in practice it meant building from the associational culture of the nineteenth century and, by doing so, emancipating from bourgeois patronization. The craftsmen and workers were no longer satisfied with only partial integration but without real participation on behalf of the Liberals or being mere subjects within patriarchal welfare concepts of the Conservatives. August Bebel, who came from the

<sup>22</sup> W. Liebknecht to K. Marx, 23 July 1868, in *MEGA I/21*, p. 1880.

<sup>23</sup> Schmidt, *August Bebel*, pp. 93, 97.

liberal association movement, wrote to Moritz Müller in 1868 “that the associations should elect their leaders from their own ranks; doctors and professors were not suited as leaders – we know that from our own experience”.<sup>24</sup> This was the articulation of a self-confident and independent voice of workers’ emancipation. And since in the IWMA as in the German labour movement the association remained the organizational model, transnational dissemination was – despite disputes on questions with regard to content – easy to manage. The delegates of the association’s conventions and international congresses discussed questions of their organizational statutes with admirable matter-of-factness.<sup>25</sup>

But these deliberative processes required special skills. This meant not only that the delegates who were sent to the IWMA meetings were well educated and often had an academic background, it meant also that in the local organizations of the IWMA and German labour movement a lot of workers were excluded from the emancipation and participation process for which the IWMA was standing. For example, Wilhelm Liebknecht argued at a congress in 1875: “The word worker definitely does not have an exclusive character. Work is the activity of mankind.”<sup>26</sup> However, this inclusive approach was conflictual in practice. Numerous values and forms of contact came from the world of male-dominated skilled trades and work. These spaces thus remained foreign and closed to women, farm workers and unskilled workers.<sup>27</sup> So, all in all, emancipation was a value which the local branches and individual members were familiar with and, as such, it was a driving force for organizational efforts. However, it was practiced only by selected groups of workers.

*Second*, the circulation and transformation of international and global ideas to the local basis and to local organizations were facilitated by the use of and intimacy with the public sphere. It was to a large extent a copy of the bourgeois public sphere with its newspapers, journals and associations. The *Vorbote* – but also other workers’ press – helped circulate ideas of internationalism. But meetings in clubs also played an important role. For example, a member of

24 A. Bebel to M. Müller, 16 July 1868, in Ilse Fischer (ed.), *August Bebel und der Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine 1867/68: Briefftagebuch und Dokumente* (Bonn, 1994), p. 267.

25 Cf. the sources in Ilse Fischer, *August Bebel; Die I. Internationale in Deutschland*; Braunthal, *Geschichte*; Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (New York [etc.], 1992).

26 *Protokoll des Vereinigungs-Congresses der Sozialdemokraten Deutschlands abgehalten zu Gotha*, (Leipzig, 1875, reprint 1976), pp. 35f.

27 See Jürgen Schmidt, “Zivilgesellschaft, sozioökonomische Spannungslinien und sozial-moralisches Milieu. Arbeiterbewegung und Arbeiterparteien in Deutschland von 1860 bis 1914”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 53 (2013), pp. 19–46, pp. 31f.

the ADAV described how he was going to promote the international idea. In September 1865, Carl Friedrich Dültgen wrote to Becker that he would explain in the next meeting in Solingen (Rhineland) that “it is only possible to achieve something through a general fraternization and not through an isolated position of Germany”.<sup>28</sup> In addition, through public outdoor meetings the German social democratic movement as representative of the IWMA established new models of participation beyond the bourgeois public sphere. In June 1866, Liebknecht reported to Marx that he had given in Chemnitz a speech in front around 2,000 workers about reducing working hours, organizing the labour movement and the IWMA: “If I had had membership cards with me, I could have won a dozen good active members and one thousand indifferent ones. But yet nothing is lost; I will return there”.<sup>29</sup>

Within this network of words, texts and discussions in the public sphere, metaphors could also circulate. Of course, it could have been common to use the word “*Rosenwasser*” (rose water) in the 1860s and therefore have been by accident that August Bebel in his first long programmatic text “*Unsere Ziele*” (Our Aims) used this word. But, the context in which Bebel used the term was exactly the same as in the first programmatic article of “*Der Vorbote*” written by Becker. In both paragraphs, both authors emphasized that the way to come to power would be a peaceful one. However, if the resistance of the opponents was brutal and violent, the labour movement would not merely “sprinkle rose water”.<sup>30</sup> Creating a semantic field of internationalism not only facilitated the move of images, it was important because it helped build a consciousness of shared inequalities and solidarity across borders.

*Third*, one of the most effective means to construct a sense and consciousness of international solidarity was through the support of comrades on strike<sup>31</sup> and the adoption of international trade union models. In *Der Vorbote* one can find again and again financial support for workers on strike in different countries – mainly in Britain, France and Switzerland. Sometimes this aid was rather symbolic with regard to the amount of money, sometimes it was financial relief that made the situation for the strikers a bit easier. Instead of doing

28 C.F. Dültgen to J.P. Becker, 24 September 1865, in *Die I. Internationale in Deutschland*, p. 79.

29 W. Liebknecht to K. Marx, 5 June 1866, in *ibid.*, p. 124.

30 *Der Vorbote* 1 (1866), Nr. 1, January 1866, p. 8; August Bebel, *Unsere Ziele* (Leipzig, 1872), p. 16 (in addition, in the previous paragraph Bebel emphasized that the “organization must be international because our conditions are not symptoms of individual nations but belong to all civilized people”).

31 For a general overview see Knud Knudsen, “The Strike History of the First International”, in Frits van Holthoorn/Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940*, 2 vols (Leiden [etc.], 1988), I, pp. 304–322.



a quantitative analysis of this transnational (financial) exchange, I will use a single case for a qualitative approach and illustrate with the following quotation how a narrative of transnational solidarity was constructed:

Two days ago the Central Committee of the Sections of German Language here [in Geneva] got news and further information about the strike of 1,400 coal miners in Essen which started with all right. Yesterday evening the Central Committee of the united Geneva Sections decided with one consent, following the demand of Becker – although money was scarce due the pressure of the strike in spring – to send immediately 200 Swiss Francs as a small gesture of fraternal support. Our other sections as well as all workers' clubs will not sit back where it is essential to transform solidarity into practice and to show that workers of all countries belong to the same family. The address is: Lakowsky, miner, Limbeckerstraße, 75, 1 staircase, in Essen.<sup>32</sup>

First of all, the report emphasized that the strike was justified. This meant that the conflict was not the result of a selfish, undisciplined and unreasonable behaviour. Instead, the strike was legitimized – as stated in a later part of the report – because of a severe fight between workers and businessmen about the withdrawal of wage reductions. This assessment of the strike as part of a class struggle helped generalize its meaning for workers in other parts of Europe. Secondly, the term “family” evokes strong ties. Support would not be received by totally unknown people, but by people to whom one was closely related. It was not (only) the abstract, economic-social category of class which should create solidarity but a kind of private, personal bonding. Thirdly, this text made a strong argument by underlining that this support was the main method to “transform solidarity into practice”. The fine idea of international solidarity was without consequences, if it remained on the metaphoric level. Words had to be followed by actions if one wanted to surmount national borders. Finally, this paragraph tried to build trust, and the text's success was totally dependent on trust. The report suggested support only after the Central Committee received “further information” and – as mentioned – after it was proved that the strike was necessary. It was the authority of the Central Committee with its transnational connections and the individual Johann Becker, that made the information and the contact person reliable. Only with this expertise and competence was it possible for readers of this article to send

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32 *Der Vorbote*, No. 9, (September 1868), p. 153.

money to an unknown miner named “Lakowsky”, living in Essen in “Limbeck-erstraße 75” on the first floor.

The formation of “International Trade Associations” (*Internationale Gewerks-genossenschaften*) in Germany can be described as a transnational learning process, too. The German organizations were more or less direct outcomes of the decisions made at the Geneva IWMA congress in 1866, when the building of such unions was suggested. The statutes August Bebel developed, were similar to the Geneva suggestions. In addition, Bebel convened in October 1868 a workers’ meeting where Liebknecht gave a presentation on the topic and in a resolution formulated that it would be necessary that the foundation should be “in accordance with the model of the English trade unions”. On the other side, Bebel frankly admitted that the term “international” was some kind of a fraud because “we could only expect to integrate the German speaking countries into our organization. The main idea of this name was to express a tendency” in this movement.<sup>33</sup> The “tendency” Bebel wanted to express, was to secure a broader base for his political ambitions in order to found a social democratic, “left-wing” labour movement and to demonstrate the relationship with the international movement in Europe.

In practice, the use of the term “international” in the trade union associations was more a strategic approach, but at least it could be utilized as a flag to facilitate the perception of the social and political question of the working class as a transnational phenomenon. The same is true of the political dimension of the IWMA in Germany. Although Bebel, Liebknecht and Johann Baptist von Schweitzer, president of the Lassallean ADAV since 1867, profited from the organizational background of internationalism, for all of them “the building up of a national organization came first”. Bebel definitely declared at the founding congress of the SDAP in Eisenach 1869: “At any rate, the social democratic party in Germany has first to constitute itself, because beside international organizations national organizations are essential; and those without these would be a mere shadow”. In general, one can argue that internationalism was a kind of vehicle to build paradigms for modernizing the German nation. Global values of humanity, fraternity and civility, vivid in international social-democratic organizations, could help transform nations in peaceful partnership.<sup>34</sup>

33 August Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 3 parts (Stuttgart, 1910–1914), I, p. 207; Welskopp, *Banner*, pp. 69off.

34 Morgan, *German Social Democrats*, p. 174; *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Allgemeinen Deutschen sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterkongresses zu Eisenach* (Leipzig, 1869, reprint 1976), p. 73; see also Welskopp, *Banner*, pp. 534ff. (with regard to August Bebel’s vision of a future system of nation states). As general topic of the IWMA see Michael Forman,

But these successes have to be reassessed. *First*, at a quantitative level the number of members remained relatively small. Since neither the VDAV nor the ADAV could become direct members of the IWMA, it depended on the willingness of individuals to join the IWMA. Between 1867 and 1869 the number of members only rose from 150 to 250. After the foundation of the SDAP in 1869, the IWMA in Germany did not exceed a few thousand members.<sup>35</sup> While this number sounds at least impressive, the reality looked very sobering. In a letter to Marx, Liebknecht saw very good chances that at the Nuremberg conference 1868 the VDAV would “join the Int. A. A. [i.e. *Internationale Arbeiter-Association*]. But we are unable to pay much or even anything besides what we have to pay.” Until the end of 1869 no payments by German workers’ clubs reached Becker or the General Council at all.<sup>36</sup> The situation could have been made even worse when local members asked the central organization in London for support without results. The reaction to a strike of German miners in Lower Silesia in 1869–70 was harsh: “In Answer to an application from the executive of the Social Democratic Party of Germany for loans for the miners of Waldenburg, now on Strike, the German Secretary was instructed to reply that it was impossible at present to do anything, & a general instruction was given to the secretaries to state in their correspondence that there was no prospect [of] obtaining pecuniary aid in London under existing circumstances.”<sup>37</sup> Disappointment and doubts about the internationalist approach could be the result.<sup>38</sup>

This weakness, *finally*, could be seen with regard to its failure to forge a sword against dominant nationalism. During the 1866 Prussian-Austrian war the IWMA in the German states faced a decline in membership. But the

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*Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park, 1998), pp. 19–65.

- 35 Franz Mehring even estimated that the number of members was not much higher than a thousand (quoted in Braunthal, *Geschichte*, p. 125). The higher figures – for 1870 – mentioned by Musto would presuppose that all members of the Social Democratic Workers’ Party at the same time would have been members of the IWMA. This was never the case (Marcello Musto, *Workers Unite! The International 150 Years Later* (New York [etc.], 2014), pp. 7, 28f., 68).
- 36 W. Liebknecht to K. Marx, 17 July 1868, in *MEGA* I/21, p. 1878; M. Quick to J.P. Becker, 29 August 1869, in *MEGA* I/21, p. 1888f.; F. Engels to Brunswick committee of the SDAP, 28 April 1870, in *MEGA* I/21, pp. 228ff.; see also Dlubek, “Korrespondenz”, p. 128; Herres, “Einführung”, pp. 1144f.
- 37 Meeting of the General Council, 4 January 1870, *MEGA* I/21, p. 741 (capital letters in the source).
- 38 On the other side, one should not forget the positive financial aspects of international solidarity. In 1869 for example J.P. Becker estimated the amount of money collected all over Europe for textile workers in Basle in a nine-week strike at 12,000 Swiss Francs. But for a fuller picture, it is also necessary to point to the quantitative weaknesses of the IWMA.

international movement as a whole was not strong enough to immunize the workers against nationalism. The movement was too small; the idea had tradition neither in the middle nor in the lower classes. In a century of nation states, in the cases of Italy and Germany in a period of nation-state-building, it was impossible to enforce internationalism as a concept and as a mass movement. Internationalism was not self-evident; it was not learned at schools; it was an abstract, intellectual idea which had to be learned and communicated.

### Concluding Remark

The IWMA was confronted by its limitations again during the Franco-German war 1870–1. It could not prevent the war, and the Lassallean ADAV gave its consent to the first war loans; August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht from the SDAP abstained from voting. The second round of war loans in November 1870 was refused by both socialist political currents. In the debate about the loan at the German Reichstag, Bebel gave a masterpiece of parliamentarianism. He declared that Germany would with the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine “trample the right of self-determination of the people by foot”.<sup>39</sup> The harsh and un-Parliamentarian reactions in Parliament against Bebel exposed society’s deeply rooted national furore as well as the trials against Bebel, Liebknecht and other party members (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2) showed the willingness of the state to destroy the international movement. The IWMA and its organizers in Germany clearly were detached from this fury and with transnational solidarity and emancipation had alternative models in mind and practiced them. But first of all, their range and influence didn’t reach far enough. The first IWMA member sections and clubs did not keep to their small circles, they participated in the public sphere; they were on their way to a civil society orientated association model, but it was only a first step for a small, privileged, interested and educated group of workers. Second, they were children of their time and they were very – perhaps too – realistic. A success for a working-class movement under the predominant conditions and structures of nation states was only possible if it built strong organizations at the national level first. How difficult it has been until today to create a self-evident idea of transnational and international cooperation and solidarity can be seen in the success of anti-EU-parties throughout Europe. It is not only an antipathy towards the “bureaucratic monster” in Brussels and towards the Euro, it is also the belief that a national paradigm can secure social standards, defend individual demands and protect from unclear fears better than a shared transnational unity.

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39 See Schmidt, *August Bebel*, pp. 107–111.



FIGURE 8.1 *First pages: Trial of the Social Democrats in Germany, 1872.*

Der Braunschweiger Ausschuss der Socialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei in Lötzen und vor dem Gericht von W. Bracke. Mit einem photographischen Gruppenbilde, *Braunschweig*, 1872 [The Brunswick committee of the Social Democratic Party in Lötzen, outside the court, by W. Bracke. With a photograph of the group, *Brunswick*, 1872].

PRIVATE COLLECTION OF MICHEL CORDILLOT.

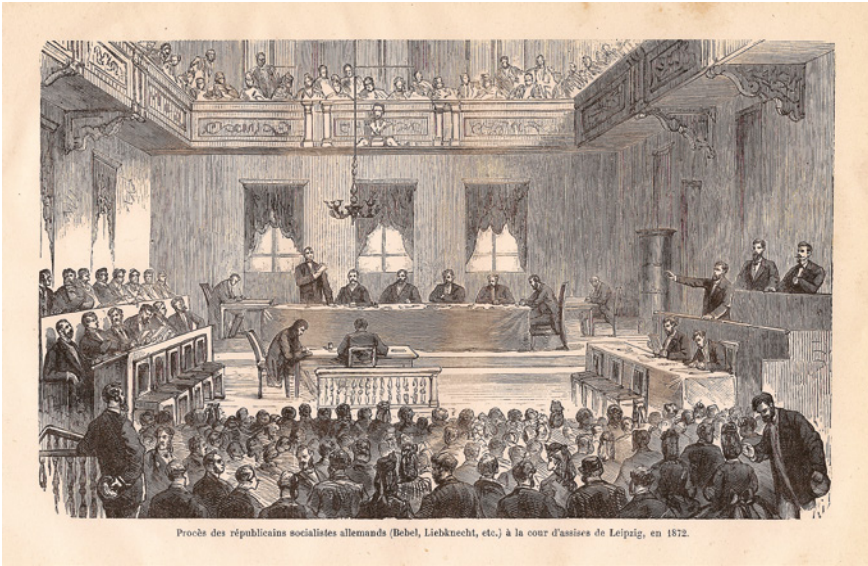


FIGURE 8.2 *“Trial of the German socialist republicans (Bebel, Liebknecht, etc.) in the assizes court in Leipzig, in 1872.”*

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## The IWMA in Belgium (1865–1875)

*Jean Puissant*

Translation from the French by *Angèle David-Guillou*

From the first histories of socialism in Belgium, written initially by militants then by professional historians from the 1950s, the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) has been presented as a founding moment, or at least as an important one, in the evolution towards the creation of the Belgium labour party, Parti ouvrier belge (POB) in 1885, and later on that of its successors – the Belgium socialist party, PSB-BSP in 1945 and the current socialist parties, the French-speaking PS and the Dutch-speaking SP/AO. One hundred years after the creation of the POB, in 1985, most of the socialist federations still traced the origin of their party back to the IWMA. This extremely linear genealogical approach had given way to a historiographic tradition that was only challenged in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

A new wave of historical research in the years 1950 to 1980 produced numerous studies, including substantial publications of source materials<sup>2</sup> which, combined with the general histories of the IWMA, formed an exceptional body of original documents – a rare thing in the field of the history of social organisations. If the harvest was not as fruitful in the following years,<sup>3</sup> our general understanding of the subject was refined by biographies.<sup>4</sup> Finally, through abundant cross-studies, the work of Freddy Joris helped us understand why the Verviers regional federation – a wool world centre at the time – had been the most important federation and survived the longest of all. From this

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\* The following \* will refer to the existence of a biographic entry in the Belgian section of the Maitron, *Dictionnaire du Mouvement Ouvrier en Belgique* : maitron-en-ligne.univ-parisi.fr.

1 Jan Moulart, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en Belgique 1870–1914* (Bruxelles, 1996).

2 See for instance in the bibliography the volumes of the collection published by the Centre interuniversitaire d'Histoire contemporaine (CIHC).

3 Nevertheless, one must cite the studies written by John Bartier on the subject of the early days of socialism, the influence of Proudhon and the role of Léon Fontaine, first contact of Marx and the IWMA in Belgium: see John Bartier, *Libéralisme et socialisme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bruxelles, 1981).

4 See Marc Mayné, *Eugène Hins* (Bruxelles 1994) ; Luc Peiren, *César De Paepe : de l'utopie à la réalité* (Gand, 1992) ; Freddy Joris, *Pierre Fluche et le mouvement ouvrier verviétois sous Léopold II* (1997) and *Marie Mineur, Marie rebelle*, Avant-Propos (Waterloo, 2013).

wealth of information, we will extract certain themes in order to suggest new research perspectives on the nature and importance of the IWMA, its influence in Belgium and its role in the internationalist movement.

### 1842 to 1865: Prolegomena

Belgium was the scene of rapid industrialisation thanks to what I call a “coal Kuwait” – Wallonia – and to a network of canals, managed waterways, roads and an early railway system. From 1842 to 1872, the industrial average annual growth was above five per cent – two thirds more than that of Great Britain.<sup>5</sup> The development of productive forces, mechanisation and industrial capitalism was impressive and the country became the “small” workshop of the modern world, exploiting *en masse* a considerable workforce (women and children in particular) during long hours of low-paid labour. Characterised by its liberal institutions, Belgium practised “social dumping” against its neighbours, partners and rivals. It was the meaning of Marx’s remark when he described the country as “the paradise of continental capitalism”. Industries marked by intensive mechanisation, and sometimes by the intervention of financial capitalism – mining and wool in Verviers, cotton in Ghent, iron, steel and metallurgy in Liege, Charleroi and the Central basin – enjoyed an extremely rapid growth which accounted for the emergence of new social movements in various industrial regions.

The period was also favourable to internationalism, in all its forms: first International Exhibitions from 1851, first international associations (International Congress of Charity, Correction and Philanthropy in Brussels in 1856, International Association for the Advancement of Social Sciences in 1862), free trade agreements in the 1860s and even a Black International in response to the IWMA.<sup>6</sup> Belgium played an active role in this internationalism due to its imposed and guaranteed neutrality. Notably, the international student congresses – Liege 1865, Brussels 1868, Ghent 1869 – gave young scholars – radicals, socialists, French and Belgian – the possibility to refer publicly to Comte, Colins, Proudhon, etc. and thus to create outrage in the Belgian and European press.<sup>7</sup>

5 See René Leboutte, Jean Puissant, Denis Scuto, *Un siècle d'histoire industrielle. Belgique, Pays-Bas, Luxembourg. Industrialisation et société 1873–1973* (Paris, 1998), pp. 31 ff.

6 See Emile Lamberts (ed.), *The Black International* (Leuven, 2002).

7 See John Bartier, “Etudiants et mouvements révolutionnaires au temps de la première internationale”, in *Mélanges offerts à Guillaume Jacquemyns* (Bruxelles, 1968), pp. 35–60. In the second version of the article published in 1981, national and international repercussions of these congresses are analysed, including with regard to cardinal Dupanloup.



The IWMA was part of this general movement – even if Marx had been thinking of creating an international organisation since 1847 – against a background of labour associations which flourished along with the economy: typographer-composers and bronze workers in Brussels (1842 and 1858), weavers and spinners in Ghent (the first organisations of large-scale industry in 1857), friendly societies (General Congress in 1863) and often precarious and short-lived production cooperatives. In 1858, the Association générale ouvrière (AGO) federated eleven of the fourteen professional associations in Brussels: bronze workers, jewellers, locksmiths, cabinetmakers, woodcarvers, glove makers, hatters, furnishing trimmings specialists and more, and even tried to get the Ghent cotton industry's unions on board.<sup>8</sup> The AGO campaigned for the right to associate and held meetings in the provinces, in Ghent and in the Hainaut region in particular. Thus the IWMA could not be considered original. The AGO sent a delegate to the Brussels Congress in 1868 but remained reluctant to the ideology of the new association, which considered it an opponent. Cooperation on one side, class struggle on the other emerged as the two poles identifying and distinguishing the two organisations.

Two rationalist organisations, created out of each other and both fiercely anticlerical, formed the matrix for the IWMA: L'Affranchissement (1854) and Les Solidaires (1857). They were mainly working class – craftsmen and skilled workers from Brussels – but also attracted the petty bourgeoisie. It was in this milieu that a radical approach emerged, articulated by César De Paepe in 1863 in Patignies: “Workers, three things must be destroyed: God, power and ownership.”<sup>9</sup> The considerable weight of the Church and the clergy on Belgian society and on its governing bodies, since the 1830 revolution, led those first socialists to hold the Church, religion and the political struggles they produced, responsible for the absence of political democratisation and for the ruling classes' refusal to consider the social question.<sup>10</sup>

8 See Eliane Gubin, Jean-Paul Mahoux, Jean Puissant, “Question sociale et libéralisme. L'exemple de l'association Générale ouvrière (1858–1920)”, *Huldeboek Prof. dr Marcel Bots* (Gent, 1995), pp. 139–165.

9 “Prolétaires, il y a trois choses à détruire: Dieu, le pouvoir et la propriété.” The Patignies section, unique in this poor rural region of the Ardennes, was founded by a former non-commissioned officer who was in contact with the rationalist associations during his military service. See Jean Puissant, “Un agriculteur ardennais libre penseur et socialiste (Joseph Henry\*)” in *La Belgique rurale du Moyen âge à nos jours, Mélanges offerts à J.-J. Hoebanx*, (Bruxelles, 1985), pp. 371–379.

10 See Alan Kittel, “Socialist versus Catholic in Belgium. The Role of Anticlericalism in the development of Belgian Left”, *The Historian*, 23, pp. 418–435; Els Witte, “De belgische vrijdenkersorganisaties (1854–1914), ontstaan, ontwikkeling en rol”, *Tijdschrift voor de studie*

### Birth and Rise of the IWMA

The first contacts between the IWMA and Belgium were made in January 1865. Léon Fontaine\*,<sup>11</sup> university student, member of Les Solidaires and the association Le Peuple – its propaganda arm which had taken part with Paz in the organisation of the first meeting of Mazzini's Association Fédérative Universelle in Brussels – received from Le Lubez, correspondent for Belgium, a copy of the rules and address of the International. But Marx personally contacted Le Peuple, who gave shelter to the first section of the IWMA on 17 July 1865. Despite *La Tribune du Peuple*, official organ of Le Peuple and thus of the IWMA from January 1866, the organisation remained confidential and essentially Brusse-lian until 1868. The militants were all wage-earners or independent workers, involved in their rationalist organisations (unions or others), subjected to the 60-hour week and the perpetual search for work. The correspondence with London showed difficulties of communication; impatience, which was hardly concealed, was usual. The IWMA did not have a real resonance in Belgium at that time. Hence its silence during the metallurgy and mining strikes in Charleroi between 28 January and 7 February 1867, even when its repression killed men and led to many being arrested and condemned, including at the Mons Court of Assizes.<sup>12</sup>

In September 1865, César De Paepe attended the London conference. He was 24 then, a typographer and a proofreader. In September 1867, he took an active part in the Lausanne Congress; at that time he had started studying medicine once again, at the ULB.<sup>13</sup> His work, his readings, his relations quickly made him the main “socialist” theorist of the country. It was significant that in his report written in London in 1865 on the Belgian section, he was only concerned with Brussels and pinpointed three active milieus: (1) The revolutionaries: L’Affranchissement and its leaders, the tailor Nicolas Coulon and the boot-maker Jan Pellerin; (2) The unionists, who were inspired by British trade-unions, “ready to go on strike for half a penny”: the AGO; (3) The socialists, who were concerned with the suffering of the people and tried to remedy it:

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*van de Verlichting*, 2 (1977) and Jean Puissant, “Anticléricalisme, démocratie, socialisme et inversement”, *Aspects de l’anticléricalisme du Moyen Age à nos jours, Problèmes d’histoire du christianisme*, 18 (1988), pp. 134–147.

- 11 See John Bartier, “Fontaine, Paz et l’Association fédérative universelle de la démocratie”, in *Libéralisme et socialisme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, pp. 313–341.
- 12 See C. Oukhow, *Documents relatifs à l’histoire de la Première Internationale en Wallonie* (Louvain, 1967), p. X (with a list of Belgian IWMA congresses).
- 13 See Peiren, *César De Paepe, De l’utopie à la réalité*, p. 41.

the IWMA's section. He also analysed the preparing the rationalist movement and the collectivisation of the soil, two of his favourite topics. But at no point did he refer to large-scale industry or to the on-going economic upheavals which he was not yet aware of. Indeed he had not visited the industrial regions and had not met the new proletariat – neither had Marx, during his stay in Belgium, for that matter.

On 24 March 1867, a meeting was organised in order to obtain the membership of some professional associations and create a federation in Brussels.<sup>14</sup> It was the first attempt at a systematic widening. At the time, the IWMA in Belgium was formed of two local branches: Brussels – independent craftsmen, factory workers and petty bourgeois – and Patignies – farmers and rural craftsmen. It was only in 1868 that the internationalist movement took off, under the aegis of the Brussels International Congress in September of that year and, most of all, that of the trial which followed the strikes at L'Epine in Charleroi.<sup>15</sup>

Some strikes broke out in the Charleroi basin after it was announced that wages would be cut in various coal-mines. The army intervened at the site of L'Epine, Bonne Espérance in Montigny-sur-Sambre, killing ten workers on 24 March 1868. This time the IWMA condemned the repression by an address, drafted by Pierre Vésinier<sup>16</sup> and signed by the members of the Federal Council. Framed in black, the document was distributed throughout the region and published in *La Cigale* on 5 April. On 12 April a committee was created to support those who had been put on trial and a collection was arranged to organise their defence and help the victims of the repression. Rallies took place in May, but it was mainly the defence of the accused that attracted great attention and later enthusiasm, when they were found not guilty. Twenty-two people, including five women, appeared at the bar, several of them charged with attempt to murder by the Court of Assizes in Mons. The Brusselian lawyers, V. Arnould\*, P. Janson, E. Robert, P. Splingard, etc., who assisted their colleague from Mons, were part of the editing board of *La Liberté*, the capital's weekly Proudhonist paper. They argued that the strike was legitimate, demonstrated that the acts of violence were induced by the intervention of the police and

14 In May 1867, the representatives of a dozen professional associations gathered during an administrative committee, but several of them had refused to join, wishing to remain autonomous.

15 See Louise Henneaux-Depooter, *Misères et luttes sociales dans le Hainaut 1860–1869* (Bruxelles, 1957), pp. 160 ff.

16 The French man Pierre Vésinier wrongly described the accused workers as vocal socialist militants, in his serialised articles for *La Cigale* (26 April ff.).

not the opposite, and finally that individual responsibilities were impossible to establish. On their return, the lawyers were triumphantly met by the IWMA, and Janson and Robert joined the association: the IWMA acquired a national visibility and raised concerns amongst the ruling classes.

This time the movement could take off. After a first gathering in Charleroi on 17 May, 140 public meetings were organised in the Hainaut province until the end of the year – 270 in 1869 – for the most part organised by Brusselian militants. Within a couple of years, 15 sections would be created there. In Verviers, the *Francs ouvriers* (15 November 1867) became formally affiliated in April 1868. Their weekly newspaper, *Le Mirabeau*, published between December 1867 and 1880, became the “organ of the IWMA”. The Anvers branch joined the IWMA in the spring, under the leadership of its convenor, the shoemaker Philippe Coenen, founding member of the Flemish democratic circle *Volkverbond* and director of the newspaper *De Werker* (1868–1914). In Bruges, the branch created by the typographer Frans Vanden Berghé\*, director of the Flemish democratic paper *Peper en Zout* in 1868 and 1869, joined in July. Of all the groups mentioned, Verviers was the most important one, beside Brussels. It emerged from local industrial and political issues preceding its affiliation to the IWMA and remained in existence after the demise of the latter (see figure 9.1).

The idea of a Brussels Congress had been on the table since 1867, but it was postponed due to vague bans imposed by the liberal Internal Affairs minister, Jules Bara, who had become cautious after the repercussions of the student congresses. The Brussels Congress took place in 1868, thanks to unrest orchestrated in the name of constitutional liberties. Its success was total, as proved by the size of its audience, the quality of its work and the considerable stir it created. Among the one-hundred-or-so people present were 58 “Belgian” delegates: 26 Wallons, 22 Brusselians including one of French origin, eight Flemings as well as Philippe Maetens\*, mechanic and delegate for the French section in London, and Aimé Flahaut\*, marbler and the Paris marblers’ delegate. They could not all attend the Congress in its entirety and around two dozens of them spoke. The over-representation of Belgian nationals, to be expected considering the location of the Congress, was also due to the interest it attracted: even organisations that would not join the IWMA were present, the AGO amongst others. Membership rapidly increased in the following months.

In December, during the second Belgian Congress, the IWMA organised itself on the model of the General Council in London. The board of the Brusselian Federation became the General Council of the IWMA-Belgium. Some correspondents, both international and regional, were put in charge of relations

with the provincial federations.<sup>17</sup> Half-yearly congresses were intensifying contacts and exchanges. From then on, several publications took on the IWMA label and spread the good word: *De Werker* (Antwerp), *Peper en Zout* (Bruges), *Le Mirabeau* (Verviers), *Le Devoir* (Liege). *La Tribune du peuple* became the central organ; its sub-editors were members of the General Council. Others were close collaborators, in particular *La Liberté*, *La Cigale*, *Uylenspiegel*, and *Le Diable* in Brussels. But half a dozen miscellaneous organs also published “objective” information on the IWMA, like *Le Peuple Belge*. If the result seemed impressive, these were in fact small publications – except *Le Mirabeau*, the most enduring one, with a circulation of 2,000 to 4,000. The IWMA, transformed, as it was, into a national organisation, reached its peak with three federations in Flanders, one in Brussels and five in Wallonia, gathering more than fifty sections.<sup>18</sup> But decline was on the way: during the fourth Belgian Congress on 31 October and 1 November 1869, only thirty-eight sections were represented; in the Borinage, two were left and only one was present. A year later, during the Special Congress, just thirty remained, and at the eighth Belgian Congress on 26 and 27 May 1871 the number had fallen to twenty.

Organisation charts are useful but do not give an accurate portrait of reality. No section had a permanent official and the correspondents were not always available. Thus Alphonse Vandenhouten\*, a house painter and international correspondent, found work in Fourmies in the North of France, putting a halt to the contacts he had struggled to set up with London. César de Paepe finished his medical studies and became a hospital intern. Paul Robin was expelled from Belgium in 1869. Frans Vanden Berghe, from Bruges, went to look for work in London in 1869. Eugène Hins, General Secretary, started off as a freelance journalist before becoming sub-editor to the new *Liberté*, an ephemeral daily paper in 1870, and then going into exile in Russia in 1872 to earn a living for his family. More often than not, struggles, bans and the precariousness of individual situations formed the daily lot of a worker’s life.

17 Eugène Hins was General Secretary, César De Paepe and Alphonse Vandenhauten were international correspondents. The French man Paul Robin (see *Maitron-France*) was the secretary, Charler Maetens\*, a union representative, the treasurer. There were two correspondents for Flanders, one for Verviers, one for Liege, seven for the Charleroi basin, two for the Central basin and two for the Borinage region. The remaining 12 were industrial workers (seven), small employers (two or three), one independent craftsman and one commercial traveller.

18 See Oukhow, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Première Internationale en Wallonie*. See figure 9.2.

Soon after, the wrongly named “IWMA’s treasure-trove” alarmed the authorities and the media, and the number of members became the subject of raving speculations. In 1871, in order to frighten the rest of Europe, O. Testut mentioned hundreds of thousands of members. Hins would speak internally of 80,000. The historian Jan Dhondt, although well-informed, cited 70,000 members in 1960, then 100,000 in 1968. In 1964, Annie Kriegel had more cautiously spoken of “perhaps 30,000” in the Borinage region.<sup>19</sup> With regard to this specific area, we have been able to locate the origin of the exaggeration.<sup>20</sup> It comes from Charles Coudroy\* who brought the IWMA into the region, but later followed his own project.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, like the IWMA, he demanded that the contingency funds of 1840 be organised in favour of miners – managed in effect by miners’ associations. From this source, fanciful figures were established for the entire country. It was inferred that if there were 30,000 members in the Borinage basin, which was not the largest federation, then they could only be twice as many altogether in Belgium. But in March–April 1869, there were only between 2,300 and 3,200 subscribing members in the region! I agree with Freddy Joris on the estimation of more or else 10,000 IWMA members in Belgium in the spring of 1869. The phantasmagorical estimation – which served both to create concern amongst the authorities and to draw in strikers attracted by possible external supports – was also encouraged by the publication of addresses supporting striking inside and outside of the country, as well as by collections and announcement of payments and/or loans. It was both a source of income and of expenditure. Brussels considered solidarity, including supporting the Commune refugees in 1871–1872, as a priority over the payment of subscriptions and considered London as a clearing house, which would have implied a double accountancy: membership and solidarity.

19 See O. Testut, *L’Internationale* (Paris, 1871); Jan Dhondt, “De socialistische beweging 1856–1875”, in *Geschiedenis van de socialistische arbeidersbeweging in België* (Anvers, 1960); Jan Dhondt, C. Oukhow, “Belgique”, in *La Première Internationale. L’institution, l’implantation et le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968) and Annie Kriegel, *Les Internationales ouvrières* (Paris, 1964).

20 See Jean Puissant, *L’évolution du mouvement ouvrier socialiste dans le Borinage* (Bruxelles, 1982 and 1993), pp. 118 ff.

21 A business agent in the Pâturages region, founder of the soon-to-be dissident Borinage Federation and its periodical *La Fédération boraine*. He publicly cited “30,000” members, the number of miners affiliated to the fund in the basin, and, why not, 92,000, the total of Belgian miners (Wallonian at the time), or even 300,000, the number of industrial workers that could be involved (24 April 1869). See Puissant, *L’évolution du mouvement ouvrier socialiste*.

## Decline

The IWMA's treasure-trove was a myth, the staggering size of its membership a legend. Despite their efforts, the highest judicial authorities were forced to drop charges against the leaders of the IWMA in June 1869.<sup>22</sup> But they succeeded in breaking the organisation's dynamism, encouraging dissidence and provoking a backward surge in membership – in the number of sections and members. The movement encountered many difficulties when its future had seemed to hold great promise. The causes were manifold: growth crisis, repression, divisions and recurrent international crises between 1869 and 1871. The international context – Franco-Prussian war, the Paris Commune, election results favouring the conservative parties throughout Europe – also had repercussions that are difficult to gauge.

### *Repression: "Belgian Massacres"*<sup>23</sup>

On 2 April 1869, the puddlers of Cockerill in Seraing went on strike, soon followed by other workers including the miners of the integrated metallurgy society. The intervention of the army and the *gendarmérie* on 9, 10 and 11 April, ended with two dead and many injured. The Belgium and London General Councils expressed their indignation at the actions taken by the state's repressive forces. On 12 April, a miners' strike was started in the Borinage region and spread. On 15 April in Frameries, as it was facing more than a thousand demonstrators, the army killed three people, including one woman, and injured several others.<sup>24</sup> The IWMA condemned the repression and organised well-attended meetings. If it was in no way responsible for these strikes, which it advised against, in fact, the IWMA did not condemn them like it did in 1865. Its message legitimated the workers' anger but stressed the inefficiency of disorganised spontaneous strikes and advocated the formation of associations and joining the IWMA. De Bavay, Brussels's public prosecutor, intended to "strike the bandits [leaders of the IWMA] hard" and take advantage of the circumstances to

22 "[...] because the Internationale, I have proof of this, does not have a penny to spare" ("*car l'Internationale comme j'en ai la preuve, ne possède pas un sou*") wrote De Bavay, public prosecutor, to the King's Prosecutor (25 April 1869, Archives Générales du Royaume [hereafter AGR], PG, 218 A).

23 Title of the address of the London General Council, 20 April 1869.

24 It was the fourth times since 1867 that a crowd had been fired at, a sad tradition in the armed forces that remained active until 1902. Without any training on the maintenance of law and order, the army "readily opened fire", as Joël Michel noted in 1990, making Belgium the most repressive country in Western Europe – French revolutions excepted.

put an end to the IWMA.<sup>25</sup> On 16 April, Eugène Hins then Pierre Croisier\*, Roch Spingard, Bonami Delesalle and Charles Coudroy were arrested and branches were searched. The dispute deflated and charges were dropped but the damage was done, with long-term consequences. At its peak, the uproar amongst internationalist milieus could not hamper their progressive decline.

### *Dissidences and Schisms: 1869*

In the Borinage region where sections prospered to a total of ten by the beginning of 1869, a schism became inevitable between a federation formed of mutual help societies, led by Coudroy, and the general Borinage Federation, supported by the IWMA and characterised by the existence of resistance funds. Only the neighbouring sections of Jemappes and Cuesmes would ultimately survive, more or less, and serve as transitions towards new endeavours, ten years later. This division rested on a profound disagreement regarding objectives and means: Coudroy was in favour of a service association capable of improving the lot of workers – whilst securing a generous financial position for himself; the IWMA favoured a struggle and defence organisation.<sup>26</sup>

In Brussels, a movement of dissidence was starting to gather momentum at beginning of the year, against a background of personal and ideological opposition. The *Tribune du Peuple*, too Brusselian and in deficit, interrupted its publication in favour of *L'Internationale*, printed from 1869 to 1873. The latter, still published by D. Brismée\*, was deemed more “national” in scope. During several months, some dissidents published a *Nouvelle Tribune du Peuple* opposed to *L'Internationale*. They were led by P. Esselens, a chemical scientist condemned in 1848, B. Delesalle, a jeweller of French origins and P. Robin's father-in-law, and R. Spingard, a future lawyer, like his brothers. They created a new section, the Affranchis, associated to the Affranchis of Jumet-Charleroi, and sought affiliation with London. Their posture was ambiguous as the new association attempted to federate all those who were opposed to the IWMA's leadership, regardless of their orientations, from the moderate Coudroy to the most “revolutionaries” – L'Affranchissement, Coulon and Pellerin – while at the same time setting records straight with *Le Peuple* on ideological, political and even personal levels. The plan failed through but the frontal attacks against Brismée – printer and administrator of the internationalist press, unassuming leader of the IWMA via both his son-in-laws De Paepe and Hins – mixed politics with personal resentment. Worse than this, it cast suspicions on

25 Letter from the public prosecutor to the King of Mons's prosecutor, 16 April 1869 (AGR, PG, 208, dossier AIT).

26 See Puissant, *L'évolution du mouvement ouvrier socialiste*.



the printer's honesty and on his management of the moneys passing through the IWMA – the main reason for workers' over-cautiousness towards organisations. Money issues were damning for workers, and all the controversies, mistakes and misappropriation of funds were structural factors responsible for the disbandment of organisations and individuals.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the economic boom of the years 1871–1873 and the rise in wages seemed to suggest that things were getting better by themselves.

### *Organisational Issues*

International quarrels did not show the Belgian International in more favourable lights either. As early as May 1869, the Seraing section (metallurgists-Liege) suggested, in order to avoid a “dangerous centralisation”, that federations should be allowed to exchange correspondences between each other directly without having to refer to the General Council. The Fourth Congress passed this motion. Responding to accusations on the role of the IWMA during the Commune, the Eighth Congress of December 1871 stated that: “considering on the contrary that the International, wishing to react against despotism and centralisation, [had] always thought it necessary to conform its organisation to its principles; declare[d] once and for all that the International [was] and [had] always solely been a grouping of entirely autonomous federations. That the General Council [was] and [had] always solely been a correspondence and information centre”.<sup>28</sup> During the congress, the Charleroi Federation put forward the possibility of appointing regional federations' representatives to the Belgian General Council and to encourage the creation of national federations of trade associations with one representative present at the General Council. If the suppression of the International General Council sparked a debate at the Ninth Congress of May 1872, the question was relegated to the sections before a decision could be made. The Tenth Congress, in December 1872, explicitly referred to the Hague International Congress that implemented the schism, and also to the “federalist” congress of Saint-Imier, adopting its conclusions. Thus the IWMA of Belgium clearly chose its side and adapted its structures.

27 The Borinage section of Frameries, for instance, decided to refund members their subscriptions, refused to take side and was disbanded. See Puissant, *L'évolution du mouvement ouvrier socialiste*, p. 137.

28 See Oukhow, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Première Internationale en Wallonie*, p. 306. “Considérant qu'au contraire l'Internationale, voulant réagir contre le despotisme et la centralisation, a toujours cru devoir conformer son organisation à ses principes ; déclare une fois pour toutes que l'Internationale n'est et n'a jamais été qu'un groupement de fédérations totalement autonomes. Que le Conseil général n'est et n'a jamais été qu'un centre de correspondance et de renseignements.”

The Belgian congress of December 1873 decided to transfer the General Council's headquarters to Verviers and took *Mirabeau* as its official organ until 1880. The decision reflected a reality: Verviers was the main regional federation, the largest and most dynamic one and, from then on, the most "revolutionary", too. F. Joris highlighted its relative stability but also noted the regular, if often conflicting, renewals of its leaders. From that time onward, the most radical ones were in charge.<sup>29</sup>

The Belgian Federation took part in the federalist congresses of Geneva in September 1873 – with five delegates and three regional federations – the Brussels Congress of September 1874 – eleven delegates from six regional federations, out of a total of 18 delegates. At the Bern Congress, in October 1876, De Paepe was the only Belgian delegate. The federalist congress of Verviers in September 1877 gathered 17 delegates, including 15 from Verviers, one from Liege and one from Charleroi. It became apparent that in the following days Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp were preparing the international socialist congress of Ghent. The progressive dissolution of the IWMA-Belgium also began: the Brussels section held its last meeting in 1882. We can reasonably claim that the Brussels Congress of 1874 put an end to the Belgian Federation of the IWMA. It was there that De Paepe defended his report on the "organisation of public services in the society to come"<sup>30</sup> in which he clearly demonstrated that the predominant ideology of the federative IWMA was not compatible with his and that this state of affairs was fundamentally dividing the Belgian section. With this in mind, we must now reflect on the ideological and political determinants of the IWMA in Belgium.

Although the question has regularly been raised in academic literature, it has never been thoroughly analysed and its chronology has never been established. By choosing the title *Entre Marx et Bakoukine*, B. Dandois perfectly summarised the reality of the situation.<sup>31</sup> M. Mayné shed a light on the role of Eugène Hins, who became a major personality in the fields of organisation and propaganda between 1869 and 1872; whereas the more studious De Paepe was writing articles and reports, whilst at the same time finishing his medical studies. The ideology of the association *Le Peuple*, at the origin of the IWMA in Brussels, was undeniably Proudhonist in its references and objectives. From the very start, consumers' mutual help and cooperative societies were at the centre of its efforts; so were unions, of course, but at first strikes raised caution, if not rejection. The role of these organisations was two-fold: on one hand they

29 See Joris, *Pierre Fluche*.

30 "Organisation des services publics dans la société future."

31 See Bernard Dandois, *Entre Marx et Bakounine, C. De Paepe. Correspondance* (Paris, 1974).

aimed at improving working conditions, on the other hand they sought to develop solidarity between its members and to structure a movement which could impact on social and even political choices; an orientation which its “revolutionary” elements profoundly criticised, e.g. *La Nouvelle Tribune du Peuple*.

On several occasions, the IWMA tried to bring unions together within the regional federations of Brussels, Ghent, Verviers, Liege and of the Borinage area. All of these had set up an internal or external mutual help fund. On Verviers’s suggestion, the last years, from 1872 to 1874, were dedicated to Hins’s 1868 project which examined the drafting of work registers<sup>32</sup> moulded on the example of the 1788 French registers of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*). But the most characteristic and lesser-studied issue had certainly been that of consumption cooperatives, far more numerous than production cooperatives. In April 1871, in Liege, a congress gathering thirty-three delegates and twenty associations positioned itself in favour of cooperation, “but within the International and without relinquishing our total emancipation”.<sup>33</sup> With regards to mutual help societies, the project defended by the IWMA to substitute itself to employer-run contingency funds for miners, quarrymen and fishermen was telling. The Coudroy schism, in the Borinage region, put an end to this undoubtedly logical but perfectly unrealistic idea, in the absence of state policies in this domain. The *Solidaires* of Fayt – 1870 – would be at the origin of the first *Maison du Peuple* in Belgium. This network of associations was typical of the influence of the Brussels section of the IWMA and would later on become the hallmark of the POB, with greater success this time. The Proudhonist sensibility was also present in *La Liberté* – 1867 to 1873. The journal, to which general secretary Hins collaborated, denoted the advantage of supporting the IWMA and that of opposing its organ, *L’Internationale*, when it converted to collectivism through the impetus given by De Paepe.

In fact, doctrinal unity never existed within the Belgian Federation, having always been a place for contradictory debates with shifting majorities. During the 1867 Lausanne Congress, the majority report of the Brussels section, which supported women’s traditional role with a Proudhonist view in mind – Vandenhouten, De Paepe, Fontaine – was voted in, supplanting the minority report in favour of women’s right to work and to associate – Esselens, Robin, Hins. De Paepe argued in favour of common landownership, an idea already

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<sup>32</sup> “Cahiers du travail.”

<sup>33</sup> See Oukhow, *Documents relatifs à l’histoire de la Première Internationale en Wallonie*, pp. 149 ff. “[...] mais dans le sein de l’Internationale et sans renoncer à notre affranchissement complet.”

defended by Colins, an influential individual amongst certain Belgian intellectual milieux: he was defeated by the “Proudhonists”. During the 1868 Brussels Congress, the Belgian group, in association with the “Marxists”, gained a majority on this question. On 13 November 1869, De Paepe wrote to Marx: “I am *deproudhonising* myself more and more, to say the truth I am no longer a Proudhonist: I was only ever one with notable reserves for that matter, especially regarding landownership, striking and *Trade-Unions*.”<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, Hins remained faithful to many ideas of Proudhon, strongly supported by *La Liberté*, especially on this subject.<sup>35</sup> If the condemning of Bakunin’s organisational manoeuvres, a known thing in Brussels, was unanimous and irrevocable in 1869,<sup>36</sup> the Belgian section tried to avert a schism between Marx’s and Bakunin’s groups, notably at the London conference in September 1871. M. Mayné<sup>37</sup> showed that Marx’s prejudices against the Belgian stance were unjustified, notably those against Hins, “a Proudhonist married to a Russian school teacher,”<sup>38</sup> whom he had met in Paris in 1870. According to Mayné, these preconceptions were made *ad hominem* instead of being based on documented proofs. Nevertheless, Belgian correspondents did condemn the nature of Marx’s comments on Bakunin. The Belgian group was also evolving towards a restriction of the Central basin’s powers over regional sections, seeking to give larger autonomy to the latter, if only for material reasons. They fought for this proposal at an international level. In fact, it was the context of the year 1871, electrified by the events of the Commune and their repression, which explained why, gradually and in opposition to Marx’s “authoritarianism”, the Belgian Federation, despite a *rapprochement* with the German leader on the question of collectivism, pronounced itself against the expulsion of Bakunin and his friends at The Hague in 1872. This position was not predicated on support for “anarchy”. The Belgian Federation sided with the Federative

34 See Daisy Devreese, *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'AIT : correspondance 1865–1872* (Nauwelaerts [etc.], 1986), p. 198. “Je me déproudhonise de plus en plus, à vrai dire je ne suis plus proudhonien du tout; je l’ai du reste jamais été qu’avec de notables restrictions, surtout relativement à la propriété foncière, aux grèves et aux Trades Unions [...]”

35 Hins wrote: “We are politically federalist, in the same way that we are economically mutualist and religiously positivist” (“Nous sommes en politique fédéralistes, comme nous sommes mutuellistes en économie et positivistes en religion.”). *La Liberté*, 29 September 1867. See Marc Mayné, *Eugène Hins (1839–1923)* (mémoire de licence, ULB, 1988), p. 100.

36 Letter from the Belgian General Council to the group at the origin of the Alliance internationale de la démocratie socialiste, 16 janvier 1869. See D. Devreese, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–115.

37 See Mayné, *Eugène Hins (1839–1923)*, pp. 119–131.

38 “Proudhonien et époux d’une institutrice russe.”

International and took part in its congresses until the last one in 1877, held precisely in Verviers. There were anarchists in Verviers, amongst whom, most certainly, was Victor Dave\* who had defended the minority position at The Hague.<sup>39</sup> Anarchist elements, at least radical ones, became prominent among the organisations of the Vesdre valley, but it was not the case in Brussels, Flanders or the Central basin, not to mention the Borinage region. With the exception of the undeniably pro “autonomy” movement, which animated the Belgian federations, one cannot detect a major doctrinal inflexion towards anarchy. De Paepe’s report on public services at the 1874 Brussels Congress allowed him to develop his collectivist convictions but was criticised by the anarchist group who feared that, even from its local scope, it could lead to the constitution of a strong state, to which they were opposed. Despite his loyalty to his “old” friends of the IWMA, De Paepe supported the changes underway outside of the IWMA and against it, from as early as 1875.

### Conclusions

The successes of the IWMA are undeniable. The “socialist” approach, undistinguishable from the social question, irrefutably received a significant echo in its national and international dimension. Exceptional efforts of organisation, reflection and propaganda were at play, and neither politicians nor the press could not ignore this dynamism. The events in France brought a dramatic dimension to the period: war, revolution, repression and an unshakable solidarity. It was undoubtedly one of the causes that led to the eventual marginalisation of the International, which, in Brussels especially, was absorbed in the defending and welcoming of the *Communards* in exile. The Paris Commune remained a major influence over the following years, accentuating the perception that Commune and International were the same thing. Incontestably, Brusselian internationalists were caught in this spiral. They were less so in Verviers, but the Commune’s anniversaries were still regularly commemorated in the press and via the organisation of rallies. For workers who were members of labour associations, it was most certainly the impact of speeches and of the solidarity displayed, both symbolic and material, during social conflicts that marked their conscience in an irrational and unrealistic way. Certain organisations fed from this hope and various instances of strikes would be valuable to study: those of cigar makers, jewellers, carpenters, etc. One strike went beyond all the

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39 He was expelled in 1873, following the side-tracking of his friend Pierre Fluche. See Freddy Joris, *Pierre Fluche*, pp. 88–89.

others, at least in Belgium: the one that followed that of Newcastle mechanics in April–October 1871, in favour of the nine-hour working day. As the employers were trying to take on other workers, including those from the continent, the London General Council sent a delegate, James Cohn,<sup>40</sup> to Brussels to dissuade Belgian workers from accepting the offer. Many articles were published in the press and letters of support were sent. Several mechanics' strikes broke out in Verviers in August, followed by other professions, in Brussels in September, Ghent in October and Charleroi in 1872. In the Central basin, four metallurgists' unions joined forces within a Union des métiers in 1871, rapidly becoming the most important union in the country. One after the other, mechanics and other metal workers, such as the bronze-workers of Brussels, obtained the ten-hour working day. A national union and even an international federation were then envisaged. Although imminent economic changes rendered those successes null and void in the following year, it was the first time that a relatively coordinated movement, including on an international level, achieved certain positive outcomes. It became the emblematic movement of the IWMA in Belgium. The experience gained from the results achieved, but also from the difficulties encountered, remained the most important accomplishment of the internationalist endeavour, together with the contacts made inside and outside of the country on this occasion.

The memorial hypertrophy of this period most certainly resulted from the fearfulness of the ruling classes and their, often extreme, reactions. On the other hand, it was a consequence of the belief held by succeeding generations, rightfully so, but in an exaggerated manner, that the IWMA was at the origin of the contemporary socialist movement. Old militants turned to anti-clericalism and free thinking (so D. Brismée\*). But at the time, in the milieus considered, membership of the IWMA was perceived as a positive marker which brought both admiration and respect, and was often remembered, in particular during the solemn ceremonies organised for the funerals of founding members: Brismée\* in 1888, De Paepe in 1890, Pierron\* in 1898, Fluche\* in 1909, etc. Memory was built on the heels of fact.

The “IWMA moment” was an encounter between circles of intellectuals, craftsmen and qualified workers from Brussels and the provinces, most specifically the great industry's proletariat and its social movements. Those contacts were not new but, on that occasion, they traced intellectual and physical itineraries that would no longer be forgotten. One can also be impressed by

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40 James Cohn, president of the London cigar-makers, member of the General Council from 1867 to 1871, delegate at the 1868 Brussels Congress, intervened during the cigar-makers' strikes in Amsterdam and Antwerp.

the amount of work that went into the writing of rules, motion reports, periodicals and correspondences, and which was shared between educated milieus and qualified workers – although not all of them were indeed qualified – who were keen to engage with new formative learning conditions. According to F. Joris, “the IWMA was not a mere flash in the pan<sup>41</sup>.” He obviously had in mind the case of Verviers<sup>42</sup>, where an uncommonly organised labour movement did not emerge from the IWMA but in fact partook of its resonance in Europe and even outlived it like nowhere else in Belgium. I personally think that it was in fact a mere flash in the pan, but that sparks remained. And here, it is the Borinage region that I have in mind. However, the support of the political struggles of the years 1877 to 1885 was indeed at odds with the IWMA and its experience.

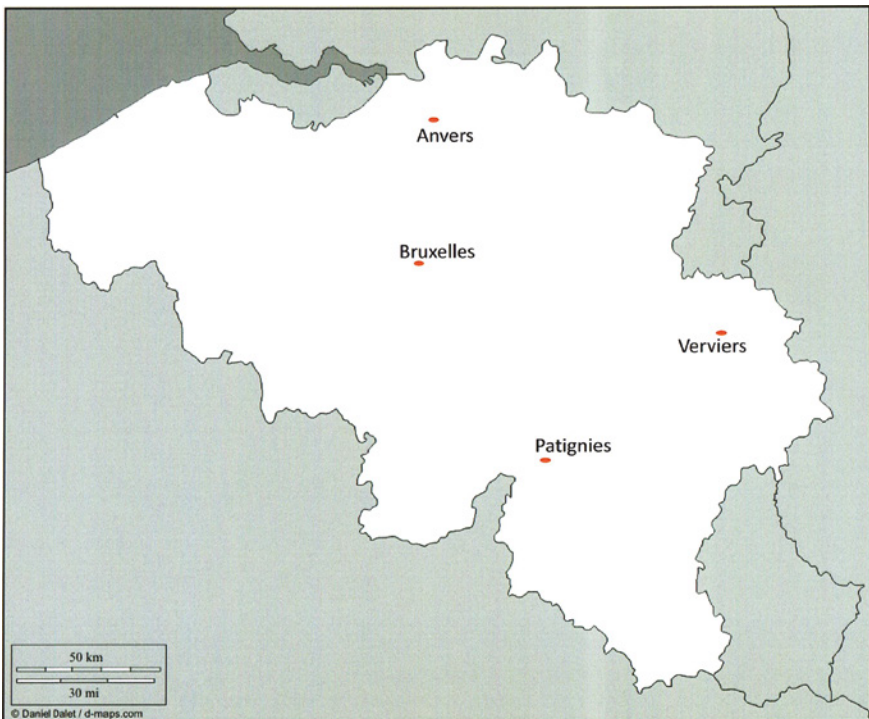


FIGURE 9.1 *Belgian Sections of the IWMA, April 1868.*

MAP BY FREDDY JORIS.

41 “L’AIT n’a pas été qu’un feu de paille.”

42 See the quoted works of Freddy Joris about Verviers.

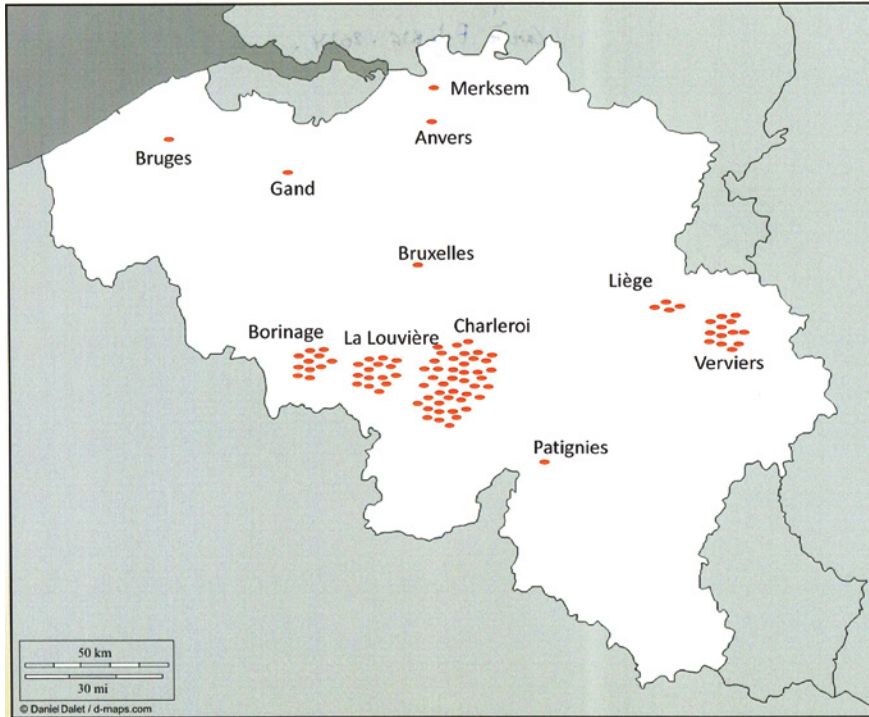


FIGURE 9.2 *Belgian Sections of the IWMA, April 1869.*

MAP BY FREDDY JORIS.

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# The First International in Switzerland

## *A Few Observations*

Marc Vuilleumier

Translation by Angèle David-Guillou

Considering the circumscribed nature of this study, we will limit ourselves to a few points.<sup>1</sup> The early presence of the International in Switzerland and, from its beginnings, the extent of its exchanges with other countries are due to the networks of personal relations which interlinked some of its first protagonists. The case of Johann Philipp Becker is known,<sup>2</sup> that of doctor Pierre Coullery less so, partly a consequence of the depreciative comments James Guillaume voiced about him; though Guillaume himself was rather ill-informed about Coullery's formative years.<sup>3</sup> A former representative of this movement that in Switzerland, around the year 1850, corresponded to that of "*démocrates-socialistes*" in France, Coullery had maintained contacts with the refugees he had known in Switzerland, many of whom were ultimately expelled to other countries. This allowed him to play a prime role in the meetings of European democrats that were held discreetly and carefully amidst crowds gathered for some official celebration: the Federal Shooting Festival at La Chaux-de-Fonds (12–22 July 1863),

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- 1 In our notes, we limit ourselves to specific studies and archives. We have ignored any reference to studies well known to historians: *L'Internationale* by J. Guillaume for instance. Regarding the minutes of the General Council, the dates stated will allow easy referencing to the passage in the document. On the occasion of the 1964 centenary, we had presented a general overview of the IWMA in Switzerland: Marc Vuilleumier: "La Première Internationale en Suisse", *La Première Internationale. L'institution. L'implantation. Le rayonnement. Paris, 16–18 novembre 1964* (Paris, 1968), pp. 231–250, as well as a version intended for the readers of *Revue syndicale suisse*, later used in our *Histoire et combats* (Lausanne, 2012), pp. 115–130. Erich Gruner, *Die Arbeiter in der Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bern, 1968) makes for an indispensable read, thanks to the width of its documentation, but a difficult one as what concerns the IWMA is disseminated across different chapters often dealing with other subjects. Since then, only a few specific studies have been published, about the Jura federation notably.
  - 2 Gruner in *Die Arbeiter in der Schweiz* used with great results his prolific correspondence. See also: Hans-Werner Hahn (ed.), *Johann Philipp Becker. Radikaldemokrat-Revolutionsgeneral-Pionier der Arbeiterbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1999).
  - 3 Despite the meticulous and remarkable study by Elfriede Wiss-Belleville, *Pierre Coullery und die Anfänge der Arbeiterbewegung in Bern und der Westschweiz. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Schweizerischen Frühsozialismus* (Basel [etc.], 1987).

the Independence festivities in Brussels (26–29 September 1863). If the *Association fédérative universelle* which came out of these encounters was short-lived, it connected or reconnected individuals who would later resurface amongst the International Workingmen's Association: Léon Fontaine and Brismée for Belgium; Coullery, Karl Bürkli and Becker for Switzerland. In addition, Valentin Weber, a German watchmaker, was delegated by the London *Arbeiterbildungsverein* (Workers' Educational Society) to Brussels, on Marx's suggestion, to intervene in favour of Poland. This same Weber had taken part in the Baden Uprising of 1849, and had gone over to Switzerland with what was left of the revolutionary army. It was at this time that he had met Becker, and perhaps Coullery who, in Geneva, had been in close contact with the German exiles.<sup>4</sup>

Coullery's networks of relationships were the source of the international flavour that he gave his journal, *La Voix de l'Avenir*. When *Le Confédéré* of Fribourg, which for its foreign part was in the hand of a group of French republicans, criticized Brismée for denouncing the verbal violence French students deployed during the Liege congress, at a meeting organised with them on 3 November 1865, Coullery wrote a reply, defending the Belgian man "I know" – even if he did not share all of his ideas.<sup>5</sup> Coullery's acquaintances in France are more difficult to trace. He could have benefited from the network of Claude François Marchand, an exile of 2 December 1851, established as a veterinary doctor in Locle, a naturalised Swiss citizen and president of the local branch of Helvetia, this radical left association which had not remained foreign to the 1863 congress. In 1848–1849, Marchand had been very involved in the revolutionary movements in Lyon, where he seemed to have kept numerous relations. And so *La Voix de l'Avenir* was particularly interested in this city, taking in numerous articles by the young Albert Richard and, after the International Workingmen's Association's (IWMA) Congress in Geneva, publishing the report of Lyon's representatives which had been withdrawn in favour of their Parisian counterparts' and which, for this reason, did not appear in the minutes of the Congress.<sup>6</sup> Coullery expressed some reservations about the report, "but [...]"

4 Wiss-Belleville, *Pierre Coullery*; MEGA III/12; John Bartier, *Libéralisme et socialisme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, studies collated and published by Guy Cambier (Bruxelles, 1981), pp. 313–341.

5 *Le Confédéré* (17 November 1865); *La Rive Gauche* (26 November 1865).

6 Ten excerpts from the *Mémoire* were published between 4 November 1866 and 20 January 1867. On 2 December 1866, a correspondence signed by "Several workers" ("*Plusieurs ouvriers*") indicates that, during a discussion on the social question, one of them read the Lyon workers' *Mémoire*, giving rise to varied comments. A manuscript copy of the 34 pages can be found in the Jung archive at the IISH. We have not been able to compare it with the texts published by *La Voix de l'Avenir*, which seem to account for almost its entirety. Maurice Moissonnier analysed the Amsterdam document on pages 54–55 of *La Première Internationale et*

one will find on each page the expression of this idea, this feeling, which will make the proletariat all-powerful, that the working classes must look for their salvation in themselves.”

Despite Coullery's connections, it was without his involvement that the first group of the International was created in Switzerland. Already, on 11 October 1864, a few workers from Geneva informed Tolain in Paris of the constitution of a temporary committee in charge of contacting the Association. Amongst them was Dupleix the binder, a French republican who had taken refuge in Switzerland after the coup of 2 December 1851. Why Tolain rather than London directly? Were there links between the older republican exiles from Geneva and Paris, perhaps via H. Lefort? During the traditional 1848 anniversary banquet, on 24 February 1865, French republicans and their friends from other countries discussed the International, which five local associations had joined. Did Becker take part in these early activities? His articles for *Nordstern* of Hamburg, in which he recounts the beginnings of the IWMA in Geneva, would suggest so, although he was then absorbed in his political activities amongst the German diaspora and Swiss radical Left associations (Helvetia). On 25 April 1865, when the Association gathered 200 members in Geneva and a General Council of fifteen with an executive of seven people was formed, the Central Committee nominated Dupleix, Becker and Falconnet as correspondents for Switzerland. The IWMA was providing existing labour associations with the possibility to join collectively. And indeed, on 5 February, the Genevan committee had sent all labour organisations a circular in French and another one in German, to which the provisional rules of the Association were adjoined, asking them to discuss and consider the possibility of becoming members. It was this circular which Coullery reproduced in the radical journal of La Chaux-de-Fonds on 25 March, and which prompted him to create the first section of the Jura-Neuchâtel region. On 21 November, the General Council nominated him as a correspondent. At the same time, Becker was speaking to the German Federation of labour associations in Switzerland and to its local branches, to Grütli, a radically inclined popular Swiss association which had numerous local bureaux, as well as to the German-speaking organisations he was in contact with in other countries, thus laying the basis of what would become the IWMA's German-speaking group, with its monthly publication, *Der Vorbote* (1866–1871).

Other networks played a part in the beginnings of the International: Pierre Vésinier's, in Switzerland then later in Brussels and London, was one of them.

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*la Commune à Lyon (1865–1871)* (Paris, 1972), insisting, perhaps too heavily, on its Proudhonist character. Albert Richard's numerous articles for Coullery's paper have not been taken into account by historians.

Vésinier was a somewhat equivocal character, whose actions were often met with hostility. He had taken refuge in Switzerland in the wake of 2 December, and there had led conspiracy activities within the exile community as well as in the field of local political struggles in Geneva, resulting in him being expelled. He joined the IWMA in Brussels, then the Concorde lodge (merged with that of the Philadelphes) in London where he met two members of the IWMA: Nüsperli from Switzerland and Le Lubez from France (convener of the French branch). It was with the latter that Vésinier accused the IWMA's Parisian officials of "Bonapartism", initiating a long-lasting dispute which ended with both of them being excluded. This opposition had its repercussions in Switzerland where, in Geneva, an informal group (formed of republicans opponents to Dupleix, progressive local politicians though enemies of the radical leader James Fazy) took stance against the International. When Blanqui came to Switzerland (19 May/3 November 1866), he had no contacts there apart from those which Vésinier provided him with. All the contacts he made in Geneva were thus with Vésinier's friends. In La Chaux-de-Fonds, where Blanqui spent the first summer month, he stayed with Coullery, although condemning his cooperative leanings and the International. The incident of the Geneva congress of September 1866, during which Blanqui's supporters attempted, in vain, to be allowed in, is well-known.<sup>7</sup>

Identifying the reasons why pre-existing labour associations would become affiliated to the IWMA is not always easy, but a few primary sources provide us with some clarifications. Generally speaking, the example set by the most powerful unions in England, as well as the solidarity both facilitated and put into practice by the IWMA, impressed and pulled them in. So did the prospect of being supported during future wage disputes; a point made very apparent from the study of the minutes of the Union of Typographers in Geneva. Three out of the first four IWMA congresses having taken place in Switzerland, the representatives of the General Council were able to use their visits to hold meetings with their local colleagues, sometimes organising tours around the entire country. All these efforts gave local associations the assurance that they were not alone in the event of protests and strikes, and ultimately incited them to join in and encouraged the workers of certain trades, not yet organised, to form sections of the International.

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7 Marc Vuilleumier, "Associationnisme ouvrier, républicains et blanquistes au début de la Première Internationale (1864–1866)", in Michel Cordillot, Claude Latta (ed.), *Benoît Malon le mouvement ouvrier, le mouvement républicain à la fin du Second Empire* (Lyon, 2010), pp. 135–170, most specifically from page 145.

We should beware the labels so readily applied to the militants of the IWMA, such as that of Proudhonist attached to Coullery. His socialism, it has been said, originated from the “*démocrates-socialistes*” of the years 1849–1850, where the influences of the various schools of thought mingled. Even the concept of federalism, very present in his discourse, owed more to what he experienced between 1848 and 1851 than to Proudhonist theories.<sup>8</sup> During the spring of 1866, the shoemakers of La Chau-de-Fonds stopped working in order to obtain the right to take their meals away from their employers’ table. *La Voix de l’Avenir*, whilst remaining perplexed as to why such a right could be contested, noted that striking was an empirical means which did not lead to the aim it sought and could even be dangerous for more than one industry. “But striking has an incontestable result, it gives courage to the worker, it develops in him the feeling of power and it prompts meetings where social questions are discussed and explored thoroughly. Strikes in England generated those numerous workers’ associations which today send tremors through the English aristocracy. Therefore, we believe strikes to be powerless in addressing the working classes’ wretchedness, but they show the road to progress, they lead to associations.”<sup>9</sup> A similar commentary regarding a shoemakers’ strike in Geneva was published shortly after: “This means of remedying our evils, powerless in essence, has the salutatory effect of making the worker think and discuss.” But “only the forming of associations can regenerate the working classes. [...] Thus, let us swap strikes for associations.”<sup>10</sup> In September 1866, when the workers of the Japy clock-making factories in Beaucourt and its surroundings (in France, not far from the Swiss border) stopped their activity to oppose a cut in wages, Coullery restated his position that striking was an “imperfect and transitory weapon.”<sup>11</sup> Noting that Japy was trying to monopolise the making of sketches,

8 We are referring here to a very old study which would benefit from an in-depth update: Marc Vuilleumier, “Théophile Thoré et les républicains français réfugiés en Suisse de 1849 à 1851”, *Revue suisse d’histoire*, 14 (1964), fasc. 1, pp. 1–32.

9 “Mais la grève a un résultat incontestable, elle donne du courage à l’ouvrier, elle développe en lui le sentiment de la puissance et elle provoque des réunions où les questions sociales sont discutées et approfondies. Les grèves, en Angleterre, ont engendré ces nombreuses sociétés ouvrières qui aujourd’hui font trembler l’aristocratie anglaise. Ainsi, nous croyons les grèves impuissantes à remédier à la misère des classes laborieuses, mais elles tracent la voie du progrès, elles conduisent aux associations.” *La Voix de l’Avenir* (20 May 1866).

10 “Ce moyen impuissant en lui-même pour remédier à nos maux, a pour effet salutaire de faire réfléchir et discuter l’ouvrier. [...] [mais] L’association seule peut régénérer les classes ouvrières. [...] Donc, remplaçons la grève par l’association.”

11 “Arme imparfaite et transitoire.”



which would not be without consequences for the clock assemblers of La Chaux-de-Fonds, he considered that the Swiss workshops should welcome the French strikers. "Workers of Switzerland, let us express our admiration to those working-men who prefer wretchedness to the unbearable conditions imposed on them".<sup>12</sup> Those few examples show how over-simplistic certain labels are. One can at once condemn the principle of striking and support its manifestations, by acknowledging what they bring to labour consciousness and to the feeling of solidarity.

It was in the name of solidarity that the first sections of the IWMA were created in Switzerland and that they gave support to local strikers but also, from an early stage, to those abroad. On 27 March 1867, the Central Committee for French-speaking Switzerland in Geneva sent a four-page circular regarding the bronze-workers' strike in Paris. After a short historical introduction, it reproduced the resolution taken by the IWMA General Assembly in Geneva: 100 francs interest-free loan; permanent subscription; call for all the French-speaking Swiss labour associations to do the same. The document was able to lay out results: forty-six francs ninety; the Carouge section loaned twenty francs and had gathered eighteen francs from a subscription; the German-speaking section of Geneva had agreed to 100 francs in loan and had launched a subscription too. To put these figures in perspective, let us remind that the average daily wage was three francs sixty for construction workers and in excess of five francs for clockmakers.

At the turn of 1868, a strike of engravers took place,<sup>13</sup> this time in Geneva. Six sections agreed to interest-free loans amounting to 220 francs (German-speaking section, joiners, tinsmiths, carpenters, stonecutters and bricklayers, cabinetmakers). Surprisingly, clockmakers were absent from this demonstration of solidarity. Subscriptions from various sections had raised 290.85 francs, including 206.05 francs from the jewellers alone. Thus the engravers' treasurer was handed 360 francs, from which two francs and a half had been deducted to pay for the printing of the poster calling for a general assembly of the sections which had shown their support. A surplus of 510.85 francs remained, well enough to pay the loans back. The well-researched great construction-workers' strike, which was taken over by the Central Committee, is worth mentioning considering its strength and the monies

12 "Ouvriers de la Suisse, exprimons notre admiration à ces ouvriers qui préfèrent la misère aux conditions impossibles qu'on veut leur imposer." *La Voix de l'Avenir* (23 September 1866). See also *La Voix de l'Avenir* (2 April 1867).

13 All the documents used below come from the archives of the Genevan typographers' union held at the Bibliothèque de Genève [hereafter BGE].

involved. Subscription-wise, the Central Committee had received 6,503.60 francs: forty per cent of which came from the clock-making and jewellery factory (“*La Fabrique*”); nine per cent from other Genevan sections; eleven per cent from the rest of French-speaking Switzerland; nineteen per cent from France (almost entirely from Paris); thirteen per cent from Germany and German-speaking Switzerland (not differentiated) and seven per cent from London and Berlin. In addition, 15,583.50 francs in interest-free loan were raised, of which twenty-two per cent was granted by clockmakers and jewellers; eleven per cent by other Genevan sections; fifty-four per cent by Paris and five per cent by London. The importance of donations and loans from France was for the most part due to the engraver François Graglia, sent to Paris and London (315 francs in expenses). He was able to befriend several members of the Federal Commission of Paris. In London, he had not been able to receive the help he had hoped for, the status of English associations making immediate unexpected payments impossible. “Undoubtedly,” he wrote to Varlin, “I am the first to admit it, in a few weeks these same societies would provide more money than our needs require.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, 13,437.80 francs were handed to the sections of locksmiths, painters-plasterers, stonecutters and bricklayers, *bardeurs*<sup>15</sup> and unskilled workers, tinsmiths and French and German-speaking carpenters and joiners. The sum, it seems, was distributed proportionally between the sections according to their size – 4,383 francs for the stonecutters and bricklayers alone. Each striker received a daily compensation of one franc fifty, then finally only zero franc seventy-five. In fact, many had already left Geneva, especially the seasonal unskilled workers of neighbouring Faucigny.

The relations created on this occasion remained strong until after the trial of the second Commission du bureau de Paris, in May–June 1868. A report from the typographers’ delegate, read in front of his section during the Central Committee’s meeting, shows that the Committee had published an address opposing the legal actions against the Parisian detainees and their sentence to three-month imprisonment.<sup>16</sup> “In addition the Committee has decided to start

14 “Sans doute, je suis le premier à le reconnaître, dans quelques semaines ces mêmes sociétés nous fourniraient des sommes supérieures à nos véritables besoins.” *Procès de l’AIT. Première et deuxième Commission du Bureau de Paris ...* (Paris, 1870), p. 139. One can also find here the correspondence received by Varlin from the Genevan Internationalists (*Les Internationaux de Genève*).

15 Workers who were in charge of carrying stones on building sites.

16 The poster, dated 5 July 1868, which included a text in French and another one in German, has survived; it is entitled: “Manifesto of the International Workingmen’s Organisation to its brothers” (“*Manifeste de l’Association internationale des travailleurs à ses frères*”) and is signed “In the name of the Central Committee of the French-speaking Switzerland section:

a subscription in their favour, at least to pay for the trial fees. To this effect, the address has been printed as a small volume with a circular. We have sent it to the French and German-speaking sections and to the Genevan sections. Later, we received a letter from citizen Varlin, written from the Sainte-Pélagie prison (accompanied with 150 francs from the late subscriptions of the Parisian section for the construction-workers strike). He expressed, in his comrades' names, the desire to drink a glass of this nice little Genevan white wine. We all know that those brave-at-hearts are not exactly happy in prison. Thus the Central Committee has taken this opportunity to treat them. Whilst we await

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The Président, Graglia, François. The general secretary, Perret, Henri" (*Au nom du Comité central des sections de la Suisse romande: Le Président, Graglia, François. Le Secrétaire général, Perret, Henri*). The German text is signed in the name of the Central Committee of the German-speaking sections group, by J.P. Becker, president, and Munch, secretary. The poster claims that the members of the Parisian Bureau have been condemned "for having helped and supported their brothers, workers in Geneva, in times of strike and as the decision from the Court stipulates: for having sought to 'better the condition of all the workers, without distinctions of nationality, through cooperation, production and credit.' It is a declaration of war to social ideas and the principles of the 89 Revolution, as the accused Varlin and Combault very well stated in their defence" ("pour avoir aidé et secouru leurs frères, les ouvriers à Genève, en temps de grève, et, comme le dit l'arrêt de la Cour: pour avoir eu pour but l'amélioration de la condition de tous les ouvriers, sans distinction de nationalité, par la coopération, la production et le crédit.' C'est une déclaration de guerre aux idées sociales et aux principes de la Révolution de 89, comme l'ont très bien dit les accusés Varlin et Combault dans leur défense.") The duty of Genevan workers was indeed "first of all to invoke public indignation against the actions of such magistracy and call upon all honest men, without exception. Then to prove, through an excess of energy that we are not the unworthy colleagues of those heroic defenders of the people, and that we will not leave them alone on the battlefield. Our honour, especially that of us, workers of Geneva, is engaged, let us thus show through our actions that fraternity is not a vain word to us, and that we are worthy to be part of the great social party, the party of the regeneration of humanity" ("certes, d'invoquer d'abord contre les actes d'une telle magistrature, l'indignation publique, d'en appeler à tous les hommes honnêtes, sans exception de parti. Puis, de prouver, par un surcroît d'énergie, que nous ne sommes pas les indignes confrères de ces défenseurs héroïques de la cause du peuple, et que nous ne les laisserons pas seuls sur la brèche. Notre honneur, surtout à nous, ouvriers de Genève, est engagé, montrons donc par l'action que la fraternité chez nous n'est pas une vaine parole, et que nous sommes dignes d'appartenir au grand parti social, au parti de la régénération de l'humanité."). BGE, Affiches politiques et sociales (1868/83). In accordance with registration copyright, a copy of each poster was deposited in the Bibliothèque de Genève. Folded and piled up, these posters were put in folders, photographed and catalogued around twenty years ago. They can be viewed on microfiche. Those of the IWMA are particularly numerous; many are notifications to attend meetings.

the day when we are able to give them the greatest testimony of our sympathy and solidarity which closely link us to them, the Committee has unanimously decided to send our friends a barrel of wine accompanied with the fraternal salutations of the twenty-four Genevan sections."<sup>17</sup>

Strikes, as we can see, promoted a feeling of solidarity and even friendship, spreading from trades to industries, to the whole of a town's working population, through a region, a country, finally reaching an international dimension. The Genevan construction workers' strike of March-April 1868 was recounted, only a month later, by Johann Philipp Becker, in a booklet published in two consecutive editions in German, then translated into French. Following an analysis and denunciation of the lies disseminated by the press, in which he insists on the fundamental capitalist nature of journalistic endeavours, Becker proceeds to a minute and circumstantial account of the events. He exposes all the manoeuvres of the action committee nominated by the IWMA's Central Committee, their efforts to inform public opinion (posters), to maintain contact with the construction-workers and never lose their trust. He explains how the locksmiths and mechanics (non-affiliated to the IWMA), seeing they could benefit from the movement, subsequently went on strike and joined the International. This spontaneous movement went against the tactics of the action committee, who did not seek to spread to other professions a strike it was supporting financially. Everything is described in detail: the bourgeoisie's efforts to stir up the Swiss against non-nationals; the attempts to find an agreement; the government's struggle not to compromise itself; the reception committee at the landing of the boats and at the station to prevent the arrival of black-legs and finally the war of posters to influence public opinion. Becker attacked those who suggested that co-operatives were a panacea: "if the proletariat, forever extending due to the laws of the current economy, should reach its salvation through cooperative associations *alone*, Jupiter could revolved around

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17 "En outre le Comité a décidé de faire une souscription en leur faveur, au moins pour payer les frais du procès. À cet effet, le manifeste a été imprimé en petit avec une circulaire. Nous l'avons envoyé aux sections romandes et allemandes et aux sections de Genève. Plus tard, nous avons reçu une lettre du citoyen Varlin, écrite de la prison de Sainte-Pélagie (accompagnée de 150 fr. provenant des souscriptions en retard de Paris pour la grève des ouvriers du bâtiment). Il a manifesté, au nom de ses camarades, le désir de boire un verre de ce petit vin blanc de Genève. Nous savons tous que ces braves cœurs ne sont pas précisément heureux dans la prison. Aussi le Comité central a-t-il saisi cette occasion de leur faire un petit plaisir. En attendant de leur donner une plus grande preuve de notre sympathie et de la solidarité qui nous lie étroitement à eux, le comité a voté à l'unanimité d'envoyer à nos amis une feuillette de vin accompagnée du salut fraternel des 24 sections de Genève."

the sun a thousand times before this salvation was achieved, and all civilisations would be buried under the rubble by the next century.”<sup>18</sup> Reaching a more general conception of the labour movement, “of which striking has only been a small convulsion”, Becker laid out his perspectives: “How can we, by ways of legislation, take capital away from usurpation, to distribute it in good order to work, the producer of and legitimate heir to this capital? How can we convert the entire society under intellectual, moral and material premises, in an association of production and consumption? How can we dissolve the State into society and society into the State? Lastly, how can we, with the help of organic laws and their efficient applications, erect solidarity as a right and as a duty? Of course, much sowing and ploughing will be required in order to attain the great harvest. [...] The labour movement does not consist of fitting everybody in a system imagined by a great genius, because all that is not generally produced by logical facts is useless; it is primarily concerned with facilitating the development of facts, of which the new ideological current is only a logical deduction; it is merely its expression in the common man’s language, the common ownership of all thinking men.”<sup>19</sup>

The booklet’s thirty-nine pages were a remarkable example of the way in which the IWMA learnt lessons from each strike it led and wished to propagate them. It was indeed a pedagogical publication and must be read today with this consideration in mind. The account of the events was faithful, despite the author’s bias, and from it a way of doing things and the mistakes to be avoided emerged: in short, a list of advice. The construction-workers strike of 1868 was

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18 “Si le prolétariat qui augmente toujours, grâce aux lois de l’économie actuelle devait attendre son salut de l’association coopérative seule, Jupiter pourrait achever mille fois son évolution autour du soleil avant que ce salut se réalise, et toute civilisation serait ensevelie sous les décombres dès le siècle prochain.”

19 “Comment peut-on, par voie de législation, enlever le capital à l’usurpation, pour l’attribuer avec bon ordre au travail, le producteur et l’héritier légitime de ce capital ? Comment peut-on convertir la société tout entière sous le rapport intellectuel, moral et matériel, en une association de production et de consommation. Comment peut-on fondre l’État dans la société et la société dans l’État ? Enfin comment peut-on, à l’aide de lois organiques et d’applications effectives, ériger en droit et en devoir la solidarité ? Certes il faudra beaucoup semer et beaucoup labourer avant d’arriver à la grande récolte. [...] Le mouvement ouvrier ne consiste pas à vouloir enserrer tout le monde dans le cadre d’un système imaginé par un homme de génie, car tout ce qui ne découle pas en général des faits logiques, n’est pas utile; il s’agit principalement de faciliter le développement des faits dont le nouveau courant d’idées n’est qu’une déduction logique, ce n’est que l’expression passée en langue vulgaire, devenue la propriété commune de tous les penseurs.”

thus of great importance for the labour movement. Usually considered and proclaimed a victory, it was sometimes judged in less favourable terms in private, as one can read in the letter of the president of the typographers' society to a Parisian correspondent. After having exposed the compromise which had put an end to the conflict, he adds: "It is not so great, as you can see, but at least it is something, especially as it was the first time such a formidable strike broke in Geneva. There were subscriptions all across the various trades, even requests for loan, and I believe that in Paris you know something about this. In short, I believe it was time that the strike stopped, because the International (which I don't wish to belittle, on the contrary, as I am one of its supporters) didn't think it would last that long and consequently had not taken the necessary measures to obtain from the foreign sections the funds it may have needed."<sup>20</sup> Another important episode of the labour struggles led in the name of the International was the strikes organised at the end of 1868 and the beginning of 1869 in Basel. We will only mention in passing the role played by Becker's booklet in this matter.<sup>21</sup>

A final example of a strike which we would like to look into, far less important and thus not known by historians, was that of roofers in Geneva (22 October to 12 December 1869). It is an episode worth mentioning as a book of minutes of the Genevan society of roofers, section of the International Workingmen's Association,<sup>22</sup> has survived and, together with *L'Egalité*, it allows us to follow the events from the perspective of the strikers themselves. One should not expect this volume to present the verbatim minutes of the incidents: here the secretary merely retraced the unravelling of the strike after it happened. Roofers were not as educated as typographers. In addition to

20 "Ce n'est pas bien brillant, comme tu le vois, mais enfin c'est quelque chose, surtout pour la première fois qu'une grève aussi formidable éclatait à Genève. Il y a eu des souscriptions ouvertes dans tous les corps de métier de Genève, même des demandes de prêt et je crois qu'à Paris vous en savez quelque chose. En résumé, je crois qu'il était temps que la grève cessât, car l'Internationale (que je ne veux pas débiter, au contraire, car je suis un de ses partisans) n'avait pas cru qu'elle durerait aussi longtemps, et n'avait par conséquent pris assez tôt ses mesures pour se procurer auprès des sections de l'étranger les fonds dont elle pouvait avoir besoin." Archives of the typographers' union, *Correspondance reçue 1850-1868*, minute of the letter dated 4 July 1868.

21 Wilfried Haerberli, "Der erste Klassenkampf in Basel (Winter 1868/69) und die Tätigkeit der Internationalen Arbeiter-Association (1866-1876)", in *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 64 (1964) p. 93 ff.; *Die Geschichte der Basler Arbeiterbewegung von den Anfängen bis 1914*, Bd 1 (Basel, 1986), p. 20 ff.

22 "*Livre de Procès-verbaux de la Société des Couvresseurs des Genève Section de l'Association Internationale des travailleurs*", BGE, manuscripts.

their fanciful spelling, their writing is a first-hand testimonial of a form of acculturation amongst the working classes – namely the appropriation of certain expressions from the legal vocabulary reminisced from the speeches of employers and from newspapers, and reused more or less successfully, making general understanding often rather arduous. Let us add that some of these roofers were German speakers – out of the thirty-six who joined the section at the end of 1868, nineteen came from German-speaking Switzerland, two from Geneva, eight from the rest of French-Speaking Switzerland, four from neighbouring Savoy, one from Piedmont and two for which the origin is not defined but probably from Geneva. It was a difficult and dangerous profession and rare were the men who lived beyond the age of fifty – of which there were four. It all started with a general assembly of the Genevan sections of the IWMA. As reported in *L'Égalité*, at the end of a discussion on “the supporting of our French brothers on strike, who, only recently, have so effectively demonstrated their solidarity towards us [...] a roofer informed us that a workshop of nine workers was about to go on strike after their employer had tried to reduce their wages. The roofers’ association could support the struggle materially, but only asked the International for moral support.”<sup>23</sup> The paper’s editorial team announced that the employer had finally given in, adding: “It is not the first time that, thanks to the International, a strike ends before it even began. Given a little more time they will all end in such a way.”<sup>24</sup> But the following issue had to refute this previous statement: there had in fact been a strike affecting the entire profession. Indeed, roofers had elaborated a new scale of wages that they had submitted to each employer, giving them until 21 October to agree to it. As none of them had replied, on the morning of 22 October some groups had called on all the construction sites, inciting those who were unaware of the situation to strike and gather at the *Temple Unique*, the International’s headquarters. On the same night, the regional committee of the IWMA had called for all the branch committees to meet and had formally taken the lead of the movement by forming a commission of eight people, including only one

23 “L’appui à fournir à nos frères de France en grève, lesquels nous ont donné, il y a peu de temps, des témoignages si effectifs de solidarité [...] un couvreur nous a fait connaître qu’un atelier de 9 ouvriers allait se mettre en grève par suite de la tentative faite par le patron de réduire le salaire. L’Association des couvreurs était en l’état de soutenir matériellement la lutte, mais elle ne demandait à l’Internationale que l’appui moral.” *L’Égalité* (23 October 1869). The Genevan newspapers mentions numerous strikes during this period: coalminers of Rive-de-Giers, wool-spinners of Elbeuf, weavers of Chazelles-sur-Lyon, miners of Aubin and their massacre, etc....

24 “Ce n’est pas la première fois que, grâce à l’Internationale, une grève finit ainsi avant d’être commencée. Encore quelque temps et toutes finiront de même.”

roofer it seems. Whilst remarking that this relieved the work of the section, the minutes observed that “in some way we are reduced no longer to be our own masters.”<sup>25</sup> The strike was very well organised: every day the members would gather (they had to register at roll call three times a day) and organise patrols on the building sites to stop people from working. It was insured that the bricklayers’ and carpenters’ branches did not allow their members to accept duties that were those of roofers. Some employers agreed to the new wage and work started again on their sites, which relieved the strain on the section. Nevertheless, after two weeks of struggle, discouragement surfaced. There were a few “false friends”,<sup>26</sup> dissensions and a fight between two militants. Help from the International had to be requested after the section’s fund became no longer sufficient. In the end, the representatives of the strike committee and the employers’ assembly reached a settlement, the workers having made a concession on the ten-hour day wage: five francs in the city and up to six francs in the country, depending on the distance. The agreement was ratified by the section but “so that they encounter no problems and whispers at a later date, each and everyone, as a proof of their consent to the new wage approved by the employer, had to append their signature.”<sup>27</sup> This strike, small in scale, shows in details how the International functioned and how it led labour struggles, potentially provoking amongst strikers the feeling of no longer being their “own masters”.

Not only in the field of strikes would researchers benefit from distancing the history of the International from the traditional frames of analysis, and bring it down to the level of individual members. It is also what they should be doing when studying the conflicts that tore apart the IWMA. Switzerland, as we know, formed a terrain on which, for the first time, the two camps, which later on would give birth to social democracy on one side and anarchism on the other, were confronting each other. But the development and assertion of those two strands took place over a ten-year period and at the start their opposition was not that of two well-defined and coherent doctrines. Therefore one must be careful not to describe the members of the Jura federation as anarchists and their opponent as socialists or even Marxists. Similarly, one must not reduce everything to a Marx-Bakunin conflict. For rank-and-file members of the International, the question depended on their experience and the representations they had elaborated. Our task is to distinguish how protagonists

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25 “Nous nous trouvons en quelque sorte réduits à ne plus être nos maîtres.”

26 “Faux-frères.”

27 “[...] pour qu’ils n’aient pas des difficultés et des murmures plus tard, chacun comme preuve du consentement du nouveau tarif approuvé par les patrons a été tenu d’y poser sa signature.”



perceived themselves, and how they perceived their opponents. At this level, that of militants and members, things were quite different from elsewhere. In Geneva, the actions of Bakunin and his supporters had offended the majority of members. Their attack on the IWMA's very popular leaders and their attempt at discrediting them because of conceptions which they found retarded, had turned the majority of the International against them. In his romanticism, Bakunin thought he could count on bricklayers and unskilled workers, the majority of whom were seasonal labour from neighbouring Faucigny. This had been a miscalculation: although they differentiated themselves from the more prosperous clockmakers of *La Fabrique*, they were not more favourable to the Russian revolutionary's ideas. The abolition of inheritance and the collectivisation of the soil, for instance, cannot have sent waves of enthusiasm through them, either. Bakunin's supporters were perceived as schemers and dissension-breeders, ambitious individuals seeking to seize power by means of a plot within the International. And what had transpired from Bakunin's secret society only confirmed these accusations. This is what is brought to light by the extensive documentation available on the congress of La Chaux-de-Fonds (3–4 April 1870), which ended with the schism of the French-speaking federation.

Belief in a plot existed on the other side, too. Admittedly Guillaume had been able to position himself beyond the small contingencies in order to elaborate a more general conception of the opposition. He did this remarkably in his 1873 *Mémoire de la Fédération jurassienne*. But in his common propaganda, he also used more basic arguments. Hence, in an article published in the *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* on 7 March 1872: "there is a scheme within the International, a scheme whose aim is to transform this association into an authoritarian organisation, into an instrument designed to serve the ambition of a few individualities. To achieve this aim, a plan has been instigated to first expel from our Association, after having crushed them under heaps of cleverly spread slander, all the men whose free spirit could have been an obstacle to the success of our future dictators' project."<sup>28</sup> The accusation of authoritarianism and the qualification of authoritarian, so frequent amongst "jurassians", will ultimately be turned against them by their opponent.

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28 "Il existe une intrigue dans l'Internationale, intrigue dont le but est de transformer cette association en une organisation autoritaire, en un instrument destiné à servir l'ambition de quelques individualités. Le plan adopté pour arriver à ce but est d'expulser au préalable de notre Association, après les avoir écrasés sous des monceaux de calomnies adroitement répandues, tous les hommes dont l'esprit d'indépendance aurait pu être un obstacle à la réussite du projet de nos futurs dictateurs."

It was in this context that the question of the participation in political struggles was asked. Once again, one must try and see in what terms it impacted upon workers, considering the absence of political parties formed at the national scale and the extreme variety of political landscapes presented by the different areas. There was nothing in common between Basel's radical opposition, incapable, since the 1840s, of overthrowing the domination of an extremely agile conservative elite, and Zurich's radicalism, representing industrial and rail work, which would be pushed out of power in 1868–1869 by a progressive democratic movement supported by the International. Radicalism was the ruling party of the Neuchâtel district when it had been driven out of power in Geneva, where it was trying to win the favours of the working class, in concordance with its tradition. But the Jura region offered very different situations between the Neuchâtel mountains (La Chaux-de-Fonds, Le Locle, etc.) and Bern Jura (Courtelary, Saint-Imier, etc.), a diversity that Coullery had analysed very well in his time. Thus, amongst the local working class, different traditions and perceptions could be observed which could even be contradictory from one place to the next.



FIGURE 10.1 *The delegates to the Basle Conference, 1869. This Conference took place from 6 to 12 September, 1869. There were 75 delegates. The flag is that of the local section Engraving based on a photo. The two boys caricaturing Napoleon have been added by the engraver.*  
 COLLECTION: IISH, AMSTERDAM.

## For Independent Poland and the Emancipation of the Working Class

*The Poles in the IWMA, 1864–1876*

*Krzysztof Marchlewicz*

The Polish question left a clear mark in the formation of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA). If the previous stages of the development of the European labour movement were the activities of the Fraternal Democrats in the 1840s, then the foundation of the International Committee (1855), from which in turn the International Association (1855–59) had stemmed, it is difficult not to notice the presence of many Polish emigrants in their ranks. All of these organisations quite frequently engaged themselves in the pro-Polish manifestations in the countries of Western Europe, and the press associated with them widely informed about the situation in Poland. The leaders of these bodies, George Julian Harney, Ernest Jones, Karl Schapper or Felix Pyat, often expressed their support for the idea of Polish independence.<sup>1</sup>

### The IWMA and the Polish Question

The Polish matters accompanied the very beginnings of the First International. Although opinions of some historians, who stated that the Association was established during the London manifestation in support of the January Uprising in 1863, were incorrect,<sup>2</sup> it is a fact that bloody events in Poland gave a new impulse to the contacts between the workers from Paris and London, initiated in the early 1860s. This impulse was a desire to articulate solidarity with the Poles who struggled against the tsarist regime. In July 1863 Henri Tolain, Auguste Bibal, Joseph-Étienne Perrachon, Jean Aubert, Antoine Cohadon and André-Pierre Murat arrived in London and participated in a pro-Polish demonstration

1 Peter Brock, "Polish Democrats and English Radicals 1832–1862. A Chapter in History of Anglo-Polish Relations", *Journal of Modern History*, 25/2, (1953), pp. 139–156; Henry Weisser, *British working class movements and Europe 1815–1848* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 118–192.

2 Peter Brock, *Z dziejów Wielkiej Emigracji w Anglii* (Warszawa, 1958), p. 36; Celina Bobińska, *Marks i Engels a sprawy polskie do lat osiemdziesiątych XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 1954), p. 194.

in St. James's Hall. On the following day (23 July 1863), they met the British Trades Union members once again. As a result of these talks, a decision regarding a close intentional cooperation among workers was made.<sup>3</sup> It is a relatively unknown fact that Prince Władysław Czarotoryski, a leader of the conservative wing of the Polish emigration, participated in the costs of the journey of the French delegates to London, offering them 450 francs. Władysław Czarotoryski – son of better-known the late Prince Adam Jerzy Czarotoryski – was not, of course, a willing supporter of the international labour movement. His intention was to establish a broad front of public opinion and political bodies which could influence the governments of England and France regarding the Polish question.<sup>4</sup> In this way, however, Czarotoryski modestly contributed to the success of Anglo-French talks in 1863, which ultimately led to the establishment of the IWMA fourteen months later, in September 1864.

The words of George Lichtheim may be repeated here, stating that the IWMA was “an attempt on the part of British and French labour leaders to find a common language: at first in defence of Poland, then over the widening range of political and industrial topics”.<sup>5</sup> In spite of this, the Poles and the Polish cause – although not insignificant – had never played a really important role in the First International. Their presence and influence were especially visible in two dimensions. During the 1860s, the members of the Central (later on: General) Council of the IWMA willingly participated in the celebrations commemorating anniversaries of the Polish national uprisings, and gave publicity to the problems encountered by the Poles deprived of their own statehood. The Association helped to organise the pro-Polish meeting in St. Martin's Hall in London in March 1865, during which Peter Fox, John Nieass, Victor Le Lubez and Johann G. Eccarius were active participants. In January 1866, a similar demonstration was attended by Karl Marx, William R. Cremer, P. Fox and V. Le Lubez. During a mass meeting on 22 January 1867, assembled in commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the January Uprising in London Cambridge Hall, Hermann Jung, Alexandre Besson, K. Marx and J.G. Eccarius also voiced their opinions. In the reports of these meetings the prominent role of the IWMA as the co-organiser was always emphasised, with its representatives expressing

3 See *The Bee-Hive*, 25 July 1863, no. 93, pp. 4–6; cf. George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism* (London, 1980), p. 171.

4 Stefan Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe* (Warszawa, 1972), p. 593; cf. Irena Koberdowa, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka 1864–1876. Sukcesy i porażki* (Warszawa, 1987), pp. 42–43.

5 Lichtheim, *A Short History*, p. 182.

their solidarity with the calls to reinstate a free Poland. Moreover, even when the Central Council was not directly engaged in such undertakings, its Polish members were empowered to represent the Association.<sup>6</sup>

In the inner discussions of the IWMA leaders, however, the Polish cause played quite a different role. It became a subject of a fierce confrontation between the supporters of active participation in national and international undertakings and those who believed that the First International should focus on social and economical issues. On one side of this conflict were Karl Marx and some of the British trade unionists. In the 1860s and 1870s, Marx popularised the thesis that the international labour movement could not remain indifferent in relation to the Polish aspirations for independence. He accepted the opinion of the Polish social-democrats that an oppressed nation has to first direct its energy towards abolishing the oppression, and only after this it would be able to concentrate on internal transformation. In one of his letters to Karl Kautsky, Marx stated that the Poles – similarly to the Irish – have the right, or even an obligation, “to be national before they become international”.<sup>7</sup> According to Marx, the alliance of Russia, Austria and Prussia – which was cemented by the partitions of Poland – was now the keystone of the old order in Europe. As a result, any support given to the Polish struggle for freedom was simultaneously in favour of the European revolution. Marx underlined also the progressive nature of some Polish revolutionary manifestos (especially from 1846), and he was undoubtedly one of the most sympathetic among the members of the IWMA towards the Poles.<sup>8</sup>

However, there was strong opposition towards the idea that the Association should always and unreservedly voice the Polish cause. It came mostly from the continental sections of the IWMA. Many French, Belgian and Swiss activists were under the influence of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and like himself, they were critical to the institution of a state. They expressed, first of all, the necessity to improve the situation of the working class through the establishment of cooperatives and provision of convenient credits. The Proudhonians distanced themselves even from strikes and any engagement in political struggle, to include the fight for Polish independence. They also knew the work of Proudhon, *Si les traités de 1815 ont cessé d'exister. Actes du futur congrès* (1863),

6 Irena Koberdowa, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka i lewica Wielkiej Emigracji* (Warszawa, 1964), pp. 141–171.

7 Marx to Kautsky, 7 Feb. 1882, in Helena Michnik (ed), *Marks i Engels o Polsce* (Warszawa, 1960), II, p. 122.

8 Adam Ciołkosz, *Karol Marks a powstanie styczniowe* (London, 1963), pp. 14–38.

where he strongly opposed the reconstruction of independent Poland, and stated that the partitions of Poland, which already gained its legal validity, were a historical necessity, serving a useful purpose for European progress. With such theoretical background, it was hard to expect that Proudhon's followers would be enthusiastically supporting the IWMA engagement in the Polish cause.<sup>9</sup>

A relatively quick struggle within the First International between these two conflicting parties took place. In September 1865, during a conference in London – when the programme for the next congress of the Association was forming – Victor Le Lubez, Pierre Vésinier, César De Paepe and John Weston voiced a number of objections regarding the Polish point of the congress agenda, which was proposed by the General Council. They opposed such explicit distinction of this problem, and tried to convince their comrades that the IWMA should, above all, focus on social issues. In their opinion, as far as the discussion on national liberation was considered, it shouldn't be limited to Poland but have a universal character.<sup>10</sup> Although the London conference ultimately decided to include the point regarding Poland in the agenda of the pending congress, the critics of the solution remained unconvinced. At the end of 1865, the articles suggesting the harmful – for the worker's cause – and manipulative influence of the Polish lobby over the General Council appeared in the radical Belgian and French press (*La Tribune du Peuple*, *Echo de Vervieres*). These accusations were preposterous for Marx, P. Fox argued with them publicly, but without positive results.<sup>11</sup> During the IWMA congress in Geneva (September 1866) the project of the General Council in relation to reinstatement of democratic and social Poland collapsed, mostly due to the French and Belgian delegates. The participants of the congress, however, were left with the possibility to voluntarily sign the pro-Polish declaration prepared by a German, Johann Philipp Becker.<sup>12</sup> After the congress of 1866, some members of the IWMA were still willing to engage with activities promoting the independence of Poland, although in general the organisation ceased to pay particular attention to Polish affairs.

9 Leszek Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu* (London, 1988), pp. 171–177; Ciołkosz, *Karol Marks*, pp. 26–28.

10 Minutes of London conference, 27 IX 1865, in Henryk Katz (ed), *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka a sprawa polska. Dokumenty i materiały* (Warszawa, 1964), pp. 315–318.

11 Marks to Engels, 15 I 1866, in Michnik, *Marks i Engels*, II, pp. 28–32. Fox's polemics in *The Workman's Advocate*, 13 I 1866, no. 149, p. 5.

12 Account of a discussion written by J. Ćwierczakiewicz-Card, in Katz, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka*, pp. 375–376.

### Polish Members of the Association

Pierre Vésinier, who was probably the author of a text which appeared in *Echo de Verviers* in 1865, expressed his criticism of an excessive interest towards Poland manifested by the General Council. He wrote: “the Poles have massively asked to belong to the Committee [i.e. the General Council – ed. K.M.] and they will have a huge majority”.<sup>13</sup> How true were these statements? Were there so many Poles in the IWMA that the suggestion about their special role, or overrepresentation, was justified? The answer is – no. The Polish members were not particularly influential or numerous, although their presence in the IWMA was always visible. Since 1864, there was a position of the Corresponding Secretary for Poland within the General Council – which was held consecutively by the Poles: Jan Emil Holtorp (1864–65), Konstanty Bobczyński (1865–67), Antoni Żabicki (1867–71) and Walery Wróblewski (1871–76). Moreover, the members of the Council at different times were: Franciszek Rybczyński, Ludwik Oborski, Jan Kryński, Józef Michał Werecki, Włodzimierz Rożałowski and Józef Rozwadowski. They weren't *dead souls* within the organisation, and their signatures remained on many documents of the First International.

However, none of the above mentioned individuals belonged to the circle of theoretical or organisational leaders of the IWMA. The meeting minutes of the General Council point out that they were not very active during the disputes. Also, in respect to the number of ordinary members of the First International, Poland looked rather moderate in comparison with England, France, Switzerland, or Spain. Moreover, one encounters considerable difficulties in attempting a precise determination of the number of the Polish members of the IWMA. When in 1873 the new General Council in New York asked for details regarding the number of sections and their members, Friedrich Engels wrote to Friedrich A. Sorge that Walery Wróblewski (the contemporary Secretary for Poland) did not have such information, as the full secret must be kept in the activities of the IWMA on Polish territory.<sup>14</sup> Polish historians, especially during the communist regime (1945–89), were insistently trying to recreate the Polish input in the First International, and were able to establish names of a few cities where the Association could be active. In the Russian partition this involved: Warsaw, Płock, Suwałki, Lublin, Siedlce and Łuków. In the Austrian partition the sections could exist in: Cracow, Wieliczka and Lvov. There was also a possibility that a section of the Association existed within the Prussian

13 « les Polonais ont demandé en masse à faire partie du Comité, et sous peu ils sont en immense majorité »; Quote after Katz, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka*, p. 348.

14 Engels to Sorge, 20 III 1873, in Michnik, *Marks i Engels*, II, p. 85.



partition – on the territory of Poznań.<sup>15</sup> However, this information was based on indirect sources, and therefore cannot be considered as fully reliable. It is also impossible to determine the number of members in these Polish sections. Although the Russian agent in London, Albert Potocki (real name: Julian Aleksander Bałaszewicz), reported in 1872 to his superiors that in accordance with the information from W. Wróblewski, the three sections in Cracow comprised of around 400 members, this information cannot be verified.<sup>16</sup>

Even if the sections of the IWMA present on Polish territory were formally organised, they still remain anonymous to us. There is considerably more information about the Poles who joined the First International while in exile. The groups of political emigrants were involved in the activities of the Association in Switzerland and France. An activist of the Geneva's section of the IWMA was a representative of the Polish National Government of 1863, Józef Ćwierczakiewicz, known as Joseph Card. He was one of the co-organisers and most active participants during the Congress in Geneva in 1866, where he, as just one of very few, persistently advocated the Polish cause. The Association's members were also Walerian Mroczkowski and Jan Zagórski – who were in close relations with Mikhail Bakunin – both resided in Lausanne for some time. According to Polish historians, the Paris sections of the IWMA also involved a few Poles.<sup>17</sup>

Definitely the best documented and probably most numerous was the contribution to the IWMA's efforts made by the London branch of Polish emigration. The leaders of the Association in Britain – Karl Marx and some British trade unionists – were more sympathetic towards Poland than its continental members, where the IWMA was associated with the name and writings of P.J. Proudhon. In consequence, closer relations with the Association in England were even sought by those Polish emigrants who chose not to fully identify themselves with its programme. The Polish section of the IWMA was established in London (most likely in 1865), joined by the former members of the Polish Democratic Society (*Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie*) and the Communes of the Polish People (*Gromady Ludu Polskiego*). When in 1866 they had established a new organisation, called London Commune of the

15 Jerzy Borejsza, *W kręgu wielkich wygnańców (1848–1895)*, (Warszawa, 1963), pp. 76–77, 97–101; Ryszard Kołodziejczyk (ed), *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego* (Warszawa, 1985), I, p. 205.

16 Julian Bałaszewicz's report, London 12 I 1872, in Albert Potocki (Julian Aleksander Bałaszewicz), *Raporty szpiega*, ed. Rafał Gerber, (Warszawa, 1973), II, pp. 279–280.

17 Jerzy Borejsza, *Emigracja polska po powstaniu styczniowym*, (Warszawa, 1966), pp. 361–367; Kołodziejczyk, *Historia polskiego*, pp. 200–203.

Polish Emigration Union (Gmina Londyńska Zjednoczenia Emigracji Polskiej), it became part of the IWMA. The membership fees paid by the Polish section for the years 1866 and 1867 may suggest that this section numbered around 60 people, from which several surnames are known.<sup>18</sup> With time this group had undergone a certain dispersion, as some emigrants returned to Polish territories (mostly to Galicia, remaining in the hands of the Austrians<sup>19</sup>). The next revival of the Polish activity within the First International came along with the fall of the Paris Commune and the influx of a dozen or so of its Polish participants to London. They had become the force behind the reactivated Polish section of the IWMA in London, between 1871 and 1872. This section numbered around 40 to 50 members, who later established a new Polish organisation, the Union of the Polish People (Związek Ludu Polskiego). Both the Polish section in the First International and the Union of the Polish People ceased their activities in 1876.<sup>20</sup>

Who were the Polish members of the First International? Our knowledge about the people who joined of the Association in Poland is very sparse and limited to the fact that they mainly came from a working-class background.<sup>21</sup> Those who lived in exile comprised of the different waves of participants in the struggle for the Polish independence, who emigrated after unsuccessful uprisings. Among them were the veterans of the November Uprising, who fought against Russia in 1830–31, like Colonel Ludwik Oborski (1789–1873), a well-known veteran who gained his experience during Napoleonic campaigns, serving in the Polish units under the French command. He joined the army of the Kingdom of Poland, and subsequently participated in the Rising of 1830. After its collapse he emigrated to France, and then stayed for a while in Switzerland, the United States, and finally in England. Oborski was engaged in the radical Polish politics in exile, and was also associated with the Fraternal Democrats. Between 1848 and 1849 he took part in the revolutionary struggle on the territory of Poznań and in Baden, and afterwards returned to England. Ludwik Oborski was considered to be a soldier rather than a politician or theoretician but he consequently was associated with the left-wing of the

18 Register of fees paid by British sections of IWMA for the years 1866/67, in Katz, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka*, pp. 423–424.

19 Among them was the second Secretary for Poland, Konstanty Bobczyński. After returning, he engaged in local politics, and in the 1880s became a member of the Galician provincial parliament; see Feliks Tych (ed), *Słownik biograficzny działaczy polskiego ruchu robotniczego* (Warszawa, 1978), I, p. 244.

20 Borejsza, *Emigracja polska*, pp. 369–376, 405–410; Koberdowa, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka i lewica*, pp. 114–122, 264–281.

21 Julian Bałaszewicz's report, London 18 1 1872, in Potocki, *Raporty szpiega*, II, pp. 280–281.

Polish political scene.<sup>22</sup> Another Polish member of the General Council of the IWMA, Jan Kryński (1811–90), was also a veteran of the 1830 November Uprising. He joined the uprising while still a student of the University of Warsaw and during the fight he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. After the Rising he left the country, worked in London as a shoemaker, and was an active member of the most radical Polish organisation in exile, the Communes of the Polish People. Similarly to Oborski, he collaborated with the International Association in the 1850s before he joined the IWMA.<sup>23</sup>

The revolutions of 1848–49 provided the next generation of Polish freedom-fighters who joined the IWMA. Two successive Secretaries of the IWMA for Poland were Konstanty Bobczyński (1817–93) and Antoni Żabicki (1818–89). They were engaged in the independence struggle and conspiracy in the Austrian partition in the 1840s. Bobczyński was arrested by the Austrians while Żabicki managed to emigrate. They took part in the Hungarian uprising of 1848–49, both as officers. After the Hungarians surrendered, they fled to Britain through Turkish territory. Both were active in the largest political organisation of the Great Emigration (Wielka Emigracja) – the Polish Democratic Society (TDP), which after 1849 had moved its centre from France to England. Żabicki mainly concentrated on publishing and writing, and in 1852 he had become a member of the top-level management in the party, the so-called Centralizacja TDP. In 1863, Bobczyński took part in the unsuccessful mission of the ship “Ward Jackson”, the goal of which was to deliver arms to the Polish insurgents in Lithuania.<sup>24</sup>

The third generation of Polish activists, who were associated with the IWMA, included the emigrants who left Poland after the January Uprising (1863–64). General Walery Wróblewski (1836–1908) was especially visible in this group. During the battles with the Russians, which he carried out until 1864, he was in command of several guerrilla units. Wróblewski emigrated to France where he joined the *Garde Nationale* in 1870, defending Paris against the Prussians. He also participated in the 1871 Paris Commune, commanding the forces on the left bank of the River Seine. Following the collapse of the Commune, he escaped through Belgium to Britain.<sup>25</sup> Except Wróblewski, there were a few more Polish communards and the insurgents of 1863 who entered the First International. Among them was Włodzimierz Rożałowski (1838–76) who joined the January

22 Bogusław Cygler, *Putkownik Ludwik Oborski – szermierz wolności (1789–1873)* (Gdańsk, 1976).

23 *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (Wrocław, 1970), xv, pp. 467–468.

24 Borejsza, *W kręgu wielkich*, pp. 472–473; Marian Tyrowicz, *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie 1832–1863. Przywódcy i kadry członkowskie* (Warszawa, 1964), pp. 45–46, 824–825.

25 Jerzy Borejsza, *Patriota bez paszportu*, (Warszawa, 1970).

Uprising by leaving the Russian army. He was interned in Austria for nearly three years and after his release he travelled to France. Rożałowski fought at the Franco-Prussian War, and during the Paris Commune was a member of the staff of General Jarosław Dąbrowski. Another participant of the Paris Commune was Józef Rozwadowski (1846–1878). Although his role in the January Uprising is not known, for some reason he left Poland in the 1860s. Before the Franco-German War, he studied in the Artillery School in Metz, and in 1870 he fought against the Prussians under the command of François de Rochebrune. The Paris Commune promoted him to the rank of Colonel and entrusted him with the defence of the XIII *arrondissement*. Similarly to Wróblewski and Rożałowski, Rozwadowski managed to escape and travelled to London, where he joined the General Council of the IWMA.<sup>26</sup>

### For Homeland or for Social Justice?

It seems interesting, or even paradoxical, that all seven above-mentioned men had come from Polish gentry (*szlachta*). The same applies to many Polish members of the First International, e.g. Józef Ćwierczakiewicz (Card), Jan Kanty Kosteczki, Mikołaj Koziell-Poklewski, or Teofil Dąbrowski (a brother to General Jarosław Dąbrowski). They weren't high aristocrats, but rather sons of the impoverished noble families. In the nineteenth century this social stratum had partially transformed into the Polish intelligentsia, which undertook professional activity characteristic for the middle class. Many of them mingled into the working class, what was often the case of the emigrants in Western Europe. However, it was not the noble background that constituted the common denominator for all Polish members of the IWMA in England, France or Switzerland. What all of them had in common was their involvement in the Polish independence movement. Therefore, it is important here to focus on the real motives which determined their access to the Association. Was it a priority for the Poles, who joined the First International, to improve the condition of the working class, or rather this was just another platform to struggle for the freedom of Poland?

There is no straightforward and simple answer to this question. As Felicja Romaniukowa wrote, in the nineteenth century, "it was characteristic for the Polish revolutionists in exile that they joined every institution, association or union, if there was even the slightest chance to voice publicly the right to

26 Borejsza, *W kręgu wielkich*, pp. 483–484, 498–499; *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (Wrocław, 1989/1991), XXXII, pp. 413–414, 429–431.

regain independence, once brutally taken".<sup>27</sup> Without a doubt, the political views of many Poles who belonged to the IWMA were distant from the social concepts of Marx or Proudhon. The first Polish members of the Central Council, J.E. Holtorp and F. Rybczyński, did not hide their fascination for Giuseppe Mazzini's republican thought, and they distanced themselves from the First International relatively soon. Some others, who declared themselves as democrats, appeared to have serious objections to be even called socialists. A Polish periodic published in London, *Głos Wolny*, observed in 1869: "[In Poland] The national and political problems overshadow all the matters, this absorbs all the attention of the present generation ... A Pole, who presents himself as a socialist seems to us as at least ridiculous, or just as temporarily overwhelmed by the ideas far from a patriotic duty".<sup>28</sup> It may be interesting to note that the editor of *Głos Wolny* at the time was the Polish Secretary of the IWMA Antoni Żabicki, and the journal attracted many members of the Polish section of the Association. The Poles who chaired the General Council rather occasionally voiced their opinions during big theoretical disputes. It is not unreasonable to believe that they were in favour of Marxists and against the Proudhonians mostly because of the differences in their opinions concerning the Polish cause. Taking into consideration reluctance towards radical socialist programmes presented by some emigrants returning to the country, will produce a picture of the Polish section (or at least its part) as a somewhat "alienated" within the IWMA, and concentrated around the possible support of this organisation for exclusively Polish interests.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that among the Polish members of the Association were also representatives of the Communes of the Polish People (e.g. J. Kryński or L. Oborski), whose since 1830s had articulated the need for social revolution, popularised common ownership of land, demanded nationalization of factories, workshops and banks, and projected systems of social security.<sup>29</sup> Although on account of the Polish economic realities, the Communes focused on problems of peasants and agricultural labourers rather than the industrial proletariat, they were committed socialists for whom the First International was a natural political environment. Moreover, since 1850s a gradual radicalisation of the entire Polish exile can be observed. The influence of the conservatives became limited, and more and more former

27 Felicja Romaniukowa, "W sprawie udziału Polaków w I Międzynarodówce", *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 68/2, (1961), no. 2, p. 333.

28 *Głos Wolny*, 15 XII 1869, no. 215/216, p. 864, quote after Borejsza, *Emigracja polska*, pp. 356–357.

29 See Hanna Temkinowa (ed), *Lud Polski. Wybór dokumentów* (Warszawa, 1957).

representatives of the moderate center began to express socialdemocratic and republican views.<sup>30</sup> This radicalisation was also visible in a short history of the Polish section of the IWMA. Reestablished in London after 1871, the new section had a much deeper social and ideological consciousness than its predecessor. It encompassed not only the members of the Paris Commune, but also many others well aware of the fact that the reconstruction of Poland required gaining over to this cause the Polish workers and constant cooperation with them. Thus, W. Wróblewski and J. Rozwadowski had remained under the strong influence of Marx, popularised his *Communist Manifesto* in Poland, and they combined national projects with social matters.<sup>31</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Polish section of the First International became a subject of considerable interest on the part of Polish researchers. The communists ruling in Warsaw in the years 1945–89 perceived the activists of the First International as their political predecessors, and their relations with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels became the important element in the founding myth of the twentieth century communist parties in Poland. The political tension surrounding this subject resulted in the disproportionately great importance attached to the Polish chapter in history of the IWMA. It was during this period, when the majority of the Polish studies concerning the First International had been written. Wróblewski, Oborski, and others, were presented as outstanding political leaders and visionaries who in the best possible way predicted the future of Europe and Poland. They have streets named after them and even history textbooks in elementary schools mentioned their names.

Now, while they have sunk into relative oblivion, it is easier to give a more balanced opinion on their historical role. It is true that the individuals who were affiliated with the First International constituted at that time the most radical group of the Polish left-wing. Their programme of reconstruction and then socialist rebuilding of the Polish state and society was clearly different from the proposals presented by other Polish national factions. In this sense, the Polish members of the IWMA were the precursors of the later socialist and communist parties in Poland (although many of them certainly would

30 Sławomir Kalembka, *Wielka Emigracja 1831–1863* (Toruń, 2003), pp. 323–338, 358–362.

31 The first Polish translation of *Communist Manifesto* appeared in 1848. It was followed by next editions in 1883 and 1892. Other texts by Marx and information about the activities of the IWMA were published by the Polish emigrational periodicals as *Głos Wolny*; *Niepodległość*; *Prawda*; *Nowiny z Wychodźstwa i Kraju* since the 1860s. They were distributed not only amongst the Poles abroad but also – illegally – in Poland. Cf. Borejsza, *Emigracja polska*, pp. 373–381, 402–410; Koberdowa, *Pierwsza Międzynarodówka i lewica*, pp. 138–140.

not be enthusiastic about brutal methods used to implement communism in the country after 1945). On the other hand, it wouldn't be appropriate to consider many Polish members of the Association as Marxists. For some of them the main goal was simply an independent and democratic Poland. On entering the IWMA, they treated it similarly to the organisations operating in the 1840s and 1850s, such as the Fraternal Democrats, the Central Committee of the European Democracy or the International Association. They perceived all of these bodies as potential allies in the struggle for freedom and the rights of small nations to self-determination. The First International was relatively less interested and active in these matters than the previously mentioned organisations; therefore, the Poles had fewer opportunities to voice their opinion within it. That is mostly why, although they were visible as a group, they held such a secondary role within the IWMA.

## Russians in the IWMA

### *The Background*

*Woodford McClellan*

In September 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin advised members of the Federal Assembly, and provincial governors, to study the works of three conservative Russian philosophers. *Mirabile dictu*, changes in national reading habits and academic curricula got underway overnight. One of the philosophers was the Christian existentialist Nikolai Berdyaev, whose 1919 work on conservative values Putin singled out, but of interest to us here is the 1946 pamphlet *Dusha Rossii* (The Soul of Russia), in which Berdyaev pronounced Russians “maximalists” by nature.

The Russians – a majority – among the Bolsheviks obviously merited the appellation, as did some predecessors. Oddly enough, one group of direct Bolshevik ancestors did not – the Russian section of the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA). In a March 1870 letter declaring allegiance to Karl Marx and the General Council, a group of mostly Russian exiles based in Geneva also proclaimed their fealty to “our teacher,” N.G. Chernyshevsky, intellectual leader of the mid-century student radicals. He regarded the peasant commune and the worker cooperative association as foundations on which Russia could leap from feudalism to socialism, bypassing capitalism. In 1890 the first genuine Russian Marxist, Georgi Plekhanov, noted that Chernyshevsky, son of a Russian Orthodox priest, “does not separate out the proletariat from the general mass of suffering and oppressed people.”<sup>1</sup>

Marx’s socialism, and his theory of proletarian revolution, had nothing in common with Chernyshevsky’s peculiarly Russian populism, but the Geneva

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1 “N.G. Chernyshevsky,” *Sotsial-demokrat (Le Démocrate socialiste)*, London, 1890, Part 1, p. 123. The last six pages of the March 12, 1870 letter, and Anton Trusov’s draft bearing the same date, are at *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, d. 216/3. The Russian section Statute is at *ibid.*, d. 215/1. See below, note 24. The peasant commune was the *obshchina*, the worker’s cooperative the *artel*.



group ignored the contrariety. To them, the political insignificance of the homeland's small industrial proletariat – about 460,000 in 1854, excluding miners – was of little consequence. They sympathized with the workers, whose 70-hour work-weeks in what the future Menshevik leader Julius Cederbaum called “horrible hygienic conditions” mimicked the situation in the industrialized West, but in their view the peasantry would be the instrument of change. Most from varying degrees of privilege, the Russian section members envisioned no particular role for the proletariat in a revolution in Russia. Convinced that an orgy of blood would, as in France, leave the old regime, or something very like it, in place for a generation or longer in backward Russia, the prospect of uncontrollable peasant violence made them uneasy.<sup>2</sup>

Russian ruling circles shared the anxiety. Stunned by the national humiliation in the Crimea, they feared internal upheaval as the anniversaries of two great peasant rebellions approached, the 1670–1671 *Razinshchina* and the *Pugachyovshchina* of 1773–1775. Five hundred fifty peasant “disturbances” struck European Russia in 1855, and rural unrest intensified after promulgation of the Emancipation Edict of 1861, which protected landlord interests. The following two years witnessed about 1,100 serious rabblements (*byistva*).<sup>3</sup>

The struggle between reformers and reactionaries came to a head in April 1866 when a Chernyshevsky disciple, Dmitry Karakozov, tried to assassinate Alexander II. No revolutionary had ever attempted such an act. Official Russia tilted sharply toward reaction, while at the same time events in Central and Western Europe were moving in the opposite direction. Working-class leaders and leftist intellectuals had sought to resurrect the revolutionary movement of 1848–1849, and in 1864 Karl Marx and others founded the IWMA to champion the cause of labor. Their hopes for progress at home dashed once again, a minuscule band of Russian revolutionaries, joined by some like-minded souls of other nationalities, would make common cause with Western labor.

### Blanquism and Anarchism

At once hoping for and dreading revolution, the dozen or so left-leaning Lac Léman Russians and their allies – a few people of various nationalities – shopped

2 Cederbaum (Russian “Tsederbaum”) wrote as “L. Martov”; see his “Krestianstvo i narodnicheskoe dvizhenie”, p. 170, and “Razvitie krupnoi promyshlennosti i rabochee dvizhenie do 1892,” pp. 120, 132, both in *Istoriia Rossii v XIX veke*, vol. VI, St. Petersburg, 1909.

3 *Malaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (MSE), vol. 4, Moscow, 1929, col. 334. The MSE and the first edition of the *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (BSE) remain valuable sources on Bolshevik history.

the European bazaar of political ideas, finding alongside Marxist socialism several philosophies with ideological high explosives in their arsenals. One, often called socialist revolutionism of a conspiratorial type, had a renowned avatar in Louis-Auguste Blanqui, “inspiration and participant in all Paris uprisings and revolutions between 1830 and 1871.”<sup>4</sup> His exploits, like those of Giuseppe Garibaldi and Mikhail Bakunin, entranced Europe in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. Multiple death sentences levied on all three sent nervous shivers through the reading public and convivial discussionists in cafés and pubs and *Kneipen*. Often misshapen by the time they reached Russia, the tales were nevertheless known, especially in the universities and in the family and social circles of soldiers returned home from pacification and occupation duty in Poland and Hungary.

Already conversant with Blanquism, the Russian section founders learned more when a French medical student, Charles Victor Jaclard, joined their circle after his 1867 marriage to Anna Korvin-Krukovskaya, a Russian feminist, revolutionary socialist, and – with Jaclard – future Communeard. She and her sister, the mathematician Sofia Kovalevskaya, were friendly with several members of the Russian section; Anna had come West to study medicine after rejecting Fyodor Dostoevsky’s proposal of marriage. Jaclard, a member of one of Blanqui’s secret societies, had helped “*l’Enfermé*” escape from the hospital ward of Sainte Pélagie Prison in 1865. Another medical student, Anton Trusov, a Pole from the Russian-occupied national territory, also became a member the Russian section, as did the Swiss Edouard Bongard and the Serb socialist Svetozar Marković. A former Imperial Russian Army officer with the occupation forces in Poland joined them: Konstantin Krupsky had been cashiered on charges that included speaking Polish, dancing the *mazurka*, and failing to attend Russian Orthodox Church services. The father of Lenin’s wife, he sought sanctuary in Switzerland.<sup>5</sup>

Jaclard directed the Geneva group’s attention to Blanquism’s insistence on social equality and the seizure of power by a small, secretive band of revolutionaries. That appealed to the children of an oppressive society that fostered conspiracies and the grotesque theories that inevitably surround them. They

4 *MSE*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1928, col. 744.

5 <http://ru.rodovid.org/wk/Запись:5862>. See the article on Nadezhda Krupskaya (Lenin’s wife) in *Wikipedia*. See also “Krupskii, K.I.,” “Trusov, A.D.,” and “Hauke-Bosak, Józef,” in V.A. Dyakov, *Deiateli russkogo i polskogo osvoboditel’nogo dvizheniya 1858–1865gg.*, Moscow, 1967. Count Hauke-Bosak was a friend of several Russian section members, and like Utin, Bongard, Trusov, and Bartenev, a Freemason. Dostoevsky evidently based the character Aglaya Epanchina in *The Idiot* (published serially in 1868–1869) on Anna Korvin-Krukovskaya.

were less enthusiastic about Blanqui's rejection of a special role for the intelligentsia in post-revolution society.

Marx and Engels saw history itself as the great strategist of revolution and left it to the avenging proletariat to work out the tactics. Into that puzzling void came Blanquism, which exercised a powerful influence on the Russian revolutionary movement through the Russian section and later through Vera Zasulich, Pyotr Tkachyov, Vera Figner, Sofia Perovskaya, Georgi Plekhanov, I.V. Stalin (the only non-Russian in this group), Nadezhda Krupskaya (Krupsky's daughter), V.I. Lenin – maximalists all. In 1874 Friedrich Engels dismissed Blanqui as “essentially a political revolutionist ... a socialist only through his sympathy with the sufferings of the people,” but 1920s Bolshevik party scholarship rejected that judgment: “[D]espise the weakness of Blanqui's philosophical and economic views ... [and] a certain national narrowness of outlook, there is a sound basis for considering him a forerunner of Marx and Lenin.”<sup>6</sup>

The Geneva radicals also knew a countryman's collectivist anarchism: A generation earlier, Mikhail Bakunin had turned P.-J. Proudhon's relatively pacific anarchism on its head, pronouncing the “passion for destruction” a “creative passion” and calling for revolution. Utopia would magically materialize. A minister in the Second Republic who knew him personally said, “S'il y avait trois cent Bakounine en France, la France ne serait pas gouvernable.”<sup>7</sup>

Bakunin sought to unleash the “destructive passion” of *all* the oppressed. Marx wanted to politicize the *proletariat*, which would make a revolution shaped by proletarian interests alone. The conflict between these approaches to revolution sparked creation of the Russian section of the IWMA.

### Nikolai Utin and Land and Liberty

Notable among the section's founders was Nikolai Isaakovich Utin, son of a Jewish banker who converted to Christianity and had his children baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church, making possible the admission of three sons to St. Petersburg University. In his second year Nikolai won a gold medal in a rigorous academic competition; the “nihilist” Dmitry Pisarev, one of the famous revolutionary “men of the 'sixties,” took the silver.

6 *BSE*, 1st ed., Moscow, 1927, vol. 6, col. 487, confirming Blanqui as ideological predecessor of the Bolsheviks. Engels's comment appeared in *Der Volkstaat* (Leipzig), no. 73, June 26, 1874.

7 Paris, *Archives de la Préfecture de Police*, B/A 944, pièce 60. The minister, Ferdinand Flocon, was in civilian life editor of *La Réforme*, which published articles by Proudhon, Bakunin, Marx, and Engels.

A close associate of the inspirational leader of leftist students, Nikolai Utin was, a police informer reported, “Chernyshevsky’s right hand.”<sup>8</sup> Arrested early in 1862, he was held in prison until his father obtained his release in October. On the surface, he appeared to have learned the proper lessons. He passed his University examinations – but he also joined *Zemlya i volya* (Land and Liberty), the name of which bespoke populism. Chernyshevsky had inspired the creation of this secret revolutionary society, whose collaborators in exile included Bakunin and the London-based editors of *Kolokol* (The Bell), Nikolai Ogaryov and Aleksandr Herzen. Banned in Russia, that journal got into the country through smugglers; most of the average press run of 2,500 copies reached St. Petersburg, Moscow, other large cities, and the universities. From 1857 to 1861 *Kolokol* played a major role in the revolutionary movement.<sup>9</sup>

Still more influential among the young generation was *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary), a political-literary monthly which Chernyshevsky edited 1859–1861. Published legally in St. Petersburg, its own average press run was 7,100 copies. Herzen excoriated its readership – the young generation that had suddenly lost faith in *Kolokol* – in an 1866 attack on “superfluous and bilious people” – an allusion to Ivan Turgenev’s *Diary of a Superfluous Man*.

Following the arrest of Chernyshevsky and other *Zemlya i volya* leaders in the summer of 1862, Nikolai Utin assumed leadership of the central committee. With his future wife Natalia Korsini (Corsini), one of the first women admitted to St. Petersburg University, he directed the clandestine society’s post-*Sovremennik* printing operations. In May 1863, the police closing in, he fled abroad. Korsini soon followed.

### *Kolokol* and the Young Generation

Utin first went to London to meet with Herzen and Ogaryov, who had badly misinterpreted the Emancipation. Herzen’s rhapsodic “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!” and praise for the “tsar-liberator” disillusioned *Zemlya i volya* and the progressive young generation, which recognized liberation without sufficient land as a cruel travesty. Hundreds of disorders had erupted in European Russia in the spring and summer of 1861.<sup>10</sup>

8 Utin, N.I.,” in *Vikipediya: Svobodnaya Entsiklopediya*. See also Mikhail Shishkin, *Russkaya Shveitsariya*, Moscow, 2012, p. 52.

9 “Martov” called *Zemlya i Volya* the “first organization of a socialist type” in Russia; “Krestianstvo ...,” p. 164.

10 Learning that the serfs would be freed in three years, Herzen quoted Emperor Julian the Apostate, who supposedly cried out just before he died of battle wounds, “Nenikekas

Utin arrived in London with an aggressive agenda. Initial pleasantries disposed of, and his suggestions for new smuggling routes for *Kolokol* accepted, he proposed that he, representing those who were fighting tsarism in Russia itself, take control of the newspaper and restore its original name, *Polyarnaya zvezda* (The North Star) to reflect the passing of the guard. He demanded the money a wealthy Russian, P.A. Bakhmetev, had given Herzen and Ogaryov for their work. That understandably angered his hosts, who declared further discussion impossible and refused to publish his article on the revolutionary movement.

The split between the young generation and the London émigrés grew deeper when *Kolokol* supported the 1863 Polish-Belarusian uprising. Perhaps mindful of its editor's quip that Bakunin "habitually mistakes the third month of pregnancy for the ninth," the modern Russian writer Mikhail Shishkin observes that "[Herzen] overstepped the line where freethinking head collides with patriotic innards."<sup>11</sup>

A Russian court later sentenced Nikolai Utin to death by firing squad *in absentia* – no doubt the way he preferred to suffer it. He moved on from London to Switzerland, which generally offered sanctuary to fugitives from the vengeance of royal houses. The Confederation was also home to a few hundred well-to-do Russians who simply found life there agreeable. Comfort-seekers and revolutionaries alike, those fluent in French – Utin included – preferred to live in or near Geneva; others chose Zürich.

At the turn of the year 1864–1865, Utin helped organize a "unity conference" in Geneva, inviting Russian émigrés from around Europe. Still perplexed by the decline of his influence, Herzen accepted. Far from unifying, however, the meeting confirmed the existence of an unbridgeable gulf. Utin persuaded his age cohort to endorse his claim to *Kolokol* and the Bakhmetev money, and to support his demand that the older generation step aside. Hopes for an accommodation dashed, Herzen wrote to Ogaryov, "Utin is the most hypocritical of our sworn enemies," adding that he was "fed up with the Geneva whelps." Three years later, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, then living in the city, dismissed Utin as one of the "Geneva 'smart-alecks.'"<sup>12</sup>

A leader of the Russian "young emigration" in Switzerland, Aleksandr Sernolovovich, helped Utin organize the conference. When a St. Petersburg court convicted him in 1862 of having "dealings with the London propagandists" and

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Galilaie!"; *Kolokol*, 18 February 1858. In general on the reaction in Russia to the emancipation see Tsederbaum -"Martov," "Krestianstvo ...," pp. 162–200.

11 *Russkaya Shveitsariya*, p. 53.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53–55.

sentenced him to deprivation of property and expulsion from the country, he absconded to Geneva. Also found guilty in the mass trial was his brother, Nikolai, a founder of *Zemlya i volya*. Condemned to exile in Siberia, he died on the road across the Urals. Tormented by what modern psychology terms “survivor guilt,” Aleksandr would commit suicide in 1869.<sup>13</sup>

### J.-P. Becker and the Geneva Slavs

A friend of Karl Marx, the German worker Johann-Philipp Becker, took “Serno” and other refugees under his wing in Geneva, where he had sought refuge when his revolutionary activities incurred the displeasure of the Palatinate authorities in 1849. He became prominent in the local labor movement, brought German and German-Swiss workers and some Slavs into the IWMA, and spearheaded the 1866 Geneva Congress’s demand for an eight-hour work day.

Becker introduced Serno-Solovyovich into the IWMA in 1867, the year Marx published *Das Kapital*. The young Russian expressed a desire to translate the book and soon received a copy, but he was neither trained economist nor sufficiently fluent in German, and nothing came of the project. He had however made a favorable impression on Marx, who exchanged a few letters with him.

Sponsored by Becker, Nikolai Utin became a member of the Carouge – a Geneva suburb – section the following year. Marx did not comment on that step but expressed disapproval when Becker backed two more Russians, Bakunin and his young disciple, Nikolai Zhukovsky, and also Bakunin’s wife, Antonia Kwiatkowska, a Pole.

Another Becker protégé, Anton Trusov, had interrupted his medical studies in Moscow to command a guerrilla detachment in the 1863 uprising in Belarus that was quickly crushed by the imperial army. A court-martial sentenced him to death *in absentia*, but he had already escaped to the West. He went to London and sought out Herzen, only to receive a rebuff. He moved to Paris, found work as a typesetter, and struck up an association with some French socialists. Through the overlapping networks of IWMA members and revolutionaries, his name became known, and Becker invited him to work in Geneva as a typesetter for his – Becker’s – friend, Bakunin.

With funds provided by Zoya Obolenskaya, a Russian noblewoman in self-imposed exile in Vevey, the aging anarchist founded the monthly journal *Narodnoe Delo – La Cause du Peuple*. He hired Trusov and, hoping to cadge

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13 The court acquitted Ivan Turgenev in this “Trial of the 32,” which dragged out from July 1862 to April 1865.

money from the Geneva Russians, made Zhukovsky and Utin co-editors. The Genevans gave no money; Bakunin denied Utin a role in the first issue.

Published on 1 September 1868, the first issue restated familiar anarchist assurances: Violence, destruction, and upheaval would produce a peaceful world free of injustice. The anarchic essence of countless peasant uprisings notwithstanding, that bloody vision had limited appeal in Russia, and Utin sensed that. Backed by several exiles, notably Olga Levashova, Zhukovsky's sister-in-law, he seized control of Bakunin's journal. Trusov joined the venture, as did the Polish émigré Ludwik Czerniecki, printer for *Kolokol*, which Herzen and Ogaryov had moved to Geneva.<sup>14</sup>

Bakunin did not long lament the loss of *Narodnoe Delo*. In October he and some Swiss followers announced creation of the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, which they described as an arm of the IWMA – effectively an “International” within the International. Ignoring the obvious fact that Bakunin's goal was to take over the General Council, J.-P. Becker outraged Marx by urging revision of IWMA statutes to admit the Alliance. The Council refused. Early in 1869 Bakunin declared he would abandon the project, but he dissembled.

### Bakunin and Nechaev

The Alliance lived on, one of two sideshows that sped up formation of the IWMA Russian section; the other was Bakunin's association with Sergei Nechaev. Son of a common laborer father and a mother born a serf, the highly intelligent but psychologically warped Nechaev occupied a lonely position on the fringes of the Russian revolutionary movement, where he tried to mask a monomaniacal hatred of society in general behind an extreme populist façade. Students in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the truly radical and the merely confused, listened, fascinated, as he expounded plans to assassinate the tsar. A master fantasist,

14 Utin discussed the *Narodnoe Delo* mess in a letter of late May or early June, 1869, to Anton Trusov; see *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* (Moscow, 1955) vol. 62, pp. 687–690. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* noted on March 30, 1870, that “The newspaper ‘Kolokol,’ founded by Herzen, now appears again under the editorship of a committee of Russian men of the movement.” The “committee” consisted of Nechaev and M.K. Elpidin, Bakunin's friend and printer. Olga Levashova and Zoya Obolenskaya were neighbors in Vevey. Olga was a friend of Nikolai and Natalia Utin; Zoya was in Bakunin's camp. After a family quarrel, Zoya Obolenskaya's husband took the couple's children back to Russia. The connivance of the Swiss authorities in the brutal *enlèvement* disgusted Herzen; see *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, (Moscow, 1941) vol. 39–40, pp. 547, 563, and *ibid.*, (Moscow, 1956) vol. 63, p. 139n.

he spun tales of secret societies, “merciless destruction,” a grand settling of accounts with the regime and the rich.

All that brought him to the attention of the Third Section – political police – of His Imperial Majesty’s Own Chancellery. In January 1869 he spread the rumor around the capital that he had been arrested, but in fact he went to Moscow and told the young Vera Zasulich, with whom he was only slightly acquainted, that he loved her and wanted her to escape Russia with him. When she declined, Nechaev, using an associate’s identity papers, departed alone, going first to Belgium, then to Geneva.

He had never yet been in a police *drozhky*, but Zasulich told police investigators that she had found a note he threw from one on his way to prison. The strange prevarication won her two years behind bars, and on her release she again fell afoul of the authorities and went back to jail. She established her maximalist credentials in 1878 by shooting and critically wounding the governor of St. Petersburg. In an exchange of letters three years later, she persuaded Karl Marx to reexamine the possibility that Russia could bypass capitalism.

In Switzerland, Nechaev beguiled Bakunin and Ogaryov, men more than thirty years his senior, with tales of escaping from prison and leading a secret underground “five” that planned to assassinate the “tsar-liberator” on the anniversary of the Emancipation decree. He wrote a “Catechism of a Revolutionary” depicting the ideal rebel as a robotic terrorist, interfered in projects to translate the *Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, and threatened to kill anyone who challenged him.

Bakunin impulsively gave his young visitor Card No. 2771 in the non-existent “Russian Section of the World Revolutionary Alliance.” And in November 1869 he provided the funds for that visitor to slip back into Russia. On his home territory, Nechaev made good on his threat to do away with any opponent. Now sought for murder as well as political crimes, he returned to Switzerland in January 1870, shortly before Herzen’s death, and inveigled Ogaryov into handing over *Kolokol* and what remained of the Bakhmetev money. As these events unfolded, Dostoevsky was describing him in serially-published chapters of *The Demons*, in which Nechaev became the terrorist “Pyotr [Peter] Verkhovensky.” At the request of the Russian minister in Berne, cantonal police in Geneva and Zürich carried out *visites domiciliaires* directed at uncovering unlawful activity among the Russian émigrés – specifically, harboring Nechaev, who in fact found no sympathy among the Russian Internationalists and their friends.<sup>15</sup>

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15 E.H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin*. New York, 1961, pp. 390–398. Ruvim Kantor, who had access to Third Section archives, wrote that “None of the prominent revolutionaries of that time



Briefly the most prominent of those Russians, Aleksandr Serno-Solovyovich contributed articles to *L'Egalité*, the central section newspaper, and in 1868 he supported a construction workers' strike with propaganda leaflets and speeches. Temporarily preoccupied with caring for a wife with serious eye problems, Nikolai Utin began attending IWMA meetings a little later. He wrote the "Nouvelles Etrangères" section for *L'Egalité* and eventually became editor. Olga Levashova received a warm welcome when Utin and Becker sponsored her admission to the Geneva women's section. Peter Kropotkin learned in 1874 that the "real soul" of the local labor-IWMA movement was "a most sympathetic Russian lady ... known far and wide amongst the workers as Madame Olga. She was the working force in all the committees."<sup>16</sup>

### The Russian Section

Speaking to a contingent of several hundred IWMA members gathered at Geneva's Plainpalais Cemetery for the August 1869 funeral for Aleksandr Serno-Solovyovich, Utin promised to continue his countryman's work.<sup>17</sup> "Serno's" suicide on the eve of the IWMA's Basel Congress, and the Bakunin-Nechaev business, weighed heavily on the Geneva émigrés who took part in that Congress – Nikolai and Natalia Utin, Viktor and Yekaterina Bartenev, Olga Levashova, and Anton Trusov. They were part of the majority that neutralized the conservative Proudhonists, until then a sizable anti-General Council bloc. But Bakunin also attended, and he and his followers posed a greater danger, fighting the General Council and Marx on several key questions.

Hermann Jung, a German-Swiss worker who represented Switzerland on the General Council, was elected chairman of the Congress. A close ally of

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was hunted as they hunted the mysterious Nechaev"; *Vpogone za Nechaevym*, Leningrad, 1925, p. 11. The Russian minister in Berne was Nikolai Girs, later foreign minister.

16 *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, Mineola, NY, 2010, p. 276; Ante Schrupp, "Die Genfer Frauen-sektion der Ersten Internationale," <http://www.antjeschrupp.de/diegenferfrauensektion>, p. 2. Antonia Kwiatkowska was a member of this section. On Utin's work for *L'Egalité* see his March 24, 1870, letter to Jung at *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, no further classification. He noted his membership in the Carouge section in the April 7, 1870, report to the General Council of the minority faction at the La-Chaux-de-Fonds congress of the Fédération Romand at *ibid.*, f. 21, op. 1, d. 317.

17 Utin published an obituary in *Narodnoe Delo*, no. 7–10, November 1869. Bakunin claimed that "Serno" deplored Utin's revolutionary braggadocio; see my *Revolutionary Exiles*, London, 1979, p. 84. I regret my error at p. 65, note 24, in writing that B.P. Kozmin exaggerated "Serno's" role in Geneva. He did not.

Marx, he admonished J.-P. Becker for failing to understand Bakunin's intrigues. Becker apologized, and together the two urged the Utin group to move forward with the creation of a Russian section. Plans that had been in preparation for months came to fruition shortly after the Basel Congress.<sup>18</sup>

Russian and Western scholars having published several monographs on the Russian section, its history is reasonably well known.<sup>19</sup> Less familiar are recently released materials from the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History. A March 8, 1870, letter from Nikolai Utin to Becker asks for an introduction to Marx, who the aborning Russian section wanted to represent it on the General Council. Utin added that *Narodnoe Delo* would soon publish a "manifesto to the Slav populations" with news of the IWMA.<sup>20</sup> Writing to *L'Égalité* on March 23, 1870, Utin now referred to a "Manifesto to the workers in Slav countries." Its purpose, he wrote, was to induce those workers to "abandon the pernicious ideas of Panslavism and the odious racial rivalry that only profits our common exploiters."<sup>21</sup>

Becker agreed to provide an introduction to Marx. Anton Trusov, secretary of the Geneva group, showed him a draft – noted in the first endnote – of a letter that opened with "Cher et vénérable Citoyen" and went on to praise Marx's "exposé des principes socialistes et [...] critique du système de la Féodalité industrielle." But Trusov overreached in adding, "Your name is rightly venerated by the young Russian student youth, which for the most part comes from the ranks of working people." The first Russian translation of the *Communist Manifesto* had only just appeared, in Geneva, and could not have reached Russia in significant numbers. *Das Kapital* was not translated into Russian until 1872; at most a tiny handful of Russians drawn to the recondite subject would have

18 In a March 11, 1870, letter to Jung (*RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, d. 216/2), Utin, Bartenev ("Njetoff"), and Trusov referred to conversations with him and Robert Applegarth, editor of the trade-union journal *The Bee-Hive*, at the Congress "et surtout au banquet."

19 V.A. Gorokhov, *Russkaya sektsiya Internatsionala* (Moscow, 1925); B.P. Kozmin, *Russkaya sektsiya Pervogo Internatsionala* (Moscow, 1957); B.S. Itenberg, *Pervyi Internatsional i revoliutsionnaya Rossiya* (Moscow, 1964); and my study mentioned above. Scholarly journals in Russia and the West have published articles on the section.

20 *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, d. 216/1. Not expecting Becker to be at home, Utin wrote a letter but ended up handing it over directly. In it he noted that "I'm leaving the two envelopes with the addresses you gave to our friend who left for Russia." The friend's identity is not known. The letter cited in note 18 above refers to the Russian section's promise to propagandize the IWMA in the Slav world and attack Bakunin and Nechaev. Utin asked that everything in Russian be turned over to him. The letter proves Becker's involvement in the smuggling of communications into Russia.

21 *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, d. 216/4. The final page or pages are missing.

had access to the German original.<sup>22</sup> Only one Russian revolutionary in Switzerland and perhaps all Europe could legitimately claim working-class origin: Sergei Nechaev.

Trusov's draft had noted in passing that the nascent Russian section had "absolutely nothing in common" with Bakunin. The letter that actually went to Marx reflected both Becker's editing and some suggestions from Hermann Jung. Marx and Jung having chastised him for coddling Bakunin, Becker was anxious to redeem himself. As the patron of people ready to establish an anti-Bakuninist IWMA section, an ideal peace offering was at his disposal. He advised the Geneva group to spell out in detail its differences with Europe's leading anarchist.<sup>23</sup>

They took the advice. As we have seen, their letter to Marx proclaiming solidarity with him and the General Council simultaneously acknowledged allegiance to Chernyshevsky. The rest embodied an attack on the individuals they now, agreeing with Marx, considered the biggest threat to the IWMA. Bakunin and Nechaev, they wrote, believed that the "**only true type** of revolutionary is the Russian highway bandit," and in that guise they were trying to take over the Russian section before it officially came into existence, and to re-assume control of *Narodnoe Delo*. One of their agents in the effort was a young Russian recently arrived in Switzerland, Vladimir Serebrennikov, whom the letter described as an "intelligent lad, but **corrupt** to the nth degree." Proclaiming his support for the Geneva circle's goals, he revealed his true character with a threat on the life of an unnamed woman who had told Utin and Trusov of "rapports intimes" with Nechaev – who was now back in Western Europe.<sup>24</sup>

The Geneva group praised Marx for founding the International and for his unceasing efforts to unmask "false Russian patriotism, the false subtleties of our Demosthenes who prophesize the glorious predestination [*sic*] of these Slav peoples who until today have only the predestination of being crushed by Tatar tsarism." That pleased one of Europe's best-known Russophobes, who agreed to act for the group on the General Council. He saw the humor in the

22 Plekhanov, "N.G. Chernyshevsky," Part 1, pp. 122f.

23 Utin's 1 April 1870, letter to him reveals that Jung helped edit the correspondence and led Utin to apologize for addressing Marx as "venerable." Becker had informed Utin that Marx was "only 50"; he turned 52 on May 5, 1870. See *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1; the typewritten letter is not further indexed.

24 The last of the six pages of this letter I have seen (see note 1) ends with "Salut et fraternité" and the signatures. The Russian section's founders recognized Serebrennikov as an accomplice of Nechaev and Bakunin in March 1870, three months before the date I gave in *Revolutionary Exiles*, p. 98.

situation and wrote to Engels, “Drôle de position für mich, als Repräsentant der Jeune Russie zu funktionieren.”<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

Marx’s new allies, a very small company of Russian émigrés and their friends of various nationalities, pledged to propagate his ideas in a country with proportionately the smallest proletariat in the industrialized world. And they promised to send that message to other Slav lands including enclaves in the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, where the concept of “proletariat” was scarcely known. The Russian section made some progress in this area, establishing contact with revolutionary circles inside Russia and arranging to smuggle in the *Communist Manifesto* and others of Marx’s works, and IWMA publications. Not until the 1880s, however, did Marxist socialism take root in Russia, and for decades after that it barely registered elsewhere in Slavdom.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian section’s service to Marx and the IWMA consisted of joining the struggle against anarchism and proving the existence of movement in Russia that could stand – however awkwardly – with Western revolutionaries to combat injustice. Nikolai Utin, the section’s dominant figure, entered the battle against the anarchists in the wake of the Nechaev affair and launched a protracted diatribe against Bakunin, attacking in *L’Egalité* and *Narodnoe Delo*; correspondence with Marx, Becker, and Jung; presentations to the IWMA 1871 Conference in London and the 1872 Congress – the last – in The Hague; and an 1873 brochure.

Utin had signaled his intentions in a March 24, 1870, letter to Jung explaining the Russian section’s public break with Bakunin and his “acolytes.” Their acts and conduct, he wrote, were “more harmful to the great cause of the Liberation of the Proletariat than all the stupid attacks of our official enemies.” There was more in this vein, then the crux of the dispute: Bakunin’s friends, Utin told Jung, “want at all costs to force *L’Egalité* to preach political abstention for the Internationalists.”<sup>27</sup>

25 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1965) vol. 32, p. 466.

26 In “Svyazi Russkoi sekti Pervogo Internatsionala s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem v Rossii,” his dissertation for Kazan State University (Kazan, 1990), V.A. Shagalov, who had access to Third Section archives, wrote that the Russian section of the IWMA had extensive contacts with revolutionary groups in Russia, and through them disseminated the works of Marx and Engels, J.-P. Becker, and others. Having seen only the dissertation abstract, I am unable to evaluate this assertion, which diverges from previous scholarship.

27 *RGASPI*, f. 21, op. 1, no further classification.

Marx and the General Council prevailed over the anarchists, whom the Hague Congress expelled from the IWMA. The expulsion and the relocation of the Council to New York, however, spelled the demise of the first modern working-class political organization. Nikolai Utin contributed to the defeat of Bakunin and his followers, but that did not make him a Marxist. He and other section members were *marxisant*; none were maximalists in the Berdyaev sense. Utin and Yelizaveta Tomanovskaya, a member of the section and the heroic “Mme Dmitrieff” of the Paris Commune, became Marx’s personal friends but were only happenstance, and temporary, political allies. They, and Natalia Utina *née* Korsini, Viktor and Yekaterina Bartenev, Olga Levashova, the Communards Victor and Anna (*née* Korvin-Krukovskaya) Jaclard, Anton Trusov, Edouard Bongard, Svetozar Marković, and Konstantin Krupsky, played their brief roles on the world stage well, then faded into the dim historical background.

## The Italians and the IWMA

*Carl Levy*

### Introduction

Italians played a significant and multi-dimensional role in the birth, evolution and death of the First International, and indeed in its multifarious afterlives: the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) has also served as a milestone or foundation event for histories of Italian anarchism, syndicalism, socialism and communism.<sup>1</sup> The Italian presence was felt simultaneously at the national, international and transnational levels from 1864 onwards. In this chapter I will first present a brief synoptic overview of the history of the IWMA (in its varied forms) in Italy and abroad from 1864 to 1881. I will then examine interpretations of aspects of Italian Internationalism: Mazzinian Republicanism and the origins of anarchism, the Italians, Bakunin and interactions with Marx and his ideas, the theory and practice of propaganda by the deed and the rise of a third-way socialism neither fully reformist nor revolutionary, neither Marxist nor anarchist. This chapter will also include some brief words on the sociology and geography of Italian Internationalism and a discussion of newer approaches that transcend the rather stale polemics between partisans of a Marxist or anarchist reading of Italian Internationalism and incorporates themes that have enlivened the study of the Risorgimento, namely, State responses to the International, the role of transnationalism, romanticism,

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1 The best overviews of the IWMA in Italy are: Pier Carlo Masini, *La Federazione Italiana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori. Atti ufficiali 1871–1880 (atti congressuali; indirizzi, proclami, manifesti)* (Milan, 1966); Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli Anarchici Italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, (Milan, (1969) 1974); Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism 1864–1892* (Princeton, 1993); Renato Zangheri, *Storia del socialismo italiano. Volume primo Dalla rivoluzione francese a Andrea Costa* (Turin, 1993); Piero Carlo Masini, “La Prima Internazionale”, in Pier Carlo Masini and Maurizio Antonioli, *Il sole dell'avvenire. L'anarchismo in Italia dalle origini all'Prima Guerra Mondiale* (Pisa, 1999). Useful for its statistics is, Emilio Gianni, *L'Internazionale italiana fra libertari ed evolucionisti. I congressi della Federazione Italiana e della Federazione Alta Italia dell'Associazione Internazionale dei lavoratori, 1872–1880* (Naples, 2008); Pier Carlo Masini (ed.), *Epistolario inedito dell'Internazionale. La Carte della Commissione di Corrispondenza dall'Archivio della Federazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori (1872–1874)* (Milan, (1966) 2013).

feminism and the politics of generational friendship and the afterlives of the International.

### Prehistory and Historical Overview

The prehistory of the First International can be traced back to three sources. Growing national trade union organisations (largely in north western Europe) and their need to create policies to coordinate the movement of labour across borders and transnational solidarity during strikes, diasporic communities of refugees from the social and national struggles of 1848 and after, and the development of cosmopolitan radical, communist and proto-anarchist secret societies, brotherhoods and clubs.<sup>2</sup> The Italians in the 1860s are largely absent from the first type of organisation, but they are present particularly in the nationalist groups which do in fact shade into formations that preach cooperation and cross-class forms of mutuality and education. The central figure of course is Giuseppe Mazzini but the earlier influences of the more radical and class oriented Buonarrotti cannot be discounted if one recalls this previous influence on Chartist circles in London and elsewhere. Mazzini and several other associates were prominent in the initial discussions which eventually led to the First International. But even if Mazzini and his circle were quickly marginalised from the IWMA by Marx and his colleagues, the influence of Mazzinian concepts remained strong in the big battalions of the British trade unions, which never renounced his self-help, cooperative and educational approaches and amongst the most radical fringes of the British trade union movement. Mazzini remained a towering figure even after his negative reaction to the Paris Commune of 1871. Giuseppe Garibaldi was also a strong influence on the milieu in which the International grew at its London centre in 1864–1865. Although Garibaldi's ideology was always quite indeterminate, his visit to London during April 1864 produced the greatest public demonstration until the protest against British intervention in the Iraq War in 2003 and supercharged the growing proletarian and middle-class radicalism of London in which the infant International's centre grew.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Recent overviews: Mathieu Léonard, *L'émancipation des travailleurs. Une histoire de la Première Internationale* (Paris, 2011); Marcello Musto (ed.), *Workers Unite! The International 150 Years Later* (London, 2014); René Berthier, *La Fin de La Première Internationale* (Paris, 2015); Robert Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy-We Invoke It. The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland, 2015).

3 An excellent recent summary is to be found in Enrico Verdecchia, *Londra dei cospiratori. L'esilio londinese dei padri del Risorgimento* (Milan, 2010).

In Italy, the first section (1869) of the IWMA and the centre of activity for Internationalism in the peninsula for the first years of its life were in Naples, albeit an early presence was noted in Sicily, however this would shift to what became the heartland of Italian anarchism and socialism before the Fascist Regime and indeed the heart and soul of twentieth century communism and its successors in the twenty first century: Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, the Marches and slightly later in Lazio and Liguria.

The Italian IWMA had a short but eventful life. Its first national conference was held in Rimini in 1872 and this was followed by national conferences in Bologna (1873), the half- clandestine gathering in Florence-Tosi (1876), Pisa (1878) and on within the Swiss border in 1880 (Chiasso) when the IWMA had already been effectively illegalised earlier in the year, albeit its organisation has already been depleted and disrupted by a series of arrests in the previous years. Besides regional and local congresses, the reformist strand of Italian Internationalism had an initial appearance in Swiss exile in the Ceresio (near Lugano) section of 1875 and a formal congress in Milan in 1877 which saw the foundation of the Federation of Upper Italy that can be characterised by its Milan-Mantua axis.

The most notable growth of the International occurred in the wake of the Paris Commune from 1871 to 1874 when sections and regional federations created a dense web of members and sympathisers: the formal membership reached 32,450 in the spring of 1874,<sup>4</sup> and it has been argued sympathisers (too cautious to join due to State and employer surveillance) gave it an effective following several times the declared figures. In the small to medium sized towns of Tuscany and the Romagna, the International was a force to be reckoned with, as Naples and Sicily lost their initial predominance, on the other hand later in the 1870s, the Federation of Upper Italy gained a following in the industrialising environments of Milan, Biella and more marginally in Turin and announced the signal role of the countryside for socialism in the Po Valley, with a nuclei of *braccianti* (landless labourers) in the surrounds of Mantua.<sup>5</sup> Several historians have argued that the International was the first true political party in Italy as opposed to the personal clan-like followings of the Republicans and the consortia of the Historic Right and Historic Left. And even if one is cautious and argues that it was a type of proto-political party, its membership in the florid early 1870s, exceeded the membership of the Italian Socialist Party in 1914.

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4 Franco della Peruta, "La consistenza numerica dell'Internazionale in Italia nel 1874", *Movimento Operaio*, 2,3-4 December 1949-1950, pp. 104-106; Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism 1864-1892* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 75-76.

5 Most notably Pier Carlo Masini and Nunzio Pernicone.



### The Italians and the Schism in the IWMA

The Italian IWMA played an important role in the schism between so-called authoritarian and anti-authoritarian wings in 1871–1872 and this leads us to the vexed question of the role of Bakunin in the formation of the Italian International. While it has been shown that Carlo Pisacane, the federalist socialist hero of the Risorgimento, was not an indigenous source of libertarian socialism or anarchism, it is also the case that Bakunin did not singlehandedly “convert” the Italians to his form of anarchist collectivism, because his anarchism was only formed during his sojourn in Italy in the 1860s.<sup>6</sup> For all intents and purposes until the late 1860s, Bakunin was a radical Hegelian “Forty-Eighter” in which the springtime of the peoples was still equated with national revolts with a social tint. But the failure of the Polish rising of 1863 (and indeed its lack of a peasant strategy), Bakunin’s interaction with Russian Populists and his sojourns in Italy, drove him to articulate his own form of anarchism, which naturally also had to do with the lasting effects of his earlier encounters with Proudhon in the 1840s and in 1863.<sup>7</sup> His attempts to convert the Florentine Free Masonry in 1864 and 1865 or the Genevan Congress of the League for Peace and Liberty (1868) in a revolutionary direction, were dismal failures but his encounters with Left-wing Mazzinians in Naples gave him interlocutors who stimulated his leap into an anarchist politics, but it did not mean that the old method of engaging in a two-level form of politics (secret organisations of initiates and broader organisations tapping the spontaneous passions of the masses) were ever superseded, indeed as is well known one of the reasons for the expulsion of Bakunin from the London Council based International was the argument that he carried his Brotherhood into the International itself. The first generation of Internationalists, such as the representative Giuseppe Fanelli, were veterans of the struggles of the Risorgimento and some like Fanelli were members of the failed expedition to Sapri in 1857 when Pisacane lost his life.<sup>8</sup> But it appears the case that the openly libertarian socialist aspects of his thought were obscured whereas his direct action politics, his discussion of guerrilla warfare and his Italian patriotism were known. This is not to say that general knowledge of Proudhon’s themes (filtered through the work of Giuseppe Ferrari) was absent from the lives of this first circle who associated with Bakunin in Naples. The important point is that even if they were associated with the Mazzinian and

6 T.R. Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians* (Kingston [etc.], 1988).

7 Mark Leier, *Bakunin. A Biography* (New York, 2006).

8 For the latest scholarship on Pisacane see, Carmine Pinto and Luigi Rossi (eds.), *Tra pensiero e azione: una biografica politica di Carlo Pisacane* (Salerno, 2010).

Garibaldian quests to force the Kingdom of Italy's hand and conquer Rome (from Aspromonte in 1862 to Mentana in 1867), they were federalists rather than centralisers and they were Free-Thinking atheists, not deists like Mazzini; and unlike Garibaldi, who had donned the Royal uniform and remained equivocal about the new Kingdom of Italy in the 1860s and 1870s, by the late 1860s they were unequivocally against the Savoy regime, many deeply humiliated by the performance of the Italian state in the War of 1866. So one can say the development of a libertarian socialism in Italy was a mutually interactive process between Bakunin and his Italian friends.

However, the watershed for the development of the International was the Paris Commune of 1871. It impacted on Italian politics in several ways. It allowed Bakunin openly to denounce Mazzini for his unbridled attacks on the class-based and atheist politics of the Commune. Secondly many of the future Internationalists had joined Garibaldi's expedition to the Vosges to fight the Prussian invasion of France and then joined the Commune as combatants and suffered death or exile to New Caledonia or more fortunately to Brussels, London, Cairo or elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Thus one can point to the example of Amilcare Cipriani, Garibaldian, "Colonel of the Paris Commune" and later unclassifiable anarchist leaning subversive; jailbird in the 1880s.<sup>10</sup> But the Commune also clarified the meaning of republicanism, in the wake of the bloody massacre that the Republicans carried out to break the resistance in Paris in May 1871. The Commune was an example of the cell for a future socialist libertarian federation of the French or for that matter for the city-state culture of Italy and the communalist federalist republican movement in Spain.<sup>11</sup> It is also quite true that later in life some Internationalists, such as the youthful Errico Malatesta, would criticise the failings of the Commune: the lack of a policy to spread the movement beyond Paris, the dominance of Blanquists and the formation of a Committee of Public Safety, the need to promote more direct democracy, and the timidity of its social policy.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless the Commune became a litmus test for the European extreme Left and its identification by the powers to be with the International boosted its prestige amongst the radical federalist

9 For the First International see, Eva Civolani, *L'Anarchismo dopo la Comune. I casi italiano e spagnolo* (Milan, 1981).

10 Carl Levy, "Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926", in David Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism. History, Theory, and Practice*, (London, 1989) see especially, pp. 42–43.

11 Eva Civolani covers this well (see footnote 8) and also see the recent, very interesting global treatment by Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury. The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London, 2015).

12 Errico Malatesta, "La Comune di Parigi e gli anarchici", *La Settimana Sangiunosa*, London, 18 March 1903.

republicans in such countries as Italy and Spain. March 18th, the date of the proclamation of the Commune, became a day of commemoration for the Internationalists and for the anarchists until the First World War.

Mazzini was therefore denounced by Bakunin and Garibaldi, but once Mazzini had lost his left-wing to the rapidly growing International, Bakunin could then turn his guns on the inconsistent Garibaldi who failed to seize the initiative in the 1870s and whose attraction to temporary military dictatorship and ambiguous relationship to the Savoy dynasty confused or alienated his erstwhile supporters. But it must be said that divorce from the political culture of Mazzinianism and Garibaldianism was never complete. One sees it in the ethical drive of republicanism, the importance of addressing the institutional question (Monarchy versus Republic) and the open-hearted rather unfocussed support for Garibaldian-style international solidarity expeditions to fight in wars of national liberation or against reactionaries which harked back to the Liberal International of the period 1815–1848 and was engrained in the historical genetic code of the Risorgimento and Post-Risorgimento generations. This meant that the watershed of 1871 was far less obvious than was formerly argued by historians. Even an Internationalist, turned firm and life-long anarcho-communist such as Errico Malatesta who wrote rather damning obituaries on the deaths of Mazzini and Garibaldi, could still participate in Garibaldian flavoured interventions in Bosnia (1876) and Egypt (1882), and Malatesta remained in a life-long conversation and on/off alliance building with Italian Republicans and the followers of Garibaldi's descendants and his legacy to the 1920s.<sup>13</sup>

The last and perhaps most important effect of the Commune was the coming of age of a new generation of radicals, born in the late 1840s or 1850s who were for the most part too young to have experienced the struggles of the Risorgimento but were shaped by their profound disappointment for the Kingdom of Italy in the 1860s. Thus Carlo Cafiero, Andrea Costa, Errico Malatesta, Emilio Covelli and many other middle-class and aristocratic educated youth, were inspired by the Commune and the Russian Populists, with Bakunin being a radical if older exemplar within their midst. Bakunin served as the charismatic and intellectual catalyst for their conversion, and conversion is an accurate description of many of these idealist youth who abandoned their

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13 For legacies of Garibaldi and Mazzini see, Eva Cecchinato, *Camicie rosse. I garibaldini dall'Unità alla grande Guerra* (Bari, 2007); Christopher Bayly and Eugenio Biagini (eds.), *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford, 2008). For Malatesta see Carl Levy, *The Rooted Cosmopolitan; Errico Malatesta, the Life and Times of an Anarchist In Exile*, forthcoming.

university educations to learn a trade and go to the people (Malatesta) and use their inherited wealth (Cafiero and Covelli) to fund the activities of the International. It was the youthful levy of the early 1870s that organised the rapid expansion of the International between 1871 and 1874. These educated youth were neither, as Engels famously wrote, unemployed and unemployable *déclassés* or in Italian *spostati* (misfits) but *autospostati*, the functional equivalent of the Russian narodniks, intellectual and articulate students and graduates with every potential to follow professional careers or indeed if they wished join the former followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi, Giovanni Nicotera or even Francesco Crispi (the current and future nemeses of the Internationalists and the anarchists) in the political ruling classes of post-Risorgimento Italy.<sup>14</sup>

### The Italians, Bakunin, Marx and Engels

But this does not mean that the young and older Italian Internationalists were unthinking followers of Bakunin. It is quite true that Fanelli served as Bakunin's envoy in Spain, but the Internationalists kept their own counsel. Even if they sided with Bakunin and an assortment of anti-authoritarian critics of the London Council they did not attend the momentous Hague Congress and at their Rimini Congress (1872) had already foreshadowed the formal schism of St Imier, albeit given the lack of attendance to bureaucratic detail Engels' claim that they were never registered with the London Council and thus not formal members of the IWMA is probably correct. While Bakunin maintained his collectivism and had harsh words for communism, the Italians were some of the first, if not the first, anti-authoritarians to promote the concept of anarcho-communism. In the wake of Bakunin's death, the young Malatesta, who had met the Russian a few years earlier on what seemed to be his own deathbed, declared publicly that the Italian Internationalists respected his memory but would not like to identify themselves as Bakuninists.<sup>15</sup> There was the delicate matter of the squandering of Cafiero's inheritance on La Baronata but also Malatesta recalled in 1889, that the major problem of the International was the personalization of political struggle within the International between self-declared Marxists and Bakuninists when in fact the vast rank and file were neither and the whole exercise had smacked of elitist politics of which so-called anti-authoritarians were not innocent. In short the effect of Bakunin was to solidify an anti-authoritarian federalist current in Italian Internationalism

14 See Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism 1864–1872* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 77–79.

15 Vernon Richards, "Some Notes on Malatesta and Bakunin", *The Raven*, 1 (1987), p. 41.

which was further exacerbated by what was seen from the peninsula as the underhanded, rude and dictatorial policies emanating from the London Council.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship of this group to Marx and Engels and colleagues in London was not as clear-cut as one would imagine. Marx and Engels were impressed by the young Cafiero when he visited them in London in 1870–1871 and indeed he became one of their chief enthusiastic correspondents from Italy. Then, the relationship soured after Cafiero read the *Communist Manifesto* and was particularly horrified and bemused about the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and the future agricultural armies envisaged during the period of socialist transition. He expressed scepticism when he thought about the rather rebellious peasantry of the *Mezzogiorno* who had avoided the conscription agents of the new Kingdom of Italy. And of course Bakunin, himself, had been appointed an agent to fight off Mazzini and his influence in Italy until their brief reconciliation disintegrated. It has been argued that Engels neglected Italy and thus the “Bakuninists” could carry out their “nefarious work”,<sup>17</sup> but it is curious that the spread of Marx’s theoretical work in this period and indeed for many years after, was the result of Covelli’s dissemination of Marx’s writing on political economy and later the rendering into Italian of *Das Kapital* by Cafiero years after his disenchantment with Marx and Engels.<sup>18</sup> The Internationalists disagreed with the leadership of the London Council because of the way it governed the International. They mobilised against Resolution Nine of the special conference of the London IWMA in 1871 which underlined the importance of political and electoral participation of the International. They argued over who were the agents of the revolutionary transformation: the industrial proletariat as argued by the “Marxists” versus the Italian Internationalists who plumped for a coalition of forces in which the peasantry, the poorer sectors of the city population, the artisans and “the workers of thought” had a greater role than the smaller and rather weak factory working class of Italy. Albeit the idea that they thought this tiny but growing stratum was a hopeless case, is mistaken. However, the Internationalists were still highly dependent on the general thrust of Marxian political economy, even as they engaged in invective with the London Council: intellectually they were still in the grip of Marx’s brilliance.

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16 Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta’s Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 19–20.

17 Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, p. 46.

18 For Carlo Cafiero see the chapter in this volume by Mathieu Léonard.

### Sociological Analysis of the IWMA Membership

As I have suggested, the membership of the Italian IWMA had a notable group of middle-class and even aristocratic figures in the leadership but the vast majority of Internationalists were artisans (shoemakers, printers, carriage makers, saddle makers, etc.) and labourers such as porters and stevedores, but there were some factory workers, indeed women from the cigarette and cigar factories of Florence and elsewhere were notable participants. Not only was the International the first political party (or proto-party), it was also the first party or political grouping with independent women's sections.

There are hundreds or thousands of working-class women who were active in the International who still deserve their historian, whose history has so far has been limited to biographical treatments of leading figures.<sup>19</sup> Even if the International began to develop a policy for the countryside, like the Mazzinian Republicanism from which most came from, they had little presence in the rural Po Valley or in the South. On the face of it this seems odd. But unlike the Spanish case where the Internationalist artisans of the small towns and cities of Catalonia and particularly Andalusia spread the movement to rural areas, the timing was less auspicious in the Italian case: the great agricultural depression, pauperization of the countryside, mass migration but also radicalization especially of those who remained in the Po Valley (which also experienced an industrialization of agriculture), led to the mass recruitment of the landless labourers into the pioneer socialist movements and trade unions of the 1880s and 1890s when the Internationalists were no longer around. Although many landless labourers and other categories in the countryside flirted with syndicalism in the early twentieth century, the anarchists were much more prominent in the former Internationalist smaller to medium-sized towns of central Italy (the Romagna, Tuscany, the Marches etc.).

The working-class or artisanal backbone of the International was sustained by their own Fasci Operai (Workers' Circles), which served as primitive trade union and cultural centres and it should also be said that during the strike waves of the early 1870s, Internationalists took some part as organisers. But the attitude of many of the more prominent Internationalists was ambiguous: many Internationalists believed in "the iron law of wages" which argued that gains from strikes would inevitably be eaten up by ensuing inflation. And thus the immediate overturning of the capitalist system was the only sensible policy. Also the "workers of thought", as the University of Bologna graduate

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19 Elena Bignami, *Le schiave degli schiavi. La "questione femminile" del socialismo utopistico all'anarchismo italiano (1825-1917)* (Bologna, 2011), pp. 75-105; 149-200.

and star pupil of the great poet Giosuè Carducci, Andrea Costa, put it, were suspicious of what we might call workerist tendencies.<sup>20</sup> As Malatesta argued, a former medical student who retrained as a mechanic, gas-fitter and later electrician, the revolution was humanist, not for a particular class. So even if the Internationalists criticised Mazzini for his denunciation of the Paris Commune as self-destructive class war, they hadn't moved that far from his position. The working class needed to be organised, that was the aim of Malatesta's rather unsuccessful quest in the Guppy engineering factory in Naples in the early 1870s, but the revolution the Internationalists were promoting was more inclusive in their eyes than narrow corporate advantage.<sup>21</sup>

### Tactics and Ideology of the IWMA in Italy

Even the Internationalists' firm opposition to Resolution Nine and to electoral politics, was not so extremist in the Italian situation of the 1870s. The Mazzinian Republicans had had a strong tradition of electoral abstention during the early days of what they felt was an illegitimate monarchist regime and they were joined by the Catholics ordered by the Pope, at least initially, to boycott the political system of the Pope's "prison warden", and of course disgruntled followers of the Kingdom of Naples had still not recognised the new order. Until the 1880s the suffrage only encompassed a vanishingly small minority of the adult population, so in these senses the Internationalists were not speaking in a vacuum. That being said, the Internationalists seemed to disregard the fact that Giuseppe Fanelli remained a parliamentary deputy after his conversion to Internationalism and indeed used his free rail travel afforded by his office to spread its gospel.<sup>22</sup>

From 1872 the Internationalists embarked on an insurrectional strategy which harked back to the conspiracies of the Risorgimento and indeed was foreshadowed by Republican insurrectional attempts as late as 1870. With the re-evaluation of the entire corpus of Pisacane's work, the Internationalists envisaged these insurrections as a Social Risorgimento. The first attempt was tried in 1874 and centred on seizing the major towns and cities of central Italy, Rome and in the South, Apulia (Sicily was ignored). This was a disastrous fiasco, the last fling of the ageing Bakunin, and failed to materialize anywhere except in the surrounds of Bologna and here the several hundred conspirators

20 Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, pp. 74–75.

21 Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism*, pp. 29–34.

22 Levy, "Italian Anarchism, 1870–1926", pp. 25–29.

were either dispersed or arrested, along with senior Republicans at Villa Ruffi, who had met to *prevent* followers of their cause from joining. The second attempt was a break from the rather familiar city-based strategy of 1874, because unlike Mazzinian predecessors, with the significant exception of Pisacane's attempt in 1857, the aim was to raise the countryside in rebellion. As one of the conspirators argued, a social *jacquerie* was needed in which the peasantry in the villages of Italy seized their lands, destroyed the tax and land title regime of the State and promoted a federation of localities throughout the peninsula. The rugged mountain chain, the Matese, fairly near Naples was chosen, the Russian Populist Sergei Kravchinsky ("Stepniak"), who Malatesta had met during his adventure in Bosnia in 1876, wrote a guerrilla manual for the operation, but once again most of the conspirators were arrested before the plan could be initiated. Most of the remaining small band could not be understood by the dialect-speaking peasants, and when they did seize several villages, the insurrectionists neither had the time nor numbers to establish what in the twentieth-century guerrilla parlance might be termed a *foco*, a rural soviet or a liberated zone.<sup>23</sup>

The insurrectional strategy was formulated within the context of waves of discontent which had shaken Italy in the 1860s and early 1870s (recall the previously mentioned strikes): Turin rioted in 1864 when the provisional capital was moved to Florence, Palermo had been briefly seized by a coalition of insurgents in 1866, the grist mill tax (the *macinato*) led to widespread rural rioting throughout peninsula in 1869 and widespread banditry mixed with clerical/Bourbon guerrilla warfare in the rural hinterland of former Kingdom of Naples. Indeed the Matese was chosen because of its history of anti-regime guerrilla warfare before 1860 and pro-Bourbon guerrilla warfare in the aftermath of the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy. But clearly both urban and rural strategies were a disaster for the Internationalists and used by the government to crush the International and outlaw it by the end of the decade.<sup>24</sup>

The Internationalists had invoked the concept of the propaganda of the deed to explain what the Matese adventure was all about. By this they meant

23 For these two failed risings see, Pier Carlo Masini, *Gli Internazionalisti. La Banda del Matese (1876–1878)* (Milan-Rome, 1958); Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, pp. 82–128; Luigi Parente (ed.), *Movimenti sociali e lotte politiche nell'Italia liberale. Il moto del Matese* (Milan, 2001); Giulio de Martino and Vincenza Simeoli, *La polveriera d'Italia. Le origini del socialismo nel Regno di Napoli (1799–1877)* (Naples, 2004); Bruno Tomasiello, *La Banda del Matese 1876–1878, I documenti, le testimonianze, la stampa dell'epoca* (Casavelino Scalo, 2009).

24 For an overview of the Mezzogiorno see, Salvatore Lupo, *L'unificazione italiana. Mezzogiorno, rivoluzione, guerra civile* (Rome, 2011).



either an insurrectional foco which would link up with the “spontaneous” discontent of the peasantry and succeed to establish a base from which a national revolution could be launched or at least a failed attempt would raise the consciousness of the peasantry of the locality for future attempts. But very rapidly the concept was transformed into acts of political assassination, targeted terrorism and finally random acts of terror. Further mutation was in reaction to the change in government policy. In most of the trials arising from the events of 1874 and 1877 the defendants were acquitted by middle-class juries, who may have had little in common with the Internationalists but were swayed by Risorgimento-like eloquence of the young, educated and physically attractive defendants.<sup>25</sup> Under the Historic Right, the policy of government was to harass and place the International under surveillance. The State was well informed of the plotting before risings of 1874 and 1877 and sort to entrap the conspirators so as to destroy the International. The arrival of the Historic Left in power promised greater liberties, but in fact led to the criminalisation of the Internationalists: they were considered a criminal conspiracy on par with the Mafia and the use of preventive arrest and internal exile became weapons employed against the entire Left from time to time until the early twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> The reaction of the likes of Covelli and Cafiero was to embrace their “othering” as *malfattori* (evil-doers) and promote a cult of illegalism and anti-organizational anarchism that greatly weakened the anarchist strand of the defunct International in the 1880s and found its realization in the pronouncements of the London Congress of social revolutionaries in 1881. This undermined forms of organisational and anti-terrorist anarchism, which Malatesta and kindred organisational anarchists sought to promote in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion: Decline and Aftermath of the IWMA in Italy

Attempts on the life of the King by a deranged republican and series of mysterious bomb blasts in the late 1870s destroyed the national organisation even if local anarchist sub-cultures remained vibrant and sprang back to life in the

25 Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta* (Milan, (1969) 1974), pp. 91–104; 129–150.

26 Susanna di Corato Tachetti, *Anarchici, Governo, Magistrati in Italia 1876–1892* (Turin, 2009), pp. 17–156; Piero Brunello, *Storie di Anarchici e di Spie* (Rome, 2009); Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism*, pp. 71–126 and in general see, Giampietro Berti, *Errico Malatesta e il movimento anarchico italiano e internazionale, 1872–1932* (Milan, 2003).

27 Pier Carlo Masini, *Storia degli anarchici italiani*, pp. 166–168.

1880s and 1890s. Attempts to reconstitute the International at Chiasso in 1880 failed as the reformist Federation of Upper Italy could not be reconciled with the anarchists, while many anarchists embarked on diasporic odysseys that at certain times before 1914 meant that the centre of gravity for the Italian anarchists was in the wider world and not Italy itself.<sup>28</sup>

The reformist rivals to the Internationalists found bases in Palermo and Milan but they should not be considered Marx's allies. The politics of Enrico Bignami, Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani or Benoît Malon (a French exile from the Commune) advanced forms of libertarian gas and water socialism, which drew on a reading of 1871 and were not completely dismissive of Bakunin. In a series of compromises, with electoralism, Andrea Costa broke from his anarchist Internationalist comrades. Attending the "anarchist" international congress in Verviers and the "socialist" international congress at Ghent in September 1877, Costa remained within the ambit of the Italian IWMA but seemed to be lukewarm about its insurrectional strategy. In the ensuing years he created a series of party devices, which were anchored in the peculiar political culture of the Romagna (the Revolutionary Socialist Party of the Romagna) and reflected a policy that argued for contesting communal elections and parliamentary elections, by exploiting an expanding male electorate to exercise power in the cities and provinces. Thus Costa envisaged a minimum programme in collectivism advanced by electoral means but a maximum goal of anarcho-communism.<sup>29</sup>

There are several fields that still need further study. One might study the leadership and cadre formations of the IWMA through the lenses of romanticism, generational history and friendship circles, as had been done for the Risorgimento.<sup>30</sup> Further, we now possess the biographical data located in dictionaries to compose a statistical superstructure which might be able to contrast the popular classes with this elite, through comprehensive prosopographical studies. Finally, the popularity of transnational studies of the Risorgimento on the one hand and the post-1870s anarchist movement on the other, still need bridging studies which focus on the origins of Internationalist transnationalism in London, Cairo, Lugano and elsewhere, supplementing earlier works on the movement of Communard exiles to Italy, the exchanges

28 Davide Turcato, "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885–1915", *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), pp. 407–444.

29 Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism*, pp. 165–168.

30 For an earlier attempt at friendship circles see, Claudia Bassi Angelini, *Amore e anarchia. Francesco Pezzi e Luisa Minguzzi, due ravennati nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento* (Ravenna, 2004).

between German Marxists and the Italians, or comparisons between the International in Italy and Spain.<sup>31</sup>

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31 For a review of the recent work on the Risorgimento, see Maurizio Isabella, “Rethinking Italy’s Nation-Building 150 Years Afterwards: The New Risorgimento Historiography”, *Past and Present*, 217 (2012), p. 268. For some initial suggestions on filling the gap, see Maurizio Binaghi, *Addio Lugano bella: gli esuli politici nella Svizzera italiana di fine Ottocento: 1866–1895* (Locarno, 2002); Anthony Gorman, “Diverse in race, religion and nationality ... but united in aspirations of civil progress’: the anarchist movement in Egypt 1860–1940”, Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt (eds.), *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 3–13; Pietro Di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy. London and the Italian Anarchist Diaspora (1880–1917)* (Liverpool, 2013), pp. 1–59.

## 1871 in Spain

### *Transnational and Local History in the Formation of the FRE-IWMA*

*Albert Garcia-Balañà*

In May, 1871, during the final days of the Paris Commune, the Spanish parliament held the first great debate concerning the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), which had recently arrived in the country. The debate was opened when a representative from the Republican opposition, Baldomero Lostau, accused the civil governor of the province of Barcelona of “violating the constitutional articles that acknowledged citizens' rights to assemble and to organize”.<sup>1</sup> Lostau declared himself a member of IWMA's Spanish Regional Federation (*Federación Regional Española*, FRE), whose foundational congress had taken place in Barcelona (Lostau's electoral district) during the summer of 1870. In the parliamentary session of May 22, the Minister of Government (and Security), Práxedes M. Sagasta, strongman of the first administration organized under the new monarchy of Amadeo of Savoy, told Lostau that the tension that afflicted Barcelona had a lot to do with the presence of Communards connected with the International in the city. He insisted that “representatives of the International” had “crossed the frontiers and spread out across the Spanish territory”, and moreover, “where the disease has presented itself with more intensity is in the Catalan provinces, especially in Barcelona”.<sup>2</sup>

In the days that followed the defeat of the Paris Commune, the pro-government media published the names of three Frenchmen deported because of their supposed connection with Paris, London, or Geneva: Adolphe Royannez (a Blanquist who had been defeated in the Marseille Commune),

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- 1 *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes/Congreso* [hereafter, DSC/C], 1871 Legislature, Session of 22 May 1871, pp. 994–999, p. 994.
- 2 DSC/C, 1871 Legislature, Session of 22 May 1871, pp. 994–999 and 999–1.003. See also José Álvarez Junco, *La Comuna en España* (Madrid, 1971), pp. 39–49 and 85–99.

André Michel and Edmond Nodot.<sup>3</sup> According to Sagasta, these men had been deported following the Barcelona governor's recommendation because they held "credentials from the Paris Commune" and were the "main agents of the International". This was an endorsement of the governor's politics of vigilance, and a warning of the persecution that was soon to come. In early June, Sagasta granted all governors "unlimited powers in the repression of the International", and the FRE's Federal Council left Madrid and sought refuge in Lisbon.<sup>4</sup>

### 1871 in Spain and the Historiography of the IWMA's Spanish Regional Federation

Two different, albeit overlapping historiographical narratives consider 1871 as a key episode in the genesis of the IWMA's Spanish section (FRE), not only because of the actors and causes behind the formation of the FRE between 1869 and the congress of The Hague in 1872, but also of the long-term organizational and doctrinal consequences of those three foundational years. Both narratives are rooted in the late twentieth-century historiographical debate about the peculiarities of the liberal revolution in mid nineteenth-century Spain. A never-ending debate that, since then, has shed new light on the subject and especially on the Spanish *Sexenio Democrático* (or *Revolucionario*) between 1868 and 1874. These were years of unrest: a military coup and a civil revolution; a change of dynasty – the House of Savoy replaced the House of Bourbon in the short term –; a short-lived Republic; a Carlist civil war in the Peninsula and a very different civil war in Cuba. It is important here to have in mind what Jesús Millán and María C. Romeo have pointed out about the social and political nature of the two revolutionary blocks that clashed in Spain after 1868. "On one side stood the Progressives ('*Progresistas*') who favoured improving conditions for the majority through reforms from above, which were to be carried out under the protective guidance of the virtuous 'middle classes'; on the other – Millán and Romeo continue – stood those associated with Spain's Democratic-Republican political culture, which insisted on instituting national sovereignty in order to rebuild the state 'from below' via local power groups backed by the national militia. [...] Democratic sovereignty, the Progressives believed, was to be evoked as a legitimizing principle only as a last resort, and

3 *La Iberia* (Madrid), 24 May 1871, p. 2; 23 May 1871, p. 1.

4 Casimiro Martí, *Orígenes del Anarquismo en Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1959), pp. 107–108 (n.54); Josep Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España (1864–1881)* (Barcelona, 2000 [1977]), pp. 140–141.

civil rights could be regulated according to the needs of the social order. On the Republican hand, the dogma of national sovereignty encouraged an interpretation of ‘the liberal nation’ as an entity capable of acting immediately and locally in order to ensure that its demands were met.”<sup>5</sup>

In the historiographical narrative launched by Max Nettlau, the government’s repression against the newborn FRE-IWMA generated by the Commune’s impact laid the ground for the definitive hold of Bakuninism and its clandestine Alliance for a Socialist Democracy across the country. Thus, what was started by “Bakuninist” Giuseppe Fanelli’s visit to Madrid and Barcelona in 1869 and the intensified contacts with Geneva (as opposed to London) of the small Barcelonan nucleus during 1870, would be completed with the political atmosphere of 1871, which propitiated the leadership of the few highly ideological groups that were sheltered by key international connections, and which were willing and prepared for covert action. The FRE Federal Council’s temporary exile in Lisbon of June 1871, would in fact trigger the historical sequence that would end in the crystallization of a revolutionary syndicalism whose insurrectional as opposed to institutional horizon made it “anti-political”. This sequence would soon be strengthened by the formal banning of the FRE-IWMA in the 1871–72 winter and the failed “Cantonalist” uprisings in the brief First Republic of 1873.<sup>6</sup> For historian Clara E. Lida, “the months between the end of the Commune and the uprising of Alcoy [in July 1873] show that the FRE consciously and carefully developed a strategy that allowed it to veer towards clandestine operations [...] following the model designed by the Bakuninist Alliance”.<sup>7</sup>

This strategy to shield a vanguard that operated in the shadows favored, for instance, the election of FRE delegates to the IWMA’s September 1872 congress in The Hague who were faithful to Bakunin and his Alliance, even though the “political” candidates with powerful local roots, such as aforementioned Baldomero Lostau, obtained practically the same number of votes (albeit in less circumscriptions, and these “rigged” according to the latter). The Spanish

5 Jesús Millán and María C. Romeo, “Was the liberal revolution important to modern Spain? Political cultures and citizenship in Spanish history”, *Social History*, 29/3 (August 2004), pp. 284–300, 294–295 (quotation).

6 Max Nettlau, *Miguel Bakunin, la Internacional y la Alianza en España (1868–1873)* (Buenos Aires, 1928), p. 63; Clara E. Lida, *Antecedentes y desarrollo del movimiento obrero español (1835–1888): textos y documentos* (Madrid, 1973), pp. 20–34.

7 Clara E. Lida, “Hacia la clandestinidad anarquista. De la Comuna de París a Alcoy, 1871–1874”, *Historia Social*, 46 (2003), pp. 49–64, 57 (quotation); Clara E. Lida, “La Comuna de París y sus repercusiones: el caso español”, in Guillermo Palacios and Erika Pani (eds.), *El poder y la sangre: guerra, estado y nación en la década de 1860* (México D.F., 2014), pp. 183–195, 192–195.

section's four Bakuninist delegates moved rapidly from The Hague to Saint-Imier (Switzerland), where an extraordinary congress that supported Bakunin's "anti-authoritarian" authority repudiated the "political" path set by Marx and London, thus participating in the schism within the IWMA. This move was itself repudiated by local chapters, particularly from Catalonia.<sup>8</sup> This early strategy of "secret reorganization" (1871–73), which underpinned the Anarchist and Bakuninist leadership at the heart of the FRE-IWMA, contributed to lay the foundation for future peasant insurrectionism, fed by the dilated persecution of the 1874–81 period in a framework of growing agrarian crisis.<sup>9</sup> In brief: transnational networks centered on the Geneva and French-Swiss IWMA and government intransigence fed off each other since the Communard spring and during the following eventful year, partially fulfilling *a posteriori* the self-interested diagnosis made by Minister Sagasta in parliament on May 1871.

In the historiographical narrative that focuses on Spain's agitated political life after the fall of the Bourbons in 1868, however, a fundamental actor in 1871 – and therefore, in the IWMA's advent – was interclass and federalist republicanism, embodied in the Federal Democratic Republican Party (*Partido Republicano Democrático Federal*, PRDF). Notwithstanding and in fact partly because of its own internal divisions, the PRDF became the principal opposition and democratizing force in the interior of the new parliamentary monarchy after the conflictive constitutional debates of 1869 were resolved with the contested election in 1870 of a new King in the person of Prince Amadeo of Savoy. The democratic and federal legitimacy of French Communard municipalism became an emblematic issue for the relevant sectors of Spanish Federal Republicanism in the months between the summers of 1870 and 1871. In his classic book on the Commune in Spain, José Álvarez Junco rescued the Federal defense of Communard democratic radicalism (as opposed to the more subdued social radicalism), especially that of the ideological brains of the party, Catalan Francesc Pi i Margall.<sup>10</sup> The pro-Communard literature published in Barcelona in 1871 constitutes another example of this, for the city was the main bastion of Federal Republicanism.<sup>11</sup> Historian Marie-Angèle Orobon sees

8 Antonio López Estudillo, "El anarquismo español decimonónico", *Ayer*, 45 (2002), pp. 73–104, 89–90 (and n.27); Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo*, pp. 165–169.

9 Lida, "Hacia la clandestinidad", p. 62.

10 Álvarez Junco, *La Comuna en España*, pp. 3–5 and 125–154.

11 *Proceso de la Commune de París: relación completa y detallada de todas las causas que se están siguiendo en el consejo de guerra instalado en Versalles ...* (Barcelona, 1871); *Fusilamientos en Francia en el campo de Satory del sargento Bougeois y los ciudadanos Ferre y Rossell, miembros de la Commune de París ...* (Barcelona, 1871); "Celebridades de la Commune de París", in *La Campana de Gràcia* (Barcelona), 4 June 1871.

evidence of the centrality of “the people” (*el Pueblo*) in the Federal mythical rhetoric on the Commune. This was a key concept in the language of the Spanish Democratic and Republican tradition, a “people” that incorporated its first classist nuances – in the sense of being anti-bourgeoisie – quite slowly and after much contestation.<sup>12</sup>

This second narrative has encouraged a reconsideration of 1871 by highlighting the role of Federal Republicanism in the FRE’s early expansion, thus qualifying the importance of the early Bakuninist groups and their continental networks. In the words of Antonio López Estudillo, “the Commune contributed to the radicalization of broad segments of Federalism, a good part of which would take the International as a referent, entering its ranks without abandoning their political stance”. Such a thesis seems to be validated by chronology and numbers: the 2,000 plus members of FRE in early 1871 (“four fifths from the Barcelona federation”) had become 10,000 in April of 1872, despite the repression unleashed against leaders connected with Geneva, the intermittent legal prohibition, and the gestation of the traumatic schism between the Bakuninist majority and the Marxist minority (encouraged by Lafargue in Madrid) in the reduced Federal Council of the Spanish federation.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter engages both narratives as the starting point of a brief social history of the year 1871 in urban Spain that reevaluates the weight of the transnational (and national) factors – which have so far received most of the attention – in light of an episode of apparently a local scale. This episode, however, will prove to be anything but merely local, and its analysis is doubly revealing. Its local character is belied first by the significance of the locale where it happened – Barcelona in the spring of 1871, the province which held four out of every five members subscribed to the burgeoning FRE-IWMA. And second, because it motivated the parliamentary tussle between Lostau and Sagasta and, I argue, the repression unleashed against the organization’s first Federal Council. Indeed, my argument is that the first repressive wave used the Commune and its global reach in a long-term internal battle that had begun before 1869, and which is at the heart of the genesis of the FRE. That is, it was not the influence of the Commune and the birth of the FRE what led

12 Marie-Angèle Orobon, “Años 1870 y 1871 en Francia y en España: a vueltas con el Pueblo”, *Historia Contemporánea*, 28 (2004), pp. 147–156, 154–156; Marie-Angèle Orobon, *La Commune de Paris en Espagne: de la presse au roman populaire* (Ph.D., Université Paris III, 1995).

13 López Estudillo, “El anarquismo español”, pp. 86–89 (also source of quotation). See also Pere Gabriel, “Visibilitats polítiques i vertebració social del món obrer i popular de Barcelona, 1868–1874”, *Barcelona Quaderns d’Història*, 15 (2009), pp. 53–77, 75.



to repression. And this episode is doubly revealing because trade unionism, organized around “classes” as defined by trades, and plebeian and municipalist republicanism, converged in it, as they had already done much before 1870.<sup>14</sup>

But this link was obscured by the anti-IWMA propaganda. The cotton sector unions were the engine of the strike that alarmed the Barcelona (and Madrid) elites during the days of the Commune; the FRE would take root on the groundwork laid by this mobilization and its globalized repression. Simultaneously, that is, during the same days in March of 1871, the Federal Democratic Republican Party (PRDF) obtained in Barcelona its major (and almost only) electoral triumph in post-1868 Spain. It constituted an evident challenge to the new monarchical government, not only because of the federalist and municipalist programs supported by the party, but because of its popular and working-class tone. The Commune also served to mask the repression against the local Federalist movement, as the government invoked its complicity with the French Communards. It was these concrete experiences of workers’ protest and plebeian democracy that rendered meaningful the words and images that came from Paris and Geneva.

### Barcelona, Spring of 1871: Labor Strike and Trade Unions

Minister Sagasta began his parliamentary address on May 1871 by reading a telegram written “at two thirty this afternoon”, in which the governor of

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14 I borrow the adjective “plebeian” from E.P. Thompson’s well-known works on eighteenth-century England (see, for example, his “Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?” *Social History*, 3/2 (May 1978)). And I have to stress two of Thompson’s motives for using it when I move “plebeian” to the mid nineteenth-century Spanish context. First, the very dynamic coexistence of “vertical identities” (such as “class” meaning “trade”) and newborn “horizontal identities” (such as “the working classes”) in mid nineteenth-century urban Spain, mainly in industrial Catalonia. The contingent overlapping of both fed the leading role of very open collective subjects, such as “*el Pueblo*” (“the People”), in the making of the radical languages of the time (see Albert Garcia Balaña, “El verdadero productor: lenguaje y experiencia en la formación de las culturas políticas obreras”, in María C. Romeo and María Sierra (eds.), *Las culturas políticas de la España liberal, 1833–1874* (Madrid [etc.], 2014), pp. 217–251). And second, the strong cultural dimension of manual workers approach to the nascent Democratic-Republican political culture in mid nineteenth-century Spain. The very episodic existence of formal mechanisms of wide political inclusion in 1833–1868 Spain, made social experiences of cultural dissent – ranging from work practices to community and leisure networks – a key realm for “the People’s protest” before 1868.

Barcelona, Bernardo Iglesias, declared that he had “the satisfaction of writing to Y[our] E[xcellency] from the great factory of the Batlló Brothers, which today has opened its doors to work after three months of shutdown ...” In his speech, Sagasta proceeded to justify Iglesias’ recommended deportation of three French Communards, who were supposedly the “principal agitators of the International” and who (also supposedly) had contributed to the strike that had paralyzed the Batlló factory in Barcelona precisely during the seventy days of the Paris Commune, and even before.<sup>15</sup> Governor Iglesias had also ordered the detention of Gaspar Sentiñón, a surgeon who had moved recently to Barcelona from Vienna, and who had been one of the Spanish delegates to the Basle Congress in 1869, and who, moreover, was close to Bakunin. Sentiñón and the workers’ newspaper that he had recently begun editing in Barcelona, *La Federación*, were accused of directing the strike as well as distributing across the city the *Manifiesto de Algunos Partidarios de la Commune a los Poderosos de la Tierra* (Manifesto of Some Supporters of the Commune to the Powerful of the Earth).<sup>16</sup> The government blamed the Internationalist actors and networks, whose main nodes were far from Barcelona (and Spain), for the local strike. And the pro-government press in Madrid represented the forceful end of the strike as part of a transnational landscape of the defeat of the Commune.<sup>17</sup>

The notable impact of the Batlló factory strike in Barcelona daily life and its representation as something triggered by Internationalist and international factors is well established in the documentary record. This is especially true of documents produced after the clashes between tens of strikers and policemen during the last days of March, during which one of the overseers of the cotton factory was, according to the pro-government press, mortally wounded.<sup>18</sup> End of March: that means a few days after the *Communard* proclamation in Paris. For one of the Barcelona informants of monarchical Progressive Catalan Víctor Balaguer, a member of Sagasta’s government and soon to be the Minister of Overseas, “the Batlló Factory affair, the presence of the International, which is sure to bring much vexation and cause many tears to fall, has completed the picture for the conservatives to distance themselves from

15 DSC/C, 1871 Legislature, Session of 22 May 1871, pp. 999–1.000 and 1.002–1.003; see also *La Iberia* (Madrid), 24 May 1871, p. 2.

16 Martí, *Orígenes del Anarquismo*, p. 83 (n.39). Sentiñón and the birth of the Barcelona Bakuninist group in 1869–70: Gabriel, “Visibilitats polítiques”, pp. 73–74.

17 *La Iberia* (Madrid), 7 June 1871, p. 2.

18 *La Iberia* (Madrid), 28 March 1871, p. 1; *La Esperanza* (Madrid), 4 April 1871, p. 1; *La Iberia* (Madrid), 17 May 1871, p. 1.

the government [of King Amadeo I].<sup>19</sup> On March 30th, the Italian consul in Barcelona wrote to Rome that “in the unrest provoked at the Batlló Factory one could see the socialist propaganda of the International”.<sup>20</sup> Even recently arrived Sentiñón shared this opinion, in his case, borne out of optimism, as a letter that he sent to Nikolay Zhukovsky on April revealed. According to Nettleau, Sentiñón spoke of “the fear of the bourgeoisie that the Commune would have a repercussion in Spain, and the fact that the governor of Barcelona had been replaced by another [Bernardo Iglesias] more willing to use force to suppress the strikes”.<sup>21</sup>

Two factors seem to explain at first sight the patrician perception that external influences were decisive in the Batlló strike, inseparable from the IWMA-Commune couple. First, the emblematic character of the Batlló factory. The factory began operations in 1870 as the largest textile factory in Spain, and the largest private building in a Barcelona that was expanding beyond the recently torn down city walls. Built to employ more than 1,500 workers in a unique block in the Barcelona Enlargement (“unique” in the sense that it joined four of the conventional blocks designed by Ildefons Cerdà, Barcelona’s very own Haussmann), its more than 50,000 spindles and more than 1,300 mechanical looms were unmatched in the Spanish industry of the time.<sup>22</sup> The factory’s physical distance from old Barcelona and *El Raval*, the city’s traditional cotton district, was in fact part of its character as a new industrial model, all of which aroused suspicion and wariness among the organized labor of the cotton sector.

And second, the fact that it was precisely during the strike – and the first days of the Commune – in March 1871, that the union that had called for the strike at the end of February, the cotton trade federation *Tres Clases de Vapor* (Three Steam Classes), joined the IWMA (although many of its local sections joined later, or never joined at all).<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that the FRE had some 2,000 subscribed members in early 1871, while the *Tres Clases de Vapor* (or *Unión de Hiladores, Tejedores Mecánicos y Jornaleros* – spinners, mechanical weavers and journeymen) had 9,000 members in December 1870, all of them residents in the province of Barcelona.<sup>24</sup> Arrested in May of 1871, Gaspar Sentiñón was

19 Quoted in Albert Garcia Balaña, *La fabricació de la fàbrica. Treball i política a la Catalunya cotonera (1784–1874)* (Barcelona, 2004), pp. 516–517 (n.14).

20 Quoted in Martí, *Orígenes del Anarquismo*, p. 107 (n.53).

21 Nettleau, *Miguel Bakunin, la Internacional y la Alianza*, p. 63.

22 Garcia Balaña, *La fabricació de la fàbrica*, p. 516; Carles Enrech, *Indústria i ofici. Conflicte social i jerarquies obreres en la Catalunya tèxtil (1881–1923)* (Bellaterra, 2005), pp. 36–37.

23 According to *La Federación* (Barcelona), 26 March 1871, p. 2; Miguel Izard, *Industrialización y obrerismo: las Tres Clases de Vapor, 1869–1913* (Barcelona, 1973), pp. 114–115.

24 López Estudillo, “El anarquismo español”, p. 86; Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo*, p. 183.

not going to suffer alone in the military castle of Montjuïc: he was soon joined by Climent Bové, “director” of the *Tres Clases de Vapor*, who was also detained by Governor Iglesias in the last days of the Commune.<sup>25</sup> However, Bové’s public life as the union leader of the local cotton spinner had started before the consolidation of the Barcelona Bakuninist group.

Bové had already led a general cotton strike in Barcelona, in 1869, a few months after the fall of the Bourbon monarchy. The issues behind that strike were a prelude to the more intense strike at Batlló two years later. In 1871 the workers were opposed to the reduction of the piecework tariffs caused by the introduction of more productive self-acting mules that had a greater number of spindles. They also condemned the attempts to hire women for textile jobs that were traditionally masculine, such as operating the spinning mules and mechanical looms, a feminization that was inseparable from the capitalist transformation of the relationship between workload and workers’ remuneration.<sup>26</sup> Spinning teams consisted of a “minder” (“*hilador*”), who manned the machine itself, and two or three “piecers” (“*ayudantes anudadores*”) who assisted the operation. According to the cotton union, if Batlló accepted the piecework tariff that Bové offered on 1st March 1871, “there would be no other manufacturer of Barcelona willing to pay less than the Batlló Brothers”. Indeed, Batlló’s self-acting mules could spin 1,000 spindles or more per machine, twice as many as the standard in the Catalan textile industry of the period, which led Bové to deduce that “[Batlló] could very well pay higher prices for labor and still make more profits”.<sup>27</sup> Despite their capacity to pay more than the smaller factories, Batlló paid its employees less. And the reason had also to do with the fact that, according to a contemporary newspaper, in February of 1871, only about fifty of the 600 to 700 workers at Batlló were male.<sup>28</sup> From the very first day, piecework teams had been partially feminized. Bové and the *Tres Clases* had already condemned the new labor model in the spring of 1870, when the factory opened its doors, lamenting the practical absence of male weavers and asking “workers from outside not to move to Las Corts” [the new neighborhood where the factory was located].<sup>29</sup>

25 *La Federación* (Barcelona), 28 May 1871, p. 3 (“*Nuestro compañero Clemente Bobé continúa preso ...*”).

26 On the 1869 strike see Albert Garcia Balañà, “Ya no existe Partido Progresista en Barcelona’ Experiencia social y protesta obrera en la insurrección republicana de 1869”, *Hispania Revista Española de Historia*, 230 (2008), pp. 735–760, 742–756.

27 *La Federación* (Barcelona), 5 March 1871, pp. 2–3.

28 *La Federación* (Barcelona), 26 February 1871, pp. 2–3.

29 *La Federación* (Barcelona), 29 May 1870, p. 2; 5 June 1870, pp. 2–3; also *La Federación. Actas del Congreso Obrero* (Barcelona), 23 June 1870, p. 7 (Climent Bové’s speech).

Both trade-unionist complaints – against the reduction in the remuneration per output and against the substitution of men by women in the spinning and weaving teams – had been around the Catalan cotton industry since at least the second half of the 1850s. In the foundational congress of the FRE-IWMA in 1870, Climent Bové had reminded participants of the decisive leadership of the spinners' union (*Sociedad de Hiladores*) in the organization of Spain's first general strike, which took place in the summer of 1855, and also of the repression that had befallen the said union following the strike.<sup>30</sup> From the 1860s on, spinners' reluctance to mind more spinning mules was a constant source of tension in the Catalan textile industry. Textile mill spinners' defense of the piece rate system, by which their teams were paid a set price for each pound of thread that they produced, was the tip of the iceberg of mill labor culture. Insofar as minders recruited, organized and benefited from the labor of their piecers, they were sort of "internal subcontractors" as William Lazonick showed for Lancashire cotton spinning.<sup>31</sup> William M. Reddy found that spinners in Rouen, 1848, described themselves to the mill owner as "thread salesmen".<sup>32</sup> For "minders", maintaining the "traditional" correlation between workload and remuneration was essential, because increases in productivity and income obtained by decreasing their organizational capacity and autonomy, and intensifying their own manual labor, reduced their authority inside and outside the factory.<sup>33</sup> The hiring of women compounded the devaluation of their trade and further altered gender relations in the textile industry. The roots of this culture, in Catalonia as well as in Lancashire, stretched back into a world of small shops and mills that did not yet incorporate steam-power, an early and atomized, extended-family, industry. The first generation of male spinners in Catalonia's mechanized cotton mills came from this cottage industry.<sup>34</sup>

In brief: textile mill labor culture was characterized by interconnected elements of autonomy and hierarchy that were independent from – and would eventually become opposed to – the efficiency of capital. A trade culture that,

30 *La Federación. Actas del Congreso Obrero* (Barcelona), 26 June 1870, p. 10; quoted in Garcia Balañà, *La fabricació de la fàbrica*, p. 513.

31 William Lazonick, *Competitive Advantage on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge Mass., 1990), pp. 78–107.

32 William M. Reddy, *The rise of market culture. The textile trade and French society, 1750–1900* (Cambridge UK, and Paris, 1984), pp. 204–218.

33 My argument and evidences for cotton spinning in Catalonia: Garcia Balañà, *La fabricació de la fàbrica*, pp. 24–31 for the comparative approach based on Lazonick's and Reddy's works; Garcia Balañà, "Ya no existe Partido Progresista en Barcelona", pp. 751–756; Garcia Balañà, "El verdadero productor": lenguaje y experiencia", pp. 229–232.

34 Garcia Balañà, *La fabricació de la fàbrica*, pp. 377–451.

having grown in the decades of 1835–1855, was very much alive in Barcelona when the IWMA arrived. During the 1869 strike, mill owners accused Bové and his unionized spinners of wanting to “fix the number of operators that each machine required and intervene in the employment of these operators”, as well as of meddling “in the organization of the mills and their personnel”, no less.<sup>35</sup>

### Barcelona, Spring of 1871: Federal Republicanism and Plebeian Democracy

In his parliamentary response of May 22, Minister Sagasta alerted Republican representative Lostau against “that cloud of foreigners who come [...] under orders of what has become the Paris Commune”, adding that “there is no doubt that it is [the Paris Commune] in touch with others, which, despite going by a different name, are well-known to everyone”. But what “other” Communes or municipal powers was Sagasta alluding to? His veiled accusations were leveled against one of the few voices that represented workers in the Spanish parliament, Federal Republican Baldomero Lostau from Catalonia, who had declared in the same session some minutes earlier: “I am a member of the IWMA”.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, the *Diputació Provincial de Barcelona* was the highest public institution governed by the Federal Democratic Republican Party (PRDF) since the Anti-Bourbon revolution of 1868. PRDF candidates had won a (simple) majority in the *Diputació* – which gathered municipalities and the elected provincial government – in the March 1871 elections, the first held by universal male suffrage. And the tensions between the *Diputació* and the monarchical government in Madrid had not ceased since, what with the double shadow cast by the strike and workers’ mobilization in Barcelona and the Paris Commune. During the repression unleashed against the *Tres Clases* in Barcelona between the 19 and 27 of May, which coincided exactly with final attack of Versailles against the Commune, the Spanish government carried out the military occupation of the *Palacio de la Diputació*, harassing its Republican officials, and orchestrating the collective destitution and legal proceedings against almost all of them.<sup>37</sup>

35 Quoted in Garcia Balañà, “Ya no existe Partido Progresista en Barcelona”, p. 748.

36 DSC/C, 1871 Legislature, Session of 22 May 1871, pp. 999 and 1.002.

37 A chronicle of the conflict between the Republican *Diputació* and the Serrano-Sagasta government in Borja de Riquer, “La Diputació revolucionària: 1868–1874”, in Borja de Riquer (ed.), *Història de la Diputació de Barcelona*, 3 vols (Barcelona, 1987), I, pp. 214–217.

In other words: in the spring of 1871, the Spanish government used the Commune's image as a plebeian insurrection that was finally (and happily) defeated to legitimize its simultaneous political and police offensive against trade unions and Barcelona's democratic and popular Republicanism. The presence of the IWMA and its Internationalist networks in Communard Paris and post-1868 Barcelona provided the best alibi for justifying repression. But the real objective of the government was to discredit and weaken the link between trade unionism and democratic republicanism, formed well before 1869, even though the latter had very little to do with the anti-political syndicalism of the early Bakuninist nucleus in Barcelona. It was in fact the combination of the radicalization of the Batlló strike and the republican electoral victory in Barcelona that sounded the alarm in the halls of power and pro-government circles (certainly, compounded by Paris as a potential mirror to avoid). Early in April, the monarchical press let its imagination run, "expecting great disturbances from the Barcelona republicans",<sup>38</sup> and thus contributing to the sense that the new governor Iglesias had to forcefully end all sources of disorder. This new governor arrived in the city a few days after the Republican victory, with the support of the local elites that were aligned with Amadeo's monarchy, and who, in the epistolary words of one of its members, "had always thought that once the King was sitting at the throne, there would be no more tolerance for all these meetings and clubs and centers and directories and Republicans, nor for threatening proclamations in the street corners and all this antisocial preaching".<sup>39</sup> That such things were still happening explained the vigor of the labor strike and the massive popular vote for the Republicans, two sides of the same coin according to the same source. It also explained, in the words of a letter received by Víctor Balaguer in Madrid, how "a *Diputación* such as that of Barcelona is composed of the worst of society and presided by a two-bit singer ("*cantador de café*")".<sup>40</sup>

The links between manual workers and political republicanism were varied and very visible in Barcelona and outside it. PRDF candidates won by a landslide in the main Catalan cities in the March elections. Thanks to the new electoral law born from the 1869 Constitution, the electorate included all men aged over 25 – who in the province of Barcelona at that time were more than 180,000 individuals – of whom almost 70,000 voted. Republicans won a clear victory

38 *La Iberia* (Madrid), 11 April 1871, p. 3; *La Flaca* (Barcelona), 2 April 1871, p. 322.

39 Unsigned letter to Víctor Balaguer, Barcelona June 1871, Biblioteca Museu Balaguer (Vilanova i la Geltrú, Barcelona) [hereafter BMB], Letters to Víctor Balaguer (1871).

40 Unsigned letter to Víctor Balaguer, Barcelona June 1871, BMB, Letters to Víctor Balaguer (1871).

in the city, taking 9 of its 14 districts.<sup>41</sup> Starting early in April, the *Diputación Provincial* was to be presided by Josep A. Clavé, a long-time republican who had worked as a lathe operator years earlier, and who was now the “two-bit singer” that led “the worst of society”, according to the alarmed monarchist witness. Clavé’s enormously popular reputation indeed came from his condition as “artist-worker”, for since the 1840s he had been founding and promoting workers’ choirs across Catalonia (“*Cors de Clavé*”), and he had been the first in Spain to adapt *La Marseillaise*. Repeatedly arrested and harassed by the monarchical governments, Clavé conceived his choirs as spaces of worker sociability and education at the service of an inter-class politics with plebeian protagonists (like himself).<sup>42</sup> During the first days of the 1868 Revolution, Clavé had exhorted the trade unions of Barcelona to publicly support the infant PRDF, and to reject all anti-political arguments.<sup>43</sup> It is therefore not strange, then, that the *Diputación* presided by Clavé publicly condemned Governor Iglesias in its May 13th session of “abuse of power [for] persecuting worker societies”.<sup>44</sup> The standoff between a new local power that was produced by the universalization of the suffrage and the mobilization of municipalist federalism, and the reconstituted central power, had begun. And it was inseparable from the workers’ protest.

In early May, the central government’s pressure on the republican *Diputación*, which included the stationing of troops in *Diputación* buildings,<sup>45</sup> seemed to bring the Barcelona experience closer to that of Paris (although the Spanish government never lost control of the situation). The numerous instances of appropriation of the Commune on the part of Spanish Federal Republicanism (including those of the PRDF’s members who had joined IWMA, such as Lostau) must be read in light of this episode of doubly plebeian, syndicalist, and democratic republican affirmation, and of its swift repression. The language of Federalist ideologue Francesc Pi i Margall when he celebrated the “beautiful spectacle” of “a city [Paris] that has for centuries been the queen and lady of France, advocating and fighting for the autonomy of all of the Republic’s provinces and peoples” remits us to that of Barcelona’s republican

41 Riquer, “La Diputació revolucionària”, pp. 214–215.

42 See Albert Garcia Balañà, “Ordre industrial i transformació cultural a la Catalunya de mitjan segle XIX: a propòsit de Josep A. Clavé i l’associacionisme coral”, *Recerques*, 33 (1996), pp. 103–134.

43 *La Vanguardia. Periódico Republicano Federalista* (Barcelona), 18 December 1868, pp. 2–3.

44 Arxiu Històric de la Diputació de Barcelona [hereafter AHDB], Minutes: Session of 13 May 1871; and *Legajo* 1.594.

45 Riquer, “La Diputació revolucionària”, pp. 215–216.



representatives' condemnation of the obstructionism and harassment suffered at the hands of Governor Iglesias, "a representative of central power".<sup>46</sup> And also to that of the defense of Communist Gustave Courbet's pictorial realism in the Republican press, which contested the critiques of the monarchical and conservative *Diario de Barcelona* that had called Courbet's "stonecutter", "ugly, ignoble and dirty", and his portrait of Proudhon "repugnant". This debate had a lot to do with local politics, no less than with transnational circulation of social aesthetics.<sup>47</sup>

Equally, FRE-IWMA's prominence and visibility in 1871, stimulated by its leaders with international connections, but also by the Spanish government, should not cloud our historiographical judgment and lead us away from actually tracing the concrete experiences that encouraged local actors (unionized workers and plebeian republican militants) to identify with the Communards and their Internationalist vindications. When we do, we find that despite its indisputable global resonance, the myth of a "people" capable of insurrection in Barcelona was not born from the words of Bakunin, or the actions in Paris, but from a specifically Spanish nineteenth-century historical process and actor.

I am referring to the *Milicia Nacional* (National Militia), a sort of *Garde Nationale* that, during most periods of its intermittent existence since the 1830s was densely plebeian, and which had seen its last action in the fall of 1869 in Barcelona. Its units, which were at that time composed of workers and commanded by Republican militants or sympathizers, had been defeated and disarmed by the army after two days of street combat. This episode in which the civil militias, renamed *Voluntarios de la Libertad* (Volunteers for Liberty), were crushed by the military, replicated similar situations lived in the city in 1842–43 and 1855–56. What is most relevant here is that the National Militia had crystallized as a space of confluence for trade unionism and political republicanism, as an experience of politicization of urban workers and social hybridization of a republicanism that had clearly mesocratic roots. In 1855–56, for instance, the National Militia of Barcelona had been purged of its Democratic Republican leadership and its plebeian battalions after having disobeyed an order from Catalonia's military governor to use force to break the first general strike, which had been called by workers to defend the right to unionize.<sup>48</sup> The 1869

46 Pi i Margall quotation in Álvarez Junco, *La Comuna en España*, pp. 136–139; *Diputación* claims against Iglesias in AHDB, *Legajo* 1.594.

47 *La Campana de Gràcia* (Barcelona), 11 June 1871, pp. 1–2 ("Courbet"); *Diario de Barcelona*, 21 May 1871, pp. 5.374–5.376; details in Reyero, "La crítica de Courbet en España", notes 22 and 30–31.

48 García Balaña, "El verdadero productor": lenguaje y experiencia", pp. 245–248.

military attack against the Militia of the workers' district of Raval had been produced in the midst of the cotton strike led by Climent Bové. Their defeat preceded that of the strikers (many of whom were the same men), and led to the exile of many Republican leaders – such as Clavé himself – who were accused of instigating a “republican insurrection” for the most part fabricated by the government.<sup>49</sup>

The dirges for the fate of the Commune *Garde Nationale* in the spring of 1871 in Barcelona were thus intimately tied to something much closer and local than to a general sense of transnational solidarity.<sup>50</sup> They were tied to the brief but influential autochthonous experiences of plebeian-supported Republican power. Experiences of worker inclusion in institutions like the National Militia, the trials of mixed labor juries, the revolutionary municipalities of 1869, or the very *Diputación* of 1871 (which was receptive to workers' demands in the labor strike).<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the debates that divided Federal Republicanism in 1871 – and through it, the burgeoning FRE-IWMA – regarding how to respond to the pressures of the central government, regarding the pros and cons of insurrectionary methods, should not be read only in relation to the Commune and the rupture between Marx and Bakunin. They must be read, also, as the culmination in the sequence of political and military defeats of a local alliance between republicanism and trade unions whose origin dated back to the 1850s. This sequence of defeats, as a shared experience, contributed to the alliance itself, while fabricating the conditions for the dissent and divisions that would assail it. Josep A. Clavé, the “two-bit singer” who presided the new Republican *Diputación* and had already renounced the politics of popular insurrection, strongly rejected them as means to confront the repression and judicial proceedings of May and June of 1871. He had paid with prison or exile the defeats of the 1856, 1866 and 1869 militia uprisings, and his last exile had taken him to Marseille and Lyon in 1870, where he met the circles who would be leading the Communes starting that summer through April of 1871, and whose collapse he no doubt read in the light of his long and decisive Spanish experience.<sup>52</sup>

49 Garcia Balaña, “Ya no existe Partido Progresista en Barcelona”, pp. 740–747.

50 *La Campana de Gràcia* (Barcelona), 4 June 1871, p. 2 (“*La Milícia de París ...*”); 11 June 1871, pp. 2–4 (“*L'ordre regna en Varsòvia*”).

51 Cotton workers and Republican municipalities in 1869: Albert Garcia Balaña, “Significados de República. Insurrecciones federales, redes milicianas y conflictos laborales en la Cataluña de 1869”, *Ayer*, 71 (2008), pp. 213–243, 218–224.

52 Josep A. Clavé to Isabel and Aurea, Lyon 11 January 1870, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona), Josep A. Clavé Papers, ANCI-700-T-64.

## Conclusions

Three conclusions derived from the double episode of labor strike and Federal Republicanism's show of force in Barcelona in the spring of 1871 suggest ways of revisiting the historiographical approaches to the early years of the IWMA in Spain.

First, that the existence and strength of trade unionism and the continued defense of trades' political and moral economy, since at least mid-century in industrialized Catalonia, provided the main local network through which the IWMA entered Spain between 1870 and 1872. Government repression, which hid its very local or regional motives in transnational threats, favored the identification (and integration, in many cases) of the former with the latter. During the foundational congress of the FRE-IWMA, held in Barcelona in 1870, Bakuninist Francisco Mora reproached the majority of the delegates, who represented trade associations, for "talking here of [there] classes or trades, abstracting from the working class in general; this is bad, because we will never think internationally [if we think] like this".<sup>53</sup> In its 1869 edition, the *Dictionary of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española* (still) defined "class" as "order or number of people of the same degree, quality, or trade".<sup>54</sup>

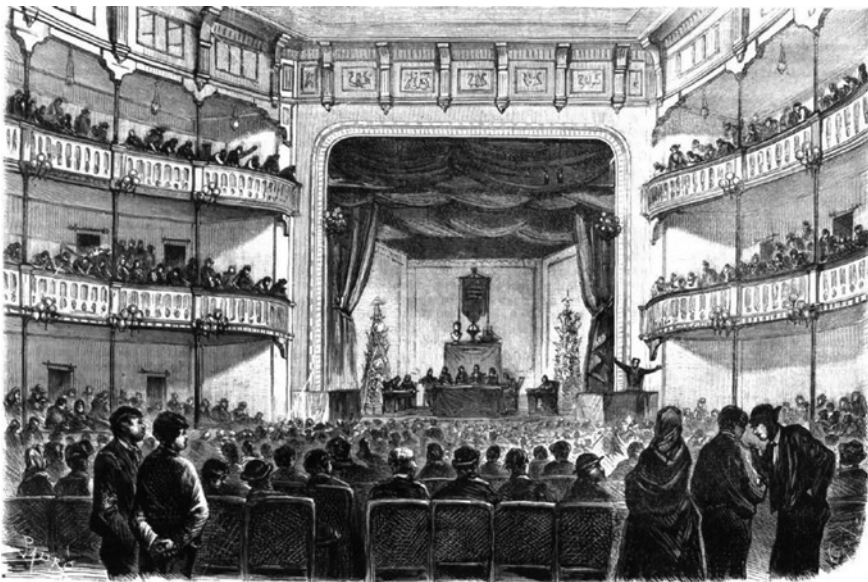
Second, that it was precisely through its long-term imbrication with trade unionism that Spanish Federal Republicanism "internationalized" in 1870–72, integrating its own discussions (and experiences) of plebeian politics and popular insurrection with those that came from Paris, London, and Geneva. Various authors have addressed the swift division between "political" and "anti-political" circles at the heart of the FRE-IWMA, but very few have ventured to look at the local factors and reasons behind such division, as if it could be entirely attributed to the various circles' (haphazard) embrace of Bakunin's or Marx's positions. The synchrony between a defiant trade unionism that (with its own means) was experimenting with trade federations, and a local republican power based on its potential to mobilize workers, and the simultaneous repression of both during the Commune spring, reveals the significance and depth of the local experiences on which the global debates were projected. In the summer of 1873, despite nearly two years of official prohibition and Bakuninist leadership, the link between cotton trade unionism and political Republicanism was still very much alive in Barcelona. Then, during the critical days of the First Spanish Republic, the direction of the union *Tres Clases de Vapor* ignored the call to join the "Cantonal" insurrection against the central

53 Quoted in Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo*, pp. 98–99.

54 García Balaña, "El verdadero productor": lenguaje y experiencia", p. 223.

Republican government issued by Bakuninists, “*intransigentes*” (intransigent Federalists) and “some French exiles”.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the crisis of 1871 offers new evidence on the weight of local and regional dynamics in the genesis and development of an Internationalist culture in Spain. The centrality of actions delimited by union, sector, and territory that would characterize a significant faction of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, before and after 1881, was constructed upon experiences such as the one analyzed here.<sup>56</sup> After all, these experiences alerted trade-centered syndicalism to the uncertainties and dangers of going down the road of politics, notwithstanding massive plebeian participation, while simultaneously steering it away from an insurrectional path that had been repeatedly tried and defeated by 1871.



CONGRESO DE OBREROS EN BARCELONA.

FIGURE 14.1 *First Congress of the FRE, Barcelona, 1870.*

SOURCE: *ILUSTRACIÓN ESPAÑOLA Y AMERICANA*, AÑO XIV, N<sup>o</sup>14, 13 JUILLET 1870, P. 11: “CONGRÈS D’OUVRIERS À BARCELONE” (WORKERS’ CONGRESS IN BARCELONA). BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA.

55 Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo*, pp. 207–217; Gabriel, “Visibilitats polítiques”, pp. 75–76.

56 See José Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo español, 1868–1910* (Madrid, 1976).

## Revolutions, Republics and IWMA in the Spanish Empire (around 1873)

*Jeanne Moisand*

In the fall of 1873, Engels published his analysis of “Cantonalist” revolutions which had just burst out in Spain, and were still partially under way. Apart from its role in the ideological struggles of the time, this polemical series of articles (entitled “Bakuninists at work”) raised a central question: how was the development of internationalism in Spain linked to different republican revolutionary movements, which broke out across its empire between 1868 and 1873? Opened by the liberal revolution of September 1868, a revolutionary cycle (the “democratic Sexenium”) led in 1873 to the unexpected establishment of the First Spanish Republic. According to Engels, a genuine social Republic was now at hand if internationalist workers supported the Government of the “republican socialist” Pi y Margall. Instead, the “false” Spanish International, with its apolitical Bakuninist façade, relied on the so-called intransigent Republicans, “crooks” that led workers in the irresponsible revolutionary creation of small local republics. Beyond the controversy, Engels seemed to share with his opponents the idea that internationalism was irrevocably linked in Spain to a certain type of republicanism.<sup>1</sup> His attention to the opportunities created by the Spanish revolutionary cycle contrasted with his neglect of the imperial backstage of the Democratic Sexenium. The proclamation of an independent republic in Eastern Cuba in 1869 led Spain to heavy war efforts against the insurgents. Because of this imperial war, coupled with a new Carlist uprising in the peninsula, it was very unlikely that the First Spanish Republic could simply

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1 Friedrich Engels, “Bakuninist at Work: An Account of the Spanish revolt in the summer of 1873”, *Der Volkstaat*, 31 october, 2 and 5 november 1873, in Engels, *Internationales aus dem Volkstaat (1871–1875)* (Berlin, 1894); First published in English: K. Marx, F. Engels, *Revolution in Spain* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1939). <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1873/bakunin/index.htm>.

go through a progressive and peaceful stabilization, as envisaged by Engels. The forgetting of Cuba is interesting because it questioned the very nature of the International Workingmen's Association's (IWMA's) internationalism: by linking their fate to a republic at war against its colony, would Spanish internationalists and their supporters outside Spain show their latent imperialism? However, before addressing this crucial point, let us follow the thread of the questions raised by Engels, about the links between republicanism and internationalism in peninsular Spain during the Cantonalist revolutions.

### Cantonal Republics and the IWMA: A Classic Problem

As was the case of the French "communes" in 1871, adverse narratives to the Cantonalist revolutions immediately saw in these movements the mysterious hand of the International Workingmen's Association. This confusion was used as a pretext for massive arrests of IWMA members after the defeat of the Cantons (between the summer of 1873 and January of 1874): even in Catalonia, where no cantonalist insurrection took place, deportations beheaded the local sections of the IWMA.<sup>2</sup> Faced with this repression, the Federal Commission of the IWMA in Spain organized subscriptions for imprisoned or exiled internationalists,<sup>3</sup> while putting the responsibility of the Cantons on the intransigent "bourgeois" Republicans.<sup>4</sup> Was this assertion justified, or was it essentially aimed at saving the Spanish branch of the IWMA (Federación Regional Española, FRE. See Figure 15.1) from repression? The works of the 1970s and 1980s also argued that the links between the FRE and cantonal revolutions were very weak: not only activists of the IWMA would have remained a minority in most Cantons, but social measures taken by those local republics would have proved extremely feeble.<sup>5</sup> Cantonalist revolutions would have been republican movements fascinated by Swiss federalism (hence their name) or by regionalism, which had received support from a broad social basis with

2 See below.

3 FRE-AIT, *Cartas, comunicaciones y circulares del III Consejo Federal de la Región española*, 7 vol. (Barcelona, 1972–87), vol. 6, pp. 186, 289 et 303.

4 *Idem*, vol. 5, letter CCLXXIV.

5 José Álvarez Junco, *La Ideología política del anarquismo español, 1868–1910* (Madrid, 1976); Clara E. Lida, *Anarquismo y revolución en la España del XIX* (Madrid, 1972); María-Alice Medioni, *El Cantón de Cartagena* (Madrid, 1979). On the historiography of cantonalism: M. Gloria Espigado Tocino, "La historiografía del cantonalismo: Pautas metodológicas para un estudio comparado", in Rafael Serrano Garcia (ed), *España, 1868–1874: Nuevos enfoques sobre el Sexenio* (Junta de Castilla y León, 2002), pp. 111–137.

cross-class interests.<sup>6</sup> However, the respect for private property in the Canton of Cartagena reminds the case of the Paris Commune and does not necessarily reveal their “bourgeois” nature. The historiography of the late Franco era also tended to reduce the FRE to its elite. Identifying Spanish internationalism and “Bakuninism”, it provided the organization of the IWMA in Spain a material and ideological cohesion which was far from reality: local federations of Barcelona or Valencia proved to be almost as important as the federal commission, and their ideological orientations radically differed.<sup>7</sup> The gap proved to be deep between Bakuninist leaders and their bases, who believed in the emancipatory power of federal republicanism.

If the republican language appeared in part as a French import, disenchantment with “The Social (Republic)” did not cross the Pyrenees so quickly: on the contrary, the Republic remained very firmly linked with the horizon of emancipation in Spain.<sup>8</sup> Republicanism was able to overcome the failures of radical liberalism, while resuming its democratic and insurrectionist practices consisting in arming the people and in creating spontaneous municipal *juntas* and political clubs. The opening of the public space during the Democratic Sexenium accelerated the penetration of republican ideas and deepened the association between radical democracy, Federal Republic and social revolution. The IWMA development in Spain benefited from this radical republican soil, especially after the Commune. The historian López Estudillo demonstrated it in terms of the Andalusian case: by identifying internationalism with democratic and social republic, the *communard* model exerted a powerful attraction on agricultural laborers and Andalusia city workers. It explains the massive increase in the IWMA membership from the fall of 1871.<sup>9</sup> In this same period, the most

6 Juan A. Lacomba Abellán, “Reflexiones sobre el Sexenio democrático: revolución, regionalismo y cantonalismo”, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 9 (1993), pp. 19–31.

7 Antonio López Estudillo, *Republicanism and anarquismo en Andalucía, Conflictividad social agraria y crisis finisecular (1868–1900)* (Córdoba, 2001), p. 189; José A. Piqueras Arenas, *La Revolución democrática (1868–1874). Cuestión social, colonialismo y grupos de presión* (Madrid, 1992) and “Craft works, Industry and Radical Culture in the Age of the First International”, in José A. Piqueras, Vicent Sanz Rozalén, *A Social History of Spanish Labour. New perspectives on Class, Politics and Gender* (New York, 2007), pp. 106–133; Josep Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España, La Primera Internacional (1864–1881)* (Barcelona, [1965] 1977), p. 183.

8 Ángel Duarte, “La Esperanza republicana”, in Rafael Cruz, Manuel Pérez Ledesma (eds.), *Cultura y movilización en la España contemporánea* (Madrid, 1997), pp. 169–199; Nigel Townson (ed.), *El Republicanismo en España (1830–1977)* (Madrid, 1994); Miguel González Román, *La Pasión revolucionaria: culturas políticas republicanas y movilización popular en la España del siglo XIX* (Madrid, 2007). Peyrou Florencia, *Tribunos del pueblo: demócratas y republicanos durante el reinado de Isabel II* (Madrid, 2008).

9 López Estudillo, *Republicanism and anarquismo*, p. 85, p. 82 note 68.

famous federalists of the 1869 republican insurrections, as Fermin Salvochea, adhered to the FRE, bringing with them many members of the political clubs and workers societies of “intransigent” republicanism.<sup>10</sup>

In the text quoted above, Engels opposed the intransigent “crooks” to Pi y Margall, who he presented as a “socialist republican.” The founder of the Federal Republican Party in 1870, Pi y Margall faced a growing divide within his political family: after the Paris Commune, the right wing of federalism (the *benévolo*s) came closer to the progressive monarchists, while the left side remained “intransigent” and defended both the social republic, the arming of the people and the imperative mandate. During the discussions in the Cortes about the extradition of Communard refugees, Pi y Margall took sides with the intransigents. Against the “individualist” Republicans, he had long advocated state intervention in the economy through agrarian reform.<sup>11</sup> The defense of Pi y Margall socialism by Engels is however surprising: a great translator of Proudhon, Pi had long preached the idea of a pact between provinces, municipalities and workers societies to form a republic “from the bottom up”.

The divisions between republicans deepened after the proclamation of the Republic on 11 February 1873, following the abdication of Amadeo I. Pi y Margall, Minister and then President of the Republic, sought to broaden the social basis of the regime by negotiating with other political trends within the central institutions of the state. His former supporters accused him of favoring the enemies of the Republic. The “Volunteers of the Republic”, intransigent militias which were joined by thousands of citizens, put pressure on the town halls which were still in the hands of monarchists. The IWMA members massively joined these militia ranks: in Valencia, they managed to create their own battalion; in Sevilla, internationalist militia launched an insurgency in June to take the weapons of Maestranza.<sup>12</sup> The proximity between the FRE and the intransigents also became visible in common candidacies for provincial or municipal deputations, and through secret agreements to organize a future insurrection.<sup>13</sup> The Spanish Federation of the IWMA, despite its Bakuninist direction, was thus very far from entering in an “apolitical” phase after the Hague Congress. On the contrary, the feverish mobilization of its members to save the

10 Gérard Brey, Jacques Maurice, Serge Salaün, Carlos Serrano (eds.), *Fermin Salvochea. Un anarquista entre la leyenda y la historia* (Cadix, 2009).

11 Charles A.M. Hennessy, *The Federal Republic in Spain. Pi y Margall and the Federal Republican Movement, 1868–1874* (Oxford, 1962).

12 López Estudillo, *Republicanism and anarquismo*; Piqueras Arenas, *La Revolución democrática*, p. 645.

13 López Estudillo, *Republicanism and anarquismo*, p. 200 and p. 250.



Republic explains the decrease of internationalist activity after February 1873. However, the field of social struggle was not abandoned: a wave of strikes was launched in May 1873. The last one, which took place in Alcoy (an industrial town near Valencia), resulted in a bloody conflict at the beginnings of July between workers and the mayor. This would be the only insurrection claimed, with that of Sanlúcar de Barrameda near Cadiz, by the direction of the FRE after the revolutionary summer of 1873.

In June, an attempted monarchist coup on the Cortes failed thanks to the intervention of Madrid volunteers, confirming the concerns of the intransigents. Why did Pi y Margall not seize the opportunity to impose a federal and popular constitution?<sup>14</sup> On the 11th of July, the intransigents in Cartagena rebelled, anticipating a replacement of troops which might have been less favorable to their cause. On 18 July, Pi y Margall resigned, rather than assuming the repression of the insurrection. Other cantons were proclaimed in the following days. Many of them were set up in Andalusia and the Levant, scattered over a wide coastal area from Valencia to Huelva. Cantons were also present – albeit fewer – in Castile. They were proclaimed both in large cities (Cadiz, Seville, Granada, Malaga, Murcia, Cartagena, Valencia, Castellón, Salamanca, Ávila) and in small rural municipalities. The absence of an insurrection in Catalonia deprived the movement of the most decisive area. Catalonia, the first region of the FRE in terms of density of the sections, and the region where federal Republican votes were most numerous, surprised everybody when it supported the central republic. The French section of the FRE in Barcelona (Charles Alerini, Camille Camet, Paul Brousse) unsuccessfully tried to push the local federation into insurgency.<sup>15</sup> The refusal of the “Spanish Manchester” to proclaim an insurgent Canton has to be linked to the threat of the Carlist insurrection, which was then arriving at the gates of Barcelona. It contributed to the idea that the Cantonalist revolutions did not deserve to enter into the history of the genuine labor movement, and even less so in that of the IWMA.

### A Movement of Archaic Workers? The Example of Cartagena Sailors-Soldiers

The development of the IWMA in Spain was marked by specific features: its chronology, the Bakuninist leanings of the leaders and the sociology of the Spanish workers in the 1870s. Already present in Engels' article, the

14 Hennessy, *The Federal Republic*, Chap. 7.

15 Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España*, p. 213.

backwardness scheme was destined to a great success: the workers of modern industries, isolated in Catalonia, were surrounded by “traditional” workers, who were more likely to be tempted by anti-authoritarian and millenarian discourses, as Hobsbawm would have said.<sup>16</sup> This dichotomy is reflected in the classification of the different insurrections as whether “social cantons”, where the worker element was deemed to dominate, like in Alcoy, and as “political cantons” elsewhere. The canton of Cartagena, the most long-lasting of all (it held the siege by the Central Republic between July 1873 and January 1874), is classified in the latter category.<sup>17</sup> Yet the city possessed a high, concentrated population of workers related to mining and port activities. A local section of the FRE was founded in 1869; it recruited exclusively from the local military arsenal workers, miners proving unreceptive. Composed of 600 members in 1870, this local section seemed very active, exchanging numerous letters and news with the Federal commission in Madrid during the following year. But the failure of a strike in the arsenal in 1871 led to a rapid decomposition of the section.<sup>18</sup> According to historian Juan Bautista Vilar, the Internationalists of Cartagena left the field of social struggle and focused on the political activity of intransigent Republicans’ clubs, led by notables. The few members of the IWMA who were present in the governing bodies of the Canton, the arsenal worker Pablo Meléndez and the *communard* refugee Antonio de La Calle, were according to Vilar discarded after a few weeks. The latter proposed social measures which were only partially adopted.<sup>19</sup>

Restricted to the leaders of the Canton, this analysis dismisses the role of the insurgent base, more likely to have been involved into social struggles. The 9,000 to 11,000 fighters of the Canton of Cartagena<sup>20</sup> undoubtedly had a working-class background: they were insurgent soldiers from the regular army in a context of unequal conscription, and milicians from the popular battalions of the Volunteers of the Republic. The exile of some of the Cantonalists in Oran in January 1874 gives a further indication on the composition of these fighters:

16 Eric Hobsbawm, *Les Primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne*, (Paris, Fayard, (1959) 1963).

17 Miklos Molnar, Juan Pekmez, “Anarquismo rural en España y la revolución cantonalista de 1873”, in Henry A. Landsberger (ed.), *Rebelión campesina y cambio social* (Barcelona, 1978), pp. 214–257, p. 254.

18 FRE-AIT, *Actas de los Consejos y Comisión Federal de la Región Española (1870–1874)*, 2 vol. (Barcelona, 1969), vol. 1, p. 61.

19 Juan Bautista Vilar, *Los Orígenes del movimiento obrero murciano. La I Internacional*, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 5 (1986), pp. 109–121; Medioni, *El Cantón de Cartagena*.

20 Antonio Puig Campillo, *Historia de la Primera República española. El Cantón murciano*, (Cartagena, 1932), pp. 308–309.

among the 1,636 Cantonalists who fled on the warship *Numancia*, we count 12 members of the Revolutionary Junta, 10 officers of the army, 248 soldiers, 480 State sailors and 492 convicts (from the prison of Cartagena).<sup>21</sup>

“State sailors”, one of the most represented category among these fighters, were actually sea workers requisitioned by the navy. Fishermen, sailors, dock workers, workers associated with the construction of vessels, constituted the special category of “workers of the sea”, who escaped conscription in the army (the *quintas*), but had to register for the navy (the *matrícula de mar*). They were considered as a reserve force and the likeliness of their being called up was much higher for them than for men submitted to the *quintas*. Subject to a special maritime law, which protected them in the competition with other job categories,<sup>22</sup> their mobility was extremely controlled, even outside campaigns.<sup>23</sup> From the outburst of the 1868 revolution, all the Republican revolts were accompanied by the shouts of “Down with the *quintas* and the *matrícula de mar*!”<sup>24</sup> The abolitions of these two forms of conscription on 17 February and 22 March 1873 were among the most significant measures of the transition to Republic. The War department replaced *quintas* by a voluntary enlistment, which was successful only among urban militias. Because of the wars against the Carlist and the Cuban insurgents, it turned out to be impossible to demobilize the troops recruited under the monarchy. On 12 July 1873, the crew of a dozen warships – the very best of the Spanish fleet – mutinied in Cartagena against a republic that had belied its promise of freedom. Navy crew soldiers revolted against their officers who quickly fled from the Canton: this mutiny of gigantic proportions<sup>25</sup> made it possible for the Cartagena Canton to last for so long.

The accentuation of military pressure on Spanish workers cannot be understood outside the context of imperial crisis during the Democratic Sexenium. To counter the Cuban separatist insurgency, 180,000 Spanish soldiers were

21 Juan Bautista Vilar, *La España del exilio, Las emigraciones políticas españolas en los siglos XIX y XX* (Madrid, 2006), p. 274.

22 Jordi Ibarz, *Imatges al Moll: els oficis de les feines destiba a la Barcelona dels segles XIX i XX* (Barcelona, 2008).

23 Enrique García Domingo, *El Trabajo en la Marina mercante española en la transición de la vela al vapor (1834–1914)*, Phd (Barcelona, 2014), pp. 31 and following.

24 Javier de Salas, *Historia de la Matrícula de Mar y examen de varios sistemas de reclutamiento marítimo* (Madrid, 1879).

25 Pedro María Egea Bruno, “Los Prolegómenos del cantón en Cartagena: El motín de la fragata *Almansa*”, *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 10 (1994), pp. 409–416; José Luis Pérez Infesta, “Las Fragatas blindadas españolas y la sublevación cantonal”, *Revista General de Marina*, 248-1 (2005), pp. 69–84.

recruited and transported to Cuba between 1868 and 1878, a contingent of unprecedented magnitude in a transatlantic war.<sup>26</sup> Land warfare, organized to fight the guerrilla that thrived in Eastern Cuba, accompanied a naval war aimed at defending the coast of “pirate” ships (*filibusteros*), fueling the insurgency in arms and men from the United States and Latin America. Unable to cope with the transport of troops and with coastal surveillance, the military navy was supported by the Spanish merchant navy, almost exclusively in hand of the Transatlantic Company of Antonio López, Marquis of Comillas. Ennobled for his services, this former slave trader won the monopolies of the mail to the colonies and of the transportation of troops, which earned him considerable profits.<sup>27</sup> In contact with foreign workers and their ideas,<sup>28</sup> maritime workers were rendered precarious by the introduction of steam, the concentration of shipping companies and the competition of rail on coastal navigation.<sup>29</sup> The expansionist Spanish naval policy of the 1850s and the 1860s<sup>30</sup> strengthened the military coercion on their mobility. In the military ships travelling to the colonial areas, workers were exposed to the total loss of their political rights. Six peninsular sailors were imprisoned for insubordination in December 1873 in the penal colony of La Havana: they had complained about their poor diets and the state of their ship.<sup>31</sup> The history of sea workers’ politicization, internationalism and revolt must be understood in this imperial context.

### Seamen, the Maritime IWMA and the Spanish Colonies

Despite their absence in the histories of the Spanish labor movement, several signs show the involvement of seamen in the internationalist and federal

26 Manuel Moreno Fragnals, José Moreno Maso, *Guerra, Migración y muerte. El Ejército español en Cuba como vía migratoria* (Madrid, 1993).

27 María Elena Hernández Sandoica, “La Compañía Transatlántica española. Una dimensión ultramarina del capitalismo español”, *Historia contemporánea*, 2 (1989), pp. 119–164.

28 British technicians were numerous in the arsenal of Cartagena from the 1850s. Cristina Roda Alcántud, *Historia e ingeniería en el siglo XIX. Vanguardia de la industria naval en el Mediterráneo occidental: el Arsenal de Cartagena* (Cartagena, 2008), pp. 324 and following.

29 Jesús María Valdaliso Gago, *Los Navieros vascos y la marina mercante en España, 1860–1935: una historia económica*, (Bilbao, 1991).

30 Josep M. Fradera, *Colonias para después de un imperio* (Barcelona, 2005).

31 AHN, Ultr. 4737, doc. 45 et 46, *instancia de D. José Armada y sus cinco compañeros de prisión*.

mobilizations during the years preceding the Canton.<sup>32</sup> They were well represented in Barcelona during the Spanish first Congress of the IWMA in June 1870: Antoni Marsal Anglora, a mechanic (*maquinista*) already present at the Congress of Brussels in 1868,<sup>33</sup> represented with the dock worker Ramon Esteve, a society of dock workers which then gathered nearly 600 workers.<sup>34</sup> Domingo Gras was a steward of the “maritime society of Barcelona”: according to his testimony, the sailors were “slaves” all their lives after their inclusion in the “marine grade” during their childhood; they were “exploited” by the captains and were also the “first victims of the State”.<sup>35</sup> One month after the congress, a wave of sea workers strikes occurred in July and August 1870: the workers in the arsenals of Cadiz and Cartagena went on strike first,<sup>36</sup> followed by the dockers and sailors of Denia near Valencia,<sup>37</sup> then by the maritime society of Barcelona in August. A new strike broke out in Cartagena in May 1871, which failed. In 1872, a mutiny in another military port, El Ferrol, was a prelude to the Cartagena events of July 1873.<sup>38</sup> Subjected to combined forms of oppression, sea workers sought their emancipation both from capitalism through the IWMA, and from the imperial state with the insurrectionist republicanism.

Would this struggle lead to the establishment of an anti-imperialistic form of internationalism, circulating overseas? The year before the mutiny of Cartagena, a similar episode had taken place in the Philippines. The revolt of Cavite in 1872 often stands for the first anti-colonial revolt in the history of Philippines, unless this assumption has been criticized. The rebels were mostly recruited in native battalions of soldiers and workers from the local military arsenal. They struggled to keep their tax privileges within the colonial system: while these categories were exempted from the tribute on the natives, a tax reform removed this exemption. Some two hundred rebels took up arms against their peninsular officials, in a revolt of unknown proportions in the colony.

32 Juan Zamora Terrés, *Notas para una historia del movimiento obrero en la marina mercante española* (Barcelona, 2003).

33 María T. Martínez de Sas, Pelai Pagès (eds.), *Diccionari biogràfic del moviment obrer als països catalans* (Ed. Universitat Barcelona, 2000), pp. 832–833.

34 Víctor Manuel Arbeloa (ed), *I Congreso Obrero Español: Barcelona, 18–26 de Junio de 1870* (Madrid, 1972), pp. 101 y 146–147.

35 *Idem*, p. 133, “sobre esta clase está pesando una injusticia, de que en nombre de los asociados protesto, y esta injusticia consiste en las matrículas de mar, cuya abolición pido. (...) el capitán (...) nos explota cuanto puede para ahorrar en provecho propio. (...) siendo las primeras víctimas del Estado.”

36 FRE-AIT, *Actas*, vol. 1, pp. 7–8, p. 14, p. 59 et 61.

37 Piqueras Arenas, *La Revolución democrática (1868–1874)*, pp. 166–167.

38 R. Cartaña, “Pi y Margall y los postulantes políticos”, *El Cantón federal*, 24 nov 1872, pp. 2–4.

They were finally neutralized and executed on the spot.<sup>39</sup> None of the sources mentioned any link between the revolt of this colonial arsenal and the FRE, despite the sea workers presence in both. If a form of solidarity eventually appeared, it was caused by the imperial repression, which then multiplied the use of the “filibuster” category and gave it a certain reality by making convicts circulate across the empire. A generation later, the Philippine novelist José Rizal dedicated his book *El Filibusterismo* (Berlin, 1891) to the revolt of Cavite. Born from the fear of a global dissidence connected by the sea, the repressive imaginary of “filibusterism” was retaken and almost claimed in this novel, erected by Benedict Anderson into a symbol of an alternative internationalism, anti-colonialist and anarchist, born in the Spanish end-of-century empire.<sup>40</sup>

No claim of this type appeared in the writings of the FRE in the 1870s. The lack of real solidarity between the revolutionary Peninsula and the insurgents in the Philippines became particularly visible after the failure of cantonal revolutions. The archives of the overseas department record the deportation of 1,076 Cantonalists and former members of the IWMA to Asian penal colonies, and 71 others to Fernando Poo. In the Philippines, peninsular convicts were put at the service of the colonial navy: the “volunteers” could participate in a campaign to subdue the natives of Jolo, Muslim people who resisted colonization.<sup>41</sup> Even if they were coerced, Spanish cantonalists and Internationalists thus participated in the expansion of the imperial state in Asia. In the Philippines, the absence of a free political space limited the organization of any protest movement, likely to contact – outside the framework of the prison – with labor or republican movements in the peninsula. Was it the same in Cuba? One of the earliest of all Latin America labor movements had emerged in the island before the Ten Years Wars (1868–78), promoted by the workers of the tobacco industry. During the war however, political freedom was banned and this labor movement silenced, except during the first months of the 1873 Spanish Republic.<sup>42</sup> The tobacco worker Saturnino Martínez, founder of the newspaper *La Aurora* (1866–67), only knew about the existence of the IWMA in 1871 by reading the conservative press after the Commune. Not able to organize a federation in Cuba, he wrote a favorable opinion about the IWMA in an

39 Leandro Tormo Sanz, “La huelga del arsenal de Cavite en 1872”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 35 (1978), pp. 283–378.

40 Benedict Anderson, *Les Bannières de la révolte: anarchisme, littérature et imaginaire anti-colonial, la naissance d'une autre mondialisation* (Paris, [2005] 2009).

41 AHN, Ultr. 5222, Exp. 2 and Exp. 3, doc. 12.

42 Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh, 1998).

article in 1874, which earned him a deportation to Spain.<sup>43</sup> The attempts of the Spanish Federation of the IWMA to establish contacts with Cuban workers also failed: in 1873, the FRE asked the Federal Council of the IWMA in New York for the addresses of possible international sections of Havana.<sup>44</sup> Would the United States have represented an Eldorado for Cuban internationalists, and made the link more efficiently in the context of the imperial war between Spain and its colonies?

### The Internationalism of the Great Causes and the Cuban Problem

The works of the 1960s recalled that an internationalism of great common causes had preceded the birth of the IWMA: Polish revolts, Italian unity and the American Civil War had constituted the first passions of the British workers' internationalism.<sup>45</sup> The Cuban insurrection continued in the vein of the US Civil War and the struggle for the abolition of slavery. Associated with the "universal republic" and the emancipation of America, the Cuban cause attracted many international fighters. North Americans, British, Venezuelans, and Dominicans embarked to help Cuban insurgents in their fight, on ships that came primarily from the United States.<sup>46</sup> In 1869, Gustave Cluseret, a future communard and future founder of the first French section of the IWMA in the US, a veteran of the wars of Italy and of the US Civil War,<sup>47</sup> contacted the Cuban *Junta* in New York: he undertook to disseminate information about the Cuban insurrection to all radical European newspapers and maintained that the Cuban question was "that of all peoples<sup>48</sup>". A first moment of rupture in this favorable impulse to the Cuban cause occurred on 13 June 1870: President Grant refused to recognize belligerency to independent Cuba, and defined the insurgents as "filibusters<sup>49</sup>". The link between the Cuban cause and the "universal republic" became blurred, as the Reconstruction split up in the struggles

43 Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets!*, p. 96, pp. 110–111.

44 FRE-AIT, *Cartas*, vol. 5, pp. 98–99.

45 Jacques Rougerie, « Sur l'Histoire de la Première Internationale: Bilan d'un colloque et de quelques récents travaux », *Le Mouvement social*, 51, (1965), pp. 23–45, p. 29.

46 Gilbert Toste Ballard, *Reeve. El Inglesito* (La Habana, 1973).

47 Michel Cordillot, *Utopistes et Exilés du Nouveau Monde : des Français aux États-Unis, de 1848 à la Commune*, (Paris, 2013), pp. 249 and following.

48 La Havane, ANC, Donativos y remisiones, legajo 167, n°111–129, lettre du 29 novembre 1869.

49 Ulysses S. Grant, "Special Message" 13 June 1870, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=70164>.

of the post-Civil war.<sup>50</sup> The misadventure of the *Virginus*, an American ship captured in 1873 by the Spanish navy and whose crew was shot, definitely discouraged the last American volunteers to enlist in the Cuban war.

The international labour movement timidly replaced the filibusters of the “universal Republic” in the solidarity with the Cuban cause. In December 1871, an internationalist demonstration gathered around 10,000 persons in New York to honor both the martyrs of the Commune and the victims of the Cuban war. The Spanish internationalist press published the information about this manifestation of a pro-Cuban workers’ solidarity.<sup>51</sup> According to the Spanish Consul in New York, Cuban exiles were having dangerous contacts with refugees from the Commune, and most Cuban workers in Brooklyn and New York had joined the IWMA.<sup>52</sup> These statements seem exaggerated by the anxieties of the diplomat. In April 1872, there was just one Spanish section in the North-American Federation of the IWMA (the 38th section created in Brooklyn).<sup>53</sup> It is not clear that it could attract Cubans (being linked as it was with the FRE), and it did not weigh much compared to the many French or German sections. Solidarity still existed with the Cuban cause (as shown by a “message of solidarity” with the Cuban insurgents signed by at least three members of the Society of the refugees from the Commune of New-York in November 1873<sup>54</sup>) but the link between the General Council of New York and the Spanish federation was undoubtedly much stronger.<sup>55</sup>

The Cuban migrants in the United States were, however, numerous, numbering between 12,000 and 30,000 persons around 1875.<sup>56</sup> Most of the Cuban

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- 50 Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, (New York, 1988), pp. 494–495.
- 51 *La Federación*, Barcelone, 127 (21 enero 1872), p. 2. Michel Cordillot, *Utopistes*, pp. 270–271.
- 52 Madrid, RAH, colec. Caballero de Rodas, vol. v. Corr. mando del Gal Conde de Valmaseda, f°270–271, copia de la com. del Cónsul de España en Nueva-York al Ministro plenipotenciario de España en Washington, 28 diciembre 1871–27 enero 1872.
- 53 Many thanks to Michel Cordillot for this reference. Jacques Freymond, *La Première Internationale, Recueil de documents*, t. 111 *Les conflits au sein de l'Internationale* (Genève, 1971), p. 269.
- 54 *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français: le Maitron*, CD ROM (Paris, Ed. de l'Atelier-Ed. ouvrières, 1997), Message signé par Ansot fils, vol. 39, EU 1872–1874, note de M. Cordillot; par Edouard Badoureau, et par Jean Lucien Bedouch.
- 55 The IWMA papers, *Records of the General Council, 1871–1874*, Microfilm by State Historical Society of Wisconsin Records of the Central Committee, 25/04/1873 pp. 23–27, 19/11/1872 pp. 36 et suiv., 11/04/1873 pp. 88–89, 8/08/1873 p. 157. FRE-AIT, *Actas*, p. 130.
- 56 Joan Casanovas Codina, “El movimiento obrero cubano durante la Guerra de los Diez años (1868–1878)”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, LV-1 (enero-junio, 1998), pp. 243–266. NYPL, Moses Taylor coll., Box 309, *El Pueblo*, Nueva York, Julio 27 de 1876, año 1 n.12, p. 2.



workers were cigar-makers, and they were much more concentrated in Florida, especially in Key West, than in New York, which was the center of the IWMA.<sup>57</sup> The hundreds of Cuban tobacco workers in New York were not very well received by the combative union linked to the IWMA (CMIU *Cigar Maker International Union-1864*): the leaders Adolph Strasser and Samuel Gompers accused them of being organized for the independence of Cuba for which they gathered funds in their *Sociedad de Artesanos Cubanos* (NYC, 1870), rather than for the emancipation of tobacco workers. Their massive migration to the US after 1868 would have represented a danger for the cause of cigar makers: Gompers would even have been in favor of a blockage of Cuban migration.<sup>58</sup> A further investigation would be necessary to see if this opinion was motivated by a racial prejudice against Cuban workers, many of them being people of color.

In Florida, the mass of Cuban workers was less connected to the IWMA and had to deal with the Southern counter-revolutionary movement: despite the mobilization of free Blacks for racial equality, Democrats regained each State one by one, and imposed their ideal of an unequal and racialized Republic.<sup>59</sup> In 1876, when this conquest of the southern States by the Democrats was almost done, the *Junta* for Cuban independence in the United States began to support them instead of Republicans, as it was used to doing.<sup>60</sup> *La Igualdad* (Equality) from Key West published an angry manifesto from the city's radical republican committee: the support of Democrats by the millionaire and leader of the *Junta* Aldama encouraged "the fatal division of races, giving rise to a very difficult future reconstruction in our Fatherland<sup>61</sup>". As the 1876 electoral campaign revealed, the social gap between the clans of exile overlapped a political and racial opposition between Cubans of southern sensibility, also numerous between poor whites, and those who defended an egalitarian and interracial republicanism, according to the tradition of the Cuban workers movement

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57 Evan Matthew Daniel, *Rolling for the Revolution: A transnational history of Cuban cigar makers in Havana, Florida and New York City, 1853–1895* (Phd New School University, 2010), p. 6 et p. 121.

58 *Idem*, p. 223 et p. 259.

59 Foner, *Reconstruction*.

60 Gerald Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, 1989), pp. 84–86.

61 NYPL, Moses Taylor collection, Box 309, *El Tribuno Cubano*, Nueva York, 15/09/1876, vol 2, n.13, p. 2. *La Igualdad*, Cayo Hueso, 16/12/1876, año I n.3, p. 3: "la funesta división de razas, haciendo imposible en el futuro ya no muy lejano la difícilísima reconstrucción de nuestra Patria".

of the 1860s.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, in the island, the great Cuban cause associated with universal emancipation was also gradually restricted to a nationalist struggle for a certain type of white hegemony.<sup>63</sup> This process played a part in the failure of the American Revolution after the Civil War, and in the decomposition of workers' internationalism when it crossed the Atlantic.

### Conclusion

In the 1860s, the revolutionary Atlantic, with its abolitionist and radical republicanism, fed the "imagined community" of European workers. Its role was completely reversed in the 1870s, as the history of the IWMA in Spain reveals. Spanish internationalism borrowed its language from various socialisms, from abolitionism and from radical and federal republicanism. Armed insurrectionism was also fundamental, and was aimed at stopping the counter-revolutionary dynamic which emerged early after the *Gloriosa* revolution (September 1868), and which disposed of an essential base in the pro-slave Spanish Cuba.<sup>64</sup> The Cuban exile community in the United States, which was first involved in the cause for universal emancipation, then abounded in the direction of the white Cuban nationalist reaction. As a last attempt to reverse this trend, the Cantonalist revolutions of the summer of 1873 happened too late in the story of the IWMA, after the splits of The Hague: they were seen as a demonstration of what the "Bakuninists at work" were worth and did not receive any support from the IWMA. However, the insurrection of the sailors of Cartagena, the most powerful of all these local revolutions, reflected the effort of organized and "internationalized" workers to resist the pressure of the imperial war and of the counter-revolution prevailing in the Spanish Atlantic.

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62 Onoria Céspedes Argote (ed), *Diario y correspondencia de Francisco Vicente Aguilera en la Emigración (Estados Unidos (1872))*, (La Habana, 2009), tomo II pp. IX–XII; Casanovas Codina, "El movimiento obrero cubano durante la Guerra de los Diez años (1868–1878)".

63 Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill, 1999).

64 Piqueras Arenas, *La Revolución democrática*.



FIGURE 15.1 *The founders of the Spanish Regional Federation.*

Photograph of the Founders of the Spanish Regional Federation of the IWMA in Madrid, around 1868–69.

From the top and from left to right: Giuseppe Fanelli, Angel Cenagorta, José Rubau Donadeu, Manuel Cano, Francisco Mora, Marcelino López, Antonio Cerrudo, Enrique Borrel, Anselmo Lorenzo, Nicolás Rodríguez, José Posyol, Julio Rubau Donadeu, José Fernández, José Adsuara, Quintín Rodríguez, Miguel Langara, Antonio Gimeno, Enrique Simancas, Angel Mora, José Fernández, Benito Rodríguez.

Anselmo Lorenzo, *El Proletariado Militante. Memorias de un internacional*, Madrid, Confederación sindical solidaridad obrera, 2005, front Page and pp. 49–50.

## The First International in Latin America

*Horacio Tarcus*

Translation from Spanish by *Bécquer Medak-Seguín*

### Introduction

For the past half century, the strength and even the existence of the First International in Latin America has remained a moot point for historians. In his 1964 contribution to the *Colloque International sur La Première Internationale*, Uruguayan historian Carlos Rama attempted to document the existence of International Working Men's Association (IWMA) branches in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Havana, Río de Janeiro, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Santiago. So weak was the documentary evidence that the Rev. Paul Droulers (s.J.), one of the participants, asked him if “in Latin America, as in other places, the International had not been but a myth.” Rama understood the “value of myth” in the Sorelian sense and replied that, indeed, “the International represented for the workers the hope of finding in Europe support for their struggles.”<sup>1</sup>

Eight years later, the Chilean Marcelo Segall strove in his turn to document the existence of branches of the International in Santiago and Valparaiso (1972), only to be given the lie by a historian of the following generation, Sergio Grez Toso, who wrote in his thesis on the genesis of socialism in Chile: “there is no serious sign, much less proof, of an organized action of the International in this country.” Furthermore, Sergio Grez Toso didn't hesitate to describe its phantasmagoric presence as a myth “persistent and relatively impermeable to the most elemental historical evidence.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, five years later an Ecuadorian historian published the thick volume, *La I Internacional en Latinoamérica*. In spite of its promising title, the author Plutarco Naranjo, who was not cognizant of the works of Rama and Segall, was quick to warn that he knew of no influence of the First International in Latin America outside of Ecuador.<sup>3</sup> And even the documentary evidence

1 Carlos M. Rama, “L'Amérique Latine et la Première Internationale”, in AAVV, *La Première Internationale. L'Institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), p. 426.

2 Sergio Grez Toso, *De la “regeneración del pueblo” a la huelga general. Génesis y evolución histórica del movimiento popular en Chile (1810–1890)* (Santiago de Chile, 1998), p. 519.

3 Plutarco Naranjo, *La I Internacional en Latinoamérica* (Quito, 1977) p. 10.

pertaining to the Ecuadorian experience was weak: all he had to offer was a speech by the essayist Juan Montalvo delivered in Quito in 1876 concerning the foundation of the Republican Society, an antidictatorial association that, according to him, was organized in accordance with the IWMA statutes, thereby constituting “the first attempt to adapt the First International to the climate of Latin America.” As additional proof, Naranjo transcribed articles from the conservative press denouncing Montalvo as a communist and the Republican Society as a local branch of the frightening International.<sup>4</sup> Naranjo’s interpretation was criticized by Noël Salomon at a conference held in Besançon (1975), where Salomon underlined that Montalvo had only spoken of the International as an example of the voluntary nature of worker’s associations: it’s “an International at Montalvo’s disposition, related to his liberalism, Christianity, and anticlerical Erasmism.” Montalvo had also affirmed that the International would respect property and had criticized the experience of the Commune. Montalvo’s conception of the International, concluded Salomon, “responds to a generous idea, a chivalrous, Quixotic sensibility; his adversaries are the ones who inscribe him completely within the International.”<sup>5</sup>

Should then Grez Toso’s judgement be extended to the whole continent, and should we conclude, as Droulers suggested, that the presence of the International in Latin America was simply a myth, a specter that frightened the dominant elites and provided a faint hope for a handful of exiled Europeans? In this paper, I will focus on the branches of the International in Mexico City, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires, for which some documentary evidence exists. Due to lack of space, the references to the International in both the “bourgeois” and the burgeoning workers’ Latin American press will be left aside.

### The International in Mexico

News of the creation of the International arrived in a Mexico that, since the 1850s, had sheltered workers’ societies of a mutualist nature. A flyer distributed in Mexico toward the end of 1870 outlined the Statutes of the International approved by the Geneva Congress, which had called for these societies to unite. At the bottom of this flyer could be read: “It’s our turn, Mexican workers, to carry out our national unity.”<sup>6</sup> The leaders of the workers’ societies agreed to

4 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

5 Plutarco Naranjo, “Montalvo y la Primera Internacional en el Ecuador”, in *Juan Montalvo en Francia* (Paris, 1976), pp. 221–222.

6 José C. Valadés, *El socialismo libertario mexicano (siglo XIX)*. Prólogo de Paco Ignacio Taibo II (Culiacán, 1984), p. 49.

hold a series of meetings and, on 10 January 1871, an invitation was sent out to the associations to designate three delegates each. The *Gran Círculo de Obreros*, the first trade union federation in Mexico, was subsequently established on this basis in 1871 by a handful of printers and tailors. By 1876 it included thousands of affiliates organized into twenty-nine associations distributed across the country.

Not long after, the weekly *El Socialista* appeared in Mexico City on 9 July 1871. This paper was published until 1888 as the organ of the *Gran Círculo*. Open to all tendencies, it regularly informed its readers about the activities of the International. One of its editors, Mariano García, defended the Paris Commune and hailed the International: “terror of the tyrants, hope of the future!”<sup>7</sup> In its 10 September 1871 issue, the paper published the Statutes of the International. Years later, on 12 July 1884, it would print the first Latin American edition of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Parallel to the foundation of the *Gran Círculo*, an immigrant of Greek origins, Plotino Rhodakanaty, influenced first by Fourier and later by Proudhon, created together with a group of youths a society called *La Social* in March of 1871. Against the socialist mutualism of the *Gran Círculo*'s artisans, which sought the support of liberal presidents in the face of large-scale industry, *La Social* proclaimed “the abolition of any system of government.”<sup>8</sup> One of its affiliates, Santiago Villanueva, presided over the *Gran Círculo*, but, after his death in 1872, the leadership fell into the hands of a socialist mutualist, the printer Juan de Mata Rivera, who had been accused of being “the representative in those regions of Mr. Marx” by the Uruguayan internationalists related to the Jura federation of the International.<sup>9</sup> This was undoubtedly an exaggeration deriving from political rivalries. Mata Rivera had evolved at the time from mutualist ideas toward a socialism with a co-operativist and reformist inclination. He directed the weekly *El Socialista* (1871–1888), in which he declared himself time and again a partisan of the coalition between Capital and Labor, and called for presidential patronage for the incipient worker's movement, even though he also published texts of a more radical nature.

7 César García Cantú, *El socialismo en México (siglo XIX)* (México, 1969), p. 74.

8 Valadés, *El socialismo libertario*, p. 50. See also Plotino C. Rhodakanaty, *Obras*. Edición, prólogo y notas de Carlos Illades, recopilación María Esther Reyes Duarte (México, 1998) and Carlos Illades, *Las otras ideas. El primer socialismo en México, 1850–1935* (México, 2008), particularly pages 37–40, 155–80.

9 Valadés, “Sobre los orígenes del movimiento obrero en México. Apéndice. Documentos para la historia del anarquismo en América”, in AAVV, *Certamen internacional de La Protesta* (Buenos Aires, 1927), p. 84.

The *Gran Círculo* and its organ, *El Socialista*, were corresponding with the General Council in London. After the Hague Congress, ties were maintained with the General Council of New York and the Jura federation.<sup>10</sup> It was mostly the antipolitical socialists of *La Social* who maintained correspondence with the Jura federation as well as with the Uruguayan section of Montevideo.<sup>11</sup> Thanks to a letter written by the Internationalists of Montevideo, we know that the “antipolitical” Mexicans of *La Social* applied for membership in the International through the Regional Spanish Federation, and that the Bern Congress granted that satisfaction to them.<sup>12</sup> The antipolitical elements also launched more radical newspapers, such as *La Comuna* (1874), *La Huelga* (1875), *El Hijo del Trabajo* (1876) and *La Internacional* (1878).

The discord between the “political” and “antipolitical” tendencies in Mexico led to a confrontation years after the Hague Congress. In 1876, when the *Gran Círculo* summoned the *Gran Congreso Obrero*, orators of both tendencies faced one another. For Valadés, this echoed the scission that had taken place four years before in the International. García Cantú expressed a more nuanced opinion: accepting that “the Jura federation, through Spain and Montevideo, had hatched its plot in Mexico City” and that the Bakuninists had spread propaganda in the city through Zalacosta, he nevertheless insisted that the emergence of anarchism in Mexico ought to be dated from a later period, that of the brothers Flores Magón, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>13</sup> The tensions that existed at the time within the Mexican organizations (political struggle v. abstention; mutualism v. cooperativism; opposition v. collaboration between Capital and Labor) had preceded the debates in the International. If Mata Rivera was not “Marx’s man in Mexico”, nor was *La Social* Bakuninist, regardless of its ties to the Jura federation. “Its leader, Rhodakanaty, was a Christian socialist. From anarchism, he only retained the opposition to the State and the conviction that the great act of a *social liquidation* would come from the will of all workers in the inauguration of a more just society.” In sum, if the split in the International had an impact on the Mexican workers, it was only indirectly, by superimposing itself on prior antagonisms. All in all, García Cantú concluded, the International had stimulated the will to unify “the harassed artisan with a budding proletariat”.<sup>14</sup>

10 Valadés, *El socialismo libertario*, pp. 74–75; James Guillaume, *L’Internationale. Documents et souvenirs*, 4 vol. (Paris, 1909), vol. 3, p. xv; (Paris, 1910), vol. 4, p. 140.

11 Valadés, “Sobre los orígenes”, pp. 87–88.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

13 García Cantú, *El socialismo en México*, p. 186.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

### The International in Montevideo

In Uruguay too the emergence of a mutualist movement had preceded trade organization and working class politics. The Montevidean Typographic Society was founded in 1870, and three years later it signed a pact of “reciprocal unity” with the Typographic Society of Buenos Aires. In 1883, they launched *El Tipógrafo*, the first trade unionist newspaper in Uruguay.

Through the correspondence edited by José C. Valadés, we know that a Uruguayan section of the International was established in Montevideo in 1872, which got in touch with *La Social* in Mexico and the Spanish Regional Federation. Its secretary was Francisco C. Galcerán, a Catalan migrant who, in an 1873 letter, wrote of the “sworn loyalty to the Socialist Democratic Alliance” (referring to the association created by Bakunin in Geneva in 1868). And thanks to a letter sent from Montevideo by an Internationalist named A. Juanes, probably another Spanish immigrant, we know that they were confronting “London agents” and that, since 1872, they had been aware of the “Machiavellianism of the General Council in London against Bakunin”.<sup>15</sup>

The Uruguayan section called a workers assembly in Montevideo on 27 June 1875. That day saw the foundation of the *Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay*, also called the Montevidean Federation (it never expanded beyond the capital city). The meeting was a success, since nearly 2,000 people attended it at a time when the number of workers didn't exceed 20,000 in Montevideo.<sup>16</sup> Not long after the founding of the Federation, on 7 July 1875, a leaflet titled “Manifiesto for All the Workers of Montevideo” was published. It asserted the productive character of labor (“without the worker, no society could exist”) and called on workingmen to turn a deaf ear to the “able style” of the exploiters since “our redemption must be the work of ourselves.”<sup>17</sup> The workers of Montevideo, the leaflet went on, should unite considering the “beneficial results” obtained “all over the world [by] the International.” The address had a class character (capital is designated as the enemy of the worker), but the government, far from being attacked, was presented as the guarantor of the Liberal Constitution: “Residents of a republican country, whose laws are especially democratic, and, where therefore, freedom of association is a given, let us constitute ourselves in the shadows of this philanthropic system, since the Government will be attentive not to suppress in the least our aspirations.” The

15 Valadés, “Sobre los orígenes”, p. 84.

16 Fernando López D'Alessandro, *Historia de la izquierda uruguaya. 1. Anarquistas y socialistas (1838–1910)*, (Montevideo, 1994), p. 48.

17 Valadés, “Sobre los orígenes”, pp. 86–87.



“Manifiesto,” which ended with “Health, Work, and Justice,” is signed by a “commission” composed of two bricklayers, three carpenters, a day laborer, a tailor and two others whose profession was not mentioned.<sup>18</sup>

It would be excessive to present the Internationalists of Montevideo as “Bakuninists” from the contents of this text. Rather than considering the liberal government as their enemy, its authors placed themselves under its patronage. They also advocated the organization of all workers, regardless of their religious beliefs or political positions.

Yet, this did not stop them from corresponding with the “antipolitical” Mexicans of *La Social*, nor from sending a copy of the leaflet to the “Citizen Secretary of the Mexican Section of the International Workingmen’s Association, brother Zalacosta” requesting publicity in the Mexican press. The “Manifiesto” was republished in its entirety in *El Socialista* in Mexico on 17 October 1875. Although the men of *La Social* had intercepted a letter sent from Montevideo to Juan de Mata Rivera, arguing that he was not “a worthy party member” but rather “a businessman and a politician,”<sup>19</sup> the director of *El Socialista* gladly published the Manifiesto received from a worker in Montevideo which not only praised the liberal government but also situated itself under its patronage.

Guillaume mentions the surprise of the Jura federation upon discovering the existence of the so-called Montevideo branch in the pages of a Mexican weekly.<sup>20</sup> After that, the men of Montevideo exchanged press and correspondences with those of the Jura federation. Thanks to Nettlau, we know that a former Communard who had joined the Uruguayan section, Pierre Bernard, received in Montevideo the *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*.<sup>21</sup> We also know that the eighth General Congress of the International held in Bern on October 26–29 1876, received word from the Montevideo section.<sup>22</sup> The *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, dated 22 April 1877, published for the first time a letter sent by the *Comité de la Sociedad Internacional de Obreros* in Montevideo, saying: “We regularly receive the *Bulletin* and we have also received the

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

20 Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, vol. 3, p. 306.

21 Max Nettlau, “La Internacional en Buenos Aires en 1872–1873,” in *Suplemento Semanal de La Protesta* (Buenos Aires, La Protesta, 15 de noviembre de 1926), p. 9. See also: Max Nettlau, “Más sobre la Internacional en Buenos Aires; algunas noticias de los años 1870–1873,” *Suplemento Quincenal de La Protesta* (Buenos Aires, La Protesta, 20 de enero de 1928); “Más sobre los orígenes de la Internacional en Buenos Aires. Documentos nuevos e inéditos,” *Suplemento Quincenal de La Protesta* (Buenos Aires, 3 de septiembre de 1928).

22 Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, vol. 4, p. 103.

*Report* concerning the International Congress in Bern. We ask you to please send us some good Italian newspapers".<sup>23</sup>

Another letter from Montevideo sent in February of 1877 to *La Social* of Mexico noted, "By way of our sister Spanish Federation, we ask for admission to the IX Universal Congress of Workers in the name of the Montevideo Federation, which counts six organized trades, five sections, and two thousand permanent members." The sign-off now read: "Health, Anarchy, and Fraternity".<sup>24</sup> Guillaume confirms the existence of that letter: the 9th General Congress of the International, which met in Verviers from 6 to 8 September 1877, accepted the request and "the Federation of Montevideo was [...] received in the International".<sup>25</sup>

On September 1st, 1878, the sections held a "general Assembly" which voted the creation of the "Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay of the International Workingmen's Association". The assembly also approved a Declaration of Principles, a Statute, some Regulations, a pamphlet including the *Manifesto*, Statutes of the International penned by Marx (approved at the Geneva congress), the Statutes modified by the Geneva Congress of 1873. The Statutes and Regulations approved by the Montevidean Federation, which defined the functions of the committees, was quickly edited. The Federation's organizational characteristics were twofold: it had a territorial character and a functional character, including administration, propaganda, organization, and discussion.<sup>26</sup> These were preceded by a "Prologue" in which the critique of labor exploitation fall back onto the "monopoly" of Capital: the capitalist society was presented as "prisoner to monopoly and, therefore, to privilege and injustice." The solution extolled by the International was "collective property in the means of production" so that each individual belonging to mankind be able to work with his/her own means and receive the complete product of his/her labor, without falling prey to an exploiter. Once this becomes true, "Truth, Justice, Morality will be the base of human relations".<sup>27</sup> More than a mere political pamphlet, it was a membership book. The first page was reserved for the name of the member, together with the signatures of the President, of the

23 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 193.

24 Valadés, "Sobre los orígenes", pp. 87–88.

25 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. 4, 258.

26 Carlos Zubillaga, *Pan y trabajo. Organización Sindical, Estrategias de Lucha y Arbitraje Estatal en Uruguay, 1870–1905* (Montevideo, 1996), p. 44.

27 Carlos M. Rama, "Los internacionalistas de 1870", *Nuestro Tiempo* 2 (Montevideo, 1955), pp. 115–121.

secretary, and of the member himself/herself. The last page was reserved for the registration of memberships dues.

In 1878, a newspaper entitled *El Internacional. Órgano de las clases trabajadoras* was started in Montevideo. Published under the motto of "Justice, Morality, Work," it was the organ of the Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. It had only two issues. In the first issue one could read: "The eternal question of labor and capital, the emancipation of workers and the reduction of capitalist power cannot be answered but by the victory of those who today endure the ominous yoke of power, in all places of the world."<sup>28</sup>

As in Mexico, the International effectively attracted those migrants and creole workers in order to create the first worker's central organization. According to Rama, the Internationalists were the first to organically connect the working class of Montevideo with socialist ideas and the future of the international working class. In addition, a continuity can be traced between the Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay (of the International) and the Local Federation of the Workers of the Uruguayan Region from 1885, founded a decade later, and even with the Regional Uruguayan Worker's Federation (FORU) set up in 1905. For, Rama affirms, they had "the same form of organization, the same style of tactics regarding worker's struggle and even the same ideological orientation, deriving from anarchism in its Proudhonian and Bakuninist forms. The model is borrowed from workers' movements with a libertarian inclination from Spain and Italy, and frequently it was the Spanish and Italians, when not Frenchmen, who stood as leaders of this tendency."<sup>29</sup>

### The Failed Attempts of Communards in Buenos Aires

Across the Rio de la Plata, in Argentina, the Buenos Aires Typographic Society had established ties with the Federal Council of the Spanish Region as early as 1870. They received the first publications of the International through this connection.<sup>30</sup> Two years later, a letter sent from Buenos Aires dated 10th February

28 *El Internacional*, 1 (Montevideo, 12/5/1878).

29 Carlos M. Rama, "Obreros y anarquistas", *Enciclopedia Uruguaya*, 32 (Montevideo, 1969), pp. 25–26.

30 Until the advent of modern studies of Ricardo Falcon, *La Primera Internacional y los orígenes del movimiento obrero en Argentina. 1857–1879* (París, 1980); "Documentos para la historia de la Primera Internacional en el Río de la Plata", *Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero y antiimperialista*, 2, (París, 1980), the references to the history of the First International in the Rio de la Plata were very remote: Jose Ingegnieros, "La Internacional en Sud América (Datos que servirán para la historia del socialismo)", *Almanaque de La*

1872 signed by a so-called Émile Flaesch was sent to the General Council in London, announcing that, days earlier, twenty-six citizens had founded the *Section Française de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs* and requesting its affiliation with the IWMA. A triangular stamp read in the middle, *Association Internationale des Travailleurs*; on one side *Section Française*, on the other *Pas de devoirs sans droits, pas de droits sans devoirs*.<sup>31</sup> A postscript dated from the following month announced that the section now had seventy members and predicted that “the International would succeed in Buenos Aires as soon as it was well-known.”

On 14 April 1872, Flaesch sent from Buenos Aires another, even more enthusiastic letter:

At the present date 89 of us have registered; 60 new members have been presented and will be accepted at the next session. Many worker societies will soon ally themselves to us. The country's newspapers, fierce enemies of the Association from afar, are now silent since they know it from close up. The representative from France has declared himself amazed by what he calls our audience. The International is in all conversations. Speeches in favor and against us have been pronounced in the masonic lodges.<sup>32</sup>

Its immediate goal was the publication of a socialist newspaper, but lacking information on the International, they expressed their desire to correspond with their European counterparts: “We beg you, citizens, keep in mind, in one of your correspondences, to please tell us how to communicate with the Parisian Federation and, if they exist, other sections of the Association in South America, and in which cities”.<sup>33</sup>

A third letter from Flaesch on 16 July 1872 spoke of exponential growth: “We reach today the number of 273 and we hope not to stop there.” He mentioned too the creation of the Italian section, whose nucleus was already important enough to separate itself from the French section. Flaesch assigned an

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*Vanguardia para 1899* (Buenos Aires, La Vanguardia, 1889); Mario Bravo, “La Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores en la América Latina”, *Crítica Social* (Buenos Aires, 21/1/1926), pp. 3–4; Faustino Jorge, “La Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores en la Argentina”, *Argumentos*, 2 (Buenos Aires, 1938).

31 Horacio Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina. Sus primeros lectores obreros, intelectuales y científicos* (Buenos Aires, 2ª ed. 2013), p. 496.

32 Flaesch to General Council, Buenos Aires, 4/14/1872, in Horacio Tarcus *Marx en la Argentina*, p. 497.

33 Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina*, p. 498.

enormous importance to this section: "Here, the Italians constitute the majority of the foreign population."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, an anonymous author calling themselves the "Fondateur de l'Internationale à Buenos Ayres" reported the creation of another section that did not "sincerely" abide by the official branch, which "could perhaps end by way of harming the Association." But it's probable that the Communards of Bakuninist orientation that had arrived in Buenos Aires had joined mutualist and resistance societies together without forming a bona fide section. The letter sent by A. Juanes to the Mexicans brothers of *La Social* said: "From Buenos Aires, I return disconsolate: only among the artisan bakers have I found an atmosphere favorable to the development of resistance societies".<sup>35</sup> Libertarian groups would not appear in Buenos Aires until the end of the decade, in 1879.

Shortly thereafter a Spanish section emerged. According to a letter of Aubert (another exile who appears as the new "Secrétaire des Sections de B. Ayres") to Jean Latraque (an ex-Communard exiled in San Sebastian, Spain):

Today, there exist in Buenos Aires three sections of the International, based on linguistic differences: the French section, and the Spanish and Italian sections, which were formed later. Each section has its own central committee, and questions of general interest are addressed by a federal council composed of six members (two for each section). I will not speak of the difficulties that it had to overcome at the beginning.<sup>36</sup>

José Ingenieros tells us that a fourth section of the International appeared in Cordoba around 1874; but it was probably very small and little evidence of its existence has been recorded.<sup>37</sup>

The Argentine section obtained the recognition it had requested. Le Moussu the Communard refugee who was the corresponding secretary for Latin America, sent an official notification from London to Buenos Aires on 1 July 1872. According to the historian Ermolaiev, "he enclosed twelve copies of the Statutes of the International".<sup>38</sup>

34 *Ibid.*, p. 499.

35 Valadés, "Sobre los orígenes", p. 84.

36 Aubert to Latraque, Buenos Aires, 3/23/1873, in Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina*, p. 502.

37 José Ingenieros, "La Internacional en Sud América (Datos que servirán para la historia del socialismo)", *Almanaque de La Vanguardia para 1899* (Buenos Aires: La Vanguardia, 1898) pp. 24–26, p. 25.

38 V. Ermolaiev, "Surgimiento de las primeras organizaciones obreras", in *La Primera Internacional y el triunfo del marxismo leninismo* (Buenos Aires, 1964), p. 262. Originally appeared in *Voprosy istorii*, 1, (Moscu, 1959), pp. 81–97.

Apart from these letters, there are unfortunately no other documents concerning the Internationalists in Buenos Aires. No file of its newspaper, *El Trabajador*, is known to have been preserved. Regarding the division between “Bakuninists” and “Marxists”, the Argentine section appears to have been aligned with the latter. For Abad de Santillán, “above all, the French section had to have been Marxist or influenced by the followers of Marxism”.<sup>39</sup> The contrast with Montevideo is noteworthy: Juanes returned from Buenos Aires “disconsolate” concerning the power of the “authoritarians.” He added: “Ah! The jackasses need a whipping.” A month later, Galcerán, the secretary of the Uruguayan section, wrote to his Mexican counterpart: “We are preparing a newspaper that will be called *El Obrero Federalista* in order to combat the authoritarians, who have seated royalty in Buenos Aires”.<sup>40</sup>

The Buenos Aires Internationalists can be cautiously described as “Marxist” in the same way as their Mexican and Uruguayan counterparts may be called “Bakuninist”; the same caveats apply. In fact, their “Marxism” was more a global orientation toward political action and a proclaimed loyalty to the Council in London, with whom they had had contact, than an acceptance of Marx’s theories, which they undoubtedly did not know. Nettlau’s hesitations make sense when he writes, “the movement in Buenos Aires was rather *workerist and socialist in general*”.<sup>41</sup>

Among the delegates attending the fifth general Congress which took place at The Hague in September 1872, was Raymond Wilmart. This rebellious child of Belgian aristocrats had been recruited into the International by Paul Lafargue in Bordeaux. According to the proceedings, in which he appears under the pseudonym of Vilmot, he sided with the “Marxists” to vote for the expulsion of Guillaume and Bakunin. It was in this congress that participants were informed of the “branching out to Buenos Aires, Australia, and New Zealand” (Flaesch’s letters had been received some time before). Once the Bakuninists had been expelled, the General Council resolved to send a delegate to Buenos Aires to explain and defend the line established at The Hague and to counter the possible reactions of the dissidents. This task was entrusted to Wilmart. In three successive letters to Marx – whose originals have been preserved at the Marx-Engels Papers of the IISG and which I’ve reproduced in my *Marx in*

39 Diego Abad de Santillán, *El movimiento anarquista en la Argentina. Desde sus comienzos hasta el año 1910* (Buenos Aires, 1930), p. 16.

40 Valadés, “Sobre los orígenes”, p. 84.

41 Nettlau, “La Internacional en Buenos Aires”, p. 17.

*Argentina* – Wilmart informed him of the local situation, giving vent first to his enthusiasm and then to discouragement.<sup>42</sup>

On 13 May 1873, he wrote in his first letter: “I have placed four series and I’ve saved one for myself.” He was probably referring to the French edition of *Capital* that was then being published in installments. Wilmart had begun distributing it in Buenos Aires. Wilmart also dismissed any anarchist influence in the Argentine section: “There is no official correspondence with the Jura federation.” In fact, the opposite was true: “The grouping of the three sections is far from anarchism – excessively disciplinary.” In any case, Wilmart asked Marx for briefings on several Communards who were members of the Buenos Aires section and whom he suspected to be Blanquist activists. Among these were many Frenchmen, “remainders of the shipwreck of the Paris Commune,” along with Swiss, Italians, and even representatives of the first wave of French migration who had participated in the Revolutions of 1848. They had “little energy”, said Wilmart, who thought their educational and mutual aid project were “unrealizable”. The young revolutionary progressively became exasperated: “Time is lost in these discussions on the inevitable questions of regulation.”<sup>43</sup> Wilmart intervened energetically in favor of political action at the risk of appearing, among those who were older than him, as “a little exalted.” Finally, Wilmart reported that he had been designated member of the board of administrators of the newspaper *El Trabajador*, but was no longer a member of the editorial team, which might be an indication of mistrust. Wilmart sent several collections of *El Trabajador* to London and asked for copies of European newspapers. Just before he signed off, he made a quick observation about the immeasurably better living standards in the country, would make it appear to many Europeans as a “refugium peccatorum.” Wilmart was beginning to find some attractiveness in the semi-barbarous land of Argentina.

Two weeks later, on 27 May 1873, his discouragement had become perceptible. Although “a proposal had been voted at the Federal Council to pave the way for creating a federation of guilds,” things advanced “always very slowly.” It took a lot of time to publish the newspaper, the mutualist spirit predominated, and instead of struggling over propaganda and political action, the sections indulged in mutualist and educational activities. Wilmart concluded that, apart from some French or Spanish exiles who were already politically conscious when they had arrived, the Argentina of 1873 was not yet ready for international socialism:

42 Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina*, pp. 504–511. See also: Horacio Tarcus, *Diccionario biográfico de la izquierda argentina. De los anarquistas a la “nueva izquierda”. 1870–1976* (Buenos Aires, 2007).

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 505–506.

I am beginning to believe that there's nothing to do with the elements here. There are too many possibilities to become a small owner and to exploit recently-arrived workers to think about acting in a certain way.<sup>44</sup>

When responding to his previous letter, Marx had obviously insisted on possible ties with the Bakuninists, since Wilmart reiterated: "there are no reasons to believe in the existence of any correspondence with the 140 members of the Jura federation." But his optimism of a few days earlier concerning the circulation of Marx's *magnum opus* had disappeared:

Until now, nothing has been said about *Capital* and I think that nobody has finished reading it, since nobody takes the time to think in this country.<sup>45</sup>

His depiction of the country's political backwardness was devastating:

In this country politics as a whole boils down to personalities and, in Europe, they would barely believe that there are not only rivalries between the States but also between the provinces.<sup>46</sup>

Wilmart did not draw this conclusion from political struggles in Argentina, but rather from the confrontations between caudillos and the masses mobilized by the "magic of names." His perspective did not differ much from Marx's when the latter wrote "Bolívar." In this context, Wilmart was favorable to the consolidation of a unified and centralized State, and indeed, after the failure of the International, he enlisted in the army as a volunteer to fight against the caudillo forces in the province of Entre Ríos. Wilmart also painted a large fresco of "barbarism" in Argentina:

Without the affluence of foreigners, no progress would be possible, no one would know anything but how to ride horse.<sup>47</sup>

On 14 June 1873, Wilmart sent Marx a final letter in which he described the irrepressible downturn in the Argentine sections:

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44 *Ibid.*, pp. 507–508.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 508.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*



Things are going poorly here: empty sessions, lack of goodwill. Three more have just left, the daily has not appeared in the last month. The issue that was supposed to come out tomorrow, will not appear before the 20th. We're lacking in funds and we must have paid roughly eight.<sup>48</sup>

Wilmart did not try to hide his uneasiness and, even worse, he saw some similarities with the crisis of the Spanish Federation. The International was now fighting against the current: "We should not ever become discouraged, but we need much more patience to blow on the ashes of those who do not want to spark again. If I've been well informed, Spain is not going well and I have the impression that it is the same thing everywhere." Most likely, the Argentine section of the International did not outlive its vegetative state after 1874.

Considering his mission was now over, Marx's emissary decided to stay in Argentina for good. Because he had been born in elite circles, it did not take Wilmart long to connect with the elite in Argentina, becoming a reputed lawyer in the *Porteño* forum, and later a professor at the Law School and author of numerous works. He became a moderate voice within Argentine socialism and an advanced voice in jurisprudence, a partisan of international tribunals and a defender of the rights of workers and women.

In 1875, a brief attempt to give a new start to the *Section Française de Buenos Ayres* must have taken place. In March, several dailies reported that a police operation had broken into the second floor of a tenement house in that city and arrested "twelve members of the International Society of Workers, the recently founded French section of Buenos Aires." These arrests were the result of an investigation into the causes of an incident which occurred on the afternoon of 28 February, when an exchange of shots took place as an ecstatic multitude approached the College of Salvador where an anticlerical meeting had been organized by Argentine masons.<sup>49</sup> On 20 April the judge on duty, Damián Hudson, decided to drop the case and released the men who had been detained. The Internationalists had been imprisoned for thirty-seven days.

Thanks to the judicial process, important direct documentary sources, including the session's minutes, have been preserved.<sup>50</sup> Of the eighteen members of the new Section, sixteen were recently-arrived Frenchmen. Just like those who had formed the first French Section, they were most likely

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48 *Ibid.*, p. 511.

49 Hilda Sabato, *La política en las calles* (Buenos Aires, 1998), p. 8.

50 Hilda Sabato, "Sección francesa de Buenos Aires de la Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores: documentos para una historia. Selección y nota preliminar", *Estudios del trabajo*, 14 (Buenos Aires, 1999).

ex-Communards from the south of France who had escaped repression. Official transcripts tell us that many were artisans: two pastry makers, two bakers, a shoemaker, a painter, a carpenter, a printer, a photographer, a machinist, a cleaner, a tailor, a bookkeeper, and a journalist. The *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français* offers no information about the majority of them, since, like the exiles involved in the previous attempt, they were young rank and file militants, unknown until the Commune.

The first formal session was held on 14 February 1875. They debated then the character of the association. The journalist Stanislas Pourille, a former elected Commune member under the name of Blanchet, presided over the meeting, and a Blanquist, Job, acted as secretary. At their next meeting, they approved a regulation stipulating that to be admitted into the Section, it was “necessary to justify one’s quality as a worker or present evidence of one’s civic and social virtues.” “All those living off usury, stock market business, all those belonging to a religious order, or exploiting gambling or prostitution establishments” would be barred from joining.

The third assembly perilously coincided with the anticlerical meeting. The meeting addressed an assembly of workers. They approved a manifesto redacted by Pourille that was printed in French, Italian, and Spanish, and was to be sent to newspapers for publication. As in the Manifesto of Montevideo, a certain classist perspective underlaid its critique of the “international association of parasites, that is to say, the class that lives and enjoys the fruits of the earth and industry at the expense of those who work and suffer.”<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, disregarding the emphasis put by the International on the constitution of the working class as a political party, an ethical dimension was here emphasized: it was a call for unity, for the fraternity of all the victims of poverty. The appeal to class solidarity gave way, a few paragraphs later, to an appeal to individuals, to “men poor and inspired by the love of liberty, equality, and fraternity.” Its call to them to get rid of “egoism, avarice, usury, libertinage, and prostitution” was closer to the Christian socialist or romantic socialist discourses than to the rhetoric of the International. Moreover, the motto chosen by Pourille (“all for one, one for all”) is more reminiscent of the romantic socialism of *The Three Musketeers* than of an appeal to the political unity of the working class in order to seize power. When the newspaper *Le Revolutionnaire* was launched a few months later in Buenos Aires, Pourille included among his references Fourier and Cabet, Mazzini and Garibaldi, Proudhon and Blanqui, but neither Marx nor Bakunin.<sup>52</sup> As we know, however, the manifesto was

51 Tarcus, *Marx en la Argentina*, p. 110.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

never printed and the Internationalists never called a public meeting. In the middle of their fifth session on Sunday, 3 March 1875, they were surprised by a police raid. This second attempt did not survive the unpleasant experience of trial and prison.

How may this failure of the Argentine sections be accounted for? First, both attempts were to some extent the by-product of the Paris Commune. But after the fall of the Commune, the International entered, as Molnar called it, its period of "decline."<sup>53</sup> The *porteñas* sections were in this respect born at the wrong time, at the moment when working class internationalism was beginning to ebb in Europe and in North America.

Secondly, the organizational model and political actions of the International presupposed the existence of a proletariat whose formation had barely begun in the Buenos Aires of 1870, where a new layer of urban workers of predominantly artisanal and mostly immigrant origin were consolidating and when starting to rehearse forms of organization of a mutualist nature. During this decade and the next, the possibilities and expectations of upward mobility were still important. The mainstream press and elite men boasted about the absence of the Social Question in Argentina.

Third, we should also consider that the conceptions and socialist values of the French internationalists were too much at odds with the liberal, individualist, and competitive ideology that dominated civil society in Argentina at that time. Aubert's and Wilmart's letters give us the image of a small nucleus of self-sacrificing men pitted against the attacks of a few and the disdain of the rest. Moreover, their socialism had a low grade of coherence. The only "political cadre," to use a twentieth-century term, with any knowledge of Marxism was Wilmart. But his failure to get any Communards to read the early chapters of *Capital* is telling. In Europe, too, it would be "a complicated reading," not only for the militant workers but also for many of the leaders.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, as with any relatively socially isolated group, there existed a climate of suspicion, rivalry, and division. The requests to London for reports from Flaesh and Wilmart were symptomatic in this respect. According to the testimony of Ingenieros, the internationalists "wasted their time and activity in futile quarrels without showing their work outside a narrow circle of

53 Miklos Molnar, *El declive de la Primera Internacional* (Madrid, 1974).

54 Franco Andreucci, "La difusión y vulgarización del marxismo", in Hobsbawm *et al.*, *Historia del marxismo*, 8 vol. (Barcelona, 1979–1983) vol. 3, p. 67.

secretaries".<sup>55</sup> As opposed to the cases of Mexico City and Montevideo, the sections of the International did not leave much of an imprint in the working classes of Buenos Aires. Its cycle was to begin later, in the dual form of anarchism and socialism, with the celebration of May Day in 1890. But that is another story.

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55 Ingenieros, "La Internacional en Sud América", p. 25.

## Socialism v. Democracy?

*The IWMA in the USA, 1869–1876*

*Michel Cordillot*

The history of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) – better known as the First International – in America was at once brief and original. Established in New York City in December 1869, it expanded rapidly to include some 4 000 members and sixty language sections in twenty-five cities; four years later, it was almost extinct.

This history, often reduced to the minor role played by the Americans after the surprise decision of The Hague Congress to transfer the seat of the General Council to New York City in 1872, prelude to an impending demise, remained largely ignored for the next century. However, the past fifty years have witnessed a renewal of interest. Following Samuel Bernstein's pioneering book (1962), Hubert Perrier explored new avenues of research in his thesis (1984). Other scholars followed suit, bringing up new questioning and broaching the often debated question of the “absence” of socialism in the USA from a different angle. The present paper is an attempt to suggest a new overall interpretation of the history of the IWMA in the USA and its historical legacy.

### First Footings in America

Five years elapsed after the founding of the IWMA in London before it managed to establish a permanent foothold in the USA. After several fruitless attempts, Section 1 (German) was officially set up in early December 1869, Section 2 (French) in June 1870, Section 3 (Czech) a few weeks later, all of them in New York City. Although ties were established simultaneously with several American reform organizations, including the “New Democracy”, the IWMA initially put down roots in various immigrant communities, eliciting a warning from the General Council worried that it might be perceived as a “foreign” organization. Things could have turned out differently, since the first national US labor organization, the National Labor Union (NLU), had contacted the IWMA on its own initiative in 1868. But despite the presence of a delegate at the Basel Congress (September 1869), the NLU never formally joined the IWMA, in part because of the untimely death of its founder William Sylvis.

The conjunction of several dynamics made possible the success of this new attempt at the end of 1869. First, there was the international expansion of the IWMA at the time when it was rapidly gaining ground in Europe following the Basel Congress (September 1869) – an ominous fact discussed at length by the American press. Next, a complex and contradictory local context combining structural economic changes (rise of female labor, technological evolutions undermining the traditional structure of employment, mass immigration...), a fluctuating economic situation in the aftermath of the Civil War (with a spectacular industrial boom, but also a difficult transition from a war-time to a peace-time economy resulting in a first economic recession in 1866/67, followed by a second one in 1869/71), and rising social tensions (the offensive strikes wave in 1868/69, was followed by a series of defensive movements, then again by a vigorous demand for the eight-hour work day) even though the US labor movement was still hesitant about its modes of organization (trade unions, international unions, city trades' assemblies, industrial congresses...) and its reform projects, as in the case of the National Labor Union. Last but not least, there existed a series of dynamics specific to each immigrant community. In August 1869, the founding in Eisenach of the SDAP, a social-democratic party challenging the Lassallean ADAV encouraged the mobilization of German political refugees, whereas the rapid deterioration of the political situation in France had already triggered the reactivation of the old political networks among the forty-eighter exiles, especially the former followers of Cabet, leading to the formation in 1868 of the *Union républicaine de langue française*. The harassment of the International leaders in France (May 1870), and the Franco-Prussian war (July 1870-January 1871) stimulated a process of further radicalization which led many to join the IWMA and adhere to a form of socialism conceived as the maximalization of the Republic.

All these dynamics, favorable at first, later took a downturn, causing a progressive decline in mobilization and eventually the near disappearance of most sections, until the decisive vote in July 1876 to officially dissolve the IWMA (at least the "centralist" one).

The first American Internationalists had to face an early test of will with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. Immediately following the proclamation of the Republic in Paris on 4 September 1870 French and German members initiated hand-in-hand two mass meetings in New York City, with the support of several American organizations, to demand the end of military operations and peace without annexation. Still traumatized by the terrible conflict they had just come through, the Americans watched the evolution of the European situation closely, and these initiatives were again largely discussed in the press. As a result, several new sections of the IWMA were organized within weeks.

It had become urgent to set up a structure which could coordinate the activities of sections in which different languages were spoken. In December 1870, the suggestion made by Eugène Dupont, who sat on the General Council in London, to form a “central committee” for North America was adopted and it soon became a *de facto* executive organ whose role was to stimulate the development of the nascent organization. Despite material difficulties related to a chronic shortage of funds, it managed to gain some visibility, especially after having demonstratively welcomed in the port of New York several Irish Fenians recently released from British jails (leading to the formation of three small Irish sections later on).

### The Paris Commune and America

While the IWMA had been rescued from obscurity by the Franco-Prussian war, the Paris Commune brought it into the spotlight. US public opinion was appalled. Except for a handful of native radicals, including the famous abolitionist leader Wendell Phillips, who announced publicly their support of the Parisians, the great majority of Americans reacted negatively to put it mildly. Conversely, the response of the Internationalists – the French first of all – and their sympathizers was enthusiastic. The membership of the IWMA soared, and the number of sections rose spectacularly from six in May 1871 to thirty-five by the end of November (before reaching forty-five in the Spring of the following year). Important sums of money were also collected to help the vanquished who had managed to flee Paris.

The German sections (about twenty in number) were headed by politically well-trained refugees. They could rely on a migratory dynamic which provided them with a mass ethnic base. In New York City, German immigrants accounted for 22% of all industrial workers: in June 1869, the *Arbeiter Union* included twenty-three German-speaking unions and had its own newspaper – which disappeared in September 1870 when rampant nationalism caused its circulation to collapse owing to its anti-war stance. German immigrants were also reputed for being rather receptive to progressive and radical ideas, and the German socialists dominated several organizations of skilled workers. It was no surprise that Germans represented about half the total membership of the IWMA in the USA.

The English-speaking sections (eighteen altogether) also developed spectacularly. As convincingly demonstrated by Timothy Messer-Kruse, they drew on the American reform tradition dating back from the revolutionary era and on the development of closer ties with the progressive wing of the labor

movement in New York City. The IWMA banners could thus be seen floating over the speakers' platform erected for the eight-hour day demonstration on 13 September 1871, which was attended by 20,000 New York workers despite a heavy downpour.

French immigration in the US was unquestionably of marginal importance. Yet, the dramatic sequence of events of the "Terrible year", followed by the arrival of a handful of communards who had escaped the "Bloody week" massacres, stirred up a strong emotional response among the local communities, leading to the multiplication of francophone sections (17 of them). The French Internationalists (together with the "autonomist sections") also initiated the impressive demonstration – the largest of its kind throughout the world – which took place in New York City on 17 December 1871 to honor the Parisian *Fédérés* and their sacrifice (see Figure 17.1). On that day, thousands of demonstrators marched in Manhattan behind a banner inscribed "Honor to the martyrs of the universal Republic" and an ocean of red flags preceded a horse-drawn hearse flanked by an honor guard of exiles and ex-communards, as tens of thousands of rather well-meaning onlookers stood by. To the great dismay of the conservatives and the police, not a single incident was recorded.

Thanks to the electric telegraph, this event made front-page headlines in the Monday issue of many papers throughout the country (see illustration: *Frank Leslie's*, 6 January 1872).

### Feuds and Schisms

This spectacular development of the IWMA was however somewhat deceptive. The coordinating efforts of the central committee were rapidly thwarted by internal strife. While all the sections shared such basic values as internationalism and, in theory at least, some long term goals (though a wide range of interpretations of such terms as "emancipation of workers" or "socialism" existed), essential divergences in terms of strategy soon became evident. In addition, the geographical dispersion of the various sections over a vast territory – among other factors specific to the USA – made coordinating actions difficult and tended to accentuate their isolation.

In early December 1871, after several weeks of latent conflict, the central committee split into two rival federal councils. The general context was grim: the communards had been defeated, and back in Europe, the unity of the IWMA was clearly threatened after the London conference of September 1871 had voted measures deemed unacceptable by Bakunin and his allies, and more generally by all those who favored federalism. Ironically, the split in America



took place at the very moment when the IWMA had scored its first popular success with the mass demonstration of 17 December 1871.

Things were simple in appearance. The so-called “centralist” (or Tenth ward hotel) faction, which consisted mostly of german-speaking members claiming to be loyal to Marx, saw itself as the gatekeeper of socialist orthodoxy. Its aim was to counter the bid for leadership of the so-called “autonomist” (or Spring Street) faction led by American Sections 12 and 9, regarded as perverted by petty bourgeois ideology, or worse. The French sections (by then accounting for about one third of the IWMA membership) were caught in the crossfire.

Yet, as Perrier demonstrated, the reality was more complex. Despite their professed loyalty to Marx and their exclusive commitment to the working class, the centralists’ positions were not devoid of ambiguities. Their American experience and the evolution of the National Labor Union had made them cautious, and they gave absolute priority to trade-union activity, refusing obstinately any form of political or electoral activity “in the present state”, contrary to what had been advocated by resolutions voted in London (at Marx’s instigation). The American autonomists (who unlike Bakunin were not intent on refusing political action or destroying the state, demanding rather its ultimate democratization,) favored the creation of a political party – as voted in London. They would welcome all types of radicals (not just workers) in order to promote various reforms in favor of the working classes, as well as women, Negroes, cooperatives and so on. They planned to amend the American Constitution and publicize their views during the upcoming presidential campaign by running a ticket associating an ineligible woman (Victoria Woodhull) and a former slave (Frederick Douglass).

The forceful irruption of the English-speaking sections had in fact raised the question of the Americanization of socialism. The real issue was whether the theoretical schemes imported from Europe could be applied unchanged on the other side of the Atlantic, or whether it was advisable to draft a program taking fully into account the national democratic tradition so as to foster an extension of native radicalism.

Dissensions crystallised around Section 12 and its most provocative proposals, including its demand to be recognized by the General Council as the “leading section” in the USA. Yet it appears that after the split, the main inspirator of the autonomist Spring Street council almost immediately ceased to be Section 12, many members of which rapidly lost interest in the factional strife of the International, and became Section 9, which stood its ground and continued to propose, from within, an electoral and unionist strategy coherent with American traditions, with the entry of workers in the political arena its central priority.

Because the two rival American factions defined themselves using the same terms as the two European factions (centralists v. autonomists), they actually confused the issue by creating the impression that their disagreements were merely the American rendition of the European feud. It is obvious that to justify their ideological stubbornness the centralists deliberately pretended to position themselves in the conflict between Marx and Bakunin, whereas the two disputes were completely distinct.

To these political disagreements, which also corresponded largely to an ethnic confrontation (German-speaking immigrants v. English-speaking members), must be added the pussyfooting of the French sections, almost exclusively preoccupied with helping the communard refugees. The landing in New York of nearly 200 of the latter, often with their families, in the Fall of 1871 had enabled the Blanquists to secure the *de facto* leadership of the French-speaking sections and the editorial control of their national newspaper, *Le Socialiste*, making the situation even more confused. In the London General Council, the Blanquists were Marx's most loyal allies, and this situation remained unchanged until The Hague Congress in 1872. But in New York City, the self-professed Marxists refused to accept what the Blanquists regarded as essential, i.e. the creation of a revolutionary political party, whereas their autonomist adversaries regarded this as their priority. Hence the relative neutrality of the French sections in the American conflict between December 1871 and September 1872.

The London General Council postponed its own decision for several months. When it finally decided in May 1872 to arbitrate in favor of the centralists and to suspend Section 12 pending the decision of the general congress due to take place in September, the gap between the warring factions had become unbridgeable. While the centralists rigidly concentrated on their trade-union activities, the autonomists were uncertain. Section 12 was busy building a large political coalition in which various reform movements, including the feminists, the money reformers, and the Spiritualists, would have their place. Very active in the unemployed movement, the members of Section 9 – which was mostly working-class in composition despite the centralists' allegations – took the initiative to organize an important demonstration in New York City on 14 March 1872, and by doing so directly challenged Section 1 on its own turf. Their goal was avowedly to launch a local labor party formulating concrete demands. But following their complete failure to convince the delegates at the founding congress of the Labor Reform Party held in Columbus (Ohio) in February 1872 to adopt their platform, as a last resort they decided to rally to the candidacy of Victoria Woodhull and take part in the foundation of the Equal Rights Party (11–12 May at the Apollo Convention Hall in New York City). Much of their credibility was lost in the ensuing debacle.

Next, in July, two rival American congresses were held to prepare the general congress at The Hague: twenty-two sections, including two French sections, were represented at the centralist one while 13 sections, including two French sections, attended the autonomist congress. About 10 French sections had decided to stay away from both congresses. At the same time that new sections were being formed, the existing ones had started to lose members rapidly.

### The Hague Congress and Its Consequences

Among the important decisions voted at The Hague (September 1872) was the transfer of the seat of the General Council to New York City. Regardless of its real motivations, this decision was an ill-fated one. In the USA, the internecine war was still raging. The labor movement had lost its momentum after the setback suffered by the eight-hour movement – of the 100 000 workers who had struck in New York City, only one in eight had had done so successfully – and, frightened by the intense press campaign, an increasing number of unions were now trying to distance themselves from the “communists”. The hard core of the New York socialist movement had shrunk to a handful of german-speaking unions relatively insulated by the language barrier, such as the cigar makers union, soon to become under the leadership of Internationalists like Gompers, Laurel and Strasser, a social laboratory promoting a socialist inspired version of trade-unionism.

Feeling to some extent legitimized – and encouraged in their complex of doctrinal superiority – by the decision voted at The Hague, the centralists gave the impression they had found a new lease of life for some time, whereas the Spring Street faction, initially more dynamic, was rapidly losing ground. As for the French blanquists, now “internationalists without the International” after their break with Marx at The Hague, they isolated themselves in an increasingly more sterile bravado which progressively exacerbated the fault-line between the old forty-eighters who had chosen to build a new life in the USA and the communard refugees eager to go back home as soon as possible. The final break was to occur in 1875, when the old *Bulletin de l'Union républicaine* resurfaced to replace *Le Socialiste*. Henceforward, only the periodic fund-raising drives to alleviate the fate of the Parisian insurgents transported to New Caledonia could temporarily reconcile all the French exiles.

In the fall of 1873, the failure of Jay Cooke & Company signaled a nationwide economic debacle, soon to have repercussions in other industrialised countries. Within weeks, the number of unemployed rose to 100,000 in New York City alone. The internationalists mustered their last forces. Building on their German-speaking strongholds, the centralists tried to organize the foreign

unemployed. Whatever autonomists were still active did the same among English-speaking workers. Quite successfully so, since by mid-December, 23 organizations numbering some 10 000 people out of work voted for the creation of a Committee of Public Safety – an obvious tribute to the communards – which called a demonstration in Tompkins Square on 13 January 1874. Worried about the extension of the movement to Chicago, Saint Louis, Cincinnati, Boston, Newark and other cities, the local authorities reacted violently. Several thousand demonstrators were brutally dispersed by the police, and the repression that followed caused the complete collapse of the unemployed movement.

### **The Demise of the International**

After this setback, the American IWMA was the shadow of its former self. The last autonomists fell back on their respective unions. The Blanquists, who had attended the demonstration in full force, returned to an even greater isolation, whereas the German sections were about to face an internal crisis echoing the one already tearing up the Austrian social-democracy.

The final act took place on 15 July at the Philadelphia conference organised during the Centennial Exposition, when ten delegates representing thirteen German sections and 635 members in good standing voted the final dissolution of the IWMA. The founding congress of the Workingmen's Party of the United States, the first American socialist party claiming at once 3,000 members, was to open in the same hall four days later (19–22 July).

The IWMA was thus obviously short-lived in the USA. Born quite late, a few months hence it saw the progressive inversion of the social, political, and migratory dynamics which had stimulated its rise. The International was by then divided and persecuted in Europe. The 1873 crisis had strongly curtailed the economic boom of the post-Civil War years, and the union mobilization was ebbing. The Franco-Prussian war and the tragical outcome of the Paris Commune had plunged the socialists into disarray. This downturn began during the second half of 1871, yet it remained unperceived for some time because of the creation of new sections throughout 1872. Precipitated by the split of December 1871, the decline of the IWMA in the USA had nonetheless become irreversible.

### **The Legacy of the International in America**

Today the American history of the IWMA is all in all well established. The main question remains to assess the legacy of this experience. What was its impact

on organized labor, on the socialist movement, and more generally on American public opinion?

It is not necessary here to dwell at length on the first two points, already thoroughly explored by Perrier and Messer-Kruse. Indeed they (and others) have shown that despite the disillusionment resulting from this failed attempt, some of the ideas promoted by the autonomists continued to make their way within the great reform movement of the Knights of Labor (K of L). Also, some prominent representatives of the Spring Street faction played an outstanding role in formulating the syndicalist and revolutionary tenets of the International Working People's Association (IWPA) in the 1880s. Suffice it to say that the French activist Victor Drury was co-author of the Pittsburgh Manifesto of the IWPA (1883) and at the same time a member of the progressive DA 49 of the K of L and of the mysterious but powerful Home Club. In the same vein, Perrier and Messer-Kruse have also convincingly shown how some former centralists – notably Samuel Gompers – gradually moved from progressive unionism towards a pansyndicalist credo, eventually to become apostles of the “pure and simple unionism” of the American Federation of Labor.

Lastly, their contribution remains essential to understand the place of the IWMA in the history of the American Left, since it was the first of a series of organizations advocating socialism and later communism (WPUS, SLP, SPA, CPUSA). What needs to be stressed here is that the internal squabbles and the exclusion of the autonomist faction prevented the emergence of a genuinely American brand of socialism, and that the decades following the demise of the IWMA were, as a result, characterised by a nearly complete hegemony of “German” socialism in the USA, thus tending to validate the idea that socialism was indeed a “foreign” ideology.

Still debated is the important question of the impact of the IWMA on American public opinion. Here it is necessary to adopt a wider angle and take a brief look back. During the first half of the 19th Century, the revolutionary origins of the nation and its conquests, including the franchise, generally remained a source of pride for many Americans still influenced by their Jeffersonian heritage. Sharing an egalitarian political culture supposed to transcend partisan divisions, they did not hesitate to support those who fought against despotism and absolutism elsewhere in the world. Because they saw themselves as pioneers in the struggle against tyranny, Americans regarded foreign revolutionaries as brothers in arms, to the great displeasure of European absolutist governments. This was obvious enough in 1848 when the revolutionary uprisings of the “Spring of Nations” were almost unanimously welcomed in America.

Yet this unanimity did not last. After the Paris insurrection of June 1848, the spectre of communism also began to haunt America. Due to the absence of restrictive laws concerning immigration, thousands of defeated European

*démoc-socs* migrated to the United States in the early 1850s, but by then their ideas were already perceived as too extremist.

A complete change of perspective prevailed in the course of the three following decades. For American public opinion, the notion of Revolution ceased to be identified with democratic progress and became synonymous with social disorder. Confronted with the upheaval of Reconstruction after a bloody Civil War, the American Nation was by then afraid of possible social (and racial) subversion. Such an unstable climate did much to prepare American public opinion to internalize an in-depth transformation of the republican ideological legacy based on a Darwinian approach to US society. As spectacular economic progress galvanized the mystique of individual success, more and more voices rose to condemn all forms of egalitarianism and socialism.

The turning point must be looked for somewhere between 1871 and 1877.<sup>1</sup> Because it was perceived as a warning of the impending threat represented by the laboring classes to property and order, and possibly to the Republic itself, the Paris Commune paved the way for this inversion of values in the collective thinking of Americans. The demonstrations held under the aegis of the IWMA plus the well publicized arrival in the US of a few hundred communard refugees did little to restore peace, and the spirit of conservatism definitely superseded the spirit of progress when the near insurrectional railway strikes erupted in 1877. For the great majority of Americans, whether large, small, or would-be proprietors, Revolution had ceased to be identified with the legitimate struggle of oppressed people for greater freedom, and took on the hideous appearance of a menace against property and the gospel of personal success. Now instinctively conservative, the great majority of Americans were ready to join the crusade against social subversion. Confronted with ever more violent social movements (in 1886, 1892, 1893...), and having to cope with the challenge of mass immigration, Americans started to worry about their cultural identity, convinced that a new plot was being hatched against them, this time by “Reds” willing to promote unamerican theories imported from Europe. The radicalization of the small socialist groups, their *de facto* “germanification”, their revolutionary and sometimes militaristic rhetoric, and their rejection of any kind of alliance with native reformers, contributed to the painting of socialism as an ideology bent on forcefully imposing a State controlled economy, which was unacceptable for most American citizens.

The rapid rise of the IWMA and its incredible press coverage briefly gave the impression that socialism might acquire a lasting influence in the USA.

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1 For a more complete discussion of this problem, see Michel Cordillot, « Socialisme et démocratie aux États-Unis : des idéaux politiques incompatibles ? », in Jean Vigreux et Serge Wolikow (eds), *Rouge et rose. Deux siècles de socialismes européens* (Dijon, 2007), pp. 189–206.

However, the events of the Commune, and perhaps even more so the internicine quarrels which resulted in marginalization of the American sections advocating a large alliance of all reformers by the German “Marxist” sections, were instrumental in quashing all hopes of significant progress.

In the mid-1880s, America lived through another bout of social fever. But the dramatic events in Chicago (4 May 1886) in the wake of the eight-hour movement and their tragic epilogue with the hanging of the anarchist communist leaders on 11 November 1887 showed that the powers that be would not hesitate to use force. Though not directly involved, many socialist and labor organizations were affected collaterally by the shock wave. Many trade-union leaders were left with the conviction that in order to survive, labor organizations would have to give up trying to transform the existing social order. Compelled to accept the system based on free enterprise, they encouraged union workers to stick to bread and butter issues. In the decades following Haymarket, the revolutionary Left did not altogether disappear. Though vocal and sometimes heeded, it was however confined to a minority status in the American labor movement. For an exasperated public opinion, socialism (and later communism) would henceforward be identified with ideas stirred up by foreign agitators, and accordingly incompatible with the values inherited from the Founding Fathers. Electorally marginalized, the “Reds” were pushed to the external fringe of the national community.

This evolution was mostly the result of specific historical circumstances rather than the direct consequence of what the IWMA had done – or had failed to do. Nonetheless, the organization had played its part in the process. So, in the end, it is also in its symbolic (and negative) dimension that the enduring legacy of the First International in America is to be found.



FIGURE 17.1 *March of the French Internationalists in New York on 17 December 1871 to honor the Parisian Fédérés.*

SOURCE: FRANK LESLIE'S, 6 JANUARY 1872.

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## “Sectarian Secret Wisdom” and Nineteenth-Century Radicalism

*The IWMA in London and New York*

*Antony Taylor*

The historiography of the First International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) remains relatively fixed, and largely unaffected by the debates around radical continuity between independent radicalism and liberalism in Britain dating from the 1990s. The historiographical parameters of debate around the IWMA remain rooted in older ideas regarding the influence of Marx in Great Britain, the relative absence of theory and ideology in British political movements for parliamentary reform, the tendency towards “reformism” that appears particularly marked within the British labour tradition, and the failure or otherwise of perceived continental styles of socialism and political leadership in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Of the authors who posit an unproblematic unity between Chartism and related currents of reform opinion in Britain and subsequent liberalism, only Margot Finn engages directly with the impact and influence of the First International. For her the tendency for British radicals to identify and support movements of national self-realisation and separatism in Italy, Poland and elsewhere created an overlapping sentiment that was as much the common inheritance of liberalism, as of post-Chartist radicalism itself, surviving even the acrimonious debates surrounding the impact of the Paris Commune in 1871.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Eugenio Biagini has also gone some way towards reclaiming the Mazzinian tradition in the United Kingdom in a historiography that marginalises the impact of Marx and Marxist opinion in favour of the imported political ideas that were anathema to Marx himself. For Biagini, the First International was a body with little traction in Britain that profited from

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1 E.J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1964), pp. 239–249; Henry Collins, “The English Branches of the First International”, in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1960), pp. 242–275.

2 See Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848–1874* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 232 and 265 and Ch. 7.

the anti-liberal politics of European governments but offers little indication about the popularity or otherwise of Marx's ideas amongst workers in Britain.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, as Detlev Mares has pointed out, the radicals who cohered around the IWMA in Britain were a heterodox community of internationalists, adventurers, former Owenites and Chartists, land reformers and advanced liberals. W.F. Cowell Stepney, an explorer and son of a Lieutenant Colonel in the British army, who advocated a collectivist society based on indigenous American culture, was not untypical of them.<sup>4</sup> The arguments about the foundation of the IWMA in Britain informed by the debates generated by the "liberal continuity" school of scholarship, must also be balanced against Marx's own tendency to "overclaim" about the importance and impact of the International in Europe and beyond.<sup>5</sup> In the United States, Tim Messer-Kruse has written a lengthy indictment of the First International that rescues the ideas of Section 12 of the International in New York, while condemning out of hand the impact of Marx-ist ideas in the United States, and pre-supposing the detrimental impact of narrow doctrinaire Marxism of the variety espoused by Friedrich Sorge on the development of the United States labour tradition.<sup>6</sup> Here deeper arguments about the failure of popular radicalism in the United States emerge, taking the historiography of the First International into broader discussions about the relative absence of a labour tradition in the United States.

This chapter is not a direct comparison of the influence and support accorded to the First International in either Britain or the United States, or in urban centres like London and New York. Nor is it another crude denunciation of the failures and miscalculations either of the practical application of Marxist theory, or of Marx as a radical politician. Rather, rooted in recent re-considerations of the First International in the United States, and drawing on the literature relating to transnational labour history, it examines the links between the

3 Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 61. For the British followers of Mazzini see Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (Woodbridge, 2013), Chs. 1–2.

4 Detlev Mares, *Auf der Suche nach dem "wahren" Liberalismus. Demokratische Bewegung und liberale Politik im viktorianischen England* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 52–60 and for W.F. Cowell Stepney, see his obituary in the *International Herald*, 29 November 1872, p. 3.

5 Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (London, 1965), pp. 63 and 67.

6 Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International, 1848–1876: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), Ch. 1. His ideas conflict with the older orthodoxy about the role of the First international in the United States in Samuel Bernstein, *The First International in America* (New York, 1962), pp. 109–127. For the background see Neville Kirk, *Labour and Society in Britain and the USA*, 2 vols (Aldershot, 1994), II, pp. 219–229.

radicals of Section 12 in New York, and analogous and related radical traditions in Britain where there is evidence of overlapping ideas, communities and goals that remained untapped by internationalist radicals of the period.<sup>7</sup> Like the British followers of the IWMA, Section 12 in New York gained much of its momentum from its alliance with a broad community of allied radical organisations, forging strong links with former anti-slavery campaigners and drawing in the new women's suffragist and civic benevolence organisations that emerged during and in the aftermath of the civil war.<sup>8</sup> With a membership that was less ideologically fixated on the currents of European socialism imported by German émigré radicals than the German migrant sections, prominent in its ranks were bohemians, land, dietary, and currency reformers. The section's iconic figureheads were the women's suffrage campaigners and free love advocates, Victoria Woodhull, and her sister, Tennessee Claflin.<sup>9</sup> (fig. 22.1) These diffuse political elements indicate the degree to which the IWMA failed to connect up with existing currents and trends within international radical movements, and highlight the existence of a shadow International, revolving around the groups and organisations marginalised or held up as unimportant to the goals of the IWMA by the General Council in London. Referring to such British tendencies, Marx dismissed groups like the O'Brienites as cultish and "conceited" about their "sectarian secret wisdom" relating to currency reform.<sup>10</sup>

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- 7 See Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 11–21, Neville Kirk, "Transnational Labour History: Promise and Perils", in Leon Fink (ed.), *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labour History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 18–22, and Shelton Stromquist, "Rethinking Working-Class Politics in Comparative Transnational Context", in Donna T. Haverty-Stacke and Daniel T. Walkowitz (eds), *Rethinking U.S. Labor History: Essays on the Working-Class Experience, 1756–2009* (London, 2009), pp. 82–110.
- 8 Ellen C Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of the Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, New York, 1978), Ch. 5 and Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, Conn [etc.], 1990), Chs 5–6.
- 9 See Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, pp. 113–115, Mark Lause, "The American Radicals and Organised Marxism: The Initial Experience, 1869–1874", *Labor History*, 33 (1992), pp. 55–80, Jamie Bronstein, *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800–1862* (Stanford, 1999), Chs 5 and 6 and Dr W.A. Alcott, "Vegetarianism in the United States" *The Vegetarian Advocate*, 2 vols (1848–50), II, p. 95.
- 10 Karl Marx to Friedrich Engels, 29 July 1869 in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works: Letters 1868–70*, 50 vols (London, 1988), XXXIII, p. 334 and Keith Robinson, "Karl Marx, the International Working-Men's Association and London Radicalism, 1864–1872" (Ph.D., University of Manchester, 1976), p. 200 [hereafter "Karl Marx, the International Working-Men's Association and London Radicalism"].

Despite the opposing political cycles that saw the First International peak in Britain in the mid-1860s, at a time when branches of the International in the United States had still barely formed, this differing chronology disguises a shared common political culture, and reveals some of the tensions that led to the decline of the International after the expulsion of New York Section 12 in 1872. At a period in which there was an apparent political caesura in radical politics in Britain in the 1860s following the demise of the Chartist platform and the emergence of a broadly-defined popular liberalism, as opposed to the proliferation of radical groups in the US in the aftermath of the American Civil War, scrutiny of the IWMA provides the opportunity for discussion of radical continuity, or even revival, in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s.

Traditionally the IWMA in a British context has been interpreted in the light of the developing relationship between radicals and trade societies. As an organisation that forged relationships with the trades, the IWMA is seen as a body that reflected the new producerist ethic of reformers articulated during a period of campaigning around the inclusion of the productive classes within the franchise.<sup>11</sup> This perspective grew out of debates confined to the General Council of the IWMA and fails to take sufficient account of other prevailing strands of internationalism in Britain that overlapped with the grass-roots organisation. In the United States, the legacy of the IWMA has similarly been interpreted through the inheritance bequeathed to trades unionists like Samuel Gompers. These perspectives have dominated the debate about the significance of the International and help relegate other tendencies within this body to the fringes of the discussion. In much of the scholarship they reinforce the point, articulated by Marx, that certain elements within British, European and North American radicalism were retrograde, unformed, or useful only for strategic purposes to counterbalance the claims of the competing radical and national groups that made up the organisation. Most of these criticisms are well known, but merit recapitulation here. Writing of the followers of the former Chartist, Bronterre O'Brien (1805–1864) in London, Marx described them as: "the sect of the late Bronterre O'Brien, and are full of follies and crotchets, such as currency quackery, false emancipation of women, and the like. In spite of their follies", he continued, "they constitute an often necessary counterweight to trades unionists on the Council. They are more revolutionary, firmer on the land question, less nationalistic and not susceptible to bourgeois bribery in

11 Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 111–119, Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 71–118, and Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, p. 229.

one form or another. Otherwise they would have been kicked out long ago." Similarly, John Weston, a former Owenite and founder member of the International in 1864, was dismissed by Marx's follower, Johann Georg Eccarius, on the grounds that "he seems to know no other basis for labour movements than the hackneyed phrase truth and justice."<sup>12</sup> Such views replicated the attitudes of the Rev Charles Maurice Davies, who, visiting the O'Brienites in the early 1870s, included them in a study of dissident and marginal religious bodies, and described them as a "mystic" organisation. Their presence in the IWMA also allowed opponents of the International in Britain to dismiss its members as proponents of "quackery and sham."<sup>13</sup> Groups like the O'Brienites were "kindred souls", according to Marx, of the New York Section 12 radicals, described by Samuel Gompers as "dominated by a brilliant group of faddists, reformers, and sensation-loving spirits."<sup>14</sup> "All kinds of bourgeois swindlers, free lovers, spirit-rappers, spirit-rapping shakers" was Frederick Engels' characterisation of the branch's membership.<sup>15</sup> Such ideas conformed to Marx's well-known hostility to "sects" in all their forms and their reactionary potential, reiterated in the closing stages of the International. In Britain, Maltman Barry, Marx's close ally who became a delegate on behalf of the British Federal Council to the Hague congress in 1872, expressed his fear that those who wanted to set up the separatist Council hoped to convert it into nothing more than "a pothouse forum or an electioneering machine."<sup>16</sup>

These comments suggest a sharp divide in regard to visions of the radical inheritance, and misinterpret the significance of the movements Marx depicted

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- 12 Marx to Friedrich Bolte, 23 November 1871, in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works: Letters 1870–73*, 50 vols (London, 1989), XXXIV, p. 252, Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 249 and Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, p. 50. A more positive view of Weston is expressed in George Jacob Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, 2 vols (London, 1906), II, pp. 263–264.
  - 13 Rev Charles Maurice Davies, *Heterodox London or Phases of Free Thought in the Metropolis*, 3 vols (London, 1874), II, p. 236, and the *International Herald*, 8 August 1872, p. 3. The O'Brienites remained a fixture of London radical club-life into the 1890s; see William Stephen Sanders, *Early Socialist Days* (London, 1927), p. 21.
  - 14 Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, 2 vols (New York, 1925), I, p. 55 and Marx to Friedrich Bolte, 23 November 1871, in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works: Letters 1870–73*, p. 252.
  - 15 Frederick Engels, "The International in America" in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels: Collected Works 1871–74*, 50 vols (London, 1988), XXIII, p. 179. For the historiography surrounding Marx's categorisation of the early European socialist organisations as sects, see Pamela Pilbeam, *French Socialists before Marx: Workers, Women and the Social Question in France* (London, 2000), Ch. 1.
  - 16 Collins and Abramsky *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 300.

as sects. The "hobby" politics of Section 12 of the First International embraced issues of long standing radical importance in the United States including an 8-hour working day, abolition of private bank notes, anti-censorship, enfranchisement of women, free love, spiritualism, residual Fourierism, the protection of children from sexual exploitation and land reform.<sup>17</sup> Such platforms existed on the fringes of accepted knowledge but received the benediction of salvationist American preachers like Henry Ward Beecher, reported in *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly* as asserting that "all isms were truths crumpled up, yet to be unfolded into symmetry and beauty."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, issues like workers' universal languages and currency reform, which Marx used to deride these agitations, were an important element in the pedigree of urban radical culture, cementing together the different groups involved and, in both contexts, with an inheritance that had long roots in the political platforms of early nineteenth-century radicalism.<sup>19</sup> The idea for an international language, for example, was debated at the Apollo Club, New York, on the same platform where Victoria Woodhull launched her candidacy for the Presidency in 1872.<sup>20</sup> In Britain, in particular, such ideas remained an important element in organisations that made the transition post-1848 into mid-century radical politics, and provided a bridge into the early socialist agitations of the 1880s. In the United States, the period marked the beginnings of the emergence of the Greenback Labor platform campaigning around the purification of financial mechanisms and proposing an anti-monopoly and anti-banking stance. Greenback labor ideas made some impact on currency reform notions in Britain, appearing in Land and Labour League programmes in the 1870s and featuring as a marked element of William Harrison Riley's articles in the *International Herald*.<sup>21</sup>

These aspects of radicalism provided evidence of overlapping cultures and co-joined aims that bore out Marx's contention that there were similarities in the comparative context of labour between Britain and the United States. The

17 See, for example, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, 15 February 1873, p. 3, 29 March 1873, p. 8, 5 April 1873, p. 4 and 19 April, 1873, p. 9.

18 Ibid, 5 April 1873, p. 5. For "isms" and "ites" in the US labour tradition, see Robin Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton, NY, 2007), p. 206.

19 W.D. Rubenstein, *Elites and the Wealthy in Modern British Society* (Brighton, 1987), Ch. 11 and Andrew Large, *The Artificial Language Movement* (London, 1985), pp. 58–65.

20 Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States* (New York [etc.], 1908), p. 180 and *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, 11 May 1872, p. 1.

21 Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861–1881* (London, 1965), p. 218, Gretchen Ritter, *Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics of Finance in America* (Cambridge, 1997), Ch. 1 and the *International Herald*, 20 September 1873, p. 4.

move of the headquarters of the IWMA from London to New York in 1872 was a reflection of the shared objectives Marx believed were apparent amongst internationalist radicals operating in the migrant contexts of urban Britain and the United States.<sup>22</sup> In Britain the broader setting for radical culture has barely been assimilated into discussion of the continuities between mid-nineteenth century radicalism and liberalism, which has concentrated instead on political programmes and points of doctrine. As in the United States, there was a penumbra of alternative organisations and cultural values surrounding movements for reform and surviving outpourings of political energy (like the Chartist movement) that co-existed with more stable agitations, but provided a conduit for the transmission of radical values to agitations that remained outside the liberal consensus.<sup>23</sup> Marx had contact with all such elements in the British and US labour traditions, and thought them insufficient to effect real political change, but, despite his misgivings, favoured some over others. The O'Brienites he tolerated, yet the tendency that features most frequently in his correspondence are representatives of the Tory radical strand in British popular politics. As James Owen notes, an emphasis in continuity debates between Chartism and liberalism has somewhat excluded the marked Tory radical inheritance in British reform politics.<sup>24</sup> Collins and Abramsky, however, emphasise that Marx worked closely with the Russophobe, David Urquhart, while the sometime Tory election agent, Maltman Barry, was a disruptive and damaging presence in the closing stages of the International, recalled in the 1890s as playing the part of “a black shadow on the labour movement ever since the old International.”<sup>25</sup> Poorly attuned to the alternative radical tradition, Marx was also guilty of equating the activities of Section 12 in New York with other groups that sought to promote autonomy from the General Council of the IWMA, notably the followers of Bakunin.<sup>26</sup>

22 Frederick Engels, “On the Hague Congress of the International”, in *Marx Engels Collected Works, 1871–74*, 50 vols (London, 1988), xxiii, pp. 178–183.

23 Mark Bevir, “The Social Democratic Federation, 1889–1885: From O'Brienism to Marxism”, *International Review of Social History*, 36 (1992), pp. 207–229.

24 James Owen, *Labour and the Caucus: Working-Class Radicalism and Organised Liberalism in England, 1868–1888* (Liverpool, 2014), pp. 15–16.

25 *Justice*, 1 October 1892, p. 1 and Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 239–240. For Maltman Barry, see the *International Herald*, 14 September 1872, p. 7, the *National Reformer*, 13 May 1877, p. 297, and Paul Martinez, “The People’s Charter and the Enigmatic Mr Maltman Barry”, *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin*, 41 (1980), pp. 34–45.

26 Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 299 and for the diverse anti-authoritarian movements that campaigned for devolved structures in the

The First International, then, throws into sharp relief the international connections between those who espoused a universalist bohemian approach to reform drawing together alternatives that transcended national boundaries, but fell short of the expectations of Marx and the more purist objectives of his followers on the General Council of the First International. In Britain, in particular, as the trade union members of the General Council drifted away from the organisation in its later stages, so these tendencies became more pronounced.<sup>27</sup> A mixture of different crusades, they were cemented by common causes around the abolition of slavery during the American Civil War (which united many American and British reformers under a common banner)<sup>28</sup> and various quests for spiritual enlightenment, notably spiritualism itself. Spiritualism in particular could look for a similar lineage to members of the First International, tracing its origins back to the visions of the Fox sisters in Rochester, New York State, in the year 1848, which spiritualists represented, not as a moment of international liberty and revolution, but rather as a highpoint of spiritual intervention in the material world.<sup>29</sup> 1848 was also the year of the first women's rights conference in North America at Seneca Falls.<sup>30</sup> Suffragism and women's rights agitations were similarly transnational in composition during this period, cementing the international celebrity status of the feminist campaigner and Section 12 member, Victoria Woodhull. Indeed, Woodhull hoped to merge the International and the women's suffrage organisations in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Internationalist in outlook and nature, Section 12 of the International in New York, and the O'Brienites recognised aligned affinities that allowed members to strike up a relationship. The O'Brienites campaigned against Section 12's expulsion from the International and harboured representatives of the section who visited the Hague Congress of 1872 to plead the case

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IWMA, Max Nomad, "The Anarchist Tradition", in Milorad Drachkovitch (ed.), *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943* (Stanford, 1966), pp. 57-92.

27 Robinson, "Karl Marx, the International Working-Men's Association and London Radicalism", pp. 184-197.

28 Philip S. Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York, 1981) and Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 71.

29 Teddy Ashton's *Northern Weekly*, 12 May 1900, p. 818, Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910* (London, 1986), Ch. 1 and Christine Ferguson, *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writings, 1848-1930* (Edinburgh, 2012), pp. 6-7.

30 Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, pp. 40-41.

31 Amanda Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution: Political Theatre and the Popular Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004), pp. 32-49 and for Woodhull's reputation outside the United States, the *International Herald*, 25 May 1872, p. 4.



for its reinstatement.<sup>32</sup> Newspapers like the *International Herald* and *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, which were mouthpieces for the IWMA, were representative of these shared interests.<sup>33</sup> Alongside land nationalisation the *International Herald*, under the editorship of William Harrison Riley, also advocated numerous ideas anathema to Marx including women's suffrage (which Marx always saw as a subordinate aim to the rectification of the balance between capital and labour) and ran speculative pieces about a utopian future in which spiritualism was part of the scientific curriculum, international languages had become mainstream, and there was a systematic colonisation of Mars. As part of this mentalité it also condemned lawyers in a view that echoed a "primitive rebel" attitude towards the law, and supported schemes for spiritual land communes.<sup>34</sup> For its part, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, reported spirit manifestations, advocated supernatural wonders and espoused mesmerism.<sup>35</sup>

At the heart of both contrasting contexts of the First International in London and New York was the image of the metropolis itself. The emergence of IWMA branches was made possible by the context of major urban centres. In 1872 the IWMA had 11 active branches across south and east London.<sup>36</sup> As Marcel van der Linden has demonstrated, the unique context of great cities incubated refugee and émigré "sub-cultures" amongst which internationalising tendencies flourished.<sup>37</sup> A combination of febrile crowd politics, a concentration of political refugees and emigrants, a proliferation of open spaces that favoured a geography of popular protest, a weak institutionalised liberalism, and the absence of responsible non-corrupt city-wide civic government that might provide an outlet for local discontents, meant that London was a late outpost of Chartist radicalism where a sub-stratum of advanced radical opinion bridged the gap between Chartist-inspired radicalism and early labourist organisations.<sup>38</sup>

32 Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 239 and Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, pp. 179–181.

33 Articles from *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly* frequently featured in the *International Herald*: see the *International Herald*, 8 June 1872, p. 6.

34 *Ibid.*, 13 April 1872, pp. 4–5, 27 April 1872, p. 8, 11 May 1872, p. 5, 1 June 1872, p. 4, 18 January 1873, p. 1 and 29 March 1873, p. 2.

35 *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, 29 March 1873, pp. 10–11, 5 April 1873, p. 4 and 15 February 1873, p. 15.

36 *International Herald*, 23 November 1872, p. 8.

37 Van der Linden, "The First International", pp. 13–14. For radical émigré culture in London see Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (London, 2002), Chs 7–8 and Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, 1, pp. 71–74.

38 Antony Taylor, "Post-Chartism: Metropolitan Perspectives on the Chartist Movement in Decline, 1848–1880", in Matthew Cragoe and Antony Taylor (eds), *London Politics, 1760–1914* (London: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 75–96.

In Britain, in particular, the middle years of the nineteenth-century saw radical energies concentrated in London, and the movement in the regions declining or becoming subsumed within liberalism and Toryism. The First International in Britain collapsed once the General Council splintered in London: the regional branches in Manchester and Nottingham had insufficient support to maintain distinct identities against a background in which the movement had contracted in the capital.<sup>39</sup> New York, where most of the same factors were apparent, demonstrated similar tendencies: both Samuel Gompers and Walt Whitman saw New York as the cradle of the labour movement in the US and the incubator for progressive and reform campaigns.<sup>40</sup> In New York, as well, once much of the energy around New York Section 12 had dissipated following its expulsion and Woodhull's own move away from conventional politics, the movement splintered into numerous and undirected anti-poverty campaigns, leaving only an orphaned IWMA branch in Philadelphia to limp on until 1876.<sup>41</sup> (fig 18.1)

In the context of this inchoate urban environment, the loose nature of radical culture meant that clubs and meeting places became fixed points around which a sequence of different organisations and splinter groups revolved. Maltman Barry's comments about the relegation of a British Federal Council to a "pothouse" level of debate in IWMA affairs, misunderstood the centrality of meeting places and long-standing places of assembly in British metropolitan radicalism. There was a shared culture here that united shifting groups with an inherited and overlapping associational life. Patterns of radical community organisation that emerged as part of the activity of the First International bore the stamp of previous agitations for reform and often involved the same people. Fetes, dinners, receptions and teas had a long radical lineage that resurfaced in the IWMA as part of a broader metropolitan alternative culture.<sup>42</sup> Frequently the same venues were used to house allied or sometimes competing organisations.<sup>43</sup> Marx's misconceptions about the impact of the IWMA in Britain on organisations like the Reform League and the

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39 *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1871, p. 5. The Manchester IWMA only became active in 1872 and was overly reliant on weaker trades like the bricklayers, see the *International Herald*, 22 June 1872, p. 6 and 14 September 1872, p. 5.

40 Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, p. 245.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 224–226 and Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York, 1999), pp. 1025–1026.

42 Finn, *After Chartism*, p. 230.

43 Antony Taylor, "A Melancholy Odyssey among London Public Houses: Radical Club-life and the Unrespectable in Mid-Nineteenth-Century London", *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), pp. 74–95.

Land and Labour League may partly be explained by this phenomenon: until 1866, the General Council of the IWMA met in the headquarters of the Marquis of Townsend's Universal League for the Elevation of the Industrious Classes whose programme it largely shared; later after 1867 it assembled at the Eclectic Institute, Soho, the gathering place of the O'Brienites.<sup>44</sup> The same aspect to radical politics featured in New York. Meeting places like the Social Reform Hall on Grand Street, and, later, the Brooklyn "Spread the Light Club" preserved a community of radicals together able to campaign in the intervals between larger popular agitations.<sup>45</sup> Against the background of a shifting and fluid metropolitan environment, continuity of places of assembly and personnel, rather than nomenclature and labels, were an important solvent of radical agitations. Often it was styles of political communication, emblems and symbolic body language expressive of a set of radical allegiances, but not of any one grouping in particular – ribbons, US flags, banners, red rosettes etc. – that held these associations together more than the names of actual organisations which often commanded little loyalty. As Detlev Mares has demonstrated, radical symbols like the cap of liberty, which resurfaced on the first membership card issued for North American branches of the IWMA, and amongst those supporting the Communards in London, was indicative of the importance and relevance of a political imagery that bound the radical community together, even when their symbolic associations were contested or their uses challenged. Such symbols were again on display in Tompkins Square in New York in 1872 at a demonstration of the unemployed, allowing the General Council of the IWMA to claim the meeting as an internationalist rally.<sup>46</sup> Given the short life spans of larger umbrella organisations in big cities, the collapse of the IWMA may have been as much about short "shelf-life" as internal disagreement. Equally, confusion about the exact date of the foundation of the Reform League and the different

44 *Bee-Hive*, 30 July 1864, p. 1, F.M. Leventhal, *Respectable Radical: George Howell and Victorian Working-Class Politics* (London, 1971), p. 52 and Gary R. Entz, *Llewellyn Castle: A Workers' Cooperative on the Great Plains* (Lincoln, NE, 2013), pp. 57 and 62.

45 Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, p. 766 and Robert Allen, "We Do Hold that Land, Light, Air and Water are the Free Gifts of Nature': The Spread the Light Club of Brooklyn, 1880–1882", paper presented at the Academic Association of Historians in Australian and New Zealand Business Schools, Auckland University of Technology, 2013.

46 Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, p. 90, Detlev Mares, "'Criminally Senseless': Ritual and Political Strategy in Mid-Victorian Political Radicalism", in Jorg Neuheiser and Michael Schaich (eds), *Political Rituals in Great Britain, 1700–2000* (Augsburg, 2006), pp. 75–91 and for Tompkins Square as a site of popular assemblies, Lisa Keller, *Triumph of Order: Democracy and Public Space in New York and London* (New York, 2009), pp. 172–181 and the *International Herald*, 11 May 1872, p. 7.

organisations (whether republican, land reform, anti-poverty or pro-Amnesty for Fenian prisoners) its component elements dissolved into, is reflective of the same phenomenon.<sup>47</sup>

Race, ethnicity and sectarianism are issues that have been particularly highlighted in the context of Section 12 of the First International. Rooted strongly in residual abolitionist campaigning organisations and culture, Section 12 espoused tolerance and cross-racial alliances. For its mouthpiece, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, the social revolution it advocated was a continuation of "the irrepressible conflict" over slavery predicted by William H. Seward before the civil war.<sup>48</sup> In 1872 it held a joint demonstration in New York with a Black militia unit, the Skidmore Light Guard, to mourn the suppression of the Paris Commune that attracted Cuban refugees and exiles.<sup>49</sup> For Messer-Kruse, the major impact of a purified International in New York under Friedrich Sorge (from which local radical traditions were excluded) was to accentuate the division between radicals who espoused an inclusive attitude towards other religious groups and identities, and an inflexible and exclusionary trades unionism, typified by Gompers, that sought to expel women, Black workers and the Chinese from the workplace in favour of a predominantly White, male workforce. In 1870, Tompkins Square was the site of a rally mobilised by the trades to protest against the recruitment of Chinese labourers by local employers.<sup>50</sup> For Messer-Kruse, the real legacy of the suppressed Section 12 was in a movement like the Knights of Labor that was non-sectarian in nature and aspired to bridge the racial divide to recruit Black members and sections.<sup>51</sup> In recent studies of the US labour tradition these issues of race are given heightened prominence.<sup>52</sup> In Britain, issues of race and identity were obscured by the emphasis Marx placed on the political possibilities in Ireland, which he saw as a lever to radicalise stagnant English politics and to create a united proletariat, shorn of artificial divisions.<sup>53</sup> The IWMA in London had two Irish sections in Marylebone

47 John Bedford Leno, *The Aftermath* (London, 1892), p. 55.

48 *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, 5 April 1873, p. 3.

49 Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution*, pp. 44–45 and Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, I, pp. 57–58.

50 John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (Baltimore, MD, 1999), pp. 178–179.

51 Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*, pp. 230–234 and Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park, PA, 1996), pp. 46–52 and 92–101.

52 Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* Ch. 2 and David R. Roediger, *Working towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants became White* (New York, 2005), pp. 82–92.

53 Sean Daly, *Ireland and the First International* (Cork, 1984), Ch. 2.

and Soho and the IWMA itself a branch in Cork established by the republican demagogue, John De Morgan.<sup>54</sup> The over-emphasis on Ireland caused tensions between the different wings of the reform community, particularly over issues relating to the Paris Commune. The shooting of the Archbishop of Paris alienated many Irish Catholics from the secular, republican traditions of French politics, and from the platform of the IMMA. In Cork meetings of the Irish branch were broken up and disrupted.<sup>55</sup> The emphasis on Ireland (both in London and New York) reinforced the insularity of the IMWA, causing rifts with Irish sympathisers and superseding in Britain wider issues of identity and ethnicity in areas like London with mixed migrant populations or with a politics coloured by imperial issues. Representations from the IWMA were conspicuous by their absence during the controversy surrounding Governor Eyre's brutal suppression of the Morant Bay rising in Jamaica in 1865, although the *International Herald* did campaign against the government's decision to meet his legal fees after his trial.<sup>56</sup> Despite the increasing presence of a politicised Jewish community in both cities, there was little attempt to engage with their interests. Partly this was a structural issue; Jewish workers in London were seldom unionised, but, equally, some of the emphasis placed on Jewish finance by the currency reformers, anti-monopolists and anti-banking campaigners that increasingly comprised the membership of the IWMA in Britain in its later years led to the profession of anti-semitic sentiments by organs like the *International Herald* in articles about "sweating" and "usury" that militated against the development of such relationships.<sup>57</sup>

The point that the doctrines and organisational initiatives introduced by the General Council of the First International were an uneasy fit with national radical traditions in both Britain and in the United States has been made many times. Indeed, much of the hostility to the International expressed by workingmen's organisations and the mouthpieces that reflected their interests, demonstrate the hostility this distance could evoke: "a wealthy exotic that can never take root and flourish on English soil" was the verdict of the *Bee-Hive* on the First International.<sup>58</sup> Paradoxically, however, as members of trades societies

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54 *International Herald*, 10 March 1872, p. 5.

55 *Bee-Hive*, 3 June 1871, the *International Herald*, 27 April 1872, p. 6 and Collins and Abramsky, *Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 244–245.

56 Hall et al, *Defining the Victorian Nation*, pp. 200–204 and the *International Herald*, 20 July 1872, p. 6.

57 *International Herald*, 25 May 1872, p. 4, and 27 September 1873, pp. 4–5, the *Bee-Hive*, 20 April 1867, p. 1 and Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 168–174.

58 *Bee-Hive*, 9 November 1872.

vacated the organisation in Britain, it became more truly representative of the metropolitan radical tradition in its appeal to currency reformers and to a heterodox radical community. This pluralism of different voices in London discomfited the General Council and lay behind its decision to relocate to New York where the more narrow and doctrinaire environment following the expulsion of Section 12 favoured Marxisant purists.<sup>59</sup> Thereafter, the IWMA in the United States became perceived as an exclusive mouthpiece for renegade European refugees, an image it bequeathed to subsequent labour organisations. Both sets of circumstances in London and New York indicate the importance of local traditions of radicalism (that often appeared marginal to the aims of the First International) to the survival of residual radical sub-groups in large urban centres. Rather than living "the latter part of their lives in the odour of sanctity of the Liberalism of Mr Gladstone", as George Lansbury remarked of the apostate British trade union members of the IWMA, veterans like John De Morgan, and William Harrison Riley popularised the transcendentalist philosophies of Walt Whitman in Britain, embarked on communal living experiments, and engaged with the ideas of the US populist movement.<sup>60</sup> The main body of O'Brienites, too, who had been the mainstay of the International in its later stages, embraced an emigrationist philosophy and initiated a scheme to create a perfect society in Kansas.<sup>61</sup> It was these contributions to the ethical socialist and "New Life" movements that helped define the alternative cultures of the 1880s and 1890s in Britain and the United States and that more properly provides a legacy for the underappreciated and marginalised radical traditions of the IWMA.

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59 Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 264–265.

60 George Lansbury, *My Life* (London, 1928), p. 32, Robert Allen, "'The People's Advocate, Champion and Friend': The Transatlantic Career of Citizen John De Morgan (1848–1926)", *Historical Research*, 86 (2013), pp. 684–711 and for W.H. Riley's later career, the *Labour Leader*, 3 August 1906, p. 170. The belief systems and ideas that overlapped with mid-nineteenth century radical alternative culture and expressed themselves in the US populist movement are described in Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 262–266.

61 Entz, *Llewellyn Castle*, Ch. 2.



FIGURE 18.1 *Riots by the unemployed in New York, 1874.*  
SOURCE: "‘THE RED FLAG IN NEW YORK.’ RIOTS BY THE UNEMPLOYED IN TOMPKINS SQUARE, NEW YORK IN 1874" (*FRANK LESLIE’S ILLUSTRATED NEWS*, 31 JANUARY 1874, P. 344). PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ANTONY TAYLOR.

**PART 3**

*Actors and Ideologies*







## Karl Marx and the IWMA Revisited

*Jürgen Herres*

London, May 1870. In a back room in Holborn a meeting of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) took place under dramatic circumstances. English union leaders and European émigrés were present. A number of “press reporters, greedy for news” were present as well, as Karl Marx reported Friedrich Engels in Manchester, since “rumours had been spread in London” that the members of the General Council were to be arrested in the meeting room.<sup>1</sup>

Just before, leading members of the IWMA, called simply the International, had been arrested in Paris and other French cities. They were accused of plotting a conspiracy against the empire and the assassination of Napoleon III. It was a transparent police manoeuvre. The French Emperor wanted to have his personal sovereignty affirmed in a plebiscite. It became his last big success. The crime of the Paris section of the International merely consisted of appealing to abstention from voting as a demonstration against the Empire and for the social republic.<sup>2</sup>

In London an English newspaper reporter followed the meeting of the General Council of the IWMA. English union leaders and European émigrés excitedly discussed the purpose and content of a public declaration. A while later, more French intellectuals joined, who had been to a revolutionary dinner. The British unionists “always come back to the point that something must be sent to the papers to prove that they do not agree with assassination”. The non-English members on the other hand wanted the regime to be condemned.<sup>3</sup>

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\* Many thanks to Matthias Thompson for translating the text.

1 Marx to Engels, 7 May 1870. (*Karl Marx, Frederick Engels. Collected Works* (Moscow 1988), vol. 43, p. 504, [hereafter, MECW].)

2 See Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe [hereafter, MEGA<sup>2</sup>], vol. I/21, p. 231/232, 771/772, 1142 and 1152/3; Julian P.W. Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1871* (Lanham, 1997), pp. 204–206.

3 “A meeting of conspirators” in *The Northern Echo* (Darlington) No. 165 (13. July 1870), p. 4. – In 1864–65, the General Council comprised thirty to fifty members; in 1866–71, twenty-five to thirty; and in 1871–72, forty to fifty. For the entire period, 1864–72, the total came to approximately 200 persons. This council consisted equally of British union members, London radicals, and émigrés living in London. Among the British members were George Odger, George

After some three hours of rambling discussion a sort of compromise was reached. “The part speaking against assassination is made clearer and stronger”, the reporter told. “At the request of the British, some beautiful passages about the sun conspiring against darkness are allowed to stand to please the foreigners.”<sup>4</sup> In the declaration of the General Council the tasks of the International are emphasized: “The special mission of all our branches [is] to act ... as centres for the organisation of the working class”. And is “also to aid ... all political movements tending to the accomplishment of our ultimate end, the economical emancipation of the working class”. All of this happened “in open daylight”. “Every form of secret society” was rejected. The workers would “conspire publicly”, “as the sun conspires against darkness”. The declaration concludes with: “The noisy and violent measures against our French sections are exclusively intending ... the manipulation of the plebiscite.”<sup>5</sup>

The declaration was written by Marx. His handwritten text was glued into the minute book.<sup>6</sup> Almost every meeting of the General Council was recorded in such a minute. Four manuscript minute books have survived. The British reporter described how at the beginning of the meeting the secretary deposited a heavy minute-book upon the table. The secretary, a German tailor and refugee, seemed to have carried that great tome all the way from the other end of London.

The journalist also left us with a remarkable description of Marx: “The most noticeable man in the company is a German professor; he is of middle-age, and has a handsome leonine face; and is evidently what an American would call the ‘boss’ of the meeting.”<sup>7</sup>

Marx was not a founding initiator. But he was present at the creation of the International. He authored its programmatic documents and drafted most of its statements, appeals, and reports. During eight years, from 1864 to 1872, Marx participated almost every Tuesday evening in the consultations of the General Council, which coordinated the international network of workers from

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Howell, Edwin Coulson, William Randal Cremer, and William Allan, who presided over some of the largest British unions and who had created the London Trades Council in 1860. Wolfgang Schieder, *Karl Marx als Politiker* (München, 1991), pp. 125/126; MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, pp. 1793–1802 and 1986–1991; Keith Robinson, *Karl Marx, the International Working Men’s Association, and London Radicalism, 1864–1972* (PhD, University of Manchester, 1976), pp. 74–98, 181–287, (Appendix I and IV).

4 “A meeting of conspirators” in *The Northern Echo* (Darlington), No. 165 (13. July 1870), p. 4.

5 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 771/772.

6 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 2074.

7 “A meeting of conspirators” in *The Northern Echo* (Darlington), No. 165 (13. July 1870), p. 4. – See MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 2073.

London.<sup>8</sup> Was Marx really to be seen as the “boss” of the International? And if so, then in which way?

To answer these questions, I will first plead for a re-definition. We should view the International Workingmen’s Association as a network of different European groups of workers and reformers, whose annual meetings in Switzerland and Belgium should be regarded as the birthplace of European socialism.<sup>9</sup>

Next I will explore Marx’ role. I will especially emphasize the middle phase of the history of the International, the years from 1866 to 1871, from the first European workers’ congress in Geneva to the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>10</sup>

### First Modern Globalisation and the International

Our view on the nineteenth century has changed, through European integration, but especially through globalisation. While historians such as E.J. Hobsbawm and H.-U. Wehler have presented the nineteenth century as an era of a double revolution in politics and economy, we now also recognise the parallel emergence of a first modern wave of globalisation, which lasted until the beginning of the first world war in 1914.<sup>11</sup> It was an epoch of big changes and

8 Schieder, *Karl Marx als Politiker*, pp. 74–117.

9 See Julius Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, 2. ed. (Berlin [etc.], 1978), vol. 1; Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of labor. A history of the First International* (New York [etc.], 1992); Marcel van der Linden, “The rise and fall of the First International. An Interpretation” in Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (eds.), *Internationalism in the labour movement 1830–1930* (Leiden, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 323–335; I.A. Bach, L.I. Golman und W.E. Kunina (eds.) *Die Erste Internationale*, vol. 1–2 (Moskau 1981); James Guillaume *L’Internationale. Documents et Souvenirs (1864–1872)*, vol. 1–4. (Paris 1905, 1907, 1909 and 1910, new ed. Paris 1985); Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British labour movement. Years of the First International* (London [etc.], 1965), pp. 59 ff.; Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International. Marxism and the American reform tradition, 1848–1876* (Chapel Hill [etc.], 1998); Miklós Molnár, *Le déclin de la Première Internationale* (Genève, 1963); Ludolf Herbst, *Die erste Internationale als Problem der deutschen Politik in der Reichsgründungszeit* (Göttingen, 1975); Geoff Eley, *Forging democracy. The history of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 33–63; F[rancis] S.L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe, 1815–1914* (Leyden, 1963), pp. 164–179; *La Première Internationale. L’institution – L’implantation – Le rayonnement, Paris 16–18 novembre 1964* (Paris, 1968).

10 See Jürgen Herres, “Einführung”, in MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 1125–1228. Online: urn:nbn:de:kobv:b4-opus-10883.

11 See Richard E. Baldwin and Philippe Martin, “Two Waves of Globalization. Superficial Similarities, Fundamental Differences”, in Horst Siebert (ed), *Globalization and Labor* (Tübingen, 1999), pp. 5–9 and 11–14; Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson,

inconsistencies, which in some respect feels closer to our current experiences than much of the twentieth century.

In view of this, the history of the International deserves to be reconsidered without any ideological distortions. Notably, the International is hardly accorded a footnote in the current interpretations of world and global history – although it was the International which conceptualized certain terms still important for present debates. Due to the IWMA, the term “international” entered the lexicons and encyclopaedias of the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Without doubt, the “classical” history of the worker’s movement with its all too narrow definition of the term “worker” and through its party- and national historical orientation which has never been sufficiently overcome significantly paved the way for this marginalization of the International in broader global historiographical contexts.

In the last fifty years a large number of important source books and analyses about the history of the International have been published. I am referring to the minutes of the London General Council published in Moscow and the minutes of the congresses of the International edited in Geneva.<sup>13</sup> These achievements in research and editing have been recently significantly complemented by the Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA<sup>2</sup>). I myself have edited documents from 1867 to 1871 in the MEGA – that is the publication of the complete writings of Marx and Engels – and re-deciphered the minutes of the General Council for that purpose.<sup>14</sup> Today all archives are open to the public, including the ones in Moscow.

The resolutions and proclamations of the International, the minutes and speeches, but also the copious correspondence should be re-examined. For far too long these texts were mainly seen as expressions of party political and ideological infighting. They were actually controversial debates about

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*Globalization and History. The Evolution of a Nineteenth-century Atlantic Economy*, 3. ed. (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 11–14, 33–41 and 208–223; Knut Borchardt, *Globalisierung in historischer Perspektive* (München, 2001), pp. 8–15.

- 12 For the first time in 1873, Larousse’s *Grand Dictionnaire* regarded the term “International” as a noun. See Peter Friedemann, Lucian Hölscher, “Internationale, International, Internationalismus”, in Otto Brunner *et al.* (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 368, 371 and 380–387; Jean Dubois, *Le vocabulaire politique et social en France de 1869 à 1872* (Paris, 1964), p. 134.
- 13 *The General Council of the First International. Minutes*, 5 vol. (Moscow, 1964–1968); Jacques Freymond (ed.), *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, vol. 1–2 (Genève 1962); vol. 3–4 (Genève 1971).
- 14 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 511–696 and 707–905. – See MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/20, pp. 265–450 and 477–591; vol. I/22, pp. 519–640.

important social, economic and political questions and problems. In these debates we can see, how in the historical context of the industrial revolution and the first modern wave of globalisation a transnational European exchange of ideas and practices occurred.

The IWMA is to be seen as an attempt, to develop ideas, concepts and techniques transnationally. That way it partly succeeded in making the globality of the interests of the workers beyond national borders and their union reality. Until then this globalization had only been imagined.

The International caused an exchange of information about political and social questions and forms of organization. However, it especially acted as a mediator and translator of ideas. It advanced the process of understanding the importance of workers' interest. This was a conflictual process that nevertheless served to integrate different actors and groups all over Europe. In connection with an eventually unsuccessful strike in Basel, a member of the General Council confidently claimed in the London *Times* that: "Trade unionism will soon be co-existing with civilization. By the agency of the IWMA the movement has spread quicker than it otherwise would have done".<sup>15</sup> In the year 1869 Marx was convinced: "The community of action the IWMA is calling into being, the exchange of ideas ... and ... the direct discussions at the general congresses would ... gradually create a common theoretical program for the general workers' movement."<sup>16</sup>

From the beginning the International was a movement transcending social questions and interests. In 1863 the British and French workers put pressure on their governments to support the Polish uprising. In conferences of solidarity for the uprising Poles in April and July 1863 in London, the history of the International began.<sup>17</sup> The British workers' leaders were against a purely economic alignment of the unions. Trade unions must act politically as well as industrially to secure for workers their equality and rights.

The International Workingmen's Association created a communication network of European workers and established itself as their voice in the European public. The congresses of the International in Geneva in 1866, in Lausanne in 1867, in Brussels in 1868, in Basel 1869 and in The Hague in 1872 were noticed

15 "Trade disputes on the Continent" (by a Unionist), in *The Times* (London), No 26354, 6. February 1869, p. 4. – See MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, pp. 1147/8.

16 Marx to Engels, 5 March 1869. (MECW, vol. 46, p. 235/6.) – See MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, pp. 116 and 118.

17 See D. Rjasanov, "Zur Geschichte der ersten Internationale. I. Die Entstehung der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation", in *Marx-Engels-Archiv* (Frankfurt am Main), vol. 1, 1926, pp. 119–202; Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1871*, pp. 1–19 and 33–35.

throughout Europe. The London *Times* published detailed correspondence reports, which were reprinted and commented on by many European newspapers. In 1867 the *Times* wrote in an editorial about the Lausanne Congress: "It will be nothing less than a new world, we really believe, when Englishmen and foreigners find themselves able to work together".<sup>18</sup> In 1870 the congress planned in Paris did not take place because of the Franco-Prussian War. In Paris, the black priest Sella Martin (1832–1876) had been supposed to represent black US-American workers for the first time. Martin had grown up as a slave and fled to Canada.<sup>19</sup>

The International was a very fragile construct. As a network it was organizationally vulnerable, without any financial resources and the association was hampered by severe political and ideological infighting. It constantly faced all kinds of crises that can be imagined. From the beginning there was a wide gap between aspiration and reality. This was also reflected in the aspirations and actions of the most prominent member of the association – Karl Marx.

### "... what an American would call the 'boss'"

Until twenty years ago there was a heated debate about Marx's influence on the IWMA. While some declared Marx the actual leader of the International, who was mainly concerned with enforcing Marxism, others told the history of the International basically without Marx. Marxist-Leninist research claimed a unique share of Marx and his theories in the creation and policies of the International. To them, the International was a step in the necessary and historically unavoidable victory of Marxism over the different forms of petty bourgeois socialism. These ideologies and instrumentalizations continue to have an effect until today, whether we are aware of it or not.

I am giving prominence to the historic Marx, not the state ideologist of the twentieth century or the visionary of anti-colonial liberation movements and anti-authoritarian student movements. The interesting story in our context deals with the social philosopher, social critic and revolutionary of the nineteenth century, with all inconsistencies and ambivalence that were a part of him and his times.

Marx was neither one of the activist professional revolutionaries, spawned only by the twentieth century, nor did he, as a scientist and analyst of capitalism,

18 "During the last few days we have reported ...", in *The Times* (London), No. 25914 (12 September 1867), p. 6.

19 See MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, p. 233, 780–782, 786, 1158 and 2083.

leave a finalized or at least cohesive work behind. Instead his work remained a fragment in central parts. And its political and scientific development was anything but a straightforward. He discussed many political questions only in the form of newspaper articles.

When the International was founded in 1864, Marx was working on the third overall design of his “Critique of Capitalist Economy”, which like the previous two drafts remained incomplete.<sup>20</sup> In 1867 the first volume of his *Kapital* was published; the only one to be published in his lifetime. The books nowadays known as volumes two and three were published after Marx’ death from his estate. When the International was laid to rest at the Hague Congress, only the first edition of the *Kapital* which was about 1,000 copies, had been sold.<sup>21</sup> For comparison: In 1859 the first edition of Darwin’s book *On the Origin of Species*, 1000 copies as well, had already been sold out on the first day.

The different Marxisms successfully separated Marx from his intellectual and communicative environment. He found himself be stylized to be the founder of a scientific ideology, a kind of a political religion, and the leader of the German and international workers, who allegedly sang praises of a communist cadre party. Against this distorting traditions, it is of indispensable importance to put Marx back into his historical contexts. It may sound paradoxical, but only this “Historisierung” (historisation) allows a discussion about potentials, which may make him and his times more “modern” and accessible for us today.

Marx never held a prominent official position within the International. In 1866 he declined the offer to become president.<sup>22</sup> But he significantly contributed to the International not just remaining an inspiring idea – like many previous initiatives, but becoming political reality and becoming politically active for almost a decade.

Marx’ position was first and foremost an intellectually dominant one. He played a critical role in moulding the identity of the International. He played an important role in conceptualizing workers emancipation as a global project and articulating a transnational community of workers’ interests. We have to read his writings and speeches as critical responses to European discussions.

His texts attracted interest, generalized and offered interpretations. They presented arguments, but they also were emotionally startling and suggestive.

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20 Today it is possible to read all these drafts in the MEGA. See MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. II/1–15. – Gerald Hubmann, Regina Roth, “Die ‘Kapital’-Abteilung der MEGA. Einleitung und Überblick”, in *Marx-Engels Jahrbuch 2012/13* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 60–69.

21 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 1200–1218.

22 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/20, p. 485.



Through their eloquence and analytical strength his texts were able to fill the communicative space opened by the International. On the one hand we can hear the echo of contemporary discourse and debates in Marx' texts and speeches. On the other hand he creatively and inspirationally influenced these debates.

Looking at the minutes of the General Council, we get to know a Marx who was committed to dealing with European social, economic and workers' questions week after week. A Marx, who determined the main topics, recited analyses and could give meaning to events. But also a Marx who was involved in the political networks of relationships and communication.

The appeals and declarations written by Marx were proof and products of exchange, not party statements he could autocratically proclaim. They are – like the public declaration of May 1870 – to be seen in the context of the discussions of the General Council and in the European trade unions and workers' movements. Famous appeals, even if they were controversially debated in the General Council, originated against this background. He also very consciously considered the sensitivities of the British public. In September 1870 he reminded Engels “that the General Council has to deal with susceptibilities in all directions”, and thus he could not write in a way he would have done in his familiar cooperation with Engels.<sup>23</sup>

On July 19th 1870, four days after the Franco-Prussian war broke out, in a meeting of the General Council Marx was assigned the task to draft a manifesto against the war. Marx asked the other members of the General Council, to express their opinions. The chairman of the meeting suggested that all members should explain their opinions, which were to serve as a guideline for Marx.<sup>24</sup> In the manifesto Napoleon III is blamed for the outbreak of the war and the end of his reign was foreseen. Although Prussia is declared complicit in the unfolding events, Marx assumed a “defensive character of the war on the German side”.<sup>25</sup> After Napoleon had been overthrown the General Council advocated immediate peace without any cession of territory, in a second address which was also written by Marx.<sup>26</sup>

I would like to look at two topics in more detail: firstly Marx' plea for a transnational solidarity of workers, and secondly his plea for a European perspective.

In 1864 Marx wrote the founding program of the International, the Inaugural address. It is a document comparable to the *Communist Manifesto*. In it

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23 Marx to Engels, 14 September 1870. (MECW, vol. 44, pp. 76/7.)

24 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 807/8.

25 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 245–250, 478–484, 1594–1612 and 1744–1750.

26 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 485–499 and 1751–1776.

he explains the necessity of a transnational solidarity of workers. It states: "It is a great fact that the misery of the working masses has not diminished from 1848 to 1864, and yet this period is unrivalled for the development of its industry and the growth of its commerce."<sup>27</sup>

With this Marx put the basic conviction of these worker activists into words. This can be seen in interviews that leading British members of the International gave the New York newspaper *The World* in May 1870. "The World" later became famous for Joseph Pulitzer. Robert Applegarth was a member of the General Council of the International and general secretary of one of the most influential British unions of his time – the carpenters and joiners. He told *The World*: "Those of us who had studied the situation had become convinced that no improvement of machinery, no application, no new colonies, no emigration, no opening of markets, no free trade, not even all these things put together, excellent as they are would do away with the misery of the operative classes. ... Our claim ... to participate in the fruits of our own labour can only be enforced and realized by the union of all of us."<sup>28</sup>

For Marx, unions were the ideal class organizations of the workers, politicized unions, who fought social battles with political intentions. This concept was behind the "provisional Rules" which were also written by Marx and were accepted by the first European workers' congress in Geneva in 1866. They state that the economic emancipation of the working classes was the big goal, which every political movement ought to be subordinate to as a means.<sup>29</sup> For Marx, parties were midwives for unions at best. That is why in 1869 in Hanover Marx told the German metal unionists who were followers of Ferdinand Lasalle: "All political parties, whatever they may be, without exception, inspire the masses of the workers only temporarily; however the unions mesmerise the masses of the workers for good, only they are capable of truly representing a workers' party and being a bastion against the power of the capital." Marx thought of political workers' parties as some kind of fad. The text of this talk has never been printed in a Marx-Engels-edition. It has only now been documented in the MEGA.<sup>30</sup>

In 1866 Marx wrote a reserved catalogue of tasks of the International for the Geneva Congress in the *Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General*

27 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/20, p. 3.

28 "Labor and Capital", in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* (New York) No. 3 (28. Mai 1870), pp. 3/4. (Reprint from *The World*, New York.) – See MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 1147.

29 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/20, p. 658/9 and 688–700; vol. I/21, p. 1141.

30 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 906/7 and 2141–2144.

*Council*.<sup>31</sup> Later he characterized these *Instructions* as “part of the platform of principles of the International”.<sup>32</sup> Marx emphasized the importance of limiting the working day to eight hours, of the question of children’s and women’s labour, of strengthening producers’ cooperatives and trade unions, and of an international inquiry into workplace conditions. He explained that he “intentionally restricted himself to such points that would allow direct understanding and cooperation of workers”.<sup>33</sup> Marx always emphasized that the General Council was “not responsible” for the decision of the Brussels Congress to demand nationalization of the mines, trains and forests. This decision can rather be traced back to the initiative of the Brussels members of the International.<sup>34</sup>

For Marx Europe was an area of reference as well as an area of action, but also an area of the future. His horizon transcended national and ethnic boundaries. But throughout his life the nation state remained the central principle of order for him. The *Communist Manifesto* may state that: “The workers have no fatherland.”<sup>35</sup> But Marx made it clear that politically the revolutionary “proletariat” had to act on a national level. He expected that the solidarity of the proletariat fighting for equal interests and rights would lead to overcoming nations. He considered national statehood and international solidarity of classes to be compatible. He underestimated the explosive force of nationalism, he may have even consciously ignored it. Already in the revolution of 1848, national rivalries had increased and led to bloody national confrontations.

Marx fought for a Europe of medium-sized states, with power bases and interests restricted to Europe. Marx and Engels saw in the “alliance of the three big western nations” – France, Britain and Germany – the most important “international condition for the political and social liberation for all of Europe”. The cooperation of these three nations – Engels wrote 1890 – was to be the “core of the European association”, that would “permanently put an end to cabinet- and race wars”.<sup>36</sup>

While Marx was writing the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847, together with other European intellectuals, he founded the Association Démocratique in

31 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/20, pp. 225–235.

32 MEGA<sup>2</sup>, vol. I/21, p. 104 and 1155/6.

33 Marx to Louis Kugelmann, 9 October 1866. (MECW vol. 42, p. 326.)

34 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 670–672, 1157, 1794, 1952–1955.

35 Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, “Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei”, in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels Werke* (Berlin, 1964), vol. 4, p. 479. – See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by Gareth Stedman Jones (London, 2002); Jürgen Herres, “Rhineland Radicals and the ‘48ers” in Terrell Carver, James Farr (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Communist Manifesto*, (Cambridge 2015), pp. 15–31.

36 Engels, “Au Conseil National du Parti Ouvrier Français” (1890), in MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/31, p. 287.

Brussels, which planned a big “congress of democrats of all European nations” in 1848. The Brussels Association Démocratique may have been the first organisation that explicitly promoted the “United States of Europe”. When the Brussels society discussed the unification of Europe (une Fédération de l’Europe) as a union of democratic republics on 26 December 1847, both Marx and Michael Bakunin were present.<sup>37</sup>

For smaller nations, Marx and Engels accepted only a cultural right to self-determination with the exception of the two Catholic victim nations of the nineteenth century. Throughout his life, Marx fought for Poland and Ireland, out of conviction, but especially for political reasons. His strategic conception was the repression and containment of the interests of great powers, especially Russia. From Marx’ point of view “the restoration of Poland” was “the annihilation of Russia, the removal of Russia’s candidacy for world domination.”<sup>38</sup> Thus he declared the “motto of the International Workingmen’s association” to be: “A free Europe, based on a free and independent Poland.”<sup>39</sup> He expected the independence of Ireland to cause a revolution in Great Britain.<sup>40</sup>

The sympathy of the International for colonized peoples however, was restricted to denouncing colonial “excesses” and did not question the colonial system as such. Although Marx repeatedly emphasized the Janus-faced character of progress, he considered only “European civilization” capable of development and progress. He considered some European and especially extra-European societies to be cultures of stagnation and regression, which could only move forward if they followed in Europe’s footsteps. In the last decade of his life Marx concerned himself more extensively with extra-European societies and tried to expand his analysis, which had so far focused on Western Europe, to a global perspective.<sup>41</sup>

In 1870 Marx temporarily thought that the power political map of Europe might significantly change. Due to the military success of Prussia against France, in his perspective Germany became independent of Russia. And it

37 See *Association Démocratique, ayant pour but l’union et la fraternité de tous les peuples. Eine frühe internationale demokratische Vereinigung in Brüssel 1847–1848*, ed. by Bert Andréas, Jacques Grandjonc and Hans Pelger (Trier, 2004), p. 359 and 460–462.

38 Karl Marx, *Manuskripte über die polnische Frage (1863–1864)*, ed. by Werner Conze and Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode (S-Gravenhage 1961), p. 93; Karol Marx, *Przyczynki do historii kwestii polskiej* (Warszawa 1971), p. 4.

39 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/20, p. 132 and 243–247, 286, 290 and 343.

40 Jürgen Herres, “Marx und Engels über Irland. Ein Überblick. Artikel, Briefe, Manuskripte und Schriften” in *Marx-Engels Jahrbuch 2011* (Berlin, 2012), pp. 12–27.

41 Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins. On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago [etc.], 2010).

appeared to him that the collapse of the second empire would enable the co-operation of France and Germany to establish republics and social revolution. Therefore he and Engels vehemently opposed the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. They called the annexation “the biggest misfortune”, as it made a great European war “unavoidable” in the future.<sup>42</sup>

Marx’s opposition to the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870–1, as well as his advocacy for Poland and Ireland had a remarkably European dimension. His political concept aimed for a Europe of democratised nation states. All chauvinism was alien to him.

### Conclusion

In 1847–8 in the *Communist Manifesto* and in 1864 in the inaugural address of the IWMA, Marx called upon the workers of the world to unite. The transnational solidarity of workers demanded by Marx had nothing in common with the proletarian internationalism of the twentieth century. That is why I have generally used the adjective transnational instead of international. And that is why I have emphasized the middle phase of the history of the IWMA.

All too often this history of the International has been told from its – admittedly – dramatic end. But that is a distorted perspective. In 1871, after the suppression of the Paris commune in the French capital which was besieged by German troops, the French workers’ movement remained inactive for many years; with it the French-British cooperation, on which the International had fundamentally rested, ended as well. The international network was not up to the police persecution of the continental European governments. Furthermore there were structural changes. Globalization which rapidly accelerated after 1870 provoked strong national defensive reactions, protectionism and a radicalisation of nationalism.

Nevertheless the question remains: why did the International proved incapable of adapting to this changed political and overall world economic situation? Did the internationalism of the IWMA in some way really have to give way to national workers’ movements?

I highlighted Marx first and foremost as an intellectual mediator, translator, analyst and provider of ideas of the International. In 1871–2 the ambivalence of his political effectiveness, but also the limits of his concepts of workers and revolution became apparent. In 1871 Marx became world-famous as one of the most controversial political radicals through his empathic defence of the Paris

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<sup>42</sup> MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/21, pp. 1190–1194.

Commune in the General Council address *The Civil War in France*.<sup>43</sup> From the perspective of the European governments he had instigated the uprising of the Paris Commune.

In 1871 Marx urged a greater leading role of the General Council and a stronger politicization of the International: “In presence of an unbridled reaction which violently crushes every effort at emancipation on the part of the working men ... the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party”. And he “recalls to the members ... that in the militant state of the working class, its economical movement and its political action are indissoluble united”.<sup>44</sup> But this “political party” did not mean the communist cadre party of the twentieth century, but a conscious politicization of the European workers’ movements.

Marx failed to move the British labour leaders to political uprising. They rather saw their social achievements jeopardized and gradually withdrew from the International. Marx did not wage the alleged power struggle against Michael Bakunin in 1872 politically or ideologically, but like a state prosecutor, who does not leave out any points that can lead to the conviction of the accused.<sup>45</sup>

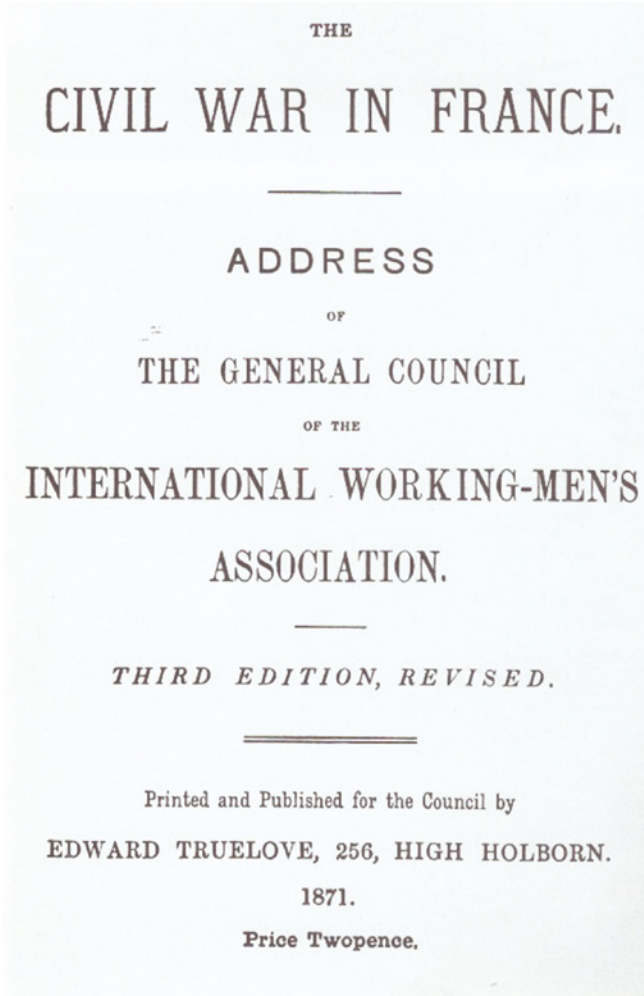
Without overvaluing the observation of the British journalist mentioned at the beginning, Marx was not the boss of the International. At no point has the General Council been a central committee of underlings.

The impact of the International had less to do with absolute numbers than with its symbolic power. It became the symbol of transnational power of workers even though the membership figures were exaggerated and the allegedly filled cash boxes existed only in the imagination of the police. Marx considerably contributed to this as long as he exercised restraint in his role as a mediator. He failed when he gave up his mediating role. The International opens our view to the debates of the European workers’ and opposition movements about important questions of foreign, constitutional, union and social policy in the age of the first modern wave of globalization.

43 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/22, pp. 13–162 and 179–226. See Figure 19.1.

44 MEGA<sup>2</sup> vol. I/22, pp. 343/4. – See Molnár, *Le déclin de la Première Internationale*, pp. 83 and 95ff.

45 See Michael Bakunin, *Konflikt mit Marx*, ed. by Wolfgang Eckhardt (Berlin, 2011), vol. 2, pp. 681ff.



.16.

FIGURE 19.1 The Civil War in France. Address of the General Council of the IWMA, 1871. *Title page.*  
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## The Construction of Proudhonism within the IWMA

Samuel Hayat

Translated from the French by *Thierry Labica*

Historiography has long accepted the view that the first Paris section of the International, between 1864 and 1867, commonly known as the Gravilliers group, from the name of street where they had their premises, was Proudhonian.<sup>1</sup> While in more recent decades, various studies have qualified or even rejected the idea altogether,<sup>2</sup> it has still retained some currency down to our day in numerous writings which historians and activists have devoted to that historical period.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, such a reference to Proudhon by the members of the Paris section of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) is evidenced in their writings as well as in their position-taking. But far from offering

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- 1 See for instance Jules-Louis Puech's seminal work, *Le Proudhonisme dans l'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris, 1907). In his article of synthesis, born from a large scale collective research enterprise, Jacques Rougerie also considers the first period of the French section, up to the two Parisian court cases, as a "Proudhonian" period. Jacques Rougerie, « Les sections françaises de l'Association internationale des travailleurs », in *La première Internationale: l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement : [actes du Colloque international organisé à Paris, 16–18 nov. 1964]* (Paris, 1968), pp. 93–127. For a presentation of the historiography of the IWMA, see Daisy Eveline Devreese, « L'Association internationale des travailleurs : bilan de l'historiographie, perspectives de recherche », *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 9–31.
- 2 Bernard H. Moss, "La Première Internationale, la coopération et le mouvement ouvrier à Paris (1865–1871) : Le mythe du proudhonisme," *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 33–48; Julian P. W Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1872: Its origins, theories, and impact* (Lanham [etc.], 1997); Michel Cordillot, « Le fouriérisme dans la section parisienne de la Première Internationale (1865–1866) », in *Aux origines du socialisme moderne: la Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'Exil, recherches et travaux* (Ivry-sur-Seine, 2010), pp. 19–32.
- 3 See for example Mathieu Léonard's recent synthesis, *L'émancipation des travailleurs: une histoire de la Première Internationale* (Paris, 2011).



mere confirmation of their Proudhonism, this presence of Proudhon is rather a cause for surprise. First, if we bear in mind these organised workers' emphasis on the right to speak and act of their own behalf, we may need to think twice before looking upon their thinking as mere derivation from the thought of a full-time professional thinker, even if he was of working class extraction himself. Secondly, while we may accept the idea of workers drawing their inspiration from a particular author, be it Proudhon, Marx, or Bakunin, the choice of Proudhon still remains an enigma. Unlike what was the case with Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, or Cabetists, Proudhon hardly ever received the embrace of followers and disciples, or contributed to organising labour except for a few months in 1848.<sup>4</sup> How come then that the name of Proudhon became attached to the first Parisian section of the IWMA, be it at the time or in later historiography? Things become even more complicated if we look at the IWMA in the broader, more long-term historical context; the Paris section of the International was not the only heir to Proudhon, and partly through that same Parisian channel, this inheritance further extended to the whole of the French labour movement, as a consequence of this section's pivotal role in the formation of revolutionary syndicalism.<sup>5</sup>

This contribution will not attempt to come up with a definitive assessment of the validity of the Proudhonian label: as in the controversies about the role of Proudhon in the emergence of revolutionary syndicalism, the opposite hypotheses of a direct "filiation" and of a simple "encounter" between Proudhonism and organised workers both prove unsatisfactory.<sup>6</sup> Instead, we will consider the question with the tools of the social history of ideas.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, Proudhonism does not exist as a coherent system of thought apart from its social construction by those who refer to it. Contrary to the usual narratives of the First International that give a prominent role to constituted ideologies (Proudhonism, Marxism, Bakuninism), we will reassess the role of the

4 Rémi Gossez, *Les Ouvriers de Paris. 1: L'Organisation, 1848–1851* (Paris, 1968).

5 Allow me to refer the reader to Samuel Hayat, « De l'anarchisme proudhonien au syndicalisme révolutionnaire : une transmission problématique », in Edouard Jourdain (ed.), *Proudhon et l'anarchisme* (2012). See also Lucien Febvre, "Une question d'influence : Proudhon et le syndicalisme," *Revue de synthèse historique* 19/56 (1909), pp. 179–93; Patrice Rolland, « À propos de Proudhon : une querelle des influences, » *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques* (1995), pp. 275–300.

6 These two hypotheses are described by Annie Kriegel, « Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire et Proudhon », in *L'Actualité de Proudhon. Colloque des 24 et 25 novembre 1965* (Bruxelles, 1967), pp. 47–66.

7 Frédérique Matonti, "Plaidoyer pour une histoire sociale des idées politiques," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 59-4bis/5 (March 1, 2013), pp. 85–104.

IWMA debates in the construction of one of these ideologies, Proudhonism. As a result, the question will not be to determine whether the workers of the Paris section of the IWMA were indeed Proudhonian, but rather to document the way they actually contributed to the construction of Proudhonism through their references to his work. This implies asking ourselves several questions: Who are the organised workers that refer to Proudhon? What practices do they have in mind when they quote him? What do they intend to achieve by doing so?<sup>8</sup> What image of Proudhon and Proudhonism do they convey through their texts? Only through answering those questions will we be able to understand the role of the organised workers in the construction of the reference to Proudhon, its origins, its deployment and its outcomes – a matter of critical importance to any understanding of the intellectual history of the organised French workers of the nineteenth century.

### Who are the Proudhonians within the International?

The construction of Proudhonism as a distinctive ideology did not start with Proudhon himself.<sup>9</sup> The word “Proudhonian” seems to have been first used by the opponents to the positions of the workers of the French section of the IWMA. Its use was unambiguously pejorative as exemplified by those “Proudhonist jackasses” with which, in a letter dated 11 September 1867, Marx meant the members of the French section.<sup>10</sup> But here we have to draw a distinction between the French section and its spokesmen – Marx being in contact with only the latter. Indeed, as early as 1867, there was at least thirty or forty sections in France; even if most of them were very small, totalising a few thousand

8 Quentin Skinner, « Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas », *History and Theory*, 8/1 (1969), pp. 3–53.

9 We know the famous phrase attributed to Proudhon when he heard that some people claimed to be Proudhonian: “They must be imbecile” (“*Ce doit être des imbéciles*”). Quoted by Pierre Hauptmann, *La Philosophie sociale de P.-J. Proudhon* (Grenoble, 1980), p. 13.

10 « *Eseln von Proudhonisten* », Marx to Engels, 11 September 1867, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke. Band 31* (Berlin, 1965), p. 342. In his correspondence, Marx first referred to the Proudhonians as a group (« *die Proudhonclique* », *Ibid.*, p. 222) in his letter to Engels dated 7 June 1866, but only meaning students in this case. It is only at the Geneva Congress, as his letter to Ludwig Kugelmann dated 9 October 1866 makes clear, that Marx discovered that the Parisian delegates « had their heads stuffed full of the most vacuous Proudhonist clichés » (« *Die Herrn Pariser hatten die Köpfe voll mit den leersten Proudhonischen Phrasen* », p. 529) and that « Proudhon has done enormous harm » (« *Proudhon hat enormes Unheil angerichtet* », p. 530).

members at most.<sup>11</sup> Marx certainly did not mean they were all Proudhonian; he must have had in mind the representatives of these sections, and more specifically the representatives of the Paris section – the most important and numerous in the first Congresses of the IWMA. To what extent can we confirm this Proudhonist label given by Marx to the Paris section? In order to answer this question, we have to give a brief description of the section's representatives.

The first circle, with whom Marx had the most contacts, was formed by the three Paris based corresponding secretaries of the London central council: Henri Tolain, Ernest Fribourg, and Charles Limousin (whom Eugène Varlin replaced after the Geneva Congress). Born in 1828 in Paris, Henri Tolain, a bronze engraver, was unquestionably their figurehead. He, unlike the three others, attended both the London meeting of 22 July 1863 in Saint James Hall and the Saint Martin's Hall meeting of 28 September 1864. He had been one of the co-authors of the *Manifesto of the Sixty* published in the 17 February 1864 issue of *L'Opinion nationale* to advocate putting up working class candidates and promote various social demands. Ernest Fribourg was an engraver and a decorator. He had not attended the Saint Martin's Hall meeting but still played a key role in the organizing and publicising of the debates within the section prior to the Geneva Congress, being particularly active in the short-lived papers of the section and later on in the drafting of the constitution of the association. Charles Limousin, born in 1840, was a print worker and had signed the *Manifesto of the Sixty*. In 1865, he had become de facto corresponding secretary in replacement of his own father, Antoine Limousin, one of the participants in the Saint Martin's Hall meeting and now unable to carry out his activities within the IWMA for reasons of poor health. While he did not participate in the Geneva Congress and then left the leadership of the International, he still played an important role organising and publicising the activities of the section, notably with the launching of the paper of the Paris section of the IWMA, *Tribune ouvrière*. Finally, Eugène Varlin, born in 1839 in Claye-Souilly (in the Seine-et-Marne department) was a bookbinder. He probably was the most advanced of them all with a long experience of strikes, mutualism, and cooperation, and was the spokesman for the minority which advocated, at the 1866 Geneva, the improvement of women's working conditions and universal compulsory education.<sup>12</sup>

11 Jacques Rougerie, « Les sections françaises de l'Association internationale des travailleurs », in *La première Internationale: l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*, pp. 97–100.

12 Michel Cordillot, *Eugène Varlin, chronique d'un espoir assassiné* (Paris, 1991).

These four workers had in common the fact that they belonged to trades that did not affiliate them to the industrial proletariat, which was still embryonic in France at the time.<sup>13</sup> Young Charles Limousin was a print worker as well as a journalist. Varlin was poor and came from an agrarian background, but was employed in a fairly skilled occupation, and further was an outstanding autodidact. As for Fribourg and Tolain, they typically represented what has sometimes been characterised as the aristocracy of labour.<sup>14</sup> Chiseling and engraving were trades of precision of a largely artisanal nature, often well-paid and for which workers had gone through proper apprenticeships. This means that the leading figures of the Parisian section of the IWMA had rather specific profiles as educated craftsmen who had attended evening classes; not all of them belonged to the more prestigious trades, but in any case, they did not come from the ranks of the more proletarianised and often rural sectors of the working class.

How much does the preceding description apply to the twenty official members of the commission of the Paris section in 1865, among whom were the twelve Geneva delegates – a group we can consider as the second circle? Although the picture remains incomplete in a number of cases, the *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier* still helps form an idea of who these delegates were. Out of the twenty members, the birth dates of fifteen of them are known. They were between twenty four and forty nine years old at the time of the Geneva Congress (thirty three years old on average). Rather than very young men, they were young heads of household and settled men for most of them. Out of the thirteen members whose birth places are known, only three were born in Paris and one in the Paris region. Out of the nine others – if we go by modern administrative regions – four came from Rhône Alpes, two from Centre, one from Bourgogne, one from Pas de Calais, and one from Champagne Ardenne (which, incidentally, goes to illustrate the considerable mobility of urban workers in the mid-nineteenth century). Nearly all of them were skilled trade workers. Next to these bronze workers and print workers though, one still finds one tanner, one shoemaker, one coach-builder, one mechanic, and even, one day-labourer, young Benoît Malon, born in 1841, who performed all kinds of unskilled jobs in spite of his primary education at the Catholic *petit séminaire*,

13 Gérard Noiriel, *Les ouvriers dans la société française: XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris, 1986); Alain Dewerpe, *Le monde du travail en France, 1800–1950* (Paris, 1989); Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class*, 2 vols. (1992).

14 For a discussion of this idea, see H.F. Moorhouse, “The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy”, *Social History*, 3/1 (1978), pp. 61–82.

and of the assistance he had received from his elder brother, a primary school teacher.

Quite obviously, these “Proudhonian” workers were not exactly representative of French workers. First, there were no women among them while the latter formed a third of the population of industrial workers. Secondly, there was not a single countryman as a consequence of the urban location of the section, in spite of the fact that agriculture was by far the largest provider of employment. Ultimately, nearly all of them belonged to organised trade guilds, and understandably so since they had been chosen, at one stage or another, to represent their respective trades within the IWMA. But they did not form a separate, solely Parisian caste either. This second circle, which neither belonged to the bourgeoisie nor to the industrial proletariat in the contemporary sense, enables us to form a fairly accurate picture, if not of French workers themselves, at least of the urban labour movement, particularly in Paris where it was at the forefront of all the insurrections of the century, from the Revolution to 1830, 1848 and the Paris Commune.<sup>15</sup>

A cursory survey of these twenty biographies will draw attention to a few more important details. First, few of them participated (in any recorded way) in the 1848 revolution. Their ages and geographical origins certainly played a part, but in any case, this mere fact means that the hypothesis of a continuous link between the insurgents of June 1848 and the founders of the IAW cannot be maintained. Louis Debock, a typographer, and a protagonist of the February clashes, was clearly involved in these events, which was also the case of Henri Tolain, who was twenty and whose role in 1848 is more difficult to establish. Debock, an early collaborator to Charles Fauvety’s and Jules Viard’s *Représentant du Peuple*, along with the Mairet brothers, Georges Duchêne and Louis Vasbenter, was part of the delegation of print workers who had paid a visit to Proudhon on 26 February 1848 to ask him to contribute to their paper. Could this account for the diffusion of Proudhonism among them? Possibly. Another source worth considering is freemasonry. Like many other republicans and socialists, Proudhon was himself a freemason. And so was it the case for at least eight out of the twenty members of the commission of the French section of the IWMA – arguably a conservative figure since their biographies are far from complete for each of them. Finally, five members of the commission had actually signed the *Manifesto of the Sixty* and can be expected to have paid special attention to Proudhon’s response to it in his *De la capacité politique des*

15 Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830–1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley, 1976); William Hamilton Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge [etc.], 1980).

*classes ouvrières*, published after his death in 1865. Among these workers, only Debock and Zéphirin Camélinat<sup>16</sup> had kept regular and documented contacts with Proudhon. Even the leader of the Gravilliers, Tolain himself, was not close to Proudhon.

What does this too rapid survey of the spokespersons of the IWMA tell us about their alleged Proudhonism? It tells us that the Gravilliers were not Proudhonian then to the extent that they were not within Proudhon's sphere of influence or even close to him, and were not followers of the philosopher prior to the creation of the IWMA. They were not of the same generation as Proudhon (being thirty three years old on average), nor did they belong to the same circles, and they had no political experience in common with him. Therefore, according to the biographies of its members, including the first circle, the notion that this group may have been "Proudhonian" requires some caution; they were no disciples of Proudhon, did not know him directly and (Debock excepted) had not taken part in the projects launched by Proudhon in 1848.

### The 1866 *Mémoire des délégués français*: A Proudhonian Document

Why describe them as Proudhonians then? Could this simply reflect a historical error or the result of Marx's malice? Probably not, and this for a simple reason: the reference to Proudhon was by no means the result of a labelling from the outside (assigned by Marx or by later historians). Rather, this reference, albeit an unexpected one, had been directly imported into the debates of IWMA by the Gravilliers in September 1866 at the time of the first IWMA Congress in Geneva. Eleven Parisian delegates, three from Lyon and one more sent by the Rouen workers, attended. The Paris delegates presented their *Mémoire* which they had collectively drafted earlier in August in response to the invitation by the General Council and to which the rest of the French delegates immediately associated themselves. It was on the occasion of this particular event, and most notably during the presentation and discussion of this document, that the thought of the workers of the French section of the International found its intellectual contours.

The *Mémoire* is an extensive collective response to the list of discussion items selected by the London Council. It went by the order of this agenda

16 From his encounter with Charles Beslay in 1862. Michel Cordillot, « Camélinat-le-communard, de Mailly-La-Ville à l'exil outre-Manche », in Michel Cordillot (ed.), *Zéphirin Camélinat (1840–1932): une vie pour la sociale : actes du colloque historique organisé au Musée Saint-Germain à Auxerre le 11 octobre 2003 par Adiamos-89*, (Auxerre, 2004), p. 20.

each time laying out the position of the Paris section of the IWMA and further pointing out, with reference to two of these items (education and women's work), that this position had received majority – rather than unanimous – support, while also reporting on the minority position. Now, interestingly, Proudhon is the only author which the *Mémoire* explicitly quoted as a reference on three occasions (one of Benjamin Constant's maxims is also quoted but without any further comment) and at some length, making it, justifiably to some, "the veritable charter of Proudhonism" from the outset.<sup>17</sup> The quotations were borrowed from *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle* (1851) and *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (1865), being two of Proudhon's deeply political and radical books (most notably so in the case of the former). *Capacité* had been chosen because this particular work was itself a direct response to the *Manifesto of the Sixty* which, among its signatories, counted five members of the first and second circles of the Paris section of the IWMA. As regards to the references to *Idée générale*, they clearly suggest that at least some of the delegates were well versed in the works of Proudhon, beyond the latter's more recent or more successful writings and the presence of this book is of critical importance to understand the Gravilliers' outlook.

How come they quote Proudhon, whereas we showed that they were not under the direct influence of Proudhon and its followers? Our hypothesis is that the authors of the *Mémoire* had turned to Proudhon in their search for the right wording of the defence of their own conception of the IWMA's role, as well as of the struggle and the contours of future society. Which then requires a different perspective altogether; rather than Proudhon merely influencing the members of the IWMA, it was they who sought to legitimise their position by actively resorting to Proudhon and his vocabulary. That some of these texts partly came from a phase of Proudhon's work which Proudhon himself had come to regard as outdated appears to confirm this, as well as the fact that the Gravilliers were at the same time turning away from Proudhon's more important books of the later part of his works (*De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'église*, and above all, *Du Principe fédératif*). What they were out to find, sometimes against the drift of the quoted texts, was a justification of their own positions, especially regarding two crucial items which had been constitutive of the French labour movement ever since the 1830s, i.e., the defence of cooperation and workers' autonomy.

The critique of the principle of association (in its communist version) and the promotion of an understanding of cooperation as freely chosen by individuals, together with a critique of the State in charge of the economy, were

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17 Rougerie, « Les sections françaises de l'Association internationale des travailleurs », p. 101.

decisive dimensions of trade workers cooperative socialism.<sup>18</sup> To justify this position, the Gravilliers turned to Proudhon's more distinctly anarchistic *Idée générale de la révolution* which regarded direct government as the most advanced form of political exploitation, and the associative model as the last form of economic exploitation. *L'idée générale* is quoted twice. The first, lengthy quotation was invoked by the majority of the section to advocate the necessity to give the responsibility of education to families rather than the State.<sup>19</sup> The State itself was relentlessly indicted by the Gravilliers for its will to maintain a standing army, control education, and even its tax system whereby

the army, courts of justice, the police, schools, hospitals, almshouses, houses of refuge and of correction, asylum rooms, nurseries and other charitable institutions, religion itself, are first paid for and maintained by the proletariat, and then directed against him; so that not only does the proletariat toil for the benefits of the caste that devours them, the caste of the capitalists, but also for that of the caste that flogs and benumbs them.<sup>20</sup>

Such a critique was of significance for the Gravilliers as it also formed the basis of their critique of state communism, thus foreshadowing the debates on the issue of the State which were to take place within the International. For the French delegates as much as for the Proudhon of the early 1850s, things were clear: communism and statism were one and the same thing. This was the thrust of their critique of association, which was very similar to Proudhon's in *L'idée générale*:

As its founders themselves recognise, association was supposed to melt interests together, annihilate differences, and create absolute equality. But which law was to preside over such a fusion of wills? Was it the free contract? Certainly not since all reformers – Cabet, Owen, Fourier, Louis Blanc, etc. ... as much as Lycurgus himself – all started from the assumption that society is everything, solely enjoys rights of its own, whereas the individual only has duties.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830–1914*.

19 *Mémoire des délégués français au Congrès de Genève*, in E. Fribourg, *L'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris, 1871), pp. 60–62.

20 *Mémoire des délégués français*, p. 78.

21 *Mémoire des délégués français*, p. 71.



This critique of community is close to Proudhon's, even in the detail of its attacks against statist socialists like Louis Blanc or the utopianism of Cabet, Owen, and Fourier. Against such approaches, the Gravilliers advocated cooperation which "brings men together to exalt the strengths and initiatives of each"<sup>22</sup>. This was a crucial issue for the French delegates: cooperation is fundamentally more just than association, since its extension, following the federalist method, increases workers' freedom whereas the extension of association reduces it. To justify this, they resorted to a second, shorter quotation from *L'idée générale*, to illustrate the section entitled: "Cooperation distinguished from association". It defines contract thus:

The contract therefore is essentially reciprocal: it imposes no obligation upon the parties, except that which results from their personal promise of reciprocal delivery: it is not subject to any external authority: it alone forms the law between the parties: it awaits their initiative for its execution.<sup>23</sup>

The authors of the *Mémoire* based their justification of cooperation and contract, as organising principles of future society, on Proudhon. This figure of the worker as an individual entering contracts with other individuals, taking part in a mutualist and federative process while still retaining his freedom at the same time, constituted the very specificity of the IWMA French delegates' thinking.

While it is correct to say that this critique was very similar to Proudhon's, that its promoters had derived their anti-statism from him remains rather uncertain. Anti-statism already was a crucial feature of French working class culture, stemming from the corporative tradition with its emphasis on the autonomy of the trades vis-à-vis the State, and above all, reinforced by the failure of the experience of the revolution of 1848.<sup>24</sup> Proudhon's interpretation of the failure of the revolution of 1848 and the anti-state conclusions he drew from it in his *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire* and in *L'idée générale de la révolution*, were not actually breaking away from the experience of organised workers (who generally withdrew from political activity after June), but it still represented a departure from the views of a Louis Blanc whose influence was all but vanishing in the wake of the June insurrection, even among the former

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22 *Mémoire des délégués français*, pp. 72–73.

23 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. J.B. Robinson (New York, 1969, [1923]), pp. 113–114.

24 Gossez, *Les Ouvriers de Paris*.

delegates to the 1848 Luxembourg Commission. Proudhon's position, which he restated in his 1865 *Capacité* was echoing the experience of the working class, and *this* – rather any prior ascendancy he would have had over the Gravilliers – was the reason for its appeal.

The second element that was central to the Gravilliers' outlook and which may explain their usage of Proudhon, was the importance they gave to working class autonomy as a mode of organisation and of struggle. This rested on the idea of the primacy of the economic over the political as spelled out in a passage from *Capacité*, quoted at the end of the memorial's preamble:

Before it legislates, administers, erects palaces and temples, goes to war, Society labours, tills, sails, trades, exploits lands and seas. Before crowning kings and instituting dynasties, the people start families, celebrate marriages, build cities, and so forth.<sup>25</sup>

Why turn to Proudhon for justification when the position was so widely accepted by socialists and within the labour movement? The point was to underpin the conclusion which both Proudhon and the Gravilliers derived from it and which distinguished them from the other sections: the necessity of working class autonomy and the primacy of social struggle. They argued that although the International was open to everyone, delegates must come from the ranks of the manual workers only, and the economy must be the IWMA's sole terrain of intervention. This was a major object of controversy within the IWMA, and as such, it defined the very singularity of the positions of the Parisian section. But was this a specifically Proudhonian idea? There are reasons to doubt it: this had been an issue of critical importance for the French labour movement itself, in its formative process since the 1830s. The founding workers documents of the year 1848 reflected that state of affairs, namely, the statutes of the Central Committee of the workers of the Seine Department, themselves an emanation of the Luxembourg Commission which laid down the principle of distinct working class candidatures, and then the *Manifeste des délégués des corporations (ayant siégé au Luxembourg) aux ouvriers du département de la Seine*, which defined the workers' task: the autonomous organisation of economic relations ahead of State intervention.<sup>26</sup> These various documents insisted on workers autonomy while no significant relations whatsoever existed between most of the Luxembourg delegates and Proudhon (with a few

25 *Mémoire des délégués français*. p. 54. The quote is from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (Paris, 1865), p. 205.

26 *Journal des travailleurs* (8 juin 1848).

exceptions, as in the case of typographer Georges Duchêne, for instance). Proudhon took up this idea, particularly in *Capacité*, but once again, this conception of working class militancy was already there in the tradition of trade workers, and owed nothing to Proudhon. Among the internationalists, Charles Limousin was one of its distinct exponents (although more of a Fourierist than a Proudhonist), in his “Inaugural address” in *La Tribune ouvrière. Sciences – arts – industrie – littérature*, an ephemeral publication of the Paris section of the IWMA, sold for five centimes a copy.<sup>27</sup> In *La Tribune*, Limousin advocated the necessity of working class autonomy in matters of intellectual judgement for “amidst the intellectual movement of our time, we can no longer be content with publications merely aimed at workers; some of it must now come from them”.<sup>28</sup> The strategy of working class autonomy was already developed, then, by the French labour movement, irrespective of Proudhon’s views.

Along with the references to Proudhon with the aim to justify working class cooperation and autonomy, the issues over which the Gravilliers *did not* refer to Proudhon are just as equally revealing. Two positions in particular – critical of the employment of women and of strikes – have been generally accepted as Proudhonian ones while being argued without any actual mention of the philosopher. Concerning women, Proudhon stands out as an exception among the socialists of his time; his virulent opposition to the political emancipation of women sets him apart from the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists. He devoted a study to it in his major work, *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l’église*, first published in 1858.<sup>29</sup> This is where he argued that women are inferior to men, not only physically, but also morally as well as intellectually, their only specific quality being their beauty.<sup>30</sup> The approach propounded by the majority of the Gravilliers was more moderate (while over this same issue, Bourdon and Varlin formed a minority in favour of public education). They did not separate the issue of women’s employment from that of education; it being necessary to reject education by the State (they did base that part of the argument

27 Michel Cordillot has documented « the existence of organic links between the Fourierist movement and the IWMA » through this publication coordinated by two Fourierists, Charles Limousin, its editor, and Antoine Bourdon, its editorial secretary, and Adolphe Clémence whose house also served as the paper’s offices. Cordillot, “Le fouriérisme dans la section parisienne de la Première Internationale (1865–1866)”, p. 23.

28 *La Tribune ouvrière*, 4 juin 1865.

29 He also wrote a particularly virulent study against women, *La pornocratie, ou Les femmes dans les temps modernes*, published ten years after his death, and which the Gravilliers could not be aware of on that account.

30 François Fourn, « Femme » in C. Gaillard, G. Navet (eds.), *Dictionnaire Proudhon* (Bruxelles, 2011), p. 304.

on Proudhon's writings) it followed that families must be given responsibility for the schooling of children, which in turns requires the full involvement of mothers. They did insist, however, that there was no question of preventing women from working, and that if they did work, then they must receive equal pay for equal work, which was rather far from being the case with women representing a third of the workers but being paid about half men's wages on average.<sup>31</sup> Now, this suggests that the majority of the Gravilliers' opposition to women's employment had little to do with metaphysical considerations about the inferiority of women in the first place, and rested on practical concerns: women's employment was accused to drive down wages. This is evidenced by the long tradition of clear hostility to women's employment that prevailed in certain trades. A case in point was the typographers' strike of March 1862, directed against women's employment, joined by future internationalist Louis Debock, and which led to a court case in May 1862. The defence of the accused based itself on the notion that typography "is not a job for women" and that "nature has assigned to each sex its particular functions", but immediately to turn to the economic motive, namely, that "the boss who resorts to the work of a woman only does so to cut his cost price; in other words, the introduction of women employed in the printing trade as compositors is a means to drive down wages".<sup>32</sup> This issue of wages was central to Louis Debock's testimony which retraced the history of the project to feminise printing, in connection with another issue, that of mechanisation. He accused bosses of attempting to punish their demands for wage rises "with the introduction of composing machines and female compositors who would be cheaper than the machines themselves".<sup>33</sup> The critique against women's employment by the majority of the Gravilliers then appears to be rooted in a history which was altogether different from the history of Proudhon's both radical and theoretical misogyny. As such, assuming that their position must have been informed by a reference to Proudhonism may be misleading.

In some respects, the problem is the same regarding the issue of strikes, but for different reasons. The Parisian members of the International expressed their views on strikes in their *Memorial*. They argued that strikes and unemployment mirror each other in the sense that strike action generates identical and negative consequences on production and therefore on the workers living conditions. Strikes and unemployment alike are "disturbances" with a common origin in "the anarchy now prevailing in the relationships between capital

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31 Noiriél, *Les Ouvriers dans la société française*, p. 28.

32 Armand Lévy, *Mémoire pour les ouvriers typographes* (Paris, 1862), p. 6.

33 Lévy, *Mémoire pour les ouvriers typographes*, p. 9.

and labour”,<sup>34</sup> or, in what they saw as the seizure of labour by capital. To avoid both unemployment and strikes, it was necessary to transform the relationships between capital and labour, “make reciprocity the basis of exchange”, reform apprenticeships, and draw up statistics.<sup>35</sup> There undeniably was a critique of strikes going on, which certainly distinguished the Gravilliers from the second Parisian section of the International, and of course, from the revolutionary syndicalism that was still to come. But here again, interpreting this as a manifestation of Proudhonism would be an exaggeration. Admittedly, in the last chapter of *Capacité politique*, Proudhon attacked what he called “workers’ coalitions”<sup>36</sup> and refused to recognise the existence of a “right of coalition”.<sup>37</sup> In certain respects, his argument much resembles the views which the Gravilliers were to express a year later; he saw the necessity of these coalitions as a consequence of “economic anarchy”<sup>38</sup> that must be replaced by association and mutuality – the causes of strikes disappearing in the process. Eventually, on this occasion more than on any other one in this book, he appealed directly to “workers’ Democracy”, to organised workers, the writers of the *Manifesto of the Sixty* being the first among them, and therefore, to at least some of the Gravilliers themselves. Such a direct appeal, in the book which the Gravilliers probably knew best, plausibly suggests that the latter may have been familiar with Proudhon’s position, regardless of the fact that their argument makes no reference to him.<sup>39</sup> But reading this position as originating in Proudhon can only be the result of some optical illusion. First, we need to observe that the symmetry established in the delegates’ *Memorial* between unemployment and strikes was not of their own choosing: they were responding to the invitation of the General Council which had formulated the question thus: “n<sup>o</sup>2 workers’ societies, their past, present, and future; of unemployment, strikes, and

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34 *Mémoire des délégués français*, p. 75.

35 *Mémoire des délégués français*, p. 76.

36 Proudhon, *De la capacité politique*, p. 403.

37 Proudhon, *De la capacité politique*, p. 421.

38 Proudhon, *De la capacité politique*, p. 414.

39 We should note here, although this takes us beyond the limits of the present discussion, that Proudhon was not fundamentally opposed to strikes. In *Capacité*, he was responding to the 1864 law on coalitions in which he saw a trap laid by Napoleon III. Meanwhile, in earlier writings (*Contradictions économiques*, and, *De la justice*) where he also dealt with the subject, workers’ coalitions were always interpreted as the result of employers’ coalitions, and he further denounced the unequal treatment by the State of the two types of coalition (which was among the motives for which Proudhon was sued, following the publication of *De la justice*).

how to address them; of primary and vocational education.<sup>40</sup> Right from the beginning, then, in the very wording of the questions contained in the General Council's invitation, that is, strikes were presented as a problem for which a solution must be found, as well as for unemployment. This is a crucial point which itself reveals a wider misunderstanding concerning "Proudhonists"; in 1866, defiance towards strikes was not specific to the French section of the International but rather, a widely shared position among the political leadership, even within the General Council.<sup>41</sup> From this point of view, Proudhon was no different from the other socialists and working class activists; strikes in general, and defensive strikes in particular, might have been regarded as a necessity, but they appeared nowhere on the strategic agenda, neither as a favoured means of struggle, nor, of course, as a means of emancipation, and the idea of a "general strike" simply did not exist. Subsequently, the Gravilliers' or Proudhon's critiques against strikes were not a specific development at that stage. It was only in retrospect that the opponents to their positions turn them into the emblem of archaism, or of a petty-bourgeois attitude. And in actual practice, the members of the Paris section did participate in strikes. Along with the March 1862 typographers' strike mentioned earlier, there is also the example of Eugène Varlin's role during the bookbinders' strike of 1864–1865.<sup>42</sup> Finally, after the Geneva Congress, the 1867 bronze workers' strike, led by Tolain among others, became the occasion to activate the resources of international solidarity for the first time, and as such represented a decisive moment in the history of the IWMA in France.<sup>43</sup> The Gravilliers' opposition to strikes, therefore, was not particularly Proudhonist, or ever specific to the French within the IWMA, and more importantly, it being an opposition to strikes as a privileged mode of militancy, the possibility to resort to strikes was still available whenever necessary.

What should we conclude from all this? Proudhon was unquestionably the major author of reference for the delegates of the Paris section of the International. He was only quoted, however, in support of two ideas, i.e. workers' autonomy and cooperation, which had their origins in the workers' experience from which Proudhon himself had inherited; he brought articulacy to it, but did not invent it. Meanwhile, the critique against the employment of women and against strikes did not use quotations from Proudhon and did not say anything

40 *Mémoire des délégués français*, p. 19.

41 See Jan Dhondt's comments in the synthesis report of *La première Internationale: l'institution, l'implantation, le rayonnement*, pp. 478–480.

42 Cordillot, *Eugène Varlin*, pp. 32–38.

43 Cordillot, « La section française de l'Internationale et les grèves de 1867 », in *Aux origines du socialisme moderne*, pp. 33–55.

about the influence of the thinker. Hence, the mostly strategic nature of the reference to Proudhon for the Gravilliers, and arguably, for their opponents as well, Marx being foremost among them, who then could explain that ideas of cooperation and workers' autonomy merely signaled the harmful influence of the petty bourgeois socialist Proudhon. In that sense, the Proudhonism of the Paris section of the IWMA is a construction and can only be properly understood in the wider context of the construction process of the IWMA.

### The Effects of Proudhonism on the IWMA

Should we infer from this that the IWMA was free of all Proudhonism, since Proudhonism, rather than the consequence of a direct influence, resulted from an outside labelling as well as from various strategic borrowings? The answer is far from being a straightforward one. It is not by mere accident that the thought of Proudhon came to be so used by the Gravilliers; the fact is that Proudhon himself had been influenced by trade workers projects, as Pierre Ansart has shown, and in particular by the mutualism of the Canut Lyonnais silk workers, before exercising his own influence, in 1848, on the way these projects were shaped.<sup>44</sup> To talk of Proudhonism about the Parisian members of the IWMA is not mistaken as long as Proudhonism, rather than being taken to mean anything like the passive absorption of Proudhon's ideas by the Gravilliers, is understood to refer to a convergence and an interaction between Proudhon himself (as a thinker and a figure in political and social life) and some of the workers, and Parisian ones in particular. Besides, if Proudhon was invoked in support of their convictions, the reference to Proudhon was itself generative of effects within the IWMA, and by that same token, within the international labour movement. Three of these effects appear to be of particular significance and may become part of the research agenda concerning the influence of Proudhonism within the IWMA.

The first of them concerns the construction of Proudhonism as an ideology. The Gravilliers' selective presentation of it conferred to Proudhon's thought a coherence and features which did not necessarily reflect the more salient aspects of his works. Hence the image of a workerist, anarchist, cooperativist, anti-strikes Proudhon, which emerged mostly from the ongoing controversies within the IWMA around the issues of, respectively, the role of non-workers in the organisation of the state, the property of the means of production,

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44 Pierre Ansart, *Naissance de l'anarchisme : esquisse d'une explication sociologique du proudhonisme* (Paris, 1970).

and the strategy of emancipation. In a way, the Gravilliers “made” Proudhon rather than the reverse; it is *they* who invented a certain image of Proudhon. The Gravilliers’ Proudhonism first marked the history of the IWMA by turning Proudhon into one of the canonical authors of the labour movement and of international socialism, and by making him instrumental to the definition and charting of the various positions both within the organisation itself and across the terrain of politics and trade unionism.

The second effect of the reference to Proudhon was the adoption, beyond the group of the Gravilliers, of a Proudhonian vocabulary. Mutualism had not been invented by Proudhon and was a working class practice first started by the Canuts Lyonnais silk workers, which Proudhon was trying to conceptualise. A similar approach was attempted in his *Capacité* with reference to the practices of workers’ associations which had developed since the revolution of 1848. His formulations, however, influenced the vocabulary of the labour movement through the diffusion, for example, of the idea of federation, later taken up by the Bakuninists to unify the following three main ideas: the IWMA must be organised along federative lines, against the authority of a General Council which would extend its remit beyond its initial function as mere liaison committee; its sections must seek to federate the different trade corporations with the implicit aim to achieve an autonomous and federative organisation of economic activity; to the federative principle – which is the only true principle – is opposed political government, the intrinsically authoritarian governmental principle, that is. The ideas of federalism and mutualism were not only means to actually name already existing states of affairs; they performatively operated the integration of different ideas which already had currency among some workers, albeit in disconnected form, and then subsequently, the transmission of these ideas now tied together into an intrinsically cohered whole. In that respect, the Proudhonian terminology had an impact on the IWMA, beyond the Gravilliers themselves and their initial intentions regarding their reference to Proudhon.

Finally, the third effect of the reference to Proudhon was about agenda-setting<sup>45</sup> and the programmatic definition of certain priorities. With their *Memorial*, the Parisian workers meant to answer the questions of the General Council, that is, a list of ten questions concerning the aims and means of the IWMA, to which were added a variety of other issues: employment (women’s and children’s, notably), unemployment, strikes, association, education, relationships with capital, competition, the army, and religion. The Gravilliers

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45 Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, “The agenda-setting function of mass media,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36/2 (1972), pp. 176–187.



responded with care, but inserted an idea – mobilising Proudhon for the purpose – that was rapidly to become the object of one of the fundamental controversies of the IWMA, i.e., property. Such a question was obviously nothing new to the General Council, and certainly not for Marx himself. Nevertheless, the question of the definition of the regime of property, beyond the mere opposition between public and private property, or between bourgeois property and communism as discussed in the *Communist Manifesto*, was unquestionably introduced by the Gravilliers in their discussion – largely based on Proudhon – of the distinction between association and cooperation. The question of property was evoked neither in the constitution of the IWMA nor in the positions of the General Council prior to the Lausanne Congress. Now, Proudhon did not directly influence the workers of Paris, but his very own way of formulating problems, his interest in the question of the legal regime of property, his insistence on the role to be given to the antinomy between property and community, all were crucially important to the debates to come.

In conclusion, what can we say of Proudhonism within the International? First, it is necessary to question the very term itself. There is no Proudhonism that can be compared to Marxism, or Bakuninism (problematic terms themselves) insofar as we are dealing with a Proudhonism without Proudhon. Generally speaking, the Gravilliers were not Proudhonist if by this is meant a closeness to Proudhon during his lifetime (this was only the case of Louis Debock and Zephirin Camélinat), or even a direct influence of the Besançon thinker. But Proudhon was these workers' central reference when it came to bolstering their ideas, and this for a strong reason; Proudhon as well as they, forged those ideas out of the same materials, inherited from earlier workers' organisations and from the revolutionary experience of 1848, Proudhon himself having had a certain influence on the diffusion among workers of an anti-statist interpretation of the consequence of this revolution for working class strategy. The Gravilliers did not turn to Proudhon to mine for ideas – they did not need him to think – but what they did find there was an echo to their own ideas and they used his writings as so many weapons in the controversies that were appearing within the IWMA. There also was a symbolic dimension to this connection; after the insurrection of June 1848, Proudhon enjoyed great credit among organised workers, for coming out in support of the June insurgents, for the speech he delivered in Parliament on 31 July 1848 and during which he spoke on behalf of the proletariat and raised the social question, or for his role (albeit a transient one) in the attempts at the unification of the labour movement from the fall of 1848 onwards. The reference to Proudhon, therefore, does not equate with an assumed influence

of his thought on Parisian activists. These interactions, however, were not without generating effects on the IWMA, and then on the wider labour movement: Proudhon became one of their references (through which adherence or rejection could be expressed), some of his vocabulary became part of their equipment, and some themes of his thought, and in particular the developments on property, all became critical points within the agenda of the IWMA, from their earlier status as marginal concerns altogether.

As for the members of the Parisian section themselves, their personal trajectories in the wake of the experience of the foundation of the International clearly revealed the considerable diversity of their opinions, and therefore the tactical nature of the Proudhonian label. Some of them were no longer in leading positions after 1867. Among the remaining ones, some still favoured mutualism while others joined the anti-authoritarian collectivists. Most of them actively participated in the Commune (Camélinat, Debock, Laplanche, Limousin, Malon, Varlin, Murat), some did not get involved (Chemalé, Fournaise), and others went as far as taking sides against it (Fribourg, Héliçon, and even Tolain – although despite he stood against the form of the Commune, he did not reject its principles, and then became a staunch supporter of amnesty). Quite obviously, the reference to Proudhon did not commit anyone to adopting a doctrine. This may have been one of the reasons for its weakness within the IWMA, as well as one of the secrets of its resilience.

# Professor Beesly, Positivism and the International

## *The Patriotism Question*

Gregory Claeys

### I Introduction

After 1789 the need to define some form of higher loyalty, above “patriotism”, was an obvious focal point for participants in the international movement for democracy and social reform. The “rights of man”, later to emerge as the concept of human rights, initially provided one such nexus of identity, and was often loosely linked to concepts like “universal benevolence” and “humanity”. In Britain, through the Owenites, Chartist groups like the Fraternal Democrats, and various international organisations, a number of strategies spanning various forms of cosmopolitanism and internationalism were mooted in the next half century.<sup>1</sup> After 1848 the romantic nationalism of the Italian Giuseppe Mazzini and the Hungarian Lajos Kossuth would provide considerable competition for such efforts, as that of Garibaldi would do for a later generation.<sup>2</sup> The International Association, founded in 1855, attacked “the selfishness of nationalities”, and proclaimed its goal of creating “a society which, consisting of members of different nationalities, may represent the future equality of peoples, and may accustom the mind to the idea of fraternity”.<sup>3</sup> By 1864, the year of the founding in London of the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA), one other now little-known option, provided by the Positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), was on offer. In Britain Comte’s ideas would assume a somewhat different trajectory from elsewhere, and their anti-imperial component from

1 For a review of this process, my “Reciprocal Dependence, Virtue and Progress: Some Sources of Early Socialist Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism in Britain, 1790–1860”, in Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 235–258. On the international movements in Britain prior to 1864 see Christine Lattek. *Revolutionary Refugees. German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (London, 2006).

2 On Mazzini see, most recently, Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe. *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (Woodbridge, 2014), and more generally my “Mazzini, Kossuth and British Radicalism 1848–54”, *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), 225–261.

3 Arthur Lehning. *From Buonarroti to Bakunin. Studies in International Socialism* (Leiden, 1970), p. 259.

the late 1850s onwards would loom much larger than in France.<sup>4</sup> This perspective, *inter alia*, was presented at the first speech given at the founding meeting of the IWMA on 28 September by the chair of the meeting, Edward Spencer Beesly.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter explores Beesly's outlook, and briefly contrasts it to Marx's much better known ideas about patriotism, nationalism and imperialism.<sup>6</sup> This contrast indisputably remains an instructive one. The communist movement went on to adopt a variety of strategies vis-à-vis the nation, the family, ethnicity, religion and other forms of identity in its search for a more powerful communal ethos to pit against the individualist philosophies produced by capitalism. To most of these lesser forms of association it was often hostile, viewing them as undermining a primary loyalty to the communal, or to the movement as a whole, later often subordinated in turn to the Party and its leader. By contrast Comte's followers, now largely forgotten, sought not to transcend patriotism or the nation-state but to redefine both. Despite their opposition to empire, thus, the Positivists were not opposed to patriotism as such, only to its irrational attachment to unduly large and aggressive states.

## II Beesly, Positivism and the International

Edward Spencer Beesly (1831–1915) was one of a group of Wadham College, Oxford, acolytes of the leading British Positivist Richard Congreve (1818–99), a physician with great affection for the ancient Greek *polis*. Congreve's conversion to Comte's anti-imperialist perspectives in the mid 1850s led this group towards the distinctively hostile position on the British empire which it would maintain through the early twentieth century. Beesly's own attraction to the group, besides its sympathy for trades unionism, was chiefly to its anti-militarist tendencies and outlook, which meshed nicely with Positivist principles.<sup>7</sup> When Beesly opened the proceedings at St Martin's Hall, Long

4 See my *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire 1850–1920* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 47–123.

5 The chief contemporary account is George Howell. "The History of the International Association", *The Nineteenth Century*, 4 (July 1878), 19–39.

6 The problem of patriotism is not explored in Royden Harrison. *Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics 1861–1881* (London, 1965), pp. 251–342. It is not discussed at length in Julius Braunthal. *History of the International 1864–1914* (London, 1977), or in the other standard work, Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky. *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (London, 1965).

7 Beesly wrote that most of those present "would have hesitated to accept the name of Socialist. ... They joined the International because they felt carried away by a warm fraternal

Acre, on 28 September 1864, he was Professor of History at University College London. The friend of many working class leaders in this period, including George Odger, George Howell and Robert Applegarth, he had been involved for some years in promoting an independent working class party, and would suffer much calumny for defending such causes.<sup>8</sup> On that day he was a great deal better known as a public figure than Karl Marx, who was only invited to attend at the last moment by the builder Randal Cremer.<sup>9</sup> Beesly himself later recorded meeting Marx only in 1867 or 1868, and only got to know him well in September 1870.<sup>10</sup> Most of those present indeed were probably not even socialists, much less communists. The founding of the IWMA, as Royden Harrison argued long ago, thus clearly owed much more to Beesly than it did to Marx.<sup>11</sup> In Britain, moreover, it is no exaggeration to suggest that Positivism's influence on the left was as great if not greater than Marx's up to World War I, and that some part of the peculiarity of British socialism was a result. George Odger thought the International embodied the Positivist synthesis of "Order and Progress".<sup>12</sup> Comte's ideas, certainly, inspired Ernest Belfort Bax, William Morris and most of the Fabians, especially the Webbs. Beesly himself was particularly significant for one of the most important communist activists of the 1880s and 1890s, H.M. Hyndman,<sup>13</sup> as well as for the Labour Church movement from which the Independent Labour Party would later emerge.<sup>14</sup> The Positivists' role in founding the International was acknowledged as early as 1883 in P.H. Bagenal's comment that "Comtism ... furnished the framework of an international alliance

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feeling for their working-class comrades on the Continent, with whom they felt themselves more closely united than with the wealthy classes in their own country" (quoted in Julius Braunthal. *History of the International 1864–1914*, p. 97.)

- 8 Howell was closer to the Positivist Henry Crompton, who found him reading Comte in the late 1870s (F.M. Leventhal. *Respectable Radical. George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics*, London, 1971, pp. 197–198.).
- 9 Beesly was subsequently invited to join the General Council of the International (he declined). See *Documents of the First International. The General Council of the First International 1864–1866* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 36, 45. There is no mention of his role here in Henry Collins. "The International and the British Labour Movement: Origin of the International in England", in *La Première Internationale. L'Institution, L'Implantation. Le Rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), 23–40.
- 10 Beesly Papers, Special Collections, University College London, box 1.
- 11 Royden Harrison. "E.S. Beesly and Karl Marx", *International Review of Social History*, 4 (1959), 31; Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, pp. 41, 70–71.
- 12 Royden Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, p. 325.
- 13 Beesly was present at the founding of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in 1881 (*Positivist Review*, Jan. 1894, 37).
- 14 See my *Imperial Sceptics*, pp. 124–234 for details.

between workingmen, and the International Association is declared to be its logical conclusion.<sup>15</sup> This statement may have resulted from the Positivists' infamous defence of the Paris Commune of 1871, which to them (as to Marx) exemplified the possibility of small-scale federalist government.<sup>16</sup>

How far then did Beesly's approach to nationalism and patriotism differ from Marx's at this crucial juncture in September 1864? Beesly began his opening address by describing the origins of the meeting in another gathering on 28 April 1863 respecting Poland's struggle against Russia.<sup>17</sup> The current occasion, he trusted, aimed "to create a co-operative and fraternal feeling between the working men of England and other countries." The sole report known of this speech continues:

He then entered at length into the necessity of a close alliance between France and England as necessary to secure and maintain the liberties of the world. He denounced the wrong doings of government in violating international rights, and the English government was as bad, if not worse, than many of the Continental Powers. England wrongfully held possession of Gibraltar from Spain, and her conduct in China, Japan, India and elsewhere was cowardly and unprincipled. (Hear.) He urged upon all present to divest themselves of those selfish feelings disguised under the name of patriotism, and to maintain only those principles which their consciences told them were right and just. He then contrasted the different modes by which Englishmen and Frenchmen endeavoured to work out the rights of labour, and concluded a most effective speech amidst loud cheering.<sup>18</sup>

Four issues stand out distinctively here: the idea of a European league to promote peace, inspired originally partly by Saint-Simon, in which Britain and France would play leading roles; the Positivists' opposition to empire; their principled renunciation of that form of "patriotism" which was increasingly linked to imperialism; and their willingness to promote British, French and other working class organisations of mutual assistance and in aid of these ends.

15 *National Review*, 2 (1883-4), 31-32.

16 See *The English Defence of the Commune*, ed. Royden Harrison (London, 1971).

17 Beesly was at this time at work on the essay which would appear as "England and the Sea", in *International Policy. Essays on the Foreign Relations of England* (London, 1866), the definitive Positivist statement on the subject.

18 *The Bee-Hive Newspaper*, no. 155 (1 October 1864), 1. While there are some lectures in the Beesly Papers, University College London, this talk does not seem to have survived.

In all these areas there was considerable distance from the views of Marx. The latter ridiculed in particular the Positivists' wish to "moralise capitalism" along republican lines while retaining private property, with its overtly paternalistic overtones. (Engels rejected "Professor Beesly and his friends" as "not properly a working-class party. They advocate a compromise to make wages labour tolerable, to perpetuate it; they belong to a political sect who believe that France ought to rule the world.")<sup>19</sup> Like Thomas Carlyle, whose enthusiasm for Captains of Industry was unbounded, and whose "feudal socialism" had been lambasted in the *Communist Manifesto*, Comte envisaged "moralised" bankers and capitalists managing the new society. Like the British labour leader John Burns in the 1880s, who told the Positivists that moralising the capitalist was about as practicable as moralising the tiger or boa constrictor, Marx could not countenance such ideas.<sup>20</sup> Confessing himself "entirely hostile" towards Comtism, he nonetheless praised Beesly as "the only Comtist, both in England and in France, who deals with historical turning points (CRISES) not as a sectarian but as an historian in the best sense of the word."<sup>21</sup> Beesly in turn conceded that while property was social in origin and thus by implication in disposition, the means of making it so were necessarily the subject of much disagreement. Like Comte, however, he regarded the abolition of private property as wrongheaded. He also continued to insist, as it was expressed by a Positivist convert from communism in 1870, that the Communists "went wrong in wishing to introduce social changes by political means, instead of trusting to moral means."<sup>22</sup> Beesly thus applauded the "peaceable determination of duties" over "the stormy discussion of rights". Regarding "debates on the possession of wealth as a barren agitation", he thus sought "an intellectual and moral regeneration to be brought about by a vast system of freely-organised education."<sup>23</sup> He thought the Positivists shared with Marx an "indignation against the individualist theories of the propertied classes and their anti-social conduct", adding that "We both believe that the working class suffer terrible wrongs at the hands of the middle class, and that the social question is more important than the political."<sup>24</sup> But his aim was not to "set class against class", but rather

19 Quoted in *The English Defence of the Commune*, p. 43.

20 Quoted in Royden Harrison. "Professor Beesly and the Working Class Movement", Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds. *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1960), p. 210.

21 *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 44 (London, 1989), p. 150 (Marx to Beesly, 12 June 1871).

22 E.S. Beesly. "The International Working Men's Association", *Fortnightly Review*, ns 8 (1870), 517–518.

23 E.S. Beesly. "The International Working Men's Association", *Fortnightly Review*, ns 8 (1870), 531.

24 *The English Defence of the Commune*, p. 16.

to “smooth over their differences, and dwell upon their common, rather than their divergent, interests”.<sup>25</sup> To Marx of course this was mere “bourgeois” reformism. But to the Positivists it was the means of avoiding the revolutionary excesses of 1793–4 or worse. Instead the Positivists offered the working classes a scheme aiming at full employment, fair wages, education and social security, wedded to a humanist religion. Beesly himself, however, was not dogmatic about Comte’s Humanist ceremonies, and refused to follow Congreve into their formalisation into a system of ritual worship.

My concentration here will be briefly on the two main issues outlined in Beesly’s speech, anti-imperialism and patriotism. In mid-19th century Britain the “nation” was rapidly expanding to become an enormous empire, and what came to be called jingoism in the late 1870s was one logical result. The British Positivists were the most outspoken critics of this process. More than any other group, and certainly more than Comte’s French followers, they dared to urge the renunciation of existing possessions, like Gibraltar, and condemned new acquisitions. As agnostics they recognised that the religious argument favouring conquest and, effectively, forced conversion, had been and remained immensely important, notably in British India. As historians of religion they also recognised the development of worship from fetishism to polytheism and monotheism, and deduced from this the need to tolerate Islam and every other form of observance as necessary stages along the path while aiming at the eventual destination of the Religion of Humanity. And so they championed a theory of organic human development which, in striking anticipation of liberal principles in the later 20th century, recognised the rights of indigenous and non-Christian peoples and smaller states to preserve their independence against external encroachment.

But the Positivists were even more ambitious than this. In an influential essay collection entitled *International Policy* (1866), which was being composed in 1864, they also urged, on the basis of Comte’s teachings, devolving all empires and nations into city-states of no more than a few million inhabitants. This they thought was the largest number of people capable of feeling a sentiment of mutual affection which might be termed patriotism. This would be supplemented by a further mutual attachment to the Religion of Humanity, which would unite the western European nations under the leadership of France and Britain.

The sources of this strategy lay in Comte’s theory of the ideal human group. Comte regarded the family as the basic unit of society and held its existing patriarchal composition to be sacred, to the dismay of his more feminist admirers

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25 E.S. Beesly. *Letters to the Working Classes* (1870), pp. 4, 6.



like John Stuart Mill. (Beesly averred that “For my part, as a Positivist, I believe that property and the family are institutions bound up with civilisation, and that they will survive all attacks.”)<sup>26</sup> Comte’s view of patriotism derived from a psychology of what might be called proximate attachment, where our sentiments have necessarily to be bound most intimately by persons and places closest to us. This meant that feelings were organised in a logically ascending series of steps from the family, the seat of “moral existence”, upwards.

Yet this was to be balanced against the necessity for the unity of humanity. But the answer to the need for a higher loyalty was not to abolish the lower forms of affection and identification. Comte warned that the “sophists who attack the Family, with their usual inconsistency, forget that the institution of Country is open to the same charges as that of Family”. So Comte also insisted that “the sense of nationality ... ought to be subordinate to larger feelings of international fraternity.” Hence he aimed to “restore the spirit of ancient manners by bringing into full harmony the different kinds of Civism under common subordination to the Great Being”, noting that “Under this system, the bond between citizens, like the love within the home, will foster of itself a true affection for society, without trenching on the Religious sense of harmony, for which these sentiments will form the final moral training.”<sup>27</sup> Here, as for Marx, the working classes had a key role to play. At present national prejudice was strongest “in the middle classes, a fact principally due to industrial competition”. By contrast “the working class is more free than any other from international prejudices ... [because] working men feel how similar their wants and their conditions are in all countries, and this feeling checks their animosity.” Nonetheless Comte also insisted that patriotism “in its true sense” would “ever be the most usual type of ... the true social feeling”. Our instincts of sympathy, he thought, “require for their full energy that the objects of them be constantly brought into presence with us. Were there not active and daily fellowship in common labours, and this is possible only in the City, there could be no expansion of universal Love; for a close identity of Belief would not be sufficient to form it.” Thus “the union between Citizens will always represent the most extensive group of those affections which appeal equally to every part of our existence”. Positivism would thus “re-establish the normal limit of extension of which this feeling of Patriotism is capable in practice.” At present “the enormous size of modern states” meant that Europeans were actually “less habitually under the influence of patriotism than our Roman or even our

<sup>26</sup> *The English Defence of the Commune*, p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> Auguste Comte. *System of Positive Polity* (1851; 4 vols, Eng. edn., London, 1875), vol. 2, p. 179; vol. 1, pp. 66, 304–305.

feudal forefathers". But patriotism remained "indispensable to the complete development of the social instinct, which it alone can preserve alike from the narrowness of family feeling and the vagueness of philanthropy." This implied dividing Europe into seventy large city-states republics of one to three million people each, making "five hundred states for the whole earth", none larger than Belgium, Tuscany or Sardinia.<sup>28</sup>

All the world might thus eventually be remade on the same model of devolved federalism, glued together by the Religion of Humanity. Thus in 1871 what the Commune meant to the Positivists implied above all the principle "of substituting municipalised provinces for a centralised empire". This involved rejecting majoritarian democratic oppression in favour of minority rights, as well as renouncing a standing army.<sup>29</sup> Local patriotism, then, was quite compatible with complete hostility to jingoism. Such language would be closer to that of Mazzini's followers in the IWMA than to Marx's, and Mazzini would go on to attack the "barren cosmopolitan idea" of "the abolition of the idea of country and nationality" which he thought the IWMA represented.<sup>30</sup> Just how far Positivism influenced the International more generally throughout this period is an interesting question, but one beyond the constraints of this essay.

### III Marx and Nationality

But what did Marx think? In the later 1840s the earliest application of the newly-minted materialist conception of history led him to see increasingly universal economic competition as destructive of "the former national exclusiveness of separate nations". Large-scale industry had already created a class – the bourgeoisie – "in which all nations have the same interest and for which nationality is already dead."<sup>31</sup> The same process could be expected to underpin proletarian internationalism. Regarding less developed nations, a clear civilisational

28 Auguste Comte. *System of Positive Polity*, vol. 1, pp. 302–305, vol. 3, pp. 268–269.

29 *The English Defence of the Commune*, p. 186 (Frederic Harrison). He continued: "Among the leading ideas of the Commune was certainly that of putting an end to the era of national contests, and of founding a state of society such that all Western Europe might gradually form one great country, made up of many independent communities" (p. 228).

30 Joseph Mazzini. "The International", *The Contemporary Review*, 20 (1872), 169, 576. The Positivists did much to ensure a warm reception for him when he toured Britain in 1864.

31 *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 73. Engels however wrote in 1845 that the bourgeoisie could not transcend nationality, and that the great mass of the proletariat were "essentially humanitarian" in outlook (*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 6.) Elsewhere he contrasted the "cosmopolitan exploitation" of the free traders with "universal brotherhood" (*Ibid.*, 464).

bias was evident. Marx was thus not critical of imperialism as such. He praised some of the destructive aspects of British rule in India, for example, for acting as “the unconscious tool of history” in undermining the village community. Engels applauded the French conquest of Algeria for similar reasons.<sup>32</sup> Marx also remained disdainful of the “historyless” small nations of Europe. His cosmopolitanism from the 1840s onwards stressed the need to abolish nationality, the principle of which he thought would disappear when private property was superseded. Bakunin’s later view was not much different, the “necessary and inevitable conclusion” of the IWMA being, in his view, the “abolition – from the political as well as from the social viewpoint” of “all territorial States, political Fatherlands, and Nations”, and its replacement by “the establishment of the great international federation of all local and national productive groups”.<sup>33</sup> Yet the persistence of such groups implied loyalties whose accommodation to a devotion to the federation remained essentially unexplored.

Whether in Marx and Engels’ case this meant that nationalities or merely national *antagonisms* would vanish is less clear. But while Marx and Engels would support the federalist principle exemplified by the Paris Commune, they did not endorse a general principle of local patriotism of the sort the Positivists championed from the outset. To the contrary, they renounced any “sentimental consideration” for small nations like the Czechs, who would remain reactionary until the “complete extirpation or loss of their national character” took place. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, with Fenianism and the possibility of Irish independence, as well as that of Poland, these assumptions shifted somewhat. Engels indeed wrote to Karl Kautsky that “two nations in Europe have not only the right but even the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalistic: the Irish and the Poles. They are most internationalistic when they are genuinely nationalistic.”<sup>34</sup> And in 1888 Engels would write that once Czarism had been overthrown “Poland will come to life again; Little Russia [Ukraine] will be able to choose its political connections freely; the Romanians, Hungarians and Southern Slavs will be able to regulate their affairs and their border questions free from foreign interference”. This seems to indicate a position much closer to both Comte and his followers and the romantic nationalism of Kossuth and Mazzini, and of course the upsurge of nationalist sentiment which followed decolonisation after 1945. It has been contended by Isaiah Berlin that Marx’s underestimation of the force of nationalism would

32 See my *Imperial Sceptics*, pp. 131–141 for details.

33 Michel Bakunin. *The Policy of the International* (1869) (London, 1919), p. 4.

34 Quoted in *Imperial Sceptics*, p. 136.

remain one of the greatest weaknesses of his system.<sup>35</sup> But there were points at which Marx and Engels' sympathy for nationalism did come to the surface, even forefront, of their thought.

#### IV Conclusion

Beesly's strategy in 1864 was intended to promote a mutual toleration of national differences while balancing the need to move all humanity towards civilisation. Given Marx's disdain for backward and "historyless" peoples this made Positivism less prone to a "civilisational" bias than Marxism. It tended less towards a variation on socialist imperialism of the sort which would emerge in the years of the Second International, and which can be construed as the position John Hobson adopted in his famous *Imperialism. A Study* (1902). It also made the Positivists much more immediately sympathetic to movements like Fenianism. Many British Comtists had an Irish background (Beesly's mother was Irish). This particularly oppressed nation yearning to be free of Britain's yoke was thus a paradigm for their own peculiar revolutionism. Yet this was to be accomplished within a framework of both working class internationalist organisations, a kind of European patriotism, and the Religion of Humanity. But Comte rejected a supranational form of cosmopolitanism. He warned that "Were the spirit of Patriotism trained to aspire after grand nationalities, it would induce the coarser minds to attempt schemes of oppression, that they might everywhere realise a form of State centralisation and political bureaucracy far beyond the degree natural to free civic union." This would be avoided in part by ensuring that the principle "of separation between Government and Priesthood will naturally prevent these sources of disturbance, whenever the Positive Religion has obtained sufficient influence." He also feared that if in "complete insurrection against the rich, the poor in their turn wish to be supreme", an "oppressive dominion" would eventually end "all collective action."<sup>36</sup>

Beesly continued to reiterate Comte's views on the family and patriotism for the next fifty years, insisting even in 1900 that he thought the majority of socialists "love their families and love their country."<sup>37</sup> Such themes were ever alive in the IWMA, with Bakunin, who joined in 1868, insisting a year later that members would have to subordinate their "personal and every your family interest ... to the highest interest of the association, namely the struggle of

35 Isaiah Berlin. *Karl Marx. His Life and Environment* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1948), p. 188.

36 Auguste Comte. *System of Positive Polity* vol. 4, p. 284, vol. 2, p. 265.

37 *The Social-Democrat* (Aug. 1900), 249.

Labour against Capital.”<sup>38</sup> The Comtist outlook of course fell into nearly utter neglect by the early 20th century. Its efforts to create a secular religion seemingly represented one of the more dismal failures of an Enlightenment project. If, however, we are accustomed to mocking this viewpoint, we might recall that Marxism too eventually assumed the form of a secular religion. Its distance from Comtism was smaller here than we usually imagine. The point we might reiterate today, however, is that it had been clear since the French Revolution that determining a “higher” locus of loyalty than the nation was going to be very problematic. Allegiance to the cause of cosmopolitan republicanism, as Beesly called it, or revolutionary democratic internationalism (as we might today term it) led Paine to aid Napoleon in his proposed invasion of Britain in 1804.<sup>39</sup> Around 1900 Ernest Belfort Bax found himself at least theoretically in an identical situation, with potentially divided loyalties, torn between a revolutionary regime with progressive principles and his own nation, implacably hostile to patriotism, and even happy to allow foreign invaders to impose correct principles on Britain. He also insisted that the proper object of Social Democratic loyalty was “the International Social-Democratic *Party*, the party of the class conscious proletariat”, not humanity, a theme which would echo down for another century.<sup>40</sup> The revolutionary movement of the 20th century ironically probably did more to promote nationalism than to undermine it.<sup>41</sup> And yet regional fragmentation of a Scottish, Flemish, Catalan or other variety may yet verge more towards Comte’s aims than Marx’s. At any rate it cannot be said that we have reached a satisfactory resolution of this problem in the 21st century. Yet only higher unities can meet the challenge of concentrated corporate and financial capital, and higher unities must attract our loyalty to rise to the occasion of the present enduring financial and political crisis. As the European idea threatens to unravel once again it is worth reminding ourselves of the implications of failing to meet this challenge.

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38 Michael Bakunin. *The Policy of the International* (1869) (London, 1919), p. 3.

39 *Bee-Hive*, 22 April 1861, 1.

40 *The Social-Democrat* (Sept. 1900), 274.

41 Eugene Lyons. *Assignment in Utopia* (London, 1937), p. 139: “It has been one of the curious functions of the revolution, in ironical disregard of internationalist dogmas, to stir national consciousness in Russia. The mere emphasis on the hostile capitalist encirclement has tended to mark off the frontiers of their country in the minds of millions.”

## Bringing Together Feminism and Socialism in the First International

### *Four Examples*

*Antje Schrupp*

The International Working Men's Association (IWMA) was a predominantly, if not only, male organization, at least as far as its leading members or its international congresses were concerned. When Karl Marx suggested Engels' partner Lizzy Burns to join the association, he explicitly asserted that "Ladies are admitted"<sup>1</sup> – so female membership was obviously not to be taken for granted. And indeed, only a few women actually did play an active role in the International<sup>2</sup>, and only male delegates participated at all seven international congresses and conferences.<sup>3</sup> This was not as self-evident as it might seem. After all, women had been participating actively and in large numbers in earlier so called "utopian" socialist movements. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emerging of various feminist movements, focusing mainly on the promotion of women's access to the labour market. Other international organizations of the time, such as the *League of Peace and Freedom*, had numerous female members as well as women speakers at their congresses.

1 Marx to Engels, 25 January 1865, in Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels, *Briefwechsel Vol III* (Berlin, 1950), p. 259.

2 Besides the four activists in this article, Harriet Law, who was a member of the General Council from June 1867 to August 1869 and regularly participated in its meetings, should also be mentioned. See: *Documents of the First International. Minutes of the General Council*, 4 vol., (London, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 110, Vol. 3, pp. 72f, 90,124f, 247; see also Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement. Years of the First International* (London, 1965), pp. 110, 150f, 241.

3 Women did participate in local IWMA activities; for instance there was a very active Women's Section in Geneva; see Antje Schrupp, "Die Genfer Frauensektion der Ersten Internationale", *MEGA-Studien* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 107–125. Sometimes women's sections created irritations, especially when they were formed in industries with male and female workers alike, because there could be conflicts of interests. This problem was discussed at the London Conference of 1871 and led to the decision – on the proposition of Marx – that women were allowed to form their own sections if they wanted to; see Jacques Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueils et documents* 4 vol. (Genève, 1962–1971), vol. 2, p. 167, footnote 11.

However, the *First International* was not only male-dominated, it even showed an anti-feminist image, at least in its first years. The Proudhonist leaders in France were strongly opposed to paid work for women and even any female activity outside the household, which is quite clearly in opposition to contemporary feminism. This position was at least partly written into the resolutions which were officially adopted by the first two Congresses of the International.

In Genève (1866) the delegates discussed for several hours the prohibition of female paid work. The discussion started with a paper of the General Council promoting an eight-hours-workday, that, among many other things, suggested prohibiting women's work at night, in circumstances that could be dangerous for their bodies or threaten their virtue. The majority of French delegates however wanted to forbid female work outside the household altogether, a position the British delegates in turn qualified as "crazy" under the given circumstances of industrialization.<sup>4</sup> Only two delegates, Eugène Varlin and Antoine Bourdon, argued in favor of female work on equal terms, suggesting to improve working conditions for everybody – a position, that was also held by the great majority of contemporary feminists.<sup>5</sup> But in their voting the delegates of the IWA approved both the papers of the General Council and the French majority (strangely, as they contradicted each other) but clearly dismissed the proposition of Varlin and Bourdon.

To further discuss the "women's question" a commission was founded to prepare a paper for the next annual congress in Lausanne (1867). And again a vast majority of delegates voted against paid work for women, supporting a speech given by Belgian Cesar de Paepe who stated, that industrial work for women was "unnatural and against nature".<sup>6</sup> So not only our emancipated perspective

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4 The discussions are documented in Freymond, *La première Internationale*, vol. 1, pp. 31–50.

5 Especially British feminists advocated against laws that prohibited female work in order to "protect" the female body, because that made access to the labour market more difficult. See for instance Barbara Bodichon, *Women and Work* (London 1859); Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (London, 1859); Bessie R. Parks, *Essays on Women's Work* (London, 1865). In 1858 some of them founded the "Langham Place Circle" which advocated women's work on equal terms and founded enterprises to provide paid work for women; see Diane M.C. Worzala, *The Langham Place Circle: The Beginnings of the Organized Women's Movement in England* (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1982).

6 Freymond, *La première Internationale*, vol. 1, p. 215. De Paepe added that the question was discussed controversially in the Belgian branch, and also read a minority paper in favour of women's work signed by Paul Robin, Eugène Hins and P. Eslens who were not present at the Congress.

from the 21st century sees the organization as anti-feminist. As a result of their position, most women activists of the time also did.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this, some female socialists decided to take an active role in the International. How did they combine both feminism and socialism in their political ideas? What strategies did they use to bring together two political goals that in their time were mainly considered as being opposed to each other?

In my dissertation<sup>8</sup>, published fifteen years ago, I discuss the political ideas of four women activists of First International:

- Virginie Barbet, one of the leaders of the International in Lyon and a member of the Bakunist *Alliance of Socialist Democracy*;
- Elisabeth Dmitrieff, one of the leaders of the Russian section in Geneva and a co-founder of the *Union de Femmes* during the Paris Commune;
- André Léo, Paris-located author and an advocate of women's rights, supporter and critic of the Commune and later a leading figure in the protests against the "authoritarian" way of the General Council;
- Victoria Woodhull, a controversial leader of the American suffrage movement, who founded the first English-speaking sections in New York, but was expelled from the International at the Hague-Congress of 1872.

I had hoped my research would be somewhat outdated by now. However, it seems that still little attention is being paid to gender issues related to the First International or to its female activists. And this is something which I myself can partly understand. I myself struggled with what I had found out about my protagonists.

When I started my research, I somehow wanted to find a "female" voice in this all-male labour movement. But even though those four women were highly involved in the movement, I could not really identify what they stood for. What were their opinions on the "big questions" being discussed under the roof of the First International? What did they think for instance, about the

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7 Swiss Feminist Marie Goegg for instance criticized the IWMA explicitly for not collaborating with the Women's Movement in a speech she gave in September 1868 at the annual Congress of the Peace and Freedom League in Bern; see Berta Rahm, *Marie Goegg* (Schaffhausen, 1993), pp 95f. On the other hand French Internationalists were even proud of being opponents to those "partisans de la prétendue émancipation de la femme", see E[rnest] Fribourg, *L'Association internationale des travailleurs* (Paris, 1871), p. 43.

8 Antje Schrupp, *Nicht Marxistin und auch nicht Anarchistin. Frauen in der Ersten Internationale* (Königstein 1999).



common property of the land, the private property of the means of production, the founding of working-class parties?

Compared to the “great” polemic texts of the male internationalists, those women seemed somewhat inconsistent, even weak in their statements. They didn’t really fit into the lines of interpretations that are usually used to classify the International’s protagonists, such as Marxists or anarchists for instance. So, perhaps that was the reason why researchers of the International didn’t find them so interesting.

By the way: the same was true for feminist researchers on women’s history. They also showed no interest in these women as they did not represent strong voices for classical women’s rights arguments either – such as the right to vote for instance.

The only interesting thing seemed to be the fact itself: that they were members of the International despite being feminists.

Only when I was ready to admit that – and it took me a while – I realized that this was not a banal observation at all.

Why *had* they, being feminists, become members of the International in the first place?

Victoria Woodhull (1838–1927) for instance.<sup>9</sup> She is one of the few voices of the real “Lumpenproletariat” in the history of socialism: Not only is her background non-bourgeois, she also is non-proletarian since neither she nor her parents held any “respectable” jobs.<sup>10</sup> Born the seventh child to a family of petty thieves and con artists, she had earned her living for many years as a spiritual advisor and clairvoyant for both sexes but particularly for women. By doing so she became acquainted with the most basic life problems of the lower classes – poverty, childbearing, exploitation, early death, rape and so on.

Her shift into politics became possible when in 1865 she fell in love with one of her clients, James Blood, a soldier that had been traumatized in the US civil war. He was an active member of the reform movements of those days,

9 For the full biography of Victoria Woodhull see Antje Schrupp, *Das Aufsehen erregende Leben der Victoria Woodhull* (Königstein, 2002). See also Lois B. Underhill, *The Woman Who Ran for President* (New York, 1995); Mary Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria. The Life of Victoria Woodhull, Uncensored* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers. The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York, 1998); Amanda Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull’s Sexual Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2004).

10 She puts her political theories in numerous books and speeches, e.g. Victoria Woodhull, *The Origin, Tendencies and Principles of Government* (New York, 1871); Victoria Woodhull, *A Speech on the Principles of Social Freedom* (London, 1984). Other important texts in Madeleine B. Stern, *The Victoria Woodhull Reader* (Weston, Mass., 1974).

mainly socialism and abolitionism. So, he helped Woodhull to bring into the political arena her experiences and political ideas which she had formed from her experiences.

A few years after, she made a fortune by giving advice to multi-millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt. She probably had insider information from some of her friends who worked as prostitutes for wealthy clients. She became really rich and with her wealth she did not only open the first female broker office at Wall Street but also her own weekly newspaper, the *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*.

Victoria Woodhull also paved her way into the organized feminist movements of her days. Those mostly middle-class feminists, however, did not receive her with arms wide open. They strongly doubted her "respectability", and rightly so. Victoria Woodhull openly advocated free love, the abolition of marriage laws, and in no way did she confine her activism to suffrage alone. But when she managed to give a speech on defending female suffrage on 11 January 1871 in front of the Judiciary Committee of the Senate and Congress in Washington, the suffrage movement could no longer ignore her and instead made her its leader and spokeswoman.

So, why did this woman join the First International? Why did she have the *Communist Manifesto* translated into English and published it in her newspaper, the *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*?<sup>11</sup> Why did she co-found sections of the International in New York and fight conflicts with the "Marxist" German section? Why did she organize a demonstration in honour of the Paris Commune? All of this only got her into further trouble with the women's movement, where she already had problems defending her leadership!

We could ask similar questions about Virginie Barbet. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out a lot about her as a person – unlike the scandalous Victoria Woodhull, she didn't make the newspaper headlines of her time. I don't even know her date of birth.

But she must have been a rather important figure in the Lyon International. I stumbled upon her when I found some inconsistencies in the protocols of the *Alliance of Socialist Democracy* which led to the conclusion that an important yet unsigned article in the journal *Egalité* (advocating the abolition

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11 The *Weekly* reported on feminist, socialist and spiritualist subjects. Its first number appeared on 14 May 1870, the last in early 1876, although at the end numbers came out only randomly. The translation of the *Communist Manifesto* was printed on 30 December 1871, and there were other contributions of European IWMA members such as Robert Applegarth. In September 1871, Marx wrote to the editors sending an article of his daughter Jenny which they printed: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin, 1978), xxii, pp. 469–476.

of inheritance laws) almost certainly had been written by her, and not by Bakunin to whom it is usually contributed.<sup>12</sup>

I became interested in who this woman was and how she had become involved. She probably first met Bakunin and his allies at the 1868 congress of the *League of Peace and Freedom* in Bern, where she gave a speech as the representative of the “Social Democrat Women of Lyon”, which is how she introduced herself.

It was at this congress that Bakunin and his friends split away from the Peace and Freedom League and founded their own organization, the Alliance, which would later join the First International. Barbet’s name is not listed among the initial founders of the Alliance. But one year later, in June 1869, she would be listed as a “founding member of Lyon”. She published some interesting texts, on atheism for instance, or defending the International against Mazzini.<sup>13</sup> And she helped organize a big strike of mostly female textile workers in the summer of 1869 in Lyon that brought a lot of new members to the International – even though their demands were only half-heartedly supported.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to her involvement with the International, Virginie Barbet too had already been involved with the feminist movement. Together with Marie Richard – the mother of Albert Richard – she was a founding member of a feminist group in Lyon that advocated a rather “egalitarian” form of feminism and the abolition of all gender differences.<sup>15</sup> It is the similar kind of gender-egalitarianism which can be found in Bakunin’s Alliance programme.

Egalitarianism, we must know, was not mainstream in French feminism at the time. There was still a rather big impact of Saint-Simonian feminism that had prevailed in the first half of the century. The Saint Simonians tried to draw upon gender *differences*, for instance, they formed separate groups and structures for men and women and had a formal 50-per-cent quote for both genders in their leadership. Their argument was that because women were *different* from men they should have a voice in the decision-making process.

12 « De l’hérédité » in *Egalité, Journal de l’Association internationale des travailleurs de la Suisse romande*, Genève (1868–1872), 12 June 1869. For details on this conclusion, see Antje Schrupp, *Nicht Marxistin und auch nicht Anarchistin*, pp. 50ff.

13 Virginie Barbet, *Déisme et Athéisme. Profession de foi d’une libre-penseuse* (Lyon, 1869); Virginie Barbet, *Réponse d’un membre de l’Internationale à Mazzini* (Lyon, 1871).

14 See Claire Auzias and Annik Houel, *La grève des ovalistes, Lyon, Juin-Juillet 1869* (Paris, 1982). For Barbet’s role see Antje Schrupp, *Virginie Barbet, Une Lyonnaise dans l’Internationale* (Lyon, 2009), pp. 39ff.

15 The « Manifeste des femmes lyonnaises adhérentes à l’Internationale » is documented in Oscar Testut, *L’Internationale et le Jacobinisme* (Paris, 1872), I, pp. 277–279.

But due to the then upcoming anti-feminist ideology of “separate spheres”, which was driven forward by many male thinkers, particularly in France, focusing on gender differences became more and more dangerous for feminists. So, some of them shifted their line of arguments to a more egalitarian approach, although Saint-Simonian convictions still remained strong.

Another French feminist who represents this shift, while being far better known than Barbet, was André Léo (1824–1900).<sup>16</sup> By the time she joined the International in the late 1860’s, she was a well-known author of novels with strong female characters. She had also been involved in various feminist organizations and activities prior to joining the International. For instance she was one of the principal founders of the *Société pour la Revendication des Droits de la Femme*. In 1869 she published her theoretical book *Les femmes et les moeurs*.

And like Victoria Woodhull, her involvement with the International got her into conflict with her more “bourgeois” feminist allies. Actively supporting the Paris Commune isolated André Léo from the French women’s rights movement. But she did not evade conflict with either side. She criticized the feminists for not supporting social issues, but also those socialists that advocated militant and violent concepts of revolution. She publicly criticized the editors of *L’Egalité*, the journal of the Roman Swiss branches of the International, and later the Blanquists in the Commune. In opposition to them, she pointed out the necessity of instruction and deliberation, and insisted that the end does *not* justify the means.<sup>17</sup>

And last but not least there was Elisabeth Dmitrieff (1851–1910), a young Russian, who played a leading role in the Russian Section in Geneva.<sup>18</sup> She was only nineteen years old when she went to London to meet Karl Marx personally and then moved on to Paris where she founded maybe the largest women’s organization of the Commune.

She came from an entirely different background compared to the other three. Having been raised in an aristocratic family (although an illegitimate child), she married a male ally so she could leave Russia. She had been influenced by “Nihilist” feminism which was very different from Western feminism, mostly because the young Russians had never experienced the strong regiment of

16 See Alain Dalotel, *André Léo (1824–1900), La Junon de la Commune* (Paris, 2004) ; see also Frédéric Chauvaud et al., *Les vies d’André Léo. Romancière, féministe et communarde* (Rennes, 2015).

17 For the role of women in the Paris Commune, see especially Edith Thomas, *Les Pétroleuses* (Paris, 1963).

18 See Sylvie Braibant, *Elisabeth Dmitrieff. Aristocrate et pétroleuse* (Paris, 1993).

the “separate spheres” ideology. In non-industrialized Russia the difference of classes still outweighed the difference of sexes by far. So, the young, revolutionary, “emancipated” women with aristocratic self-esteem did not linger on what women could *not* do. They were convinced that women could do everything they wanted, if they only had the determination and willingness to do so. In that, by the way, Dmitrieff was similar to Victoria Woodhull who due to her lower-class-background was not held back by bourgeois concepts of womanhood – drafting women as weak and in need of male protection – either.

It is not hard to imagine, that some “clash of cultures” must have taken place in Paris, when this young, self-assured woman started to organize the “Union des Femmes” without consulting the opinions of the older feminists. Unfortunately, we have only some vague hints as to the nature and issues of those disputes.

Dmitrieff was not at all isolated in Paris. She not only had support from the Marxists in the International but also was an old friend and admirer of Anna Jaclard (1843–1887), whom she had already got to know back in Russia. It was together with her and Anna’s sister Sofia Kowalewski (1850–1891), who later became a famous mathematician, that Dmitrieff had left Russia. And back in Geneva she had already established a friendship with Benoit Malon, who by now had become the lover of André Léo.

So, there were many intersections between the feminist protagonists during the Commune, but there were also differences. For instance, why did neither André Léo nor Anna Jaclard join Dmitrieff’s Union? I am convinced that deeper research, particularly on those *differences* would be enlightening, but this has yet to be done.

So, what can we make of this examples? What is the contribution of these four women to the history of socialism, to the history of the First International?

I would like to put forward an interpretation that takes into consideration the difficult relationship between socialism and feminism at the time.

As I’ve already pointed out, feminists were somewhat forced to shift their arguments from focusing on gender differences to focusing on gender equality. And maybe some of them moved one step further and decided to not only shift their arguments but also their actions.

They kind of infiltrated male political organizations in order to change their point of view on women, and to keep feminism “in”, not by arguing, but by simply being there. Perhaps this was the only way to handle the serious problem of revolutionary movements of the time: the drifting apart of feminism and socialism.

The early socialist movements in the first half of the nineteenth century still had a broad agenda, including not only economics and politics but also

culture and explicitly the relationships between women and men and children and new forms of family and community-building. On this basis, feminism and socialism weren't considered as separate movements. After all, workers and women alike were being excluded from the rights of bourgeois men and suffered from the material consequences of a concept that defined "equality" as only a formal right.

But in the 1850's, the issues and concerns of the feminist and socialist movements drifted further and further apart.

For the women's movement it was no longer about change in society, but equal rights with men: access to the labour market, reform of marriage laws, and the right to vote. And for the labour movement it was no longer new forms of living, working, and loving, but higher wages, political parties and other means to increase the political influence of workers.

So, both movements were losing the broader cultural perspective, and consequently, feminism and socialism lost their common ground. In the end, they often found themselves on opposite sides of the fence in defending the interests of women or those of male workers. Feminist movements became anti-socialist, socialist movements became anti-feminist.<sup>19</sup>

A woman with a feminist agenda that joined a male-dominated labour organization made it out of that stalemate. She would criticize and contest that stalemate, not by writing yet another pamphlet or founding yet another party, but proving it wrong in action. She would leave the politics of positions and standpoints and start – or continue – a politics of relations.

Those women joined male spheres not in order to argue about women's rights, but in order to bring their personal difference into play.

I call this "embodiment of politics". Bringing a female body to places, where women are not expected and maybe not even be welcome, creates the necessity of mediations, that otherwise would not take place.

When we now take a fresh look at the texts and actions of those women Internationalists, we have a new perspective. What seemed inconsistent and weak in matters of positions and straight opinions, now becomes reasonable. Those women did not want to carve out differences and standpoints. They wanted to keep social issues connected that in their opinion belonged together – socialism *and* feminism. They relied on acting in a concrete

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19 Only later, starting in the 1880s, feminist views were integrated into the socialist movements to some degree, thanks to activists like Clara Zetkin, August Bebel, Eleanor Marx or William Morris. But by then, the feminist movement was strictly divided into "socialist" and "bourgeois" branches, which were opposed to each other as much as they were opposed to misogynists in their own ranks.

contingent situation, and therefore their positions and opinions would adapt to that situation and to the concrete persons involved. They did not act on principles, but on necessities in a given context.

By doing so they also challenged one of the main topoi of the time: that politics meant struggle between opponents and parties. Pointing out contradicting interests was a spreading strategy in labour and feminist movements alike – men against women, labour against capital.

By contesting this topos, the feminist socialists earned themselves the verdict of not being radical enough, and they earned it from their fellow socialists as well as from their fellow feminists.

But it was not a lack of radicalism, but faithfulness to the roots of the social movements, to keep a broader agenda – namely the common good, that included all aspects of life and did not consider some as more important than others. A point of view which, by the time of the International, was discredited as “utopian” in socialist ranks and as “naïve” in feminist ones.

That doesn’t mean that those feminist socialists ignored or negated the real difficulties or contradictions. There *really* was antagonism in the interests of women and men or of capital and labour. Trying to negate this on a theoretical level would have truly been utopian or naïve.

But by opting for the politics of personal intermediations, they found another way: going to the places of the others and talk to them. Establishing relationships, staying in contact, instead of deepening the abyss by still one more sharp analysis.

I am inclined to call this the “politics of women” because it is a common experience among women to not rely on a fixed identity. Women have always experienced many changes in their lives, such as name changes when they marry, change of work when they have children and so on. The existence of a woman does not depend on any fixed “identity” but on the relations she is involved in.

And in her writing and speaking she does not aim at finding an identity but at finding intermediations. Intermediations between what she is and wants right now and what the other is and wants; the concrete other that she has to deal with in a given context. That means negotiating, taking into consideration her own wishes and convictions as well as those of the other people involved, not in an abstract and theoretical manner, but concretely, here and now.<sup>20</sup>

At least this is the lesson I have learned from those feminist socialists in First International: that the concrete interactions and relations between activists

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20 See also Antje Schrupp, “Politik verkörpern statt Stellung beziehen“, in Ina Praetorius (ed.), *Sich in Beziehung setzen. Zur Weltsicht der Freiheit in Bezogenheit* (Königstein, 2005), pp. 37–48.

are the center of politics, and not their fixed pamphlets, the consistency of their theories, or the standpoints they take. It is only in relations with others that we develop political ideas, and as valuable as texts, positions and viewpoints surely are, they are not what really matters in political activism.

And this lesson is, unsurprisingly, still true and relevant for social movements of today.



FIGURE 22.1 *Victoria Woodhull c. 1869.*  
PRIVATE COLLECTION. FOTO BY BRADLEY & RULOFSON, PUBLIC DOMAIN  
(FOR COPYRIGHT-DETAILS SEE: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/  
WIKI/CATEGORY:VICTORIA\\_WOODHULL#/MEDIA/FILE:VICTORIA\\_C  
\\_WOOHULL\\_BY\\_BRADLEY\\_%26\\_RULOFSON.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Victoria_Woodhull#/Media/File:Victoria_C_Woodhull_by_Bradley_%26_Rulofson.png)).





FIGURE 22.2 *Elisabeth Dmitrieff*.  
SOURCE: SYLVIE BRAIBANT, *ELISABETH DMITRIEFF*,  
BELFOND, 1993.

## Bakunin and the Jura Federation

*Marianne Enckell*

Translated from the French by *Constance Bantman*

In the autumn of 2014, a commemorative plaque was put up in Le Locle, a small town in the Neuchâtel district (Switzerland), on the wall of the Café de la poste, as an homage to Michael Bakunin, who had given a talk there in February 1869. Contrary to what is stated on the plaque, of course, he did not give “a conference on anarchism”:<sup>1</sup> while the word “anarchism” or “anarchy” was indeed present in political philosophy, nothing at the time heralded the anarchist movement or a coherent theory.

Upon his return to Geneva, he wrote to the Le Locle comrades: “Isn’t it a wonderful thing that a man, a Russian, an ex-nobleman, who until very recently was a complete stranger to you, and who has set foot in your country for the first time, should find himself surrounded by hundreds of brothers?”<sup>2</sup>

And indeed, the meeting, James Guillaume recalled,<sup>3</sup> had been a “familiar evening; consequently, after an hour dedicated to philosophy and socialism, there was dancing in the very room where the conference had been given, after the benches and chairs had been removed, while Bakunin, who had withdrawn to a neighbouring room, chatted with a few mature men who favoured talking to him over the noisy pleasures of youth.”

There was dancing? The International sections’ members were without doubt almost all male; but women attended conferences and informal evenings: “The way the International’s speakers were greeted went beyond the wildest hopes of the event’s promoters. We heard a woman say on her way out: – Ha, if only I were a man I wouldn’t lose any time in getting into the International! – But, shall we say in reply, there is no need to be a man in order to be

1 In his introduction to the first volume of Bakunin’s *Œuvres* (Paris, 1895), Max Nettlau wrote: “Bakunin went – for the first time – to the Jura where, on 21 February 1869, at the *cercle international* of Le Locle, he gave a conference on ‘The people’s philosophy’. This conference fell into two parts, one of which dealt with ‘the religious question’, while the other was devoted to ‘the history of the bourgeoisie, its development, its rise and its fall’”. The six volumes of the *Œuvres* published from 1895 to 1913 are available in French online on Wikisource. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the translator’s own.

2 *Le Progrès, organe des démocrates loclois*, n. 6, 1st March 1869.

3 James Guillaume, *L’Internationale*, 2 vol. (Paris 1905), vol. 1, p. 130.

part of the International; women workers suffer from the oppression of capital just as much as men do, and consequently they are just as entitled as men to join the great Workingmen's Association."<sup>4</sup> Only in Geneva did a short-lived "section des Dames" (Ladies' section) come into existence, despite a few efforts to the same end elsewhere in French-speaking Switzerland.<sup>5</sup>

Another major reason why the International took hold so quickly in the Neuchâtel Mountains and the Saint-Imier valley, is that the local populations were familiar with organisations mixing ideal goals and forms of sociability.<sup>6</sup> The International Working men's Association (IWMA) sections created there since 1865 were "multi-coloured groupings";<sup>7</sup> and remained so in the following years: mutual help societies, trade unions, craft unions, associations, propaganda or working-class culture clubs and societies. The statutes letter, the contents of the *Inaugural Address* remained for most of them temporary texts, or even abstract texts, which had to be tested in reality.

Facts – rather than theories. But Bakunin gave them food for thought: after his talk, he sent a series of articles to the local journal *Le Progrès*, in the form of long letters *Aux compagnons de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs du Locle et de la Chaux-de-Fonds* (To the comrades of the IWMA in the Locle and La Chaux de Fonds), where he traced the evolution of the bourgeoisie and then liberalism, and criticised the state and patriotism. A second series appeared under the title *Lettres sur le patriotisme* (Letters on patriotism),<sup>8</sup> still with the tone of a discussion between friends, still unfinished, like most of Bakunin's writings.

Bakunin, at the time, was enthusiastic about the International. The previous year, he had tried to talk the Ligue de la paix et de la liberté (Peace and Freedom League) into subscribing to it, or even merging with it; but the Ligue had refused to embark on the path of social change.<sup>9</sup> Soon after he left the Ligue with a handful of faithful friends, he launched with them the project of

4 *La Solidarité*, 11 June 1870.

5 See Antje Schrupp, "Die Genfer Frauensektion der Ersten Internationale", <http://www.antjeschrupp.de/die-genfer-frauensektion>, last accessed 4 May 2015.

6 See Hans Ulrich Jost, "Sociabilité, faits associatifs et vie politique en Suisse au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle", in *A tire d'ailes* (Lausanne, 2005), pp. 117–143.

7 Miklós Molnar, *Le déclin de la Première Internationale: la conférence de Londres de 1871* (Geneva, 1963), p. 34.

8 *Le Progrès*, February to May 1869, then June to October; articles reproduced in Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vol. 1.

9 *Bulletin sténographique du deuxième Congrès de la paix et de la liberté* (Bern, 22–25 September 1868). See also a letter from Elisée Reclus to his brother Elie, *Correspondance*, 3 vol. (Paris, 1911), vol. 1, p. 279 ff.

an Alliance Internationale de la Démocratie socialiste (International Alliance of socialist Democracy), which was set up in Geneva on 28 October.<sup>10</sup> The Alliance, claiming to bring dynamism to the IWMA, make it progress theoretically and practically and go ahead with propaganda, soon reorganised into regional sections, in order to be accepted by the IWMA's General Council, and into a secret brotherhood, a force for reflection and organisation. It was one of the secret organisations which Bakunin liked to launch under various names, so that their genealogy could not be established.

But, as he left the Ligue for the Geneva section of the IWMA, he noted among other things that "the founders of the IWMA acted with great wisdom by first removing from the organisation's agenda all political and religious questions. There is no doubt that they themselves were not short of resolute political opinions, nor of antireligious opinions; but they refrained from enshrining them in this programme, because their main goal was above all to unite into a common action the labouring masses the civilised world over".<sup>11</sup>

The series of articles published in *Le Progrès* provides a remarkable summary of his political theories in their contemporary context. In a few brief extracts:

Until 1848, [the bourgeoisie] was still highly spirited. Without a doubt [...] it no longer was the heroic spirit of a class which had once been full of daring because it had been forced to conquer everything; it was the wise and thoughtful spirit of a new owner who, after acquiring a much-coveted good, must now make it prosper and increase in value.

Exploitation is the visible body, and government is the soul of the bourgeois regime. [...] Both of these, in this highly intimate relation, are from a theoretical as well as a practical viewpoint, the necessary and faithful expression of metaphysical idealism, the unavoidable consequence of this bourgeois doctrine which seeks individual freedom and morality outside social solidarity.

[But the state is] the immolation of each individual as well as all local associations, the destructive abstraction of living society, the limitation – or, in better words, the complete negation of life [...] The state has all always been the heirloom of a given privileged class: the sacerdotal class, the nobiliary class, the bourgeois class; – the bureaucratic class at the end.

<sup>10</sup> A copy of the invitation, which includes the statutes and rules and carries 10 signatures, can be found in the Biblioteca Franco Serantini in Pisa; others are at Amsterdam's International Institute of Social History.

<sup>11</sup> "Politique de l'Internationale", *L'Egalité*, Geneva, August 1869; articles reprinted in *Œuvres*, (Stock, 1911) vol. 5, p. 172 ff.

Patriotism is a bad, narrow and grim habit, since it denies human equality and solidarity. The social question which, nowadays, is being raised in practical terms by Europe's and America's working classes, and whose solution is only possible if state borders are abolished, tends necessarily to destroy this traditional habit in the consciousness of workers of all countries.

Only socialism, by replacing political, judicial and godly justice with human justice, by replacing patriotism with the universal solidarity of men, and economic competition with the international organisation of a society entirely founded on work, can put an end to all these brutal manifestations of human animality, to war.

### Disagreements in Switzerland

The first IWMA sections in Switzerland had toyed with parliamentary politics, and frequently sided with the radical party which was keen to court workers, in Geneva where it was in the opposition, as well as in Le Locle. Others, like doctor Coullery, sought alliances with the conservative opposition.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of electoral defeats, the members of the International in the Jura easily came to the conclusion that this type of politics was useless; it is hardly surprising that they welcomed Bakunin's words to them.

In *Fédéralisme, socialisme et antithéologisme*<sup>13</sup> he had set out the programme which he presented to the Ligue de la Paix et de la Liberté in 1867; it was after this was rejected that Bakunin moved for good to the IWMA's side. It was in this programme, indeed, that he suggested breaking away from old states once and for all and organising society from the bottom up – “the free federation of individuals into towns, of towns into provinces, of provinces into nations and finally of the latter into the United States of Europe first and then, later, of the entire world”.

Between the Swiss Jura watchmakers and Bakunin, there was therefore an encounter, and complementary experiences. Bakunin came back to the area, for other conferences in Le Locle, and for other, longer stays between Sonvilier and Saint-Imier. Two years later, he told them: “By working in small groups in

12 See Marc Vuillemier, “La Première Internationale en Suisse”, *La Première Internationale* (Paris, 1968). The radicals and the catholic conservatives were the main two political currents in Switzerland at the time; they became national parties after the 1874 Federal Constitution was adopted in 1874.

13 Written around 1867. Reprinted in *Œuvres*, vol. 1.

your workshops, and even by working in your own place, you earn much more money than can be earned in the large industrial establishments employing hundreds of workers; your work is intelligent, artistic, it does not deaden the mind in the same way that machine work does. Your skill, your intelligence count for something. Moreover you have far more leisure and relative freedom; this is why you are more educated, freer and happier than the others."<sup>14</sup>

Freer, no doubt, since the break within the IWMA's French-speaking Federation which had brought together Switzerland's French-language sections since 1869; the International never really took root in Alemannic Switzerland. In April 1870 a split occurred between the Geneva sections, which opposed political abstention, and the sections located in the Neuchâtel Mountains, which insisted on "giving up any action aiming to effect social transformation through national political reform."<sup>15</sup> A year and a half later, the latter renamed themselves the Jura Federation – at the risk of not being recognised by London's General Council, which required that there be only one federation per country.

It is beyond doubt that Bakunin and his friends' manoeuvres played a role in this process, but it is hard to know precisely what role. Much later, when Max Nettlau carried on indefatigably his research into Bakunin's life and writings and enquired to him about secret societies, James Guillaume wrote to him:<sup>16</sup> "After carefully weighing the pros and cons, I decided, for good, to observe complete silence regarding the Brotherhood and everything deriving from it. One should be able to tell *everything*; but, on one hand, we don't know *everything*; on the other hand, certain things still *cannot* be told." In the first volume of *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, published in 1905, he gave a little more away: "It was not an association after the classical type of the old secret societies, in which one was expected to follow orders from on high: the organisation was nothing else than the free gathering of men united towards collective action, without forms, without solemnity, without mysterious rites, just because they trusted one another and it seemed to them that an alliance was preferable to isolated action."<sup>17</sup> A century of commentaries and interpretations, from Marx to Arthur Lehning,<sup>18</sup> has not made it possible for historians to draw definite conclusions; I will not take the chance.

14 "Trois conférences aux ouvriers du val de Saint Imier" [May 1871], in *Œuvres*, vol. 5, p. 325.

15 *La Solidarité*, Neuchâtel, 11 April 1870.

16 Letter dated 30 July 1904, in Max Nettlau, *Nachträge*, note 44296+, available online on the website of Amsterdam's IISG, <https://search.socialhistory.org/Record/ARCH01001>, Content list (n. 1698), accessed February 28, 2015.

17 Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, p. 131.

18 Karl Marx, *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste et l'Association internationale des travailleurs* (London, 1873). Arthur Lehning, "Bakunin's Conceptions of Revolutionary

For the “Jurassians”, the International was “not only this formal organisation which, nowadays, embraces part of the proletariat: organisations are a secondary and transitory thing; they develop, transform and sometimes tear away like an item of clothing which is too small.”<sup>19</sup> The International was a perfectible, but truly legitimate form for organising the proletariat; the more universal it became, the more it would have to accommodate diversity in its midst. The conflict between Marx’s champions and Bakunin’s, between “centralists” and “federalists”, therefore had as much to do with its social project (the emancipation of the proletariat through the conquest of political power for the former, through the abolition of any political power for the latter) as with the organisation of the International; for the Federalists, the General Council could not be a governing body but should restrict itself to being a mere coordinating organ, a correspondence bureau between autonomous regional sections.

### The Saint-Imier Congress

Both elements – the social project and organisational matters – provided direction to the Saint-Imier “anti-authoritarian” congress on Sunday 15 September 1872. A week earlier, the majority of the Hague congress had excluded Bakunin – in his absence – and James Guillaume from the IWMA; the minority group accepted the proposal put forward by the Italian Federation (which was not represented at the Hague), to hold an international congress in Switzerland.

Fifteen delegates presented their mandates. Four of them came from Spain – a typographer, a barber and an engraver, as well as a French teacher. Five came from Italy, including three young men as well as the Russian Bakunin and his old friend Fanelli, who had spread his ideas in Spain. Two Frenchmen based in Switzerland represented “several French sections” existing clandestinely. Two American sections delegated a French communard refugee living in Switzerland. Finally, two Swiss, an engraver and a printer, represented the Jura Federation.

For the most part these were young men: they were between 20 and 30, except for their elder Bakunin, who was born in 1814, and two 45 year old men, Giuseppe Fanelli and Gustave Lefrançais. They had been active members of IWMA sections for five or six years, or even a lot less. Some of them had already been sent as representatives to international congresses, and several were back

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Organisations and Their Role. A Study of his ‘Secret Societies’, in *Essays in honour of E.H. Carr* (London, Basingstoke, 1974), pp. 57–81.

19 James Guillaume, “Le 18 mars”, *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 4, 20 March 1872.

from the Hague conference. Others had travelled via Zurich in order to confer with Bakunin first.

The international delegates arrived in Saint-Imier from Bienne or La Chaux-de-Fonds, by stage-coach, cart or even by foot: the train did not travel there yet, it was built two years later. At that time the town counted 4 to 5,000 inhabitants, as many as today. It underwent a large-scale alignment plan after the serious mid-century fires; the streets were rebuilt and working-class dwellings of four or five floors were erected.<sup>20</sup>

The Maison-de-Ville (Central hotel) where the congress took place was probably smart: it was built after the last great fire of 1856. It was the usual calling point of *établisseurs* – the skilled masters of the watchmaking industry and trade – coming to collect the spare pieces made in the local villages in order to assemble watches in factories. Watchmaking, which had developed there for about 40 years, had drawn many new dwellers from Alemannic Switzerland, the Jura and neighbouring France. It was mainly practiced in small workshops or at home, but the Longines factory (named after the place where it was built) opened there in 1867 and played a role in further transforming the urban and industrial landscape.<sup>21</sup>

The congress was held in three languages – French, Italian and Spanish, with three presidents and three secretaries (a Swiss engraver was chosen outside the delegates' circle). In accounts, newspaper articles, contemporary correspondence, no one seems to be surprised or intimidated by this, nor to have found it difficult. The delegates, as discussed above, hailed from countries where one Latin language or another was spoken; this did not change when the Belgian Federation's joined, later. Moreover, James Guillaume spoke English fluently and Adhémar Schwitzguébel spoke German; later on, they translated correspondences or congress talks.

This shows that the International had become a motherland – “*Nostra patria è il mondo intero*”, as the Italian anarchists expelled from Switzerland were to sing 20 years later.

The questions on the agenda were tangible, intended for immediate application. Four resolutions were adopted: the first one reasserted the principles

20 I wish to thank Catherine Krüttli, from the archival centre *Mémoires d'ici* (m-ici.ch) for providing me with a file on the history of local urbanism.

21 See, among others, Robert Pinot, *Paysans et horlogers jurassiens* (Geneva, [1887] 1979); Patrick Linder, *De l'atelier à l'usine: l'horlogerie à Saint-Imier* (Neuchâtel, 2008). Regarding the watchmaking process: Jean-Frédéric Gerber, “Le syndicalisme ouvrier dans l'industrie suisse de la montre de 1880 à 1915”, in Erich Gruner *et al.*, *Arbeitschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz, 1880–1914*, 3 vol. (Zurich, 1988) vol. 2, pp. 279–290.



of autonomy and federalism, “the first condition for workers’ emancipation”; the second drew “a friendship, solidarity and mutual defence pledge” between the organisations which were represented; the third proudly declared, in direct response to the General Council’s injunctions, “that the destruction of any political power is the proletariat’s first duty”; the fourth reflected upon the ways “of strengthening workers’ organisation and, through simple economic battles, preparing the Proletariat for the great and definitive revolutionary struggle which, destroying all privileges and all class distinctions, would give workers the right to enjoy the entire product of their labour”.<sup>22</sup>

Aside perhaps from the third resolution, this was therefore not an anarchist programme, but a set of principles aiming to rebuild the International whilst respecting regional differences.

For several years, the Jura federal committee would act as a correspondence bureau between “anti-authoritarian” federations. From its very beginnings, the weekly *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* (1872–78) published letters from abroad, translated the main congress resolutions, kept the discussion going. Subscriptions from the whole world were registered with Sonvilier-based engraver Adhémar Schwitzguébel. The *Bulletin* had a few dozen international subscribers:<sup>23</sup> in Alsace, Belgium, Spain and Italy for instance, regularly paying 5 francs a year. In 1877, about 50 copies were sent free of charge, for propaganda purposes, to cafés in the area and newspapers from Le Locle, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Geneva, Neuchâtel, Porrentruy, Zurich; to anarchist or socialist papers in Verviers, Antwerp, Berlin, Leipzig, Hamburg, Amsterdam, the Hague, Barcelona, Mexico City, Milan, Sienna, Rimini, to Alexandria in Egypt; to comrades in Patras, Greece, to Lisbon, Madrid, Montevideo, London, to Iowa or Italy’s Capua Vetere prison, where Errico Malatesta was a prisoner, but also to professor Eugen Dühring at Berlin University.

### The Cradle of Anarchism

Simultaneously and concurrently, the notion of an anarchist movement was taking shape. The word had gained great currency among its champions as well as its detractors, and utopia was among the goals of several groups.

In September 1871, the International’s Spanish regional Federation declared that “the real federal democratic republic means collective ownership, Anarchy

<sup>22</sup> *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 17–18, 15 September 1872 (in fact, October 1st).

<sup>23</sup> List of the subscribers to the *Bulletin*, IISH, Amsterdam, Fédération jurassienne Archives, file 116.

and economic federation, that is to say the free and universal federation of free associations of agricultural and industrial workers”<sup>24</sup> – a federation which was intended as a negation of the state, political parties and constituent assemblies, and as a statement of the spontaneous and revolutionary organisation of freely-federated communes and autonomous groups.

In spring 1873, it was the Italians who claimed that “anarchy, for us, is the only way for social Revolution to be a fact, for social liquidation to be complete ... for passions and natural needs, returning to their state of freedom, to carry out the reorganisation of mankind on grounds of justice.”<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, other comrades such as Benoît Malon, claimed that the “anarchist programme” was an impossibility. James Guillaume opposed it too, but for other reasons: he used “anarchy” in Proudhon’s sense, he accepted “anarchist” as an adjective but found these terms negative and equivocal.<sup>26</sup> The federations from Belgium and the Netherlands concurred with him.

As for Bakunin, he chose that time to withdraw, at least formally. He wrote a public letter to the *Journal de Genève*, and then a text to his Jura friends:<sup>27</sup> “Now is no longer the time for ideas, but for facts and actions. What matters above all, today, is to organise proletarian forces. But such organisation must be carried out by the proletariat itself. If I was young, I would have transported myself to a working class environment and, sharing my brothers’ industrious life, I would also have taken part with them in the great labour of this necessary organisation.” Personal conflicts also surfaced, and the break-up was painful. But this shows clearly that it was not Bakunin who “invented” the Jura militants’ anarchism, as the latter carried on without him.

On 3 March 1877, Elisée Reclus gave a conference in Saint-Imier about anarchy and the state: “After reducing bourgeois fanciful frights in the face of the word ‘anarchy’ to their actual worth,” the *Bulletin* summarised, “he explained the word’s scientific meaning, and how we should focus on it. He reviewed the state’s various forms – the theocratic, royal, aristocratic and lastly the popular state –, and demonstrated how the latter, aiming for people to be governed by

24 Quoted by Mathieu Léonard, *L’Emancipation des travailleurs* (Paris, 2011), p. 293.

25 *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 1st April 1873.

26 He also wrote, in 1876, in the *Bulletin*: “No such thing as an ‘anarchist programme’ has ever been formulated, as far as we know ... But there is a *collectivist* theory, articulated in the congresses of the International, and that’s the one we associate with, as do our friends from Belgium, France, Spain, Italy and Russia”. He was always careful to write the word *anarchist* in italics.

27 *Journal de Genève*, 25 September 1873; *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 12 October 1873.

the people, when truly implemented, resulted logically in anarchy ... this horizon of freedom which we want for human society".<sup>28</sup>

Within 5 years – from September 1872 to the summer of 1877 – the anarchist movement acquired its own life and identity. Referring to movements or militants as anarchists prior to that date is anachronistic.

The IWMA Congress in The Hague, in 1872, had allowed the General Council to save face, but at the cost of losing almost all the affiliated federations. It may be asked whether, subsequently, one of the Association's two strands was more powerful than the other. The "centralist" branch was near-defunct; its 1873 Geneva congress was a flop. As for the "federalist" branch, it survived for another 5 years; it was not a Bakuninist fraction nor an anarchist cell, but a "genuinely proletarian and internationalist movement," as described by Miklós Molnar.<sup>29</sup> In Geneva in September 1873, just before the "centralist" congress, it brought together section and federation delegates, often with substantial memberships, from 7 countries: England, Belgium, Spain, France, Holland, Italy, "Jura".<sup>30</sup> English sections were still present in 1874 at its Brussels congress, when the IWMA no longer had any public presence in France: several sections federated from 1876, in France or even in exile.

The last (federalist) congress of the IWMA took place in 1877 in Verviers, in Belgium. It brought together delegates from France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia, Switzerland and Belgium,<sup>31</sup> and received correspondences from Greece, Egypt and Uruguay. The discussions focused on solidarity, internationalism; manifestoes of support were sent to "those among our brothers who have been victims of their revolutionary energy" in Russia, in Italy, in Switzerland or in the United States.<sup>32</sup> There were discussions about collectivism and communism, political parties and revolutionary socialism. Nothing there was terribly original, except that the delegates sought to overcome their differences and give an added lease of life to their association. But this was not meant to be.

The following year, the Jura Federation gave up. In its own congresses it explored in greater depth the issues of autonomy, federalism and internationalism. Its swan song was – rather paradoxically – a programmatic text: that which the Saint-Imier region Federation put up for discussion at the 1880

28 *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 11 March 1877.

29 "Quelques remarques à propos de la crise de l'Internationale en 1872", *La Première Internationale* (Paris, 1968).

30 The minutes of this congress and the following ones are reprinted in Jacques Freymond (ed.), *La Première Internationale, recueil de documents*, 4 vol. (Geneva, 1962–1971) vol. 4.

31 *Id.*, p. 523.

32 *Id.*, p. 530.

congress, through the voice of its secretary Adhémar Schwitzguébel.<sup>33</sup> Stressing, among other things, the need for organisation “from the point of view of preparatory action for the revolution and revolutionary action itself,” he specified that “trade organisations, study and propaganda groups, local, regional and international workers’ federations, socialist and revolutionary conspiracies are as many varied forms giving satisfaction to the organisational needs of the different economic, political and social environments. In terms of organisation, therefore, there is no such thing as an absolute form: they all have their *raison d’être* according to the specific situations and goals through which they work towards the realisation of the general goal”.

That’s what it means – this fine word “International”. It all began in Switzerland, thanks too to the presence of foreigners and political refugees there: a situation which, unfortunately, has changed a lot over time, and not only with respect to anarchists.

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33 *Programme socialiste: mémoire présenté au Congrès jurassien de 1880 par la Fédération ouvrière du district de Courtelary* (Geneva, 1880), 32 p.

## Carlo Cafiero and the International in Italy

*From Marx to Bakunin*

*Mathieu Léonard*

Translated from the French by *Constance Bantman*

The history of internationalism has been written many times, and has come to focus on a few familiar categories and famous fights. In the case of Italy, the most famous of these fights pitched Marx against Bakunin. Thus, in 1909, the German-Italian sociologist Roberto Michels claimed that “Bakuninism” had set the scene for Marxism in Italy. This testified to the prevalence of these interpretative frameworks.<sup>1</sup> A biographical trajectory may prove valuable to avoid repeating these frameworks: history on an individual scale may help us grasp the changing nature of situations and therefore revise some interpretations and open up new paths for further research.

It may be the case that the unusual itinerary of Carlo Cafiero, a major player within the International’s Italian Federation – which first split from the General Council even before the Hague congress – epitomises the stakes of the International’s history in Italy and the complex tensions between the stances inspired by Marx and Bakunin respectively. Moreover, this provides food for thought regarding the role of irrationality, interpersonal relations and subjectivity in political choices. Indeed, in the fight for influence unfolding in Italy, Bakunin’s closeness to a handful of Italian players may have exerted powerful attraction over the small initial group of internationalists – against which the general Council’s cold and distant injunctions were bound to remain powerless. The history of the Italian Federation of the International therefore testifies to the singular paths taken by the various tendencies – be they autonomous or not – of the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA), which, as it fell apart, failed in pointing out one single organisational way to the sections which it had been instrumental in setting up. Lastly, this founding history of Italian anarchism must be placed in its specific context and be seen as part of a – thwarted – desire for continuity with the fighting spirit of the *Risorgimento* generation, and therefore as breaking away from their sacrifices.

In historiographic terms, James Guillaume’s archival and memorial work was a precursor in that it sought to retrace the dynamics of anti-authoritarian

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1 *Storia del marxismo in Italia. Compendio critico. Con annessa bibliografia* (Rome, 1909).

internationalists. Cafiero's itinerary can be followed in Guillaume's Memoir on the International<sup>2</sup> as well in the latter's introduction to a *Compendium of Das Kapital* in 1910.<sup>3</sup> The publication of Max Nettlau's *Bakunin e l'Internazionale in Italia* in 1928,<sup>4</sup> with a preface by Errico Malatesta, was the last work to be both a transcription of direct memory and a historian's work. In the 1850–60s, the historian Pier Carlo Masini<sup>5</sup> inserted the history of the internationalists and Cafiero – whose biography he wrote – in the legacy of Italian anarchism. Followed by Enzo Santarelli, T.R. Ravindranathan and the American Nunzio Pernicone,<sup>6</sup> whereas in 2005, in *Apostles and agitators*,<sup>7</sup> the historian Richard Drake later regarded Cafiero as part of the Italian Marxist tradition, as its dissident forerunner. Finally, let us note Piero Brunello's<sup>8</sup> 2009 study, with its renewed approach to the history of the International in Italy, breaking away from uniform readings, testifying to the vitality and diversity of the sections existing in Italy, and connecting them with a period of modernisation for the Italian police.

Cafiero's romantic appeal has inspired literary and cinematic creations. He was turned into a novel character in 1927 by Riccardo Baccheli, in *Il diavolo al Pontelungo*, where his activism was depicted sarcastically. In 1971, Cafiero's figure was also a source of inspiration, as well as a political stake, in the film of the Taviani brothers (who were close to the Communist Party), *San Michele aveva un gallo*, inspired both by a novel by Tolstoy and the experience of the Matese insurrection, in which Cafiero took part in 1877. The film's character, Giulio Manieri, now pathetic, symbolises the obsolescence of inconsequential romantic revolutionary socialism in the face of the emergent scientific

2 James Guillaume, *L'Internationale. Documents et souvenirs (1864–1878)* (Paris, 1905–1910).

3 Carlo Cafiero, *Abrégé du Capital de Karl Marx* (1910).

4 Max Nettlau, *Bakunin e l'Internazionale in Italia dal 1864 al 1872* (Edizioni del Risveglio, 1928).

5 Pier Carlo Masini, *Gli Internazionalisti e la Banda del Matese, 1876–1878* (Milano [etc.], 1958); *La Federazione Italiana dell'Associazione Internazionale dei Lavorati. Atti ufficiali 1871–1880 (atti congressuali; indirizzi, proclami, manifesti)* (Milano, 1963); *Storia degli anarchici italiani. Da Bakunin a Malatesta (1862–1892)* (Milano, 1969); *Cafiero*, (Milano, 1974).

6 Enzo Santarelli, *Il socialismo anarchico in Italia*, (Milano, 1959); T.R. Ravindranathan, "Bakunin in Naples: an assessment", *The Journal of Modern History*, 53, 2 (June 1981), pp. 189–212; T.R. Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians* (McGill, 1988). Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892* (2009). The work of the labour movement's biographical archives [hereafter ABMO] in Genoa is also of note. They published Emilio Gianni's *L'Internazionale italiana fra libertari ed evolucionisti. I congress della Federazione Italiana e della Federazione Alta Italia dell'Associazione Internazionale dei lavoratori, 1872–1880* (Pantarei, 2008), <http://www.abmo.it>.

7 Richard Drake, *Apostles and Agitators: Italy's Marxist Revolutionary Tradition* (Harvard, 2003).

8 *Storie di anarchici et du spie, Polizia e politica nell'Italia liberale*, (Roma, 2009).

socialism, with its political apparatus, in accordance with the left's hegemonic interpretation – although this narrative was disrupted at the time of the film's release by the autonomist movements rejecting the traditional party and trade union structures.

This presentation does not seek to bring any new insights into Cafiero's life, which has been examined in great detail, but its main axes will be outlined. Cafiero's legacy is threefold: (1) he was a major actor in the International's implantation in Italy and the Italian Federation's split from the General Council; (2) he took part in evolving anarchist or anarcho-communist principles characterised by their uncompromising stance towards political strategies, as well as developing insurrectional tactics; (3) lastly, he was the first mediator of the critique of political economy, writing one of the first summaries of the first book of Karl Marx's *Capital*.

### The General Council's Failed Implantation

Carlo Cafiero (1846–1892) had everything to become the first Italian “Marxist”<sup>9</sup> – although, in the 1870s, the term was irrelevant and anachronistic in its positive acceptance, and was only used until then by Marx's opponents, pejoratively. During his stay in London between July 1870 and May 1871, Carlo Cafiero gave up the diplomatic career to which his bourgeois origins destined him – he came from a very old family of landowners on the Adriatic coast of Puglia. He discovered, as a result of the industrial revolution, the utter destitution of the proletariat of London's East End. On 16 April 1871, he attended a meeting organised by the IWMA, which brought together more than 30,000 people in Hyde Park in support of the Paris Commune. This event was instrumental in winning him over for good to revolution and socialism. He would not be a diplomat; he would be an internationalist.

In the struggle for hegemony between the followers of Bakunin and the General Council, but also in the fight among the Mazzinian tendencies, Cafiero was perceived to have the potential to become the London agent, as the special correspondent in Italy. Cafiero joined the Naples section of the

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9 A few words about uses of the term “Marxism” in the early 1870s: it was used almost exclusively by Marx's “Bakuninist” (a mirroring term) opponents. Thus, in the June 1872 *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, the “Marxist dynasty”, the “Marxist conspiracy” and the “Marxist law” were denounced. Marx was not very keen on the term ‘Marxist’, as he wrote to British socialist leader Henry Hyndman in a letter dated 2 July 1881: “Party programs ought to keep free of any apparent dependence upon individual authors or books”.

International – “the city where the labour element is the most resistant, the most rebellious to any idea of progress,” as Mazzini wrote in his vitriolic attack against both the Commune and the IWMA, published in his own diary *La Roma del Popolo* in the same period.<sup>10</sup>

It was on 31 January 1869, in Naples, that the first Italian section of the IWMA appeared, but its origins go back to the group formed around Bakunin, Gambuzzi and Saverio Friscia in 1866, which saw the publication of the paper *Libertà e Giustizia* from August 1867 to February 1868. In March 1869, the section claimed that it already had 1,200 registered workmen – 3,000 in February 1870, when it was first dissolved by the police.

It was dissolved again on 20 August 1871, through a Royal decree. In December 1871, the Federazione Operaia Napoletana was founded, with Errico Malatesta as its secretary. In this transforming section, there were fiery young intellectuals and students, often of middle-class extraction, such as the lawyer Carmelo Palladino, Errico Malatesta (who soon dropped out of medical school) and Emilio Covelli, a former fellow seminary student of Cafiero. It was on the post-Unification frustration of these young people, faced with downward social mobility and turning their backs on Mazzini’s and Garibaldi’s ideas, that Bakunin could project his hopes for a revolutionary renaissance: “In Italy, one finds what other countries are missing – an ardent, energetic youth, without status, without hope, career, prospects and which, in spite of its middle-class origins, is neither morally nor intellectually spent like other countries’ youths. Today, these young people are embracing revolutionary socialism unreservedly [...]”<sup>11</sup>

Italy’s “first anarchism” has often been condescendingly reduced to an attempted peasant revolt which was both industrially backwards and politically rash. The context was far from anecdotal: the Risorgimento’s broken promises, both social – agrarian reform – and political – a broader franchise – as well as the Italian peninsula’s late industrialisation, the North/ South divide as well as substantial work migration are well-known factors. Complete with the political imagination of a new generation, itself pervaded with the experience of the “last men of Risorgimento” (Carlo Pisacane, Garibaldi, Fanelli) as well as the working-class’s evolution and the symbolical dimension of the Paris Commune, this provides the keys to understanding the Italian internationalists’ options. Bakunin’s Alliance’s radical programme was therefore likely to feed their revolutionary impatience.

<sup>10</sup> Article dated 13 July 1871.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Dragomanov (ed.), *Correspondance de Michel Bakounine, Lettres à Herzen et Ogarreff* (Perrin, 1896), p. 47.



Cafiero corresponded with Engels until June 1872. Since the September 1871 London conference, Engels occupied a pivotal place within the General Council, hunting down factions as “Marx’s bulldog”, in the words of his recent biographer Tristram Hunt,<sup>12</sup> while Marx sought to devote himself exclusively to his theoretical works. Cafiero’s letters initially testified to a social situation of extreme deprivation and the “barbarian state” of Southern Italy. He thought that he could discern the signs of the “most dramatic social revolution.<sup>13</sup>” He also informed him of the latest progress of the International. On 18 October 1871, he wrote: “There is not a single important city where the International does not have at least some foothold [...] The last zone which still belonged to Mazzini’s defeated and fully washed-out army, [is being invaded] by the International”.

In November, Engels congratulated Cafiero on the text signed by “Some Internationalists”, which criticised Mazzini’s despotism and antisocialism. It was in fact a memorandum written by Bakunin and entitled “To my Italian friends”, on the occasion of the working-class Congress called to Rome by the Mazzinian party on 1st November 1871. Cafiero told Engels the truth: “You should congratulate Bakunin, not me.” Above all, Engels endeavoured to get Cafiero to formally fight against Bakunin’s champions, whom he characterised as “professional sectarians” aiming for their personal doctrine to prevail within the International.

Cafiero, urged to unmask the Alliance’s “henchmen”, understood this fixation less and less: “Regarding Bakunin,” Cafiero wrote on 12 July 1871, “I can confirm that he has many friends in Naples who share some of his principles and truly have some common views; but to claim that there is a sect, a party dissenting from the principles of the General Council – I completely negate that.” Detecting a hint of scepticism in his correspondent’s tone, Engels could sense that he was about to change sides: “They are all pro-Bakunin in Naples and only one of them, Cafiero, is at least good-willed. He is the one I correspond with.” “Cafiero is a good man,” he wrote to Lafargue on 11 March 1872, “a natural mediator, and as such he is naturally weak; if he doesn’t pull himself together soon, I will give up on him too.”

Following Cafiero, therefore, shows the impact of social and political conditions, but also of human beings and their abilities to organise. Cafiero was one individual among others who was instrumental in giving the Italian situation its specificity. But this was not all.

12 Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Hunted Communist: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels* (2009).

13 This quote and the following ones are extracted from Del Bo Giuseppe, *La corrispondenza di Marx e Engels con Italiani 1848–1895* (Milano, 1964).

### Cafiero in the Intimate Alliance

The demonisation of Bakunin aroused Cafiero's curiosity and, through Fanelli, in mid-May he left to meet him in Locarno, Switzerland, where he stayed for a month. On 21 May, Bakunin noted in his diary: "All day with Fanelli and Cafiero. Perfectly-completed alliance."<sup>14</sup> From then on, agreeing on everything with Bakunin, Cafiero – under the aliases Armando and Gregorio – penetrated the first circle of the close correspondents of the secret Alliance, an international network of a few individuals between Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Russia, whose only mystery, James Guillaume claimed, resided in the "free rapprochement of men, without forms, solemnity, arcane rituals, simply because they trusted one another and perceived getting on as preferable to isolated action." However, entire sections of their clandestine activities are to remain shrouded in mystery since it is known from Marc Vuillemier's work on James Guillaume's archives<sup>15</sup> in particular that much of their correspondence was destroyed at different points.

On 19 June 1875 Cafiero sent Engels the letter in which he broke away from the General Council – a letter read and approved by Bakunin beforehand: "Your Communist programme is, in my view, in its positive part, a great reactionary absurdity,"<sup>16</sup> he wrote in reference to the *Communist Manifesto*, to which Bakunin had alerted him and which he perceived to be a kind of hidden programme for the General Council. Cafiero reworked an argument made by Bakunin, who saw in Resolution IX, voted at the London Congress, "pan-Germanic claims" – given that "the proletariat can act as a class only by establishing itself as a distinct political party." This reference to the *Manifesto* was a sign that the text was becoming known among Bakunin's champions, since he had been involved in its first translation into Russian.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, around the same period, Marx and Bakunin seemed to reassess the *Manifesto*'s programmatic points: "The practical application of the principles will depend, as the *Manifesto* itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical

14 Guillaume, *L'Internationale. Documents et Souvenirs*.

15 Marc Vuillemier, « Les archives de James Guillaume », *Le Mouvement social*, 48 (Jul.–Sept. 1964), pp. 95–108.

16 Jacques Freymond (ed.), *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*, vol. 4, (Geneva, 1971).

17 This rediscovery was far from being available to a large audience at the time. Only in 1882 did Laura Lafargue give a complete translation to the French paper *L'Egalité* – the 1848 translation had completely disappeared. The first part-translations came even later in Italy, including in 1892 in the paper *Lotta di classe*.

conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. [...] One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” they wrote in the preface to the German second edition of the *Manifesto* in June 1872.

Engels and Cafiero's correspondence was remarkable in that it was probably the only direct exchange between a protagonist belonging to the current often referred to as “antiauthoritarian” and an eminent General Council delegate. While the letter's feverish style and occasionally muddled arguments mean that it will most likely never feature in any anthology of anarchist texts, this document still makes it possible to highlight the key disagreements with the General Council's centralism: (1) the aspiration to turn itself into a form of executive body for the IWMA; (2) the very principle of turning the proletariat into a political party; (3) the systematic castigation of Bakunin; (4) a sense of autonomy heightened by the rejection of the Italian state's political centralism. It was through a saying from Puglia, “the octopus should be cooked in its own water,” that Cafiero manifested his profound attachment to the principle of autonomy from the General Council's guidelines, as well as from those of the Italian central state.

Besides, Engels and Marx's attempts to provide an indirect reply to the Italian internationalists' options cast a long shadow, in ideological terms. The publication, in 1873 and 1874, of two texts addressed to the Italian socialists, in an Almanac from Bignami editions<sup>18</sup> – “On Authority” by Engels and “Political Indifferentism” by Marx – provided cornerstones in the argument against anarchism, subsequently taken up in all Marxist-Leninist *vade mecums*. Cafiero's U-turn signified the loss of the General Council's most important correspondent in Italy. There only remained one General Council ally – “albeit not a very energetic one,” according to Engels –, in Lodi: the moderate socialist printer Enrico Bignami.

The founding Congress of the Italian section of the International, bringing together twenty-one sections, twenty-five delegates, on 4 August, 1872 in Rimini, presided by Cafiero, saw the famous resolution declaring that “the Italian Federation dissolved any solidarity with London's General council.” Cafiero stood as the General Council's “resolute opponent” as he accompanied James Guillaume, in late September 1872, as a mere spectator, to the Hague Congress,

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18 *Almanacco repubblicano*, Milano, December 1873 and 1874.

where he lost patience with Guillaume's ecumenism: "Best to stay alone than make concessions."<sup>19</sup>

The second Congress, in Bologna, from 15 to 17 March 1873, brought together sixty sections, from Bologna, Florence, Pisa, Ravenna, Turin, and Sicily. None of the Southern sections was in contact with the General Council, but with Bakunin via Cafiero. However, Cafiero was not just Bakunin's vassal. He even emancipated himself from him in the wake of the events at La Barronata and the aborted Bologna insurrection, during which Cafiero lost all of his inheritance, which he had earmarked to serve the cause. Bakunin himself was excluded from the close circle which he had set up in September 1874. Cafiero had described Mazzini as "a man of the past," and the generational process also seemed to work against Bakunin.

1875 saw the victory of internationalist ideas over Mazzinianism, and a new-found vigour in creating sections. According to the Italian Federation's internal reports, the overall number of sections in the peninsula rose from 129 in February 1874 to 155 in April<sup>20</sup> – an increase in the number of members from 26,704 to 32,450.<sup>21</sup> Internal numbers, such as those of the police, were probably exaggerated, but in a report dated 4 June 1873, Florence's police chief reckoned that "there are many workers and craftsmen who support its principles, but are afraid of joining the International for fear of losing their jobs or because they cannot afford the dues."<sup>22</sup>

### The Temptation of Illegality

Faced with the severe economic crisis of 1873–74, Italy underwent many popular insurrections which led the internationalists to adopt an insurrectional strategy. The most radical republican currents also saw the era as propitious to an overthrow of the monarchy. On 2 August 1874 authorities arrested republican leaders preventatively, during a meeting at villa Ruffi, near Rimini, and dismantled the internationalist sections of Emilia-Romagna. The August 1874

19 Max Nettlau, "Les Origines de l'Internationale antiautoritaire", *Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste*, Geneva, 597, (16 Sept. 1922).

20 The breakdown for the latter figure is 36 in Tuscany, 30 in Emilia-Romagna. 18 in Umbria, Lazio and Marches, 17 in Naples and Southern Italy, 15 in Sicily, 11 in Lombardy, 9 in the Venetian, 8 in Piedmont, 6 in Liguria and 1 in Sardinia.

21 Franco Della Peruta, "La consistenza numerica dell'Internazionale in Italia nel 1874", *Movimento Operaio*, 3–4, (Dec. 1949–Jan. 1950), pp. 104–106.

22 Quoted in Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864–1892* (1993).

Bologna insurrection planned by anarchists petered out even before it started; it was meant to bring together 3,000 insurgents, and in fact there were only 200, who were promptly arrested.

In the face of police repression, the Italian Federation underwent two sluggish years, which coincided with the moderate left's rise to power. The third – clandestine – Congress of the Italian federation, in late October 1876, set out a tactic based on “propaganda by the deed,” relying on riots and insurrection: “The Italian federation believes that the – insurrectional – deed is the most effective means of propaganda and the only one which, without corrupting or deceiving masses, may penetrate into the deepest layers of society and draw the live forces of mankind into the struggle that the International is leading!” It is interesting to examine this terminology of propaganda by the deed, which has been traced back to anarchism only, in the context of continuity with the Risorgimento, but whose filiation should be analysed more closely. The patriot and revolutionary Carlo Pisacane (1818–1857) appears as a forerunner of Italian anarchism,<sup>23</sup> and he described his faith in the primacy of insurrection over ideas in terms similar to those of the Italian Federation: “*Profonda mia convinzione di essere la propaganda dell'idea una chimera e l'istruzione popolare un'assurdità. Le idee nascono dai fatti e non questi da quelle, e il popolo non sarà istruito, ma sarà ben tosto istruito quando sarà libero.*”<sup>24</sup>

It was with the rather proactive purpose of triggering the masses' spontaneity that, in early April 1877, 30 internationalists, including Malatesta and Cafiero, attempted to lead an insurrection in the Matese Mountains in Southern Italy. Ill-prepared and without any real local knowledge, the insurgents were easily arrested by the police on 12 April, on the spot where comrades were supposed to join them. “The Matese Gang,” in remand for over a year, were eventually acquitted by a popular jury in August 1878 due to a lack of evidence, especially relating to the accidental death of a policeman.

This aborted guerrilla has of course been used as an argument to castigate the inconsistency of this nascent anarchism, relying on adventurism, vanguardism, fascination with social bandits, conspiracies ... However, while their failure reflects rather poorly on them, the internationalists were acting in a

23 In 1988, an article in a historical anarchist journal founded by Errico Malatesta was entitled: *Un precursore del comunismo anarchico: Carlo Pisacane*, by Francesco Lamendola, *Umanità Nova*, year 68, (26 February 1988).

24 “I am deeply convinced that propaganda by the idea is a chimera and popular instruction an absurdity. Ideas are born from facts, not the opposite, and the people will not be free because they are educated, and they will very soon be educated when they are free.” *Saggio sulla rivoluzione*, a posthumous book published in 1860.

context of intense social discontent. Their attempt took place 15 years after the Piedmont's army crushed the *brigantaggio postunitario* and Carmine Crocco's guerrilla, in those same mountains. Costa, who did not get involved in the attempt, actually tried to provide it with a rational explanation during the 1877 federalist congress in Verviers: "In almost all the Southern Italian provinces, propaganda, as it is understood in Western countries, is near impossible ... The only means which peasants had so far to escape the government's and the landlords' tyranny was very primitive: they would grab a gun, get a few comrades together and became robbers. Generally speaking, robbers are not hated by the people."<sup>25</sup> This undoubtedly was a longing for "widespread robbery" under the unitary banner of the "insurgent masses", against "the rich and the authorities", in keeping with a powerful Bakuninian imagination; above all, however, the insurgents wanted to experiment with exemplary rather than directional tactics.

Nonetheless, observing unbearable inequalities was far certainly not the preserve of revolutionary socialists. Pasquale Villari's *Southern Letters*, and investigations by Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino raised the alarm regarding both Southern Italy's destitution, where "the worst of the old feudal regime and new agrarian capitalism coexisted",<sup>26</sup> and the dangers of "socialism", which Villari regarded as "the most dangerous among modern diseases."

The International was outlawed again. At the 8 September 1877 federalist congress in Verviers, Andrea Costa, who had found refuge in Geneva, reported on the atmosphere of widespread hostility towards the internationalists: "The right wing used to treat us like political enemies, and the left has sought to disparage us and to get us to be regarded as plain criminals, lazy individuals, vagrants who, possessing nothing and wanting to do nothing else, attacked other people's lives and property. "The Italian internationalists," Nicotera declared [in Parliament], "are not philosophers like the Germans; they are camorristi in Naples, Mafiosi in Sicily, throat-slicers in Romagna."<sup>27</sup>

A trend towards the dissolution of solidarity spread within the socialist movement, which could not see past the Italian internationalists' illegality. Jules Guesde called them "the Cerreto fugitives."<sup>28</sup> *Vorwärts*, the German

25 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*.

26 *Condizioni economiche ed amministrative delle province napoletane: Abruzzi e Molise-Calabrie e Basilicata. Appunti di viaggio* [pubblicato insieme a *La mezzeria in Toscana*, di Sidney Sonnino], (Firenze, 1875).

27 Freymond, *La Première Internationale. Recueil de documents*.

28 In the Parisian paper *Le Radical*; reported by Guillaume in *L'Internationale*, vol. 3, pp. 561.

*Sozial-Demokratie's* main organ, claimed that the insurrection had nothing to do with the International, that the insurgents were “mere criminals” (*ein-faches Raubgesindel*). Benoît Malon poured scorn over the insurgents. “Lastly, in Zurich’s *Tagwacht*, the organ of the Schweizerischer Arbeitbund, Hermann Greulich implied that Cafiero, Malatesta and their companions were “provocateurs,” and drew a parallel between the Italian internationalists and the Empire’s white shirts”, James Guillaume noted in his brief biography of Cafiero.<sup>29</sup>

The ideological positions of the Italian sections thus fluctuated with these power struggles, and also with individual and generational changes, as well as these insurrections and the experience of illegalism in the 1870s. Lastly Cafiero’s trajectory makes it possible to complicate traditional interpretations.

### When Cafiero Promoted Marx

Due to the hostility – at least in political terms – which they experienced, the Internationalists had to evaluate their own experience critically. Jail fulfilled its classic role as a site of political education for Cafiero, who studied Marx’s *Capital* based on the translation by Joseph Roy dated 1875, sent to him by James Guillaume. Cafiero saw the book as a “remarkable weapon of war”, and decided to write a more accessible version for Italian audiences. Besides, despite the argument with Marx, Bakunin’s allies were undeniably among the first in socialist circles to perceive the theoretical importance of his work. *Il Capitale di Carlo Marx brevemente compendiato da Carlo Cafiero* published by Bigami editions in Milan in 1879 – the same legalistic socialist who had published Engels and Marx’s texts against anarchism – was in fact a pioneering incursion of Marx’s work into Italy, ten years before Antonio Labiola’s works.

In his compendium, Cafiero eagerly insisted on the inhumane effects of the industrial capitalist system, through the historical example of the British proletariat’s development, but also on what appeared to him as instructive for contemporary Italian opinion, that is to say the process whereby capital accumulation was effected through the violent expropriation of the larger part of the people, peasants and craftsmen. When, in 1879, Marx received at his house two Italian copies of Cafiero’s compendium, he had every reason to be surprised by their origin. According to his daughter Laura, this did not prevent Marx from regarding “Cafiero’s work as a very good lay account of his surplus

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29 These attacks are recalled in his preface to Carlo Cafiero, *Abrégé du Capital de Karl Marx*, (Stock, 1910).

value theory.”<sup>30</sup> Cafiero distinguished between Marx’s critical economy writings and his so-called political theory. He looked for an anarchist-communist synthesis, founded on the scientific tools of Marxism and libertarian requirements, that is to say antiparlamentarianism and the rejection of the state. His compendium was to follow the vagaries of history. It is well-known that the first edition held pride of place in the book collection of Mussolini’s father. There was a second edition, with a preface by the anarchist Luigi Fabbri, in 1913, then a third in 1920. After the downfall of fascism, the book was republished by Marxist-Leninist publishers, obliterating all references to the author’s anarchism.

“From 1879 onwards,” Enzo Santarelli noted, “the crisis of Italian internationalism coincided with the onset of a – very gradual – progression of political democracy in Italy – with the left’s rise to power and the extension of the franchise.”<sup>31</sup> Andrea Costa’s shift to parliamentarianism in 1879 – he became the first socialist member of the Italian Parliament in 1882 – reinforced Cafiero’s irretrievably antiparlamentarian positions and the conundrums facing Italian anarchism, as it was deprived of an organic connection with the nascent labour movement. After 1882, the last period of Cafiero’s life saw him in a tragic state of permanent dementia, expressed among other things by a form of mystical exaltation and acute paranoia, until his death in Nocera Inferiore’s lunatic asylum, aged forty-five, on 7 June 1892, following a bout of gastric tuberculosis.

The circulation and reception of ideas have trajectories that are serpentine, but nonetheless logical if the expectations of go-betweens are taken into account. Without renegeing in the slightest on his political choices, which cannot be labelled simply as “Bakuninist”, Cafiero translated the works of Marx a reminder that translation is also an intellectual adaptation – thereby exposing the many ways of accessing “Marxist” ideas in the early twentieth century.

What can this trajectory – briefly summarised here – tell us about the seeming opposition between Marxism and anarchism supposedly characterising Italy? First, that it is not possible to reduce the history of struggles and the individuals fighting them to their sole ideological basis, however fractious the latter may be. Secondly, that the way in which men who went on to become prominent figures in a movement developed their ideas was through very diverse sources and re-readings, drawing from ideas and alternatives which were both substantial and differentiated. Lastly, that the Italians’ anarchist positions

30 James Guillaume, « Carlo Cafiero et Karl Marx, Deux lettres inédites », *La Vie ouvrière* (5 February 1912).

31 Enzo Santarelli, « L’anarchisme en Italie », *Le Mouvement social*, 83, (Apr.–Jun. 1973).



in the years 1870–1900 and their dedication to the cause could certainly lead to new research.

Such complexity also protects us against a linear reading and the notorious “enormous condescension of posterity,” whereby this period’s revolutionary buoyancy may be seen as a mere proto-socialism, both archaic and accidental, on the part of an Italian labour movement which allegedly then returned naturally to the safe road of political modernity through parliamentary ways.

## The IWMA – A Brief Chronology

### 1 Central Organization and International Congresses

28 September 1864	Foundation meeting, St Martin's Hall, London
5 November	Publication of the statutes of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), written by Karl Marx.
25–29 September 1865	London Conference
3–8 September 1866	1st Congress in Geneva
2–8 September 1867	2nd Congress in Lausanne
6–13 September 1868	3rd Congress in Brussels
21 to 25 September 1868	Congrès de la Ligue pour la paix in Bern. Bakunin quits the League and founds the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy
6–12 September 1869	4th Congress in Basel
1870	Debate on the financial management problem inside the IWMA
18 March–28 May 1871	Paris Commune
30 May 1871	<i>Address</i> of the General Council of the IWMA on the civil war in France, written by Marx.
17–23 September 1871	London Delegate Conference
2–7 September 1872	5th Congress in The Hague
1–6 September 1873	6th Congress (“Autonomist”), Geneva
7–13 September 1873	6th Congress (“Centralist”), Geneva
7–13 September 1874	7th Congress (“Autonomist”), Brussels
15 July 1876	Philadelphia Delegate Conference (“Centralist”)
26–30 October 1876	8th Congress (“Autonomist”), Bern
15 July 1876	Philadelphia Delegate Conference: Official dissolution of the IWMA (“Centralist”)
6–8 September 1877	9th and final Congress (“Autonomist”), Verviers

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\* This chronology has been elaborated thanks to the help of the authors of the present book. We warmly thank them.

## 2 National Chronologies

### *Great Britain*

- 1835: Foundation of the Association of All Classes of All Nations (Owenite)
- 1838–1858: Chartist movement
- 1840–1919: Communist Workers' Educational Society in London
- 1844–45: Democratic Friends of All Nations
- 1845–48: Fraternal Democrats
- 1854–56: The International Committee
- 1856–59: The International Association
- 1859–60: London strike of the building trades
- 1860: Formation of the London Trades' Council
- 1861–1878: Publication of *The Bee-Hive*, a weekly trade unionist journal which was adopted by the London Trades' Council, and was then the official journal of the London Working Men's Association.
- May–Nov. 1862: International exhibition in London. The London Trades' Council meets the French delegates, including the reception organised by the French exile Joseph Collett and his fellow O'Brienites.
- April 1864: Garibaldi's visit to Britain
- April 1864: Formation of the Reform Union in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester
- 28 September 1864: Foundation meeting, St Martin's Hall, London
- 5 November: Publication of the statutes of the IWMA, written by Karl Marx.
- 23 February 1865: Formal inauguration of the Reform League (for universal suffrage and electoral reform) at St Martin's Hall, London
- July 1865: General election. Liberal Victory (Lord Palmerston remains PM)
- 25–29 September 1865: London Conference
- 1865: Anglo-French celebration in 1865 of fifty years of peace between the two countries; the London and Paris IWMA sections objected to the English and French representatives attending it.
- March 1866: strike of the London Operative Tailors. Subsequent affiliation to the IWMA.
- 29 June and 23 July 1866: Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park demonstrations for reform
- 26 June 1866: Conservative ministry (Prime minister: Lord Derby; Chancellor of the Exchequer: Disraeli)
- Sept–Oct: Mass meetings in the provinces on the reform issue
- August 1867: Reform Act (extension of the franchise)
- Late 1867: Irish Fenian rising in Ireland, Canada and England (Manchester, Chester and Clerkenwell, London). Nov: execution of the Manchester Fenian martyrs
- Nov–Dec. 1868: General election (Liberal victory). Gladstone becomes PM.
- September 1869: Establishment of Labour Representation League

October 1869: Formation of Land and Labour League

August 1870: Workmen's Peace Committee formed

March 1871: Passage of the liberal Trade Union Bill and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, recognizing the status of unions, but failing to legalise peaceful picketing.

June 1871: following the publication of Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, endorsed by the General Council, trade union leader George Odger and Benjamin Lucraft resign from the Council.

Nov 1871: Sir Charles Dilke's "Cost of the Crown" speech, inaugurating a republican campaign.

### *France*

March-May 1848: Commission de gouvernement pour les travailleurs (Luxembourg Commission)

1861: Manifesto: "L'organisation des Travailleurs par les corporations nouvelles"

17 February 1864: "Manifeste des Soixante" (Manifesto of the Sixty)

January 1865: The Paris branch of the IWMA is established, rue des Gravilliers.

February 1867: Paris bronze-workers' strike; (with financial support of the IWMA).

March 1867: Paris tailors' strike. Financial support of the London tailors.

November 1867: Leaders of the Paris branch are prosecuted.

March 1868: The leaders of the Paris branch sentenced to fines are replaced by younger and more radical activists.

May 1868: The second group of leaders are prosecuted and sent to prison. The IWMA seems to be virtually dead in France.

June 1868: Individual members of the International play a prominent role in the Workingmen's Assembly of 1867, and they manage to regain an outstanding influence in the rapidly developing labour movement.

1869-Spring 1870: The IWMA expands rapidly in the provinces and seems to be a growing threat to the stability of the Imperial regime as a revolutionary collectivist agenda is adopted.

May 1870: Third trial of the Parisian leadership, who are once again imprisoned or forced to run away.

July 1870: Franco-Prussian War and First Siege of Paris. The members of the International are present, but largely unable to act on a collective basis due to the disorganization resulting from war.

September 1870: Fall of the Second Empire

18 March-28 May 1871: Paris Commune. Most members of the International actively support the communalist movement (32 out of 92 members of the Commune belong to the IWMA). After the Bloody Week ("Semaine sanglante"), they are mercilessly executed, transported, or forced into exile for a decade.

1872: The IWMA is outlawed by the Dufaure Law

10–25 March 1873: After the Toulouse trial, the IWMA is no longer active in France

### *German States*

23 May 1863: Foundation of Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein (General German Workers Association, ADAV) in Leipzig. No association to the IWMA.

April–June 1865: Leipzig typographers' strike

1865: Liebknecht developed and organized a labour organization which followed the rules and statutes of the IWMA in Germany (affiliation not allowed in Prussia).

1865: 66 illegal German sections of the IWMA in different towns (e.g. Solingen, Berlin, Magdeburg, Cologne) with very few members (Source: *Die Erste Internationale 1864–1870*. Teil 1, Moskau 1981, p. 387ff.).

1869: 250 individual members, 13 sections (*ibid.* p. 433).

1869: Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SDAP, Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany) founded by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel in Eisenach, Saxony. Saw themselves as belonging to the IWMA.

1870: Franco-Prussian War. Liebknecht and Bebel oppose the war, are arrested and charged with treason.

1875: Gotha conference. The ADAV and the SDAP merge to form *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands*, (SAPD).

### *Belgium*

1845–1848: Marx in Brussels (1846 Bureau de correspondance communiste – 1848 *Communist Manifesto*)

1842–1858: First Union in Brussels and Ghent

August 1865: "Le Peuple" association, first branch IWMA in Brussels

July 1868: First national congress.

Mars 1868: "Belgian massacres" in Seraing.

April 1868: Strikes in Charleroi

1868–1869: IWMA development in industrial areas.

December 1868: Second Belgian congress (after the international one)

1869- : Splits and decline

1871–1872: Strikes in Belgium (Verviers, Brussels, Centre, Ghent, ...) for the ten hour day, before and after Newcastle (metal workers)

December 1872: 10th national congress for the "Autonomists"

1868–1874: 10 national Belgian congresses

7–13 September 1874: 7th International congress ("Autonomist") in Brussels. De Paep's report on the public services in the new society.

8 September 1877: 9th and final international Congress ("Autonomist") in Verviers

9–16 sept 1877: International socialist congress in Ghent

1882: The Brussels IWMA section holds its last meeting.

### *Switzerland*

- 1864: IWMA branch founded in Geneva (first branch of the IWMA on the continent), led by Johann-Philipp Becker.
- Autumn 1865: New IWMA centre in La Chaux-de-Fonds, animated by Pierre Coullery. Expansion of the IWMA to the little industrial towns of Bern and Neuchâtel. Creation of the newspapers *Journal de l'Association internationale des travailleurs* and *La Voix de l'Avenir*.
- Early 1866: First sections of the IWMA in Zurich and Basel and Saint-Imier.
- 1866: At the instigation of the London's central committee, Becker organizes a central committee of the German-speaking section. Creation of the newspaper *Der Vorbote*
- 1868: The Union of Deutsche Arbeiterbildungsvereine (German workers' educational associations) joins the IWMA.
- 1868: Strike of the construction workers in Geneva. Strikers massively join the IWMA, that helps to organize the financial support of the strike.
- 1869: Creation of the Romandy federation of the IWMA (along with the foundation of the newspaper *L'Egalité*)
- 1869: Development of Bakunin's ideas in the Jura branch.
- Mars 1870: Organization of a social democrat Party for the cities of Zurich, Basel, Berne, Winterthur. It brings together all the sections of the Alemannic Switzerland's IWMA (newspaper: *Tagwacht*)
- 1870: 30 sections in Geneva, 2000 members
- 1870–1871: Split of the Romandy federation between the Jura Federation and Romandy federation.
- 1870–1871: Franco-Prussian War and Paris Commune. Organization of a secret committee to help the Paris Commune; after their defeat, the Communards are welcomed. Most join the Jura federation
- 1871- : In Alemannic Switzerland, decline of the IWMA, because of the public opinion and the intervention of authorities. The IWMA plays no part in this place after 1873.
- 1875: Decline of the Genevan sections.
- 1880: End of the Jura federation.

### *Italy*

- 31 January 1869: First Italian section of the IWMA, Naples.
- 1872: First national Congress in Rimini
- 1873: National Congress in Bologna
- 1876: half-clandestine gathering in Florence Tosi
- 1877: Congress of the reformist strand of Italian Internationalism in Milan. Foundation of the Federation of Upper Italy.

1878: Conference in Pisa

1880: The IWMA is effectively made illegal. Conference in Chiasso (at the Swiss border)

### *Spain*

September 1868: "September Revolution" which inaugurated the "Sexenio Democrático"

21/12/1869: Foundation of the first section of the IWMA in Madrid by Fanelli.

June 1870: Barcelona (First Congress)

1871: Batlló factory strike

1871–1872: Repression against the Spanish Regional Federation (*Federación Regional Española*, FRE).

June 1871: Temporary exile of the FRE Federal Council's to Lisbon

September 1871: Valencia (Secret conference)

April 1872: Zaragoza (2nd Congress)

December 1872-January 1873: Cordoba (3rd Congress)

February 1873: Proclamation of the First Republic

May 1873: Toledo (Congress organized by the *Nueva Federación Madrileña* – "centralist")

July 1873- January 1874: Cartagena revolution (in the framework of the cantonalist revolution)

January 1874–1881: Prohibition of the FRE-AIT

June 1874: Madrid (4th Congress – "autonomist")

February 1881: Barcelona (last congress of the FRE)

September 1881: Barcelona (Constitutive Congress of the FRTE- Worker's Federation of the Spanish Region)

### *United States of America*

December 1869: After several fruitless attempts, Section 1 (German) is established in New York City

June-July 1870: Section 2 (French) and Section 3 (Czech) are established in New York City.

19 November 1870: Anti-war meeting organized jointly by the French and German Internationals in New York City

End of December 1870: The central committee of the IWMA for North America is created; a few days later its representatives are present to welcome the Fenians released from British prisons upon their arrival at the port of New York.

May 1871: 6 US sections are active

13 September: Mass demonstration of the New York workers in favour of the 8 hour day; the Internationals receive a hearty welcome from the trade union leaders.

19 November: Split of the central committee into two rival federal councils ("centralists" v. "autonomists")

17 December 1871: 5 000 to 10 000 demonstrators march in New York City following the initiative of the autonomists and the French branches to honour both the Paris Commune and the victims of the Cuban war.

December 1871: 35 US sections are active.

Spring 1872: The so-called “centralists” refuse any form of political involvement to concentrate on trade-union activities, whereas the so-called “autonomists”, favourable to the creation of a Labor Party decide to support Virginia Woodhull’s decision to run for the Presidency of the USA.

April 1872: 50 sections are officially registered in 18 cities, but the total membership (up to 4 000 members altogether) is already declining fast

May 1872: The London General Council decides to suspend Section 12 (“autonomist”)

6–8 July 1872: centralist congress in New York City; 22 sections are represented

9–10 July: Autonomist Congress in Philadelphia; 13 sections are represented (10 French sections have chosen to stay away from both congresses)

2–7 September 1872: Two rival US delegations at the Hague Congress; the decision is voted to transfer the General Council to the USA

Spring 1873: The autonomists are left in bad shape after the failure of the Woodhull campaign

Fall 1873: Both the “centralists” and what is left of the “autonomists” help organize the massive Movement of the unemployed in the main Eastern cities

13 January 1874: Tompkins Square riot in New York City; after several weeks of “Red Scare”, the IWMA is virtually extinct.

July 1876: The 10 delegates (all centralists) attending the Philadelphia conference vote the official dissolution of the IWMA. This is immediately followed by the decision to create the Workingmen’s Party of the United States.

### *Poland*

1865: Establishment of the Polish section of the IWMA in London

1871: Probable founding of IWMA sections in Cracow and Posen

1872: Reorganisation and the new start of the Polish section of the IWMA in London (ended in 1876)

### *Uruguay*

1872: Establishment of the Uruguayan section of the International in Montevideo.

27 June 1875. Foundation of the *Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay*, also called the Montevidean Federation.

### *Argentina*

February 1872: Foundation of the *Section Française de l’Association Internationale de Travailleurs*

1873: Three sections of the International in Buenos Aires: the French, Spanish, and Italian sections.



*México*

1876: The Mexican organization “La Social” asks to be recognised as a IWMA section at the 8th Congress (“Autonomist”) in Bern (26–30 October 1876). It will be approved after the Congress (the letter arrives too late).

*Australia*

1872: W.E. Harcourt, a delegate from the Democratic Association, Victoria, attended General Council meetings of the IWMA in London. Victoria was thus represented, even if other colonies in Australia were not.

## Membership

Membership of the International Working men's Association (IWMA) is a tricky issue. One reason for this is that most members did not join as individuals, but as members of trade unions, associations, political parties and other forms of workers' organisations. Marcello Musto has summarised the available data in a useful table, from the 1964 conference papers and other monographs.<sup>1</sup> In the table below, some of the estimates provided by Musto have been modified, according to the data given by the contributors to the book. Membership is estimated at its national peak for each country. One may argue that by 1871–2, the IWMA numbered more than 150,000 members – far below the estimates of its main enemies, whose figures ranged from 800,000 to 2.5 million.<sup>2</sup>

Country	Peak year	Membership
Great Britain	1867	50,000
Switzerland	1870	6,000
France	1871	More than 30,000
Belgium	1869	Not more than 10,000
USA		4,000
Germany	1870	11,000 (including the members of the Social Democratic Workers Party; the IWMA itself did not exceed a few thousand members)
Spain	1872	10,000 (More than 40,000 in 1873 according to Max Nettlau) <sup>a</sup>
Italy	1874	About 32,500
Netherlands	1872	Less than 1,000
Denmark	1872	A couple of thousands
Portugal	1872	Less than 1,000
Ireland	1872	Less than 1,000

1 Marcello Musto, *Workers Unite! The International 150 Years Later*, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 68.

2 « France 433 875 ; Angleterre (environ) 80 000 ; Allemagne (environ) 150 000 ; Hongrie et Autriche (environ) 100 000 ; Suisse 45 226 ; Espagne 2718. » (A. Duplessis, « Les mystères de l'Internationale », *Le Figaro*, Paris, n° 163, 18 June 1870. S. 1, Sp. 6, bis S. 2, Sp. 2. – *Troisième Procès de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs à Paris*. Paris 1870, p. 134 et 137).

Country	Peak year	Membership
Austria-Hungary	1872	A couple of thousands
Argentina	1873	250 in 1873
Uruguay	1875	(?) 2,000 workers attended the foundational meeting of 1875.
Mexico	1876	(?) 8000 workers in the <i>Gran Circulo de Obreros</i> which was not strictly an IWMA section (La Social was admitted as so, with probably less than a hundred members).

- a Max Nettlau, *La première internationale en Espagne, (1868–1888)*, révision des textes, traductions, introduction, notes appendices, tableaux et cartes aux soins de Renée Lamberet, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, 1969. Josep Termes, *Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España, La Primera Internacional (1864–1881)*, Barcelona, Critica 1977 (1965).

# Index of Names

- Aleksandr II, Tsar 199  
Alerini, Charles 242  
Allan, William 300  
Amadeo I, or Amadeo of Savoy 221, 228, 241  
Applegarth, Robert 48, 51, 60, 79, 80, 203,  
307, 334, 347  
Arlès-Dufour 28  
Arnould, Victor 148  
Aubert, (?) 262, 268  
Aubert, Jean 181  
Aubry, Emile 62
- Baccheli, Riccardo 367  
Bakhmetev, P.A. 198, 201  
Bakunin, Michail (Michel, Mikhail, Mikhail)  
201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 210, 211,  
212, 213, 214, 216, 219, 223, 227, 228, 234,  
235, 238, 257, 263, 267, 273, 274, 275, 288,  
309, 311, 314, 332, 340, 341, 342, 348, 355,  
356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 363, 366,  
367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 376, 379  
Balaguer, Víctor 227, 232  
Balaszewicz, Julian Aleksander 186, 187  
Ballaguy, Jean-Marie 31  
Bara, Jules 149  
Barbès, Armand 25, 31  
Barbet, Virginie 11, 345, 347, 348, 349  
Bartenev, Viktor 195, 202, 203, 206  
Barteneva, Yekaterina 202, 206  
Bastiat, Frédéric 28  
Batlló Brothers 227, 228, 229, 232  
Bauer, Henrich 25, 30, 34  
Bax, Ernest Belfort 334, 342  
Bebel, August 2, 112, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136,  
137, 139, 141, 143, 351, 382  
Becker, Johann Philipp 10, 131, 132, 133, 134,  
135, 137, 138, 140, 165, 166, 167, 172, 173,  
174, 175, 184, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204,  
205, 383  
Beecher, Henry Ward 287  
Beesly, Edward Spencer 7, 13, 332, 333, 334,  
335, 336, 337, 338, 341, 342  
Benoit, Joseph 34, 118  
Berdyaev, Nikolai 193, 206
- Berjeau, Jean 31  
Bernard, Martin 25  
Bernard, Pierre 258  
Bernstein, Samuel 108, 270, 281, 283  
Besson, Alexandre 93, 182  
Bibal, Auguste 181  
Bignami, Enrico 215, 219, 372  
Blanc, Louis 31, 34, 321, 322  
Blanqui, Auguste 25, 168, 195, 196, 267  
Blood, James 346  
Bobczyński, Konstanty 185, 187, 188  
Bongard, Edouard 195, 206  
Boon, Martin 70  
Bourdon, Antoine 324, 344  
Bové, Climent/Clemente 229, 230, 231, 235  
Brismée, Désiré 101, 102, 153, 159, 166  
Brousse, Paul 242  
Buonarroti, Filippo Michele 23, 108, 332  
Bürkli, Karl 166  
Burns, John 336  
Burns, Lizzy/Lydia 343
- Cabet, Etienne 23, 25, 267, 271, 321, 322  
Cafiero, Carlo 7, 13, 214, 366, 367, 368, 369,  
370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 376, 377  
Camélinat, Zéphirin 319, 330, 331  
Camet, Camille 242  
Card, Joseph, *see* Cwierczakiewicz-Card,  
Józef 184, 186, 189  
Carducci, Giosuè 216  
Carlyle, Thomas 336  
Carol I<sup>er</sup> 119  
Cederbaum *see* Tsederbaum 194, 198  
Cerdà, Ildefons 228  
Chardon, Jean-Baptiste 112  
Chemalé, Félix 331  
Chemalé, François 99  
Chernyshevsky, N.G. 193, 194, 197, 204  
Cipriani, Amilicare 211  
Clafin, Tennessee Celeste 284  
Clavé, Josep A. 233, 235  
Cluseret, Gustave 111, 119, 248  
Cobden, Richard 28  
Coenen, Philippe 149

- Cohadon, Antoine 181  
 Cohn, James 101, 159  
 Colins (de), Jean-Guillaume 145, 157  
 Collett, Joseph 380  
 Combault 172  
 Comte, Auguste 145, 332, 333, 334, 336, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342  
 Congreve, Richard 333, 337  
 Cooke, Jay 276  
 Costa, Andrea 207, 212, 216, 219, 375, 377  
 Coudroy, Charles 151, 153, 156  
 Coullery, Pierre 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 179, 358, 383  
 Coulon, Nicolas 101, 147, 153  
 Coulson, Edwin 300  
 Courbet, Gustave 234  
 Coussat, Démophile 115  
 Covelli, Emilio 212, 213, 214, 218, 369  
 Cremer, William Randal 34, 48, 56, 59, 60, 74, 80, 182, 300, 334  
 Crispi, Francisco 213  
 Crocco, Carmine 375  
 Croisier, Pierre 153  
 Crompton, Henry 334  
 Ćwierczakiewicz-Card, Józef 184, 186, 189  
 Czartoryski, Adam Jerzy 182  
 Czartoryski, Władysław 182  
 Czerniecki, Ludwik 200
- Dąbrowski, Jarosław 189  
 Dąbrowski, Teofil 189  
 Dandois, Bernard 102, 155, 161  
 Darwin, Charles 305  
 Dave, Victor 158  
 De Bavay 152  
 De la Barra, Edouardo 119  
 De Morgan, John 294, 295  
 De Paepe, César 34, 102, 144, 146, 147, 150, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 162, 163, 382  
 Debock, Louis 318, 319, 325, 330, 331  
 Deslalle, Bonami 153  
 Denis, Pierre 82  
 Derby, Lord 380  
 Derooin, Jeanne 32  
 Dilke, Charles 381  
 Disraeli, Benjamin 380  
 Dmitrieff, Elisabeth. *see* Tomanovskaya 206, 345, 349, 350, 354
- Dombrowski, Jarosław 119  
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor 195, 201  
 Douglass, Frederick 274  
 Drury, Victor 278  
 Duchêne, Georges 318, 324  
 Dührung, Eugen 362  
 Dültgen, Carl Friedrich 137  
 Dupleix, François (ou Jean-Baptiste) 167, 168  
 Dupont, Eugène 68, 83, 87, 124, 272
- Eccarius, Johann Georg 35, 49, 69, 70, 71, 87, 100, 101, 132, 135, 182, 286  
 Elpidin, M.K. 200  
 Engels, Friedrich 3, 26, 29, 35, 36, 39, 43, 46, 49, 57, 71, 75, 85, 88, 100, 129, 132, 134, 135, 140, 181, 183, 184, 185, 191, 196, 205, 213, 214, 238, 239, 241, 242, 263, 284, 286, 288, 299, 302, 303, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 315, 336, 339, 340, 341, 343, 370, 371, 372, 376, 402  
 Esselens, Prosper 153, 156  
 Esteve, Ramon 246  
 Eyre, Governor Edward John 294
- Fabbri, Luigi 377  
 Falconnet 167  
 Fanelli, Giuseppe 210, 213, 216, 223, 252, 360, 369, 371, 384  
 Farga i Pellicer, Rafael 75  
 Fauvety, Charles 116, 318  
 Favre, Jules 107, 108, 112, 114, 122  
 Fazy, James 168  
 Ferrari, Giuseppe 210  
 Ferré, Théophile 115, 224  
 Figner, Vera 196  
 Flaesch, Émile 261, 263  
 Flahaut, Aimé 149  
 Flocon, Ferdinand 196  
 Flores Magón, Jesús 256  
 Flores Magón, Ricardo 256  
 Flores Magón, Henrique 256  
 Fluche, Pierre 144, 155, 158, 159, 163  
 Fontaine, Léon 144, 147, 156, 162, 166  
 Fourier, Charles 23, 162, 255, 267, 321, 322  
 Fournaise, Joseph 331  
 Fox, Peter André 43, 182, 184, 289  
 Franchetti, Leopoldo 375

- Fränkel, Leo 111  
 Fribourg, Ernest-Edouard 73, 112, 316, 321,  
 345, 317, 331  
 Friscia, Saverio 369  
  
 Gambuzzi, Carlo 369  
 Galcerán, Francisco C. 257, 263  
 García, Mariano 255  
 Garibaldi, Giuseppe 33, 43, 57, 113, 195, 208,  
 212, 213, 267, 332, 369, 380  
 Gladstone, William Ewart 43, 295, 380  
 Gnocchi-Viani, Osvaldo 219  
 Goegg, Marie 345  
 Gompers, Samuel 250, 276, 278, 281, 285,  
 286, 290, 291, 293  
 Graglia, François 171, 172  
 Grant, Ulysses 248  
 Gras, Domingo 246  
 Guesde, Jules 375  
 Guillaume, James 34, 99, 103, 161, 165, 178,  
 256, 258, 259, 263, 301, 355, 359, 360, 361,  
 363, 366, 367, 371, 372, 373, 375, 376, 377  
  
 Hales, John 43, 45, 51, 70  
 Harcourt, W.E. 386  
 Harney, George Julian 26, 27, 28, 29, 34,  
 38, 181  
 Harris, George E. 35, 70  
 Héligon, Jean-Pierre 331  
 Herzen, Aleksandr 197, 198, 199, 200, 201,  
 369  
 Hins, Eugène 80, 101, 144, 150, 151, 153, 155,  
 156, 157, 163, 344  
 Hobson, John 341  
 Holtorp, Jan Emil 185, 190  
 Holyoake, George Jacob 24, 57, 286  
 Howell, George 35, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 56, 292,  
 300, 333, 334  
 Hudson, Damián 266  
 Hughes, Thomas 49  
 Hyndman, H.M. 334, 368  
  
 Iglesias, Bernardo 227, 228, 229, 232, 233, 234  
 Ingenieros or Ingegnieros, José 262, 268, 269  
  
 Jaclard, Anna 350  
 Jaclard, Charles-Victor 195, 206  
 Janson, Paul 148, 149  
  
 Johannard, Jules 80, 87  
 Jones, Ernest 26, 29, 31, 32, 181  
 Juanes, A. 257, 262, 263  
 Juin, Jean, alias Jean Michelot 25  
 Julian the Apostate, Emperor 197  
 Jung, Hermann 60, 69, 83, 87, 182, 202, 203,  
 204, 205  
  
 Karakozov, Dmitry 194  
 Kautsky, Karl 74, 183, 340  
 Korsini (Corsini), Natalia 197, 206  
 Korvin-Krukovskaya, Anna 195, 206  
 Kossuth, Lajos 332, 340  
 Kostecki, Jan Kanty 189  
 Kovalevskaya (ou Kowalewski), Sofia 195,  
 350  
 Koziell-Poklewski, Mikołaj 189  
 Kravchinsky, Sergei ("Stepniak") 217  
 Kropotkin, Peter 202  
 Krupskaya, Nadezhda 196  
 Krupsky, Konstantin 195, 196, 206  
 Kryński, Jan 185, 188, 190  
 Kugelman, Ludwig 129, 308, 315  
 Kwiatkowska, Antonia 199, 202  
  
 Labiola, Antonio 376  
 Lafargue, Laura 371  
 Lafargue, Paul 116, 225, 263, 370  
 Lakowsky 138, 139  
 Langlois, Amédée 104  
 Laplanche, Georges 331  
 Lassalle, Ferdinand 129  
 Latraque, Jean 262  
 Laurrel, Carl Malcom Ferdinand 276  
 Lavrov, Peter 111  
 Law, Harriet 343  
 Le Lubez, Victor 31, 35, 147, 168, 182, 184  
 Lécluse, Charles 97  
 Ledru-Rollin, Alexandre 31  
 Lefort, H. 167  
 Lefrançais, Gustave 360  
 Le Moussu, Benjamin 262  
 Léo, André 11, 345, 349, 350  
 Lessner, Friedrich 34, 35, 71, 101  
 Levashova, Olga 200, 202, 206  
 Lichtheim, George 182  
 Liebknecht, Karl 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137,  
 139, 140, 141, 143, 382

- Liebknecht, Wilhelm 132, 133, 134, 135, 136,  
 137, 139, 140, 141, 143, 382  
 Limousin, Antoine 316  
 Limousin, Charles 316, 317, 324, 331  
 Lostau, Baldomero 221, 223, 225, 231, 233  
 Lovett, William 24, 25, 26  
 Lucraft, Benjamin 70, 83, 103, 381  
  
 Maetens, Charles 150  
 Maetens, Philippe 149  
 Mairet, Joseph 318  
 Mairet, Nicolas 318  
 Malatesta, Errico 207, 211, 212, 213, 214, 216,  
 217, 218, 362, 367, 369, 374, 376  
 Malon, Benoît 34, 62, 168, 219, 317, 351, 360,  
 363, 376  
 Maltman Barry, Michael 286, 288, 291  
 Marchand, Claude François 166  
 Marković, Svetozar 195, 206  
 Marsal Anglora, Antoni 246  
 Martin, Sella 304  
 Martínez, Saturnino 247  
 Martov, *see* Tsederbaum  
 Marx, Karl 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 137, 140,  
 144, 155, 161, 183, 191, 196, 204, 205, 238,  
 261, 262, 264, 267, 283, 284, 286, 288,  
 289, 290, 291, 293, 294, 295, 299, 300,  
 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308,  
 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 319,  
 328, 330, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338,  
 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 347, 349,  
 351, 359, 360, 366, 367, 368, 370, 371, 372,  
 376, 377, 379, 380, 381, 382  
 Mata Rivera, Juan de 255, 256, 258  
 Mazzini, Giuseppe 31, 34, 113, 147, 190, 208,  
 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 216, 267, 283, 332,  
 339, 340, 348, 369, 370, 373  
 McGrath, Philip 29  
 Megy, Edmond 112  
 Miall, Arthur 49  
 Michel, André 222  
 Mill, John Stuart 338  
 Milner, George 70  
 Moll, Joseph 25, 30, 34  
 Montalvo, Juan 254  
 Mora, Francisco 252  
 Mottershead, Thomas 43, 70  
 Mroczkowski, Walerian 186  
 Müller, Moritz 136  
 Munch 172  
  
 Murat, André-Pierre 181  
 Murat, François 101, 102, 331  
  
 Napoleon Bonaparte 342  
 Napoleon III 30, 31, 34, 90, 299, 306, 326  
 Nechaev, Sergei 200, 201, 202, 203,  
 204, 205  
 Njetoff, *see* Bartenev  
 Nicotera, Giovanni 231, 375  
 Nieass, John 182  
 Nodot, Edmond 222  
 Nüsperli 168  
  
 O'Brien, James Bronterre 23, 285  
 Obolenskaya, Zoya 199, 200  
 Oborski, Ludwik 25, 31, 32, 35, 185, 187, 188,  
 190, 191  
 Odger, George 35, 44, 46, 48, 51, 56, 59, 60,  
 299, 334, 381  
 Ogaryov, Nikolai 197, 198, 200, 201  
 Orsini, Felice 30  
 Owen, James 23, 47, 288, 321, 322  
 Owen, Robert 74  
  
 Paine, Thomas 26, 27, 342  
 Palladino, Carmelo 369  
 Palmerston, Lord 380  
 Paz, Joseph 147, 162  
 Pellerin, Jan 101, 147, 153  
 Pelletier, Claude 31  
 Perovskaya, Sofia 196  
 Perrachon, Joseph-Étienne 181  
 Phillipps, Wendell 272  
 Pi y Margall, Francisco/ Francesc 238, 241,  
 242, 246  
 Pierron, Evariste 159  
 Pisacane, Carlo 210, 216, 217, 369, 374  
 Pisarev, Dmitry 196  
 Plekhanov, Georgi 193, 196, 204  
 Potocki, Albert *see* Bałaszewicz, Julian  
 Aleksander 186, 187  
 Potter, George 34, 48, 49, 50, 58  
 Pourille, Stanislas (dit Blanchet) 267  
 Proudhon, Pierre Joseph 7, 58, 98, 99, 104,  
 111, 144, 145, 157, 183, 184, 186, 190, 196,  
 210, 234, 241, 255, 267, 313, 314, 318, 319,  
 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328,  
 329, 330, 331, 363  
 Pulitzer, Joseph 307  
 Pyat, Felix 31, 181

- Reclus, Eliséé 356, 363  
 Richard, Albert 60, 62, 166, 167, 348  
 Richard, Marie 348  
 Riley, William Harrison 43, 287, 290, 295  
 Rivoli, Duke of 115  
 Rizal, José 247  
 Robert, Eugène 124  
 Robin, Paul 39, 41, 42, 150, 153, 156, 344  
 Rochebrune, François de 189  
 Rhodakanaty, Plotino 255, 256  
 Roy, Joseph 376  
 Royannez, Adolphe 221  
 Rożałowski, Włodzimierz 185, 188  
 Rozwadowski, Józef 185, 189, 191  
 Rybczyński, Franciszek 185, 190
- Sagasta, Práxedes M. 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 231  
 Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de 23, 335  
 Salvochea, Fermin 241  
 Schapper, Karl 25, 27, 30, 31, 35, 181  
 Scheppler 101  
 Schweitzer, Johann Baptist von 139  
 Schwitzguébel, Adhémar 361, 362, 365  
 Sentiñón, Gaspar 227, 228  
 Serebrennikov, Vladimir 204  
 Serno-Solovyovich ("Serno"), Aleksandr 198, 199, 202  
 Serno-Solovyovich, Nikolai 198, 199, 202  
 Serrailier (or Séraillier), Auguste 31, 69, 70, 116  
 Seward, William H. 293  
 Shishkin, Mikhail 197, 198  
 Sonnino, Sidney 375  
 Sorge, Friedrich Adolph 35, 185, 281, 283, 293  
 Splingard, Pierre 148  
 Splingard, Roch 153  
 Steens, Eugène 101  
 Strasser, Adolph 250, 276  
 Sylvis, William 270
- Talandier, Alfred 30, 31, 35, 58  
 Tartaret, Eugène 101  
 Taviani, Paolo 367  
 Taviani, Vittorio 367  
 Testut, Oscar 68, 72, 99, 101, 151, 164, 348
- Theisz, Albert 101, 109  
 Tkachyov, Pyotr 196  
 Tolain, Henri 33, 34, 57, 90, 98, 101, 102, 167, 181, 316, 317, 318, 319, 327, 331  
 Tomanovskaya, Yelizaveta (*see* Dmitrieff E.) 206  
 Tristan, Flora 24  
 Trusov, Anton 193, 195, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 206  
 Tsederbaum (Cederbaum), Julius 194, 198
- Urquhart, David 288  
 Utin, Isaak 195  
 Utin, Nikolai 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206
- Vaillant, Edouard 109  
 Vanden Berghe, Frans 149, 150  
 Vandenhouten, Alphonse 150, 156  
 Vanderbilt, Cornelius 347  
 Varlin, Eugène 34, 60, 62, 94, 98, 109, 119, 171, 172, 173, 316, 317, 324, 327, 331, 344  
 Vasbenter, Louis 58, 318  
 Vésinier, Pierre 148, 167, 168, 184, 185  
 Verkhovensky, Pyotr, *see* Nechaev 201  
 Viard, Jules 318  
 Villanueva, Santiago 255  
 Villari, Pasquale 375  
 Vuillermoz, Romuald 120
- Walton, Alfred 35  
 Webb, Sidney and Beatrice 46, 61, 78, 334  
 Weber, Valentin 166  
 Werecki, Józef Michał 185  
 Weston, John 35, 184, 286, 346  
 Wilmart, Raymond 263, 264, 265, 266, 268  
 Whitman, Walt 291, 295  
 Woodhull, Victoria 11, 274, 275, 284, 287, 289, 290, 291, 293, 307, 345, 346, 347, 349, 350, 353, 385  
 Wróblewski, Walery 185, 186, 188, 189, 191
- Żabicki, Antoni 87, 185, 188, 190  
 Zalacosta, Francisco 256, 258  
 Zagórski, Jan 186  
 Zasulich, Vera 196, 201  
 Zhukovsky, Nikolai 199, 200, 228



# Index of Places

- Alcoy 223, 242, 243  
Algeria 119, 340  
Alsace (Alsace-Lorraine) 109, 141, 310, 362  
Andalusia 215, 240, 242  
Antwerp 82, 150, 155, 159, 362  
Apulia 216  
Argentina 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 385, 388  
Aubin 176  
Australia 31, 263, 386  
Austria (Austria-Hungary) 1, 13, 22, 111, 112, 183, 189, 388  
  
Baden 166, 187  
Ballarat (Australia) 31  
Barcelona (Barcelone) 2, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 268, 362, 384, 388  
Basel (Basle) 63, 67, 68, 79, 80, 103, 140, 165, 175, 179, 180, 202, 203, 227, 270, 271, 303, 379, 383  
Batlló 227, 228, 229, 232, 284  
Beaucourt 169  
Belarus 199  
Belgium 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 22, 23, 24, 29, 35, 59, 76, 78, 87, 99, 111, 112, 113, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 159, 160, 163, 166, 188, 201, 301, 339, 362, 363, 364, 382, 387  
Berlin 3, 46, 60, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 171, 205, 238, 247, 283, 301, 305, 308, 309, 311, 315, 340, 343, 347, 362, 382  
Bern (Berne) 155, 165, 179, 201, 202, 256, 258, 259, 345, 348, 356, 379, 383, 386  
Birmingham 33, 58, 73  
Bohemia 1, 284, 289  
Bologna 209, 215, 216, 373, 374, 383  
Bordeaux 79, 111, 112, 263  
Borinage basin 151  
Bosnia 212, 217  
Boston (Massachusetts) 32, 277  
Bourgogne 317  
Brazil 122  
Bruges 149, 150  
Brussels (Bruxelles) 29, 31, 99, 100, 101, 103, 141, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 166, 167, 168, 211, 246, 303, 308, 309, 364, 379, 382  
Budapest 112, 116  
Buenos Aires 223, 253, 254, 255, 257, 258, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 266, 267, 268, 269, 385  
  
Cadiz 242  
Canada 304, 380  
Carouge (Geneva Canton) 170, 199, 202  
Cartagena 239, 240, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 251, 384  
Castile 242  
Catalonia 105, 215, 224, 226, 230, 231, 233, 234, 236, 239, 242, 243  
Cavite 246, 247  
Central basin 145, 150, 157, 158, 159  
Centre 161, 188, 317  
Ceresio 209  
Champagne-Ardenne 317  
Charleroi 143, 145, 147, 148, 149, 150, 153, 154, 155, 159, 382  
Chazelles-sur-Lyon 176  
Chemnitz 137  
Chiasso 209, 219, 383  
Chicago (Illinois) 32, 121, 277, 280, 281, 309  
Chile 112, 119, 253  
China 335  
Cincinnati (Ohio) 32, 277  
Claye-Souilly 316  
Clerkenwell (London) 44, 380  
Cologne 382  
Columbus (Ohio, USA) 275  
Cordoba (Spain) 262, 384  
Córdoba (Argentina) 240  
Cork 13, 43, 293, 294  
Courtelary 179, 365  
Cracow 24, 185, 186, 385  
Cuba 9, 13, 222, 238, 239, 245, 247, 248, 250, 251  
Czechs 26, 340  
  
Denmark 13, 104, 387

- Ecuador 253, 254  
 Egypt 212, 220, 362, 364  
 Eisenach 139, 271, 382  
 El Ferrol 246  
 Elbeuf 176  
 Emilia Romagna 209, 373  
 England 10, 23, 26, 33, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46,  
 47, 51, 54, 55, 58, 62, 64, 71, 74, 76, 85,  
 97, 100, 112, 134, 168, 169, 182, 185, 186,  
 187, 188, 189, 226, 283, 285, 288, 334, 335,  
 336, 344, 364, 380  
 Entre Ríos (Argentina) 265  
 Essen 138, 139  
 Europe 5, 7, 8, 12, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 36, 45, 46,  
 60, 67, 68, 70, 72, 77, 80, 82, 89, 90, 121,  
 123, 131, 138, 139, 140, 141, 151, 152, 160,  
 163, 181, 183, 189, 191, 194, 195, 198, 204,  
 208, 243, 253, 265, 268, 271, 273, 274, 277,  
 279, 283, 301, 303, 304, 308, 309, 310, 339,  
 340, 358  
 Faucigny 171, 178  
 Fayt 10, 156  
 Flanders 150, 158  
 Florence (Florence-Tosi) 209, 215, 217, 283,  
 373  
 Florida 250  
 Fourmies 150  
 Frameries 152, 154  
 France 1, 2, 7, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29,  
 33, 34, 35, 43, 54, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61,  
 62, 63, 64, 69, 76, 79, 87, 90, 92, 93, 94,  
 96, 97, 99, 102, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 116,  
 118, 119, 130, 132, 137, 150, 158, 163, 165,  
 166, 168, 169, 171, 176, 182, 185, 186, 187,  
 188, 189, 194, 196, 207, 211, 233, 261, 267,  
 271, 285, 286, 299, 302, 303, 308, 309,  
 310, 311, 312, 313, 315, 317, 318, 327, 333,  
 335, 336, 337, 344, 349, 361, 363, 364,  
 379, 381, 382, 387  
 Fribourg 73, 112, 166, 316, 317, 321, 331, 345  
 Galicia (Austrian) 187  
 Geneva (Genève) 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 83, 90,  
 99, 100, 105, 112, 131, 138, 139, 155, 166,  
 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 175, 176, 178,  
 179, 184, 186, 193, 195, 196, 198, 199, 200,  
 201, 202, 203, 204, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226,  
 236, 254, 257, 259, 301, 302, 303, 307, 315,  
 316, 317, 319, 327, 343, 345, 349, 350, 355,  
 356, 357, 358, 359, 361, 362, 364, 365, 371,  
 373, 375, 379, 383  
 Germany 1, 2, 7, 12, 23, 26, 29, 59, 60, 73, 76,  
 78, 87, 99, 111, 112, 121, 130, 131, 132, 133,  
 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 171, 308,  
 309, 310, 364, 382, 387  
 Ghent 145, 146, 155, 156, 159, 219, 382  
 Gibraltar 335, 337  
 Gotha 136, 382  
 Gravilliers street, Paris 313, 319, 320, 321, 322,  
 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 381  
 Great 2, 27, 28, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 52, 111,  
 113, 118, 130, 145, 282, 292, 309, 380, 387  
 Grütli 167  
 Guadeloupe 283  
 Hague, The / The Hague 6, 8, 13, 75, 104, 132,  
 154, 157, 158, 205, 206, 213, 222, 223, 224,  
 241, 251, 256, 263, 270, 275, 276, 286, 288,  
 289, 303, 305, 345, 360, 361, 362, 364,  
 366, 372, 379, 385  
 Hainaut 146, 148, 149, 150, 163  
 Hamburg 60, 167, 362  
 Hanover 307  
 Havana (La Havana) 238, 245, 248, 250, 253  
 Helvetia 166, 167  
 Hungary 1, 13, 111, 112, 195, 388  
 India 100, 335, 337, 340  
 Ireland 13, 26, 27, 41, 43, 45, 111, 119, 293, 294,  
 309, 310, 380, 387  
 Italy (Kingdom of) 1, 7, 12, 76, 87, 99, 111,  
 113, 141, 207, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214,  
 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 248, 260, 282,  
 360, 362, 363, 364, 366, 367, 368, 369,  
 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377,  
 383, 387  
 Japan 335  
 Jura 7, 51, 91, 95, 96, 105, 106, 165, 167, 177,  
 179, 255, 256, 258, 264, 265, 355, 358,  
 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 383  
 Kansas 295  
 Kingdom of Naples 216, 217  
 La Baronata 213  
 La Barronata 373

- La Chaux-de-Fonds 42, 104, 105, 165, 167, 168,  
 169, 170, 178, 179, 202, 356, 362  
 Lancashire 230  
 Latin America (Hispanic America) 2, 5, 13,  
 111, 112, 113, 245, 247, 253, 254, 255, 262  
 Lausanne 79, 99, 111, 147, 156, 186, 303, 304,  
 330, 344, 356, 379  
 Lazio 209, 373  
 Le Creusot 112  
 Le Locle 105, 179, 355, 358, 362  
 Leeds 24  
 Leipzig 77, 132, 133, 143, 362, 382  
 Levant 242  
 Liguria 209, 373  
 Limoges 58, 59  
 Lisbon 222, 223, 362, 384  
 Lithuania 188  
 Locarno 371  
 Lodi 372  
 London 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35,  
 36, 39, 40, 44, 46, 48, 50, 51, 54, 56, 57,  
 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72,  
 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 87,  
 89, 90, 92, 93, 95, 99, 100, 101, 109, 110,  
 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 118, 121, 124, 126, 130,  
 131, 132, 134, 135, 140, 147, 149, 150, 151,  
 152, 153, 157, 159, 166, 167, 168, 171, 180,  
 181, 182, 184, 186, 187, 188, 189, 191, 193,  
 197, 198, 199, 205, 208, 210, 211, 213, 214,  
 218, 219, 220, 221, 223, 224, 236, 256, 257,  
 261, 262, 263, 264, 268, 270, 272, 273, 274,  
 275, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 288, 290,  
 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 299, 300, 301,  
 302, 303, 304, 308, 316, 319, 332, 334, 343,  
 349, 359, 362, 368, 370, 371, 372, 379,  
 380, 381, 383, 385, 386  
 Lorraine 141, 310  
 Lower Silesia 140  
 Lublin 185  
 Lugano 209, 219, 220  
 Łuków 185  
 Lvov 185  
 Lyon/ Lyons 24, 62, 63, 68, 79, 84, 96, 97, 109,  
 110, 111, 112, 119, 166, 167, 235, 319, 345,  
 347, 348  
 Madrid 222, 223, 225, 227, 231, 232, 242, 243,  
 252, 362, 384  
 Magdeburg 382  
 Manchester 44, 70, 94, 100, 242, 291, 299, 380  
 Manhattan, New York 273  
 Mantua 209  
 The Marches 209, 215  
 Marchiennes (Belgium) 78, 84  
 Marseille 62, 79, 96, 111, 112, 119, 121, 221, 235  
 Martinique (Martinica) 111, 120, 253  
 Matese 217, 367, 374  
 Metz 189  
 Mexico 112, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 260,  
 269, 362, 386, 388  
 Milan 209, 319, 262, 376, 383  
 Mons 147, 148, 153  
 Montevideo 254, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 263,  
 267, 269, 362, 385  
 Montigny-sur-Sambre (Charleroi) 148  
 Moscow 197, 199, 200, 201, 302  
 Mulhouse 96  
 Naples 209, 210, 216, 217, 367, 368, 369, 370,  
 373, 375, 383  
 Netherlands 13, 59, 363, 387  
 Neuchâtel (Neufchatel) 167, 179, 355, 356,  
 359, 362  
 New Caledonia 276  
 New York 9, 31, 32, 185, 206, 238, 248, 249,  
 250, 256, 270, 271, 272, 273, 275, 276, 280,  
 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289,  
 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 307,  
 345, 347, 384, 385  
 New Zealand 263  
 Newark (New Jersey) 277  
 Newcastle 159, 382  
 Nocera Inferiore 377  
 Northampton 94  
 Nottingham 291  
 Nuremberg 133, 135, 140  
 Palatinate 199  
 Paris 1, 6, 12, 14, 24, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33, 36, 51,  
 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67,  
 7380, 81, 82, 85, 90, 93, 95, 96, 97, 101,  
 104, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 118, 119,  
 120, 124, 125, 130, 149, 152, 157, 158, 167,  
 170, 171, 173, 185, 181, 186, 186, 187, 188,  
 189, 191, 195, 196, 199, 205, 206, 208, 209,  
 211, 216, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227,  
 231, 232, 233, 234, 236, 240, 241, 255, 264,  
 268, 271, 272, 277, 278, 279, 282, 293, 294,

- 299, 301, 304, 310, 311, 313, 314, 315, 316,  
 317, 318, 320, 322, 324, 327, 328, 330, 335,  
 340, 345, 347, 349, 350, 368, 369, 379,  
 380, 381, 383, 384  
 Pas de Calais 317  
 Patignies 146, 148  
 Philadelphia 277, 291, 379, 385  
 Philippines 246, 247  
 Piedmont 176, 373, 375  
 Pisa 209, 357, 373, 383  
 Płock 185  
 Po Valley 209, 215  
 Poland 289, 309, 310, 335, 340, 385  
 Portugal 13, 104, 112, 387  
 Posen 385  
 Poznań 186, 187  
 Prussia 22, 109, 119, 129, 132, 183, 306,  
 309, 382  
 Puglia 368, 372  
  
 Ravenna 373  
 Reims 96  
 Rhineland 134, 137, 308  
 Rhône Alpes 317  
 Rimini 209, 213, 362, 372, 373, 383  
 Rio de Janeiro 122, 253  
 Rive-de-Giers 176  
 Romania (Romagna, The Romagna) 209,  
 215, 219, 373, 375  
 Rome 211, 216, 217, 228, 370  
 Roubaix 63, 85, 96, 97, 99, 102  
 Rouen 79, 82, 96, 97, 109, 111, 230, 319  
 Russia 1, 12, 33, 150, 157, 178, 183, 187, 193, 194,  
 195, 197, 198, 200, 201, 203, 205, 309, 335,  
 340, 342, 349, 350, 363, 364, 371  
  
 Saint-Imier 104, 154, 179, 224, 356, 358, 359,  
 360, 361, 363, 364  
 Saint James Hall, London 316  
 Saint Louis (Missouri) 277  
 Sanlucar de Barrameda 242  
 Santiago de Chile 253  
 Sapri 210  
 Sardinia 339, 373  
 Savoy 176, 211, 212, 221, 222, 224  
 Saxony 132, 382  
 Seraing 63, 78, 81, 83, 85, 152, 154  
 Sevilla 241  
  
 Sicily 209, 216, 373, 375  
 Siedlce 185  
 Soho 25, 292, 294  
 Solingen 134, 137, 382  
 Sonvilier 358, 362  
 Sotteville-lès-Rouen 79  
 Spain 2, 7, 12, 13, 99, 104, 111, 112, 113, 119, 185,  
 211, 212, 213, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225,  
 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 233, 236, 237,  
 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 248, 251, 256,  
 260, 266, 335, 360, 362, 363, 364, 371,  
 384, 387  
 St Martin's Hall (Long Acre, London) 15, 65,  
 89, 182, 333, 379, 380  
 St. Petersburg 196, 197, 198, 200, 201  
 St. Aubin 63  
 St.-Etienne 63  
 Suwalki 185  
 Switzerland 1, 2, 12, 22, 23, 28, 35, 40, 41, 42,  
 59, 74, 76, 87, 91, 95, 99, 104, 105, 111, 112, 113,  
 130, 132, 137, 165, 166, 167, 168, 170, 171, 176,  
 177, 185, 186, 187, 189, 195, 198, 201, 202, 204,  
 224, 301, 355, 356, 358, 359, 360, 361, 364,  
 365, 371, 383, 387  
  
 Toledo 384  
 Tompkins Square, New York 277, 292, 293,  
 296, 385  
 Troyes 96  
 Turin 209, 217, 373  
 Tuscany 209, 215, 339, 373  
  
 Ukraine 340  
 United Kingdom 2, 99, 113, 282  
 United States 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 23, 27, 28, 95,  
 105, 111, 112, 113, 119, 187, 245, 248, 249,  
 250, 251, 277, 279, 281, 283, 284, 285, 287,  
 288, 289, 293, 294, 295, 309, 358, 364,  
 384, 385  
 University of Bologna 215  
 Uruguay 257, 259, 260, 364, 385, 388  
  
 Valencia 240, 241, 242, 246, 384  
 Valparaíso (Chile) 253  
 Verviers 144, 145, 149, 150, 155, 156, 158,  
 159, 160, 185, 219, 259, 262, 364, 375,  
 379, 382  
 Vevey 199, 200

Victoria (Australia) 386  
Vienna 227  
The Vosges 211

Waldenburg 140  
Wallonia 145, 150  
Warsaw 32, 185, 188, 191

Wieliczka 185  
Winterthur 383  
Wolverhampton 33, 58

Zaragoza 384  
Zurich 24, 179, 198, 201, 361, 362, 376, 383

# Index of Subjects and Organisations

- 1848–1849 Revolutions 8, 23, 29, 30, 89, 114, 188, 264
- abolitionism 9, 251, 347
- Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein* 382
- Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners 48, 51, 60
- anarchism, anarchists 5, 7, 11, 41, 42, 114, 154, 158, 177, 194, 196, 199, 200, 204–206, 207–220, 224, 247, 256, 260, 264, 269, 280, 321, 328, 346, 355, 362–365, 366–378
- anticlericalism 159
- antiparliamentarianism 377
- Apollo Convention Hall, New York City 275
- Arbeiter Union*, USA 272
- Association Démocratique, Brussels 308, 309
- Austro-Prussian war (1866) 140
- autonomy 43, 45, 72, 82, 84, 96, 97, 104, 157, 157, 230, 233, 288, 320, 322, 323, 324, 328
- Bakuninism, Bakuninists 6, 7, 42, 52, 72, 75, 76, 204, 213, 214, 223–225, 229, 232, 236, 237, 238, 240–242, 251, 256, 258, 260, 262, 263, 265, 314, 329, 330, 364, 366, 368, 377
- basket-makers 59
- Blanquism, Blanquists 63, 76, 109, 110, 168, 194–196, 211, 221, 264, 267, 275–277, 349
- Bloody Week (Paris) 85, 273, 281
- Bolshevik Party 196
- Bonapartism 168
- Bookbinders 57, 93, 94, 101, 327
- Bricklayers 46, 61, 170, 171, 177, 178, 285, 291
- brigantaggio postunitario* 375
- British Federal Council 39, 42, 45, 50, 51, 286, 291
- bronze workers 33, 57, 61, 62, 63, 73, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 146, 159, 170, 317, 327, 381
- brotherhoods 208
- building workers 59, 62, 63, 78, 79
- cabinetmakers 146, 170
- Cantons, Cantonalist 223, 236, 238–251
- Carlist 222, 238, 242, 244
- Carouge (Geneva) Section 170, 199, 202
- Carpenters 46, 48, 51, 56, 60, 73, 79, 80, 158, 170, 171, 177, 258, 307
- Central Committee for North America 272
- Central committee of all twenty Parisian arrondissements 109
- Central committee of the German-speaking section 172, 383
- Central committee of the IWMA for North America 384
- Centralism, centralist 42, 67, 76, 80, 154, 211, 271, 274–278, 339, 341, 360, 364, 372, 379, 384, 385
- Charbonnerie 112
- Chartism, Chartists 10, 23–32, 35, 47, 48, 52, 56, 57, 59, 103, 104, 118, 130, 208, 282, 283, 285, 288, 290, 291, 332, 380
- child labour 145, 308, 329
- cigar-makers 9, 11, 58, 159, 250
- City Trades' Assemblies, USA 271
- civil society 74, 141, 268
- Civil War (1861–65), USA 8, 32, 33, 43, 51, 105, 105, 119, 248, 249, 251, 271, 277, 279, 284, 285, 289, 293, 346
- clock workers, clock makers 91, 169, 170, 171, 178
- collectivism 99, 156, 157, 210, 213, 219, 364
- Committee of Public Safety (1873–74, New York City) 110, 211, 277
- Commune révolutionnaire* 30, 31
- communism, communists 3, 27, 29, 99, 207–209, 212, 213, 219, 254, 276, 278, 280, 305, 311, 320, 321, 330, 333, 334, 336, 364, 367, 368, 371, 377
- Communisticher Arbeiter-Bildungsverein (CABV), Communist Working Men's Education Association 25, 26, 27, 35, 131, 131, 380, 382
- compositors (also see printers, typographers) 54, 56, 58, 325
- Concorde lodge (London) 168
- Congrès de la Ligue pour la paix* 379
- construction workers 170, 172–174, 176, 202, 383

- cooperation, co-operation, cooperative,  
 co-operative, cooperativism 7, 40, 55–57,  
 64, 89, 103, 106, 121, 146, 155, 156, 168, 173,  
 183, 191, 193, 208, 255, 256, 274, 306, 308,  
 310, 316, 321–330, 335
- cotton 100, 145, 146, 226–230, 235, 236
- currency reform 284, 287, 294
- Democratic Association (Australia) 126, 386
- Democratic Friends of All Nations 25, 26,  
 380
- Démoc-socs* 279
- Disputación Provincial de Barcelona* (Barcelona  
 Provincial Government) 231
- Eclectic Institute, Soho 292
- Edict of 1861 194
- eight-hour day 273
- engravers 170
- Equal Rights Party (USA) 275
- Exile 8, 12, 22–35, 58, 101, 104, 107, 112, 118,  
 130–132, 150, 158, 166–168, 186–190,  
 193–204, 209, 211, 212, 219, 223, 235, 237,  
 239, 243, 249, 250, 251, 254, 264, 267, 271,  
 273, 276, 293, 364, 380, 381, 384
- factory 85, 89, 91, 94–105, 148, 169, 171, 190,  
 214, 215, 216, 225, 227–230, 236, 361, 384
- Fasci Operai* (Workers' Circles) 215
- federalism 42, 169, 225, 233, 239, 241, 273,  
 329, 339, 358, 362, 364
- Fédération de l'Europe* 309
- Federation of German Workers' Associations/  
 Vereinstag deutscher Arbeitervereine  
 VDAV 129, 132, 133, 140
- feminism, feminists 13, 24, 32, 195, 208, 275,  
 289, 337, 343–354
- Fenianism, Fenians 39, 41–45, 119, 272, 293,  
 340, 341, 380, 384
- fetishism 337
- First Republic (Spain, 1873) 223, 384
- Franco-Prussian War 69, 104, 113, 152, 189,  
 271, 272, 277, 301, 304, 306, 310, 381
- Fraternal Democrats 8, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 37,  
 38, 181, 187, 192, 332, 380
- free trade 29, 90, 92, 96, 103, 145, 307, 380
- freemasons 30
- FRE-IWMA (*Federación Regional Española de  
 la AIT*) 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 230, 234,  
 235, 236
- Fundraising 67, 74, 103
- General Council 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 31, 35, 39, 40,  
 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51,  
 52, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73,  
 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86,  
 99, 100, 109, 110, 112, 115, 116, 118, 124, 129,  
 132, 134, 140, 149, 150, 152, 154, 155, 157,  
 159, 165, 167, 168, 182, 184, 185, 188, 189,  
 190, 200, 202, 203, 204, 206, 249, 256,  
 257, 261, 263, 270, 272, 274, 275, 276, 284,  
 285, 288, 289, 291, 292, 294, 295, 299,  
 300, 302, 303, 306, 307, 308, 311, 312, 319,  
 326, 327, 329, 330, 334, 343, 344, 345,  
 357, 359, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368, 370,  
 371, 372, 373, 379, 381, 385, 386
- General German Workers' Association/  
 Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein  
 ADAV 129, 132, 134, 137, 139, 140, 141, 271,  
 382
- globalisation 3, 35, 66, 90, 123, 301, 303,  
 310, 311
- Gran Círculo de Obreros (México) 225, 388
- Gran Congreso Obrero (México) 256
- Greenback labor 287
- Grève des Ovalistes* 84, 348
- Grist mill tax (*macinato*) 217
- Hague Congress 6, 65, 104, 206, 213, 241, 256,  
 270, 275, 276, 286, 288, 289, 305, 345,  
 360, 366, 372, 385
- Hatters 59, 146
- Haymarket affair (1886 Chicago)
- Historic Left 209, 218
- Historic Right 209, 218
- Illegalism 218, 373, 375, 376
- Immigration 271, 273, 278, 279
- Industrial Congresses, USA 271
- insurrectional strategy 216, 217, 219, 373
- International Alliance of Socialist Democ-  
 racy 72, 200, 357, 379
- International Association 21, 31, 35, 40, 41,  
 57, 89, 96, 145, 181, 188, 192, 267, 332,  
 333, 335, 380
- International Committee 29, 31, 66,  
 181, 380
- International Exhibition 34, 90, 93, 145, 380
- International Policy (1866) 335, 337
- International Unions, USA 271
- International Working People's Association  
 (IWPA), USA 278
- Islam 337

- Jewellery 171  
 Jews 61  
 Joiners 48, 51, 73, 79, 170, 171, 307  
 Jura Federation 7, 51, 105, 106, 165, 177,  
 255, 256, 258, 264, 265, 355, 359, 360,  
 364, 383
- Knights of Labor 278, 281, 293
- La Social (México) 255–259, 262  
 Labor Reform Party, USA 275  
 Labour Representation League 380  
 Land and Labour League 46, 287, 292, 381  
 Land reform 284, 287, 293  
 League of Peace and Freedom 343, 348  
 League of the Outlaws/Bund der  
 Geächteten 130  
 leather-dressers 62  
 lock-out 55, 56, 60, 61, 63  
 locksmiths 146, 171, 173  
 London Council 210, 213, 214, 319  
 London Trade Union 7, 48  
 London Trades' Council 58, 283, 380  
 London Working Men's Association 24,  
 48, 380  
 Luxembourg Commission 323, 381
- machinery 8, 63, 89–106, 307, 372  
*Malfattori* (evil-doers) 218  
 Marianne 112  
 material culture 10  
 maximalists 193, 196, 206  
 mechanics 81, 83, 159, 173  
 militia 222, 234, 235, 241, 244, 293  
 miners 78, 84, 138, 140, 151, 152, 156, 176,  
 194, 243  
 money Reformers, USA 275  
 mutualism 99, 255, 256, 316, 328, 32, 331
- National Labor Union (NLU), USA 270, 271,  
 274  
 National League for Polish Indepen-  
 dence 33, 57  
 Nationalism 130, 140, 141, 272, 308, 332, 333,  
 335, 340–342  
 Nationalization 46, 308  
 New Democracy, USA 270  
 nihilism, nihilists 196, 349
- O'Brienism, O'Brienites 51, 284, 286, 288,  
 289, 292, 295, 380  
 Ottoman Empire 84, 121, 205
- painters 171  
 Paris Commune (1871) 6, 12, 57, 61, 85, 104,  
 108, 115, 119, 120, 124, 125, 152, 157, 158,  
 188, 189, 191, 206, 208, 209, 211, 216, 221,  
 222, 227, 231, 240, 241, 255, 264, 268, 272,  
 277, 279, 282, 293, 294, 310, 311, 318, 335,  
 340, 345, 347, 349, 368, 369, 379, 381,  
 383, 384  
*Partido Republicano Democrático Federal*  
 (PRDF) 224  
 pattern-drawers 59  
 Peasant Commune (*obshchina*) 193  
 Philadelphes (London) 30, 31, 168  
 plasterers 171  
 plebiscite 299, 300  
*polis* (Greek) 333  
 Polish January uprising (1863) 181, 182,  
 188, 189  
 Polish November uprising (1830) 187, 188  
 polytheism 337  
 pope 216  
 Positivism, Positivists 7, 11, 13, 332–342  
 potters 58  
 printers (*see also* compositors, typogra-  
 phers) 58, 93, 215, 255  
 public sphere 130, 136, 137, 141
- Regional Federation of the Oriental Republic  
 of Uruguay 257, 259, 260, 385  
 Regional Uruguayan Workers Federation  
 (foru) 260  
 Reform League (Great Britain) 44, 46, 48,  
 49, 50, 291, 292, 380  
 religion of Humanity 337, 339, 341  
 repression 10, 24, 34, 56, 84, 85, 87, 104, 108,  
 147, 148, 152, 157, 158, 222, 223, 225, 226,  
 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 239, 242, 247, 267,  
 277, 309, 374, 384  
 republicanism 56, 130, 207, 211, 212, 215, 224,  
 225, 226, 231–236, 238–251, 342  
 Revolution of September 1868 (Spain) 238  
*Risorgimento* 336  
 Romanticism 178, 207, 219  
 Russian Orthodox Church 195, 196



- Russian Section in Genève 193, 194, 195, 196,  
201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 345, 349
- Russian Section of the World Revolutionary  
Alliance (Bakunin) 201
- saddlers 59, 117
- seamen, sea workers 244–247
- Second International 341
- secret societies 112, 129, 195, 201, 208, 359,  
360
- Section Française de l'Association Internatio-  
nale de Travailleurs* (Buenos Aires) 261,  
385
- sewing machine 93, 94, 99
- Sexenio Democrático* (Spain, 1868–1874) 222,  
240, 384
- shoemakers 58, 91, 94, 169, 215
- slaves 106, 114, 120, 246
- Socialist Democratic Alliance 257
- Social Democratic Federation 288, 344
- Social Democratic Workers' Party/Sozialde-  
mokratische Arbeiterpartei SDAP 131,  
133, 134, 139, 140, 140, 141, 271, 382
- social-democracy 2, 277
- Socialist Labor Party (SLP), USA 278
- Socialist Party of America (SPA) 278
- Société démocratique française* 25
- Société fraternelle des démocrates-  
socialistes* 31
- Société pour la Revendication des Droits de la  
Femme* 349
- Society for Human Rights/Gesellschaft der  
Menschenrechte 130
- solidarity 4, 10, 22, 24, 34, 42, 47, 66–86, 91,  
97, 130, 137, 138, 140, 141, 151, 156, 158, 168,  
170, 173, 174, 176, 181, 183, 204, 208, 212,  
235, 247, 249, 267, 303, 306–308, 310,  
327, 357, 358, 362, 364, 372, 375
- Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (SDAP),  
Germany 131, 133, 134, 139, 140, 141, 271,  
382
- Sozialdemokratische Arbeitpartei  
Deutschlands* 382
- Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* 382
- Spanish Regional Federation /FRE 8, 221,  
222, 252, 257, 382, 384
- spiritualism, spiritualists 287, 289, 290
- stonecutters 170, 171
- subscription 61, 67–87, 151, 154, 170–172, 175,  
239, 362
- Swiss German workers' association 383
- syndicalism 207, 215, 223, 232, 237, 314, 326
- tailors 34, 58–63, 91, 93, 94, 255, 380, 381
- technology 96
- Tenth Ward Hotel ("centralist" faction) 274
- Terrible Year 2, 273
- textile 63, 80, 95–97, 100, 228, 229, 230, 348
- Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own  
Chancellery (Russia) 201
- tinsmiths 170, 171
- Tres Clases de Vapor* (Spanish Cotton  
Union) 228, 229, 231, 236
- type-founders 59
- typographers (also see compositors, print-  
ers) 77, 90, 102, 146, 147, 149, 168, 168, 171,  
175, 318, 324, 325, 327, 360
- Typographic Society (Montevideo) 257
- Typographic Society (Buenos Aires) 260
- Union des Femmes* 350
- Union of Typographers (Geneva) 168
- Union ouvrière* 24
- Union républicaine de langue française*,  
USA 271
- United States of Europe 309, 358
- Unity Conference (1864–1865), of Russian  
radicals 198
- Universal League for the Elevation of the  
Industrious Classes 292
- University College, London 334, 335
- utopianism 322
- vegetarianism 284
- Vigilance committees 109
- Wadham College, Oxford 333
- wage labour 85, 135
- watchmakers 95, 96, 105, 135, 358
- women  
women's labour 308  
women's suffrage 284, 289, 290
- wool-spinners 176
- Worker cooperative association (*artel*) 193
- Workingmen's Party of the United States  
(WPUS) 277, 385
- Workmen's Peace Committee 381
- Young emigration, Russian, in Switzer-  
land 198

# Index of Sources

- L'Atelier* (Paris) 24  
*La Aurora* (Cuba) 247
- Bee-Hive* (London) 48, 49, 50, 57, 58, 59, 60, 100, 182, 203, 292, 295, 335, 342, 380  
*Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* (Sonvilliers) 105, 106, 178, 258, 360, 362, 363, 364, 368  
*Bulletin de l'Union républicaine* (New York) 276
- La Campana de Gràcia* (Barcelona) 224, 234, 235  
*La Cigale* (Bruxelles) 100, 148, 150  
*The Civil War in France* (Marx K., 1871) 51, 311, 312, 381  
*The Commonwealth* (London) 49, 50  
*Communist Manifesto* See *Manifesto of the Communist Party*  
*La Comuna* (México) 256  
*The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Friedrich Engels) 134  
*Le Confédéré* (Fribourg) 166
- Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Köln) 24  
*De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph) 320, 323  
*De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'église* (Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph) 320, 324  
*Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung* (Brussels) 29  
*Le Devoir* (Liège) 150  
*Le Diable* (Brussels) 150  
*Du Principe fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution* (Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph) 320
- L'Echo de la fabrique* (Lyon) 24  
*Echo de Verviers* 185  
*L'Egalité* (Geneva) 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 50, 51, 52, 100, 175, 176, 202, 203, 205, 349, 357, 371, 383
- La Federación* (Barcelona) 227, 228, 229, 230, 249
- Garde Nationale* (Paris) 188, 234, 235  
*Glos Wolny* (London) 190, 191  
*Guthenburg* 58
- El Hijo del Trabajo* (México) 256  
*La Huelga* (México) 247, 253, 256
- La Iberia* (Madrid) 222, 223, 237  
*Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle* (Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph) 320  
*La Igualdad* (Key West) 250  
*Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association* (London, 1864) 89, 306, 310, 356  
*The Innovator / L'Innovateur* (Paris) 58  
*Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council* 307  
*La Internacional* (México) 256  
*El Internacional. Órgano de las clases trabajadoras* (Montevideo) 260  
*International Herald* (New York) 43, 283, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 294
- Das Kapital* (Marx K. 1867) 199, 201, 203, 214, 367  
*Kolokol* (London) 197, 198, 200, 201, 203
- Libertà e Giustizia* (Naples) 369  
*La Liberté* (Bruxelles) 98, 100, 148, 150, 156, 157
- Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels) 29, 134, 191, 201, 203, 205, 214, 255, 306, 308, 310, 330, 336, 371, 372, 382  
*Manifesto of the Sixty* 90, 316, 318, 320, 326, 381  
*Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* 3, 39, 299, 302  
*Mémoire des délégués français au congrès de Genève* 321  
*Minutes of the General Council* 43, 46, 50, 58, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 112, 116, 165, 185, 302, 306, 343

- Le Mirabeau* (Verviers) 149, 150, 163  
*Movement* (London) 24
- New Moral World* (London, Leeds) 24, 25  
*Niepodległość* 191  
*Nordstern* (Hamburg) 167  
*The Northern Echo* (Darlington) 299, 300  
*The Northern Star* (Leeds, London) 26, 29  
*La Nouvelle Tribune du peuple* (Belgique) 156  
*Nowiny z Wychodźstwa i Kraju* 191
- L'Opinion nationale* (Paris) 316
- Peper en Zout* (Bruges) 149, 150  
*Le Peuple belge* (Brussels) 100, 150  
*Le Populaire* (Paris) 24  
*Prawda* (London) 191  
*Le Progrès, organe des démocrates loclóis* (Le Locle) 355  
*Provisional Rules of the International Working Men's Association* 16, 40, 89, 132, 167, 307
- Red Republican* (London) 29, 59  
*La Réforme* (Paris) 29, 196  
*Resolution Nine* 214, 216  
*Le Révolutionnaire* (Buenos Aires) 267  
*Rheinische Jahrbücher zur Gesellschaftlichen Reform* (Darmstadt) 29
- Rheinische Zeitung* (Köln) 24  
*La Roma del Popolo* (Rome) 369
- El Socialista* (México) 255, 256, 258  
*Le Socialiste* (New York) 275, 276  
*La Solidarité* (Neuchâtel) 356, 359
- Tagwacht* (Zurich) 376, 383  
*The Times* (London) 129, 303, 304  
*El Tipógrafo* (Montevideo) 257  
*La Tribune du Peuple* (Bruxelles) 100, 147, 150, 184  
*La Tribune ouvrière. Sciences – arts – industrie – littérature* (Paris) 324
- Unsere Ziele* (*Our Aims*, August Bebel) 137  
*Uylenspiegel* (Brussels) 150
- La Voix de l'Avenir* (La Chaux-de-Fonds) 96, 166, 169, 170  
*Der Vorbote* (*The Herald*) (Geneva) 131, 134, 137, 138, 167  
*Vorwärts* (Leipzig) 375
- De Werker* (Antwerp) 149, 150  
*Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly* (New York) 287, 290, 293, 347  
*The Workman's Advocate* (London) 184  
*The World* (New York) 307