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Mastellone, Salvo

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Mastellone, S. (2006). Mazzini's International League in the light of the London Democratic Manifestos (1837-1850). *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 6(3), 525-532. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56218-3>

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Mazzini's International League in the Light of the London Democratic Manifestos (1837-1850)

SALVO MASTELLONE

As you know, *La Démocratie en Amérique* by Alexis de Tocqueville, published in 1835, was translated into English in the same year, and achieved great success. Henry Reeve in the "Preface" affirmed that "the democracy governing the American communities" interested the English readers because the democratic spirit was introduced into America by the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed from England in 1620; in other words the rise of democracy in England was possible through constitutional measures and the development of associations.

In June 1836 William Lovett and Henry Hetherington with the agreement of the Trade Unions founded the London Working Men's Association and started the preparation of the People's Charter. William Lovett, secretary of the Working Men's Association, in the name of this democratic movement drew up the *Address from the London Trade Unions to the Working Classes* and the *Manifesto of the Industrious Classes*¹. These socio-political messages were not only an English affair.

In the year 1837 the London Section of the Polish Democratic Society published the *Manifesto of the Polish Democratic Society* (London, 1837), edited by H. Hetherington. The text was drawn up in French by the Société Démocratique Polonaise in the language of the "Mazzinian" *Jeune Pologne*. The political programme was about "independence" and "nation", "rights" and "duties", "caste" and "masses", "progress" and "social emancipation", "equality" and "liberty"; in conclusion: "All for the People – all by the People: is the general principle of democracy. Yes, the voice of the People is ever that of God".

William Lovett answered the Polish Democratic Society with an *Address to the Working Classes of Europe and especially to the Polish People* (London 1838): "In reply to the Polish Democrats, who recently addressed us, we beg it might be understood, not only by them, but by the Working Classes of Europe, that while we are zealously labouring to diffuse a knowledge of true principles among our own brethren, we are not unmindful of that great principle of democracy that all mankind are brothers". Lovett, on page 6, was also addressing the Young Italy of Mazzini and his political programme: "How can he hope to diffuse his national and democratic ideas among the working classes?", "Young Italy is resolved in favour of Liberty", but "the old sins of ignorance, prejudice and fanaticism, diffused among the masses, form a drag-chain to their progress, a barrier to their freedom". The debate "upon democracy in Europe" was open in London: the English democrats emphasised the six points of the *People's Charter*, and great publicity was given to the *Manifesto of Robert Owen to improve permanently the condition of all Classes in all Countries*.

¹ William LOVETT, *Addresses of the London Working Men's Association and the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People*, British Library, 8138, a.55.1-35.

Mazzini in 1839 wrote an article with this title: "Chartism. Is it a Revolt or a Revolution?". The article was published by *Taif's Edinburgh Magazine* in June 1840. For the revolutionary exile "a presentiment of a new order of things, of great events, that will communicate a new impulse to society, pervades the world"; "the initiative of great radical changes can only come from below", and the "English People's Charter" will not be "The Charter of the future"; "the People desire a solution to the social problem" (XXII, 379-90).

William Lovett and John Collins published in 1840 for the National Association of the working class a *Plan for education and an improvement of the People politically and socially*¹, where they insisted on "intellectual and moral progress of the working men"; the last pages were dedicated to the "Rights" and the "Duties". Lovett knew Mazzini, and I think it was not a coincidence that in March 1840, Mazzini founded in London the Union of the Italian Workers and published in November 1840 the democratic journal *Apostolato Popolare*. Ten numbers of the *Apostolato Popolare* to February 1843 were issued in London, and Mazzini continued his criticism of Constitutional Chartism and French Communism after the translation into English by J. Bronterre O'Brien of the Buonarroti *History of Babeufs Conspiracy for Equality*; with the *Author's Reflections on the Causes and Character of the French Revolution*². But Mazzini's predominant idea was the independence of Italy from Austrian despotism with a People's insurrection; the centre of the insurrection was the Papal States. He prepared a *Piano per un moto insurrezionale in Italia*, dated London, January 3, 1844: "The revolutionary elements of all countries are waiting for an opportunity". This Italian uprising with the Papal States at the epicentre, and followed by the Polish countries, was presented as a national revolution "initiating a new Europe"; his programme was to launch a national *Manifesto* for the Italians and a *Manifesto* for the nations of Europe.

The *Plan for the uprising in Italy* reached Vienna, and in consequence the Austrian Ambassador in London, Philipp Neumann, discreetly asked the Foreign Secretary of Peel's Government, George Aberdeen, to obtain information regarding the dangerous Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini. The Foreign Secretary passed the request to the Home Secretary, James Graham. He ordered the Post Office to open letters sent to Mazzini and to copy them, so that Lord Aberdeen could read excerpts to the Austrian Ambassador. But Mazzini realized that his letters were being opened so he presented a petition in Parliament asking for justice and remedy. On 14 June, 1844 Thomas Buncombe, a member of the Opposition, presented a petition to the House of Commons requesting the appointment of a board of inquiry and the condemnation of such "anti-constitutional and shameful action". Three days later in the House of Lords, Lord Radnor asked why the Home Secretary had issued an order to open Mr. Mazzini's letters which was against the English ruling of the inviolability of private correspondence. In the *Times* of June 15 "a violent article" appeared criticising the fact that a public official had opened and read the correspondence of a Sardinian expatriate. On June 16, the *Times* published Thomas Carlyle's letter to the editor: "I have the honor to know Mr Mazzini for a series of years; he is a man of genius and virtue, humanity and nobleness of mind". The debate continued in July 1844. At the beginning of August the dramatic news circulated in London that in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies nine

¹ H. Hetherington, London, 1840, 132 pp.

² H. Hetherington, London, 1836.

members of the Bandiera brothers' expedition, perhaps organised with Mazzini's consent, had been shot.

In September 1844 the *Westminster Review* published (pp. 244-266) an article under the title "Mazzini and the Ethics of Politicians". Mazzini informed his mother: "That article is violent against government and very good for me". At the end of October the article with *Some accounts of the Brothers Bandiera by Mazzini* was reprinted as a pamphlet to be circulated among the people. Many scholars repeat that we have no copy of the pamphlet "which may have been destroyed by the English government". On the contrary the pamphlet was widely circulated in England, it was also reprinted in 1845 in New York, and a copy is preserved in British Library of London with the following title: *The following pages are from an article of the Westminster Review for September 1844 entitled "Mazzini and the Ethics of Politicians", to which is added some account of the Brothers Bandiera and other martyrs of liberty, by, J. Mazzini, of London.* The pamphlet has the heading *The Last Awful Tragedy: or Conspiracy of the Crowned Heads Exposed.*

During the long parliamentary debate Mazzini conceived the idea of writing a small book "speaking to the English Nation, not to those who govern it", in order to explain the aims of his democratic and revolutionary project, already outlined in the *Piano per un moto insurrezionale in Italia*. The only means of making Italy a Nation was insurrection, but only a national council elected by universal suffrage would lead to the political revolution drawing up a constitution. Mazzini writes that "the popular element is preparing a new system" (XXXI, p. 431), that is democratic; he desired "political unification of Italy", but not administrative centralisation (ivi, p. 421). The debate closed on 7 May, 1845, with a public retraction of the accusations against Mazzini. In the second half of June Mazzini's text of 139 pages with the title *Italy, Austria and the Pope* was published by a modest Italian printer. Scholars repeatedly state that the circulation of this work in England "was not up to expectations"; the text, published privately, was not widely circulated. They seem unaware, that thanks to J. Harney, the important Chartist journal *The Northern Star* published in eight issues from 19 July to 27 September 1845 pieces of this work.

At the beginning of 1845 *An Address to the Friends of Humanity and Justice among all Nations* on 20 January 1845 was published by H. Hetherington; The British Library attributes this *Address* to William Lovett (B.L.8138.a.23), but this *Address* is signed by Hon. Sec. Charles Schapper (leader of the Arbeiter Bildungs Verein) and Chairman Louis Oborski (leader of the Polish Democratic Society). They knew Mazzini very well; Oborski in July 1843 was secretary at a meeting with Mazzini and they both discussed and voted a document on the democratic exiles; Karl Schapper took part in Mazzini's expedition in Savoy in 1834. The Democratic Friends of all Nations, signatories of the *Address*, demanded "free and equal institutions in every country" and to reform society "improving all by the labour and fruits of each in the social scale", all being brethren, labour should, injustice, stand on equality.

At the meeting in London on 22 September, 1845, with the participation of "some of the leading Democrats of most of the European nations", including Schapper and Oborski, to commemorate the French Republic of 1792, Harney proposed the foundation of a Society of Fraternal Democrats, giving life to a new "Young Europe". In the report of the *Northern Star*, 27 September, Harney affirmed: "We may belong to the English, or French, or Italian, or German section of the European family, but 'Young Europe' is our common designation and under its

banner we march against tyranny and inequality". After him Thomas Cooper, "the poet of Chartism", in the name of "Young Europe" expressed the wish: "May the Democrats of all nations unite in a fraternal phalanx for the destruction of tyranny and the universal triumph of equality".

How did Mazzini react to the European democratic project of Harney allying the English Fraternal Democrats with the Deutsche Bildungs Verein and the Polish Democratic Society for the general cause of European progress? In the first months of 1846 Mazzini hoped to constitute a European board of democrats, in March Giuseppe Lamberti wrote to Mazzini from Paris that Lamennais was proposing to appoint a "Centre" with common principles; in fact Joseph Guinard went to London to discuss with Mazzini the formation of this European Democratic Committee. In April Mazzini approved the idea of a European Committee, but with its centre in London and functioning as a continuation of "Young Europe", in May he sent a letter to Rodolphe Schneider in Berne in order to organise an "Alliance des peuples" and not to work as a secret association, but in the light of day, and arrive at a "Congrès Européen se posant par un *Manifeste*", and gathering "par des *Adresses* l'opinion sur la Démocratie dans toutes les langues" (XXXVII, pp. 27-29).

It must be noted that the democratic Polish refugees in London did not approve Mazzini's plan of independence arising from a political revolution, in December 1845 news of unrest in Poland began to circulate in London, and the *Northern Star* published on 13 December, an "Appeal of Poland to Europe"; the Polish democratic emigrants demanded "equal rights and equal enjoyment for all the Poles", consequently "the next revolution in Poland must and will be social, as well as political and national"; the *Address* was elaborated in a meeting (7 December 1845); the democratic Polish emigrants want "not only the enjoyment of equal and political rights, but also the full and unconditional property of the soil, which peasants have hitherto cultivated for the benefit of the aristocracy". In March 1846 the insurrection broke out in Cracow against the Austrian troops, and the Provisional Government issued a *Manifesto* of which the *Northern Star*, of 14 March, published the translation into English; it requested "the amelioration of our social state" so "each shall enjoy the goods of the earth, according to his merit and his capacity". The *Cracow Manifesto* proposed an anti-aristocratic revolution along the lines of the French Revolution. The *Northern Star* commented: "The nation shall have the absolute property of the land, which today is only enjoyed by some". Louis Oborski in an "Address to the People of Great Britain" asked them "to sympathise with the oppressed nations" (*Northern Star*, 28 March). Poland "had not risen for mere nationality; desired a government based on the pure principle of democracy, establishing a true sovereignty of the people". In a "Great Public meeting" in London the Committee for Poland's Regeneration was formed by the "Friends of Poland".

I have to add another fact not less important. In the same month of June 1845, as the publication of the text *Italy, Austria and the Pope*, the work *Die Lage der Arbeitenden Klasse in England* was published in Leipzig by Friedrich Engels. In the dedication in English to the working class of Britain, he stated: "I have reached the conclusion that you are perfectly right not to expect any support from the middle classes". The twenty-seven year old Marx (1818) and the twenty-five year old Engels (1820) followed the events in England closely, as can be seen from the draft of *German Ideology*, and they read the *Northern Star* carefully. In the summer of 1845 Marx and Engels stayed in England for about six weeks; they saw Harney to whom Engels started sending articles about Germany, and were in touch with Schaffer and other members of the Arbeiter Bildungs Verein, despite considering

the ideas of the "German democrats in London naive". From the *Rheinische Jahrbücher* it is possible to know the political thought of Engels at the end of 1845: "Democracy today is Communism; another democracy can only exist in the texts of visionary theorists; democracy has become a proletarian principle". In March 1846 in letters to Harney, Engels insisted on a speedy arrival of proletarian revolution in England and the abolition of private property within three years. Against the success of the principles expressed by the *Cracow Manifesto* in England, announcing an anti-aristocratic democratic revolution and also against the programme for a political and national "Glorious Revolution", Engels and Marx, theorists of the German critical communism, decided to send an *Address* directly to Feargus O'Connor, Editor of the *Northern Star*, because they foresaw that a class revolution by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie would break out in England.

Scholars interested in the *Communist Manifesto* have paid little attention to the *Address of the German Democratic Communists of Brussels to Feargus O'Connor, signed Engels, P. Gigoty Marx, 17 July, 1846*:

"The working classes of England know very well that now the great struggle of capital and labour of *bourgeois* and *proletarians* must come to a decision. The ground is now cleared by the retreat of the landed aristocracy from the contest; middle class and working class are the only classes betwixt whom there can be a possible struggle [...] the battle by which the working class will become the ruling class of England".

This *Address* was a surprising and revolutionary document, issued by three foreigners living in Brussels, and was also the basis of the *Communist Manifesto*, edited in English by Engels in 1888: "The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class". According to the *Oxford Dictionary* the concept of "ruling class", so important for political science, was first expressed by Helen Macfarlane in 1850, but in fact it was formulated in English by Engels and Marx, in the *Address* published by the *Northern Star* on the 25 July 1846.

Marx and Engels, announcing in this *Address* a class revolution of the workers to found an anti-bourgeois proletarian democracy, rejected the Italian programme for a democratic political revolution and the Polish project for a social revolution against the nobility, owners of the land. But when the well-known political writer, Giuseppe Mazzini read the "Address to Feargus O'Connor" in the *Northern Star* of July 25 – where his name was mentioned and an ode was published in honour of the Bandiera brothers – could he consider himself a liberal only because he did not believe in "working class democracy"? Engels and Marx in the *Address* indicated the *Northern Star* and the *People's Journal* as the English newspapers "which knew the real state of the parties in England". A week later Mazzini decided to write to the Editor of the *People's Journal* asking to publish some articles "upon Democracy in Europe". We now know why Mazzini on 1 August, 1846, determined to expound his *Thoughts*, and why Engels and Marx should be included in this English political literature.

In the issue of 29 August, 1846, the *People's Journal* published a sort of *Address to John Saunders, Editor of the People's Journal, upon Democracy in Europe by Joseph Mazzini*. In the preliminary letter Mazzini stated that the object of his text was the thought which in the last four years (from 1842) had directed the democratic movement on the Continent. From 1842 perhaps because in that year were printed: the *Voyage en Icarie* by Étienne Cabet, the articles *Aux Politiques. De la politique sociale et religieuse* by Pierre Leroux, the *Garantien der Harmonic und Freiheit* by Wilhelm

Weitling. In the first article Mazzini defends "the democratic tendency": "The union of the democratic principle with representative government is an entirely modern fact"; "The ensign of democracy is the progress of all through all under the leading of the best and wisest". Moving away from Tocqueville, who had taken the United States as a political model, Mazzini is addressing the Democratic Societies in England and he insists on the ethical function of Democracy in Europe:

"The suffrage, political securities, progress of industry, arrangement of social organization, all these things are not Democracy, they are its means: we wish man to be better than he is" (XXXIV, p. 170).

In August 1846 Mazzini was still hoping to constitute in London a European Democratic Committee. He wrote, on 13 August, to Joachim Lelewel about "l'organisation d'un Congrès Européen, composé des noms les mieux connus dans les rangs de la Démocratie se posant par un *Manifesto* et par une série d'actes collectifs adressés à chaque peuple" (App. III, 87). The Democratic Associations in London did not accept Mazzini's political and ethical position. After the first article of the "Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe", the *Northern Star*, 26 September, page 3, declared: "Joseph Mazzini gives the first of a series of articles entitled 'Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe'. We shall watch these articles and have our say upon them". On page 2 was published the "Address of the Fraternal Democrats to the Democrats of all Nations" in defence of "the rights and interests of the masses", the "Address" was signed by the Secretaries of Great Britain, Germany, France, Poland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Hungary: they defended "the rights and interests of the masses"; against "the present state of society" they demanded "the common property" of land and industry; "citizens of one commonwealth" in the name of their "cosmopolitanism" they refused "the national vanities". The "Address" was presented at the meeting held on 21 September in London to celebrate the first anniversary of the foundation of the Fraternal Democratic Society. In the text of the "Address" there was no reference to Communism, but in his speech Hamey stated: "The principles of the German Communists are the principles proclaimed in our 'Address', we therefore must sympathise with our persecuted brethren".

Probably that criticism against Mazzini expressed by the "representatives in London of the United Democracy of Europe" influenced him when writing *Thoughts Upon Democracy*, especially as regards the articles on French Fourierism (6 Feb. 1847), on German Communism (17 April 1847) and on English Cosmopolitanism (8 May 1847). This criticism also modified his European democratic project. The *Address of the People's International League* was published in March 1847, in London, as pamphlet. The *object of this Association* was "to promote a good understanding between the peoples of every country".

William Linton in his volume *European Republicans. Recollections of Mazzini and His Friends* (London, 1893) remembers: "Toward the close of the year 1846 Mazzini suggested The People's International League taking for its object to disseminate the principles of national freedom and progress in favour of the right of every people to self-government. In the article in the *People's Journal*" (9 January, 1847), entitled "The European Question", Mazzini emphasized that the feeling of European unity existed in the heart of the nations. But to which ideologies was the People's International League in opposition? The International League was against "nationalism" and "despotism". *Nationalism* was a neologism, and already in the first two articles Mazzini, underlines the "undeniable movement of Europe toward new destinies" and criticises "narrow nationalism"; in the article "Nationality

and the Cosmopolitism" (VII, 8 May, 1847), in accordance with the concept of Humanity, he rejects "a nationalism narrow, mean and jealous", and the "Nationality of the absolute, and therefore necessarily selfish, which, supports itself only upon blind force"; he condemns "a Napoleon-people usurping all, if not by arms, at least, by a permanent and exclusive moral and intellectual leadership".

Mazzini condemns despotism of government in defence of liberty and human individuality; but the republican exile is opposed not only to the despotic and absolute monarchical power, but to every social despotism of authority, alluding to the social Utopian societies: the leaders, the *learned*, the *priests* believe themselves to be "the only persons capable" of realising the project; they assign to themselves the direction of society, so they lead to the despotism of authority (IV); in other words "starting from the *collective* point of view" the leaders of the social fourierist society fall into the despotism of authority (V); with a communist governing body, these imposed or elected chiefs, it matters little which, will be, during the exercise of their power, in the position of the masters of slaves in olden times; and seduced by the immense power concentrated in their hands they will strive by corruption to reassume the dictatorship of the ancient castes (VIII).

Mazzini's political philosophy was founded on two important texts, not very often quoted: Johann Herder, *Idées sur la philosophie de l'humanité*, translated into French by Édgard Quinet in 1828, and Jean de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, published also in Genoa, in 1798, "An premier de la République Ligurienne"; Mazzini knew this text by heart:

"Nos espérances, sur l'état à venir de l'espèce humaine, peuvent se réduire à trois points importants: la destruction de l'inégalité des nations, le progrès de l'égalité dans un même peuple, enfin le perfectionnement réel de l'homme" (Gênes, 1798, p. 305).

It was Mazzini's idea to form a People's International League, but the "international" qualification can be attributed to John Bowring, who had published Bentham's works; "international" was a neologism, coined by Bentham to indicate "international law"¹, but suitable to express Mazzini's concept of the political understanding of peoples. Mazzini's concept of people at the end of 1846 came in contrast with Marx's concept of *proletarians* as ruling class. In any case the People's International League was born before the Communist International League, founded in June 1847. In May 1847 the *Northern Star* recognised that Communism had three formidable opponents in the ranks of Democracy: Lamennais, Mazzini and Feargus O'Connor, and when the last article (VIII) of Mazzini was published, the same journal in June wondered who should be "the competent person to undertake the task" of answering Mazzini.

In conclusion, not only Mazzini, even Marx and Engels are involved in the London debate developed through the social-political messages of Manifestos. In Autumn 1847 Engels and Marx were in contact with Harney hoping for a union with the Fraternal Democrats. On the 23 November 1847 Engels writes to Marx: "Have you seen the *Northern Star* with the 'Manifesto to the Democracy of Europe' drafted by the Fraternal Democrats? We have no more talk of Catechism, but of Manifesto".

In December 1847 Marx was in London, but he wrote in Brussels the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*. which was published unsigned, in London, at the end

¹ *Works*, vol. II, 1843, pp. 535-556.

of February 1848. A few days afterwards the European exiles, from Schapper, to Marx, to Mazzini, rushed to Paris where the *Republic* was proclaimed. In March 1848 revolutions broke out in Europe from Vienna to Milan. I have to point out that *The Democratic Review*, edited by Julian Harney, in July 1849, published in English another "German Manifesto: the Manifesto of the Red Republicans, of Germany" with "the programme adopted at the Democratic Congress, held at Berlin in June 1849": "The proletarians will seize upon the revolution and make it permanent". Eleven points followed "to elucidate the aims and objects of a communist revolution in Germany". But after the victories of the monarchist armies, and the overthrow of the Roman Republic by the French Republic, it was useless to discuss "upon revolution".

From 1848 to 1849 France proposed three forms of republic: the republic of Lamartine, the republic of Blanc, the republic of Bonaparte. What sort of republic in 1850 was proposed for Europe by the democratic exiles in London? The communist republic with the proletariat ruling class? The socialist republic of the *ateliers sociaux*? The democratic representative republic? In place of the People's International League Mazzini formed in 1850 the Central European Democratic Committee, and on 22 July 1850 he launched from London, in French (*Le Proscrit*), a *Manifeste* signed also by Ledru-Rollin, not Blanc, by Arnold Ruge not Marx, by Albert Darasz, not Lelewell; the *Manifeste aux peuples* ended with ten points to summarize the programme. *The Red Republican*, edited by Harney, on 7 September 1850 published in English Mazzini's "Manifesto to the Peoples: Organization of Democracy". Why two months later, on 9 November, by the same *Red Republican*, was published the "Manifesto of the German Communist Party", ascribed to Marx and Engels? Why was Mazzini's "Manifesto to the Peoples" republished in January 1851 in *The English Republic*, edited by William Linton? The history of the London Manifestos is rather complicated. As a historian, I think that we have to give Mazzini his place in the main stream of European political thought of his time.