

Revolutionary and Socialist Fraternalism 1848–1870: London to il Risorgimento

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FELICE ORSINI FAILED IN HIS ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE LOUIS NAPOLEON in 1858, but Dr Simon Bernard, 'le Clubiste', a French exile living in London, was implicated. There was an admission decades later by George Jacob Holyoake, social radical, secularist, cooperator, and Oddfellow that he tested similar bombs. France desired the rendition of Dr Bernard, and to make this request possible the Prime Minister Lord Palmerston brought forward The Conspiracy to Murder Bill, which would allow such renditions. A meeting at Freemasons' Hall was convened to halt the bill, this succeeded, and Palmerston was defeated and resigned. Dr Bernard was then put on trial in London but acquitted with help from Charles Bradlaugh, parliamentarian, secularist, social radical, and Freemason.

Much of the thread of action swirls around the *Loge des Philadelphes* in London, and supporters of the Italian Risorgimento. Giuseppe Garibaldi was and is both a national and Masonic hero in Italy but he was also a member of the Philadelphes in London. Members of this same group raised funds for an English Brigade which went and fought in Italy. This British support is perhaps an untold part of the tale.

Readers will have to form their own opinions of this revolutionary or at least radical fraternalism but it was in the mood of the times. The preoccupation of the mid-19th-century British society find some uncanny echoes with today's 'war on terror', 'extraordinary rendition' of 'terrorists' and our society with its secular overtones. That Garibaldi got such support should perhaps not surprise us; after all he was popular enough in Britain that they actually named a biscuit after him.

Introduction

Hearing Professor Prescott talk about Charles Bradlaugh¹ was something of an eye-opener; here was a social radical who was also a Freemason. But there were other fascinating snippets too, and questions that followed from some of Prescott's comments. Surely Freemasonry didn't 'do' bombs, didn't support 'terrorists', was not secular and especially that this was all in some way associated with the *Loge des Philadelphes*, an unrecognized Memphis-Misraim lodge. Clearly here was part of a story – but of what and where was the rest of it?

Part of the answer came from a random search in the National Archives which produced a document in the Metropolitan Police Archives blandly headed 'Meeting held at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, to discuss Lord Palmerston's Conspiracy Bill.'² The photocopy of this transcript sat on my shelf for some years until the final pieces of the jigsaw fell into place.

Felice Orsini 1819–13 March 1858

Orsini was born in Romagna, part of the Papal States. His biographer Michael St John Packe perhaps describes him neatly: 'She (his mother) did not realize that his infant thoughts were of a repressed and furtive trend; that when he waved his wooden spoon and gurgled, he was marshalling secret armies in craggy places, or that his wondering unfathomable eyes, jet black and shining, screened from her view a world of incipient revolution, wherein he was already blowing up Emperors and dethroning Popes.'³ While destined for the priesthood he left and joined Giovine Italia (Young Italy), the organization founded by Giuseppe Mazzini.

He was arrested in 1844 for revolutionary plotting, sentenced to life imprisonment and then freed by Pope Pius IX. He was back fighting in the First War of Italian Inde-

¹ A. J. Prescott, 'In the Cause of Humanity: Charles Bradlaugh and Freemasonry', *AQC* 114 (2003), 15–64 and particularly 31.

² MEPO 2/68 'Meeting held at Freemasons Hall, Great Queen Street, to discuss Lord Palmerston's Conspiracy Bill 15th February 1858', www.nationalarchives.gov.uk National Archives MEPO Records of the Metropolitan Police Office/ Records of the Office of the Commissioner and successors/ Correspondence and Papers/ Meetings and Demonstrations (1858).

³ M. St J. Packe, *The Bombs of Orsini* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), 1.

pendence in 1848. In 1854 he was then sent by Mazzini on a secret mission to Hungary but was caught and imprisoned at Mantua, escaping by sliding down a rope made of bedsheets. He visited Britain in 1856, his story was serialized in the press and he published his memoirs. In the end he went to the guillotine for his bomb throwing.

Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865)

Palmerston twice served as Prime Minister but he was in government almost continuously from 1807 until his death in 1865, starting his parliamentary career as a Tory and concluding it as a Liberal. Karl Marx writing in *The Times* had this to say:

If the monopoly of managing foreign affairs of the nation had passed from the aristocracy to an oligarchic conclave, and from an oligarchic conclave to one single man, the Foreign Minister of England viz Lord Palmerston, the monopoly of thinking and judging for the nation, on its own Foreign relations, and representing the public mind in regard to these relations, had passed from the press to one organ of the press, to the Times⁴

Palmerston's intention was for Britain to rule the world and to achieve that he had to diminish the power of Austria, Russia, Prussia, and the Ottoman Empire. He started with the Greek Revolution in the 1820s. The year of 1848 was a great revolutionary year with many governments in Europe toppled, war in Italy, civil war in Austria, barricades in Paris, and tumult in Germany. With the help of Napoleon III Palmerston was planning to deal with Russia, in what was to be the Crimean War.

To be able to run such a broad foreign policy Palmerston needed a good reserve of exiles who could be encouraged to produce disruption; however things did not always proceed entirely according to the Palmerston plan and the tale that follows is one of those.

Louis Napoleon / Napoleon III (1808–1873)

He was a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, first President of the French Republic and the only Emperor of the Second Republic. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 the family fled abroad, and he was brought up in Switzerland and Germany, later settling in Italy where he joined the Carbonari – who were opposed to the Austrian domination of Northern Italy.

He returned to France in 1836, attempted a coup which failed and was exiled to the United States where he remained for four years. In 1840 he returned again to France, staged another (failed) coup and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He eventually managed to escape in May 1846 by changing clothes with a mason working at the castle and fled to Southport in England.

⁴ Karl Marx in *The Times* and quoted in *The New York Daily Tribune* (21 October 1861).

England remained his home till 1848. On 7 April 1848 he enrolled as a Special Constable in London on the occasion of the Chartist demonstrations. Clearly this must have made some impression on the public because a relative of mine wrote:⁵

It was the only time I ever was sworn in as a special constable, and I was partly inspired to do so by a tradition in the family that one of my uncles had been similarly sworn in at the time of the great Chartist Terror of 1848, and in that capacity had stood shoulder to shoulder with Louis Napoleon – then a disreputable discredited adventurer, whom no one took seriously – with apparently as much chance of being Emperor of France as of being Grand Lhama of Tibet

By December 1848 he had returned to France, fought and won an election and became President of France. His attitude to Italy was tempered by the time he spent in Italy, but in 1849 he sent French troops to help restore Pius IX as ruler of the Papal States. Matters were further complicated by the fact that France controlled Savoy, which is largely today Piedmont and Italian. It is not perhaps surprising that Orsini could feel that Louis Napoleon was the real impediment to a unified Italy.

In 1870 he started the Franco-Prussian War; he was captured after being defeated at Sedan and deposed upon the formation of the Third Republic. He spent the last few years of his life and died at Chislehurst in Kent.

The Attempted Assassination of Napoleon III

In Paris on the evening of 14 January 1858 Emperor Napoleon III and his wife were in a carriage going to the opera when Orsini and three accomplices threw three bombs at the carriage they were in. The first landed among the mounted horsemen in front of the carriage, the second wounded horses and broke the carriage glass while the third landed underneath the carriage and seriously wounded a policeman. Eight were killed and 142 injured but the Emperor went on to the theatre. Orsini was found the next day in his lodgings by the police. He was sentenced to death and guillotined on 13 March 1858. There might have been no repercussions from this if the trail had not led back to England where the bombs had been made. The Emperor was keen to deliver justice to all the parties who had been involved, and not simply those who had thrown the bombs!

The Bombs

Towards the end of 1857 Orsini had visited England and commissioned a gunsmith by the name of Joseph Taylor to make six bombs to a design of Orsini's own. The bombs were tested and made and sent back to France. A French émigré, Dr Simon Bernard, was also implicated in this and Louis Napoleon wanted him back in France to be tried. The

⁵ Thormanby (aka William Willmott Dixon), *The Spice of Life* (London: Everett, 1912), 12.

unnamed party however was George Jacob Holyoake who admitted some decades later in his memoirs to testing bombs of a similar design in 1856 – while denying that they were the same bombs which were sent to Paris.⁶

It was at Ginger's Hotel that I first saw the bombs whose construction was perfected afterwards for use in Paris ... When strangers came into the coffee-room Dr Bernard laid them back on the seat between him and a friend ... At a later stage I was told that Mazzini thought they might be useful in the unequal warfare carried on in Italy, where the insurgent forces of liberty were almost armless (and declining responsibility) ... When two of the shells were delivered to me to make experiment with, I understood that they were a new weapon for military warfare in Italy.⁷

Thus equipped he decided to take them to Sheffield where he was lecturing, choosing Sheffield because 'it was a noisy manufacturing town, where the addition to its uproar of a bomb going off would be little noticeable.' He did however have to get both himself and the bombs to Sheffield by train!

With a shell as large as a Dutch cheese in each pocket, I looked like John Gilpin when he rode with the wine kegs on either side of him ... My only anxiety was that some mechanic with his carpenter's or plumber's basket might choose to sit down by my side, when a projecting hammer or chisel might be the cause of an unexpected disturbance.⁸

The bomb exploded and he was able to saunter away. He then determined to take two more shells to Devon for which he says he received thirty-two shillings, that being the cost of a third class fare. Once in an unspecified part of Devon he describes events.

it was necessary to choose a field which had a stone fence, where, after throwing the bomb into the air, I could lie down and be protected while the fierce fragments flew around ... There was however little need of the precaution, as no explosion followed. The nipples buried themselves in the earth, and the obstinate shell remained fixed and silent ... The difficulty then was to get the perverse ball out of the earth, since plucking it might occasion an abrasion of the cap, and cause it to burst while I was over it.⁹

⁶ George Jacob Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitators Life*, 2 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900).

⁷ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, Chapter LX, 'In Charge of Bombshells', 19–25. The Chapter heading says 1856, so either Holyoake has the wrong year or the plot was being hatched earlier than most record.

⁸ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 21.

⁹ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 24.

George Jacob Holyoake¹⁰ (1817–1906)

George Jacob Holyoake, atheist and freethinker, self-proclaimed 'agitator', champion of the working class, and cooperator, was born at Birmingham on 13 April 1817. His father was a printer and mother a button maker. In 1831 Holyoake joined the Birmingham Reform League and became an active participant in radical political and social movements. During one lecture his reply to a loaded question put up by a clergyman about the place of religion in proposed socialist communities led to his prosecution for atheism and to six months' imprisonment in Gloucester gaol, thereby achieving the distinction of being last person in Britain to be imprisoned on such a charge. Following his release Holyoake coined the term 'secularism' to describe his views. His later years were chiefly devoted to the promotion of the cooperative movement among lower-class workers. As a mark of its respect for him the cooperative movement built a headquarters for the cooperative societies in Manchester called Holyoake House in his memory¹¹. On the matter of faculty of memory he has some words to say that may strike a chord with any Freemason:

Taking Pope's 'Essay on Man', I learned the first two lines, the next day two more, always repeating the lines learned. Thus at the end of a year I could repeat 730 lines; at the end of a second year I could repeat 1,460. Then the time to repeat 1,460 lines, with the addition of new lines each morning obliged me to desist. This daily use of memory was an advantage to me when I came to deliver lectures. Though I could not always foresee what I should say when I began to speak, I could always tell what I had said when I had spoken.¹²

He was also an Oddfellow and a member of the Robert Burns Lodge (of Oddfellows) in Glasgow and in 1845 on arriving there on a visit discovered that the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows was offering five prizes of £10 each for the five best lectures to be read to members of the order on taking successive degrees. The subjects were to be Charity, Truth, Knowledge, Science, and Progression. He duly entered and was among the 79 entries that were judged, and won all the categories. 'I had left Scotland long before the award, and made up my mind I was out of the running, when one day the Grand Master called upon me and handed me five £10 notes. It was with this money that I set up "The Reasoner"':

This award was not without contention because as he wrote,

¹⁰ G. J. Holyoake, Obituary from *The Times*, viewed at [http://www.gerald-massey.org.uk/holyoake/c_misc_\(1\).htm#Obit_1](http://www.gerald-massey.org.uk/holyoake/c_misc_(1).htm#Obit_1) viewed August 2008.

¹¹ The plaque on the building reads 'This building was erected by the voluntary contributions of 794 Co-operative Societies members of the Union to perpetuate the memory of the late George Jacob Holyoake, one of the pioneers of Co-operation, who for nearly 70 years was a strenuous worker for liberty and reform. Born 1817. Died 1906. It is now part of a 20 acre site occupied by the Co-operative Wholesale Society and part of a 20 acre redevelopment site, the largest in central Manchester.'

¹² Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. I, 204.

some apprehensive members raised the question whether the money ought to be paid to me ... An earthquake might happen in the order if what I had written were read officially from time to time to a quarter of a million men who belonged to the greater Unity, for the memory of Gloucester Goal (where he was goaled for atheism) was quite lively in the public mind¹³

George Jacob Holyoake is a name that will crop up frequently in this tale. His brother Austin Holyoake together with Charles Bradlaugh were both members of the *Loge des Philadelphes* and indeed this blend of secularism, fraternalism, socialism and their fight for freedom and liberty is very much of the age.

Lord Palmerston and the Conspiracy to Murder Bill

The attempted assassination took place on 14 January and very soon there were mutterings from some French Colonels who expressed their readiness to cross *La Manche* to London and fetch Dr Bernard back to Paris. However Palmerston and Napoleon III were on good terms and Palmerston brought a bill to Parliament in early February 1858 to enable him to deal in Britain with foreigners who while in Britain conspired against friendly governments abroad – a bill to extradite them having been considered untenable and abandoned.

The first reading passed by 19 votes on Wednesday, 10 February, the following day a subscription was taken,¹⁴ and on Saturday, 13 February, it was resolved to call a meeting on the Monday night at Freemasons' Hall¹⁵. On Monday, 15 February, a group of activists met at Holyoake's house at 147, Fleet Street which decided to have a meeting on Sunday, 21 February, in Hyde Park.

Events carried on apace and on Friday, 19 February 1858, the second reading of the bill took place and was lost by 234 votes to 215 – and Lord Palmerston's government resigned.

The Meeting at Freemasons' Hall, 15 February 1858

Normally a meeting at Freemasons' Hall would have passed unnoticed but on this occasion not so. Holyoake deals with it in detail in his memoirs and clearly the Metropolitan Police considered the event sufficiently seditious that they sent a team of shorthand writers in to take a verbatim transcript.¹⁶ This was unearthed in the National Archives

¹³ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. I, 207–208.

¹⁴ Lord Clarendon in Hansard, Lords, 1 March 1858, Law Relating to Aliens p64. Lord Clarendon says that 'one half of the hire of the room was paid by Bernard, the man who is now in custody'. The veracity of this statement is unclear. Viewed at www.books.google.com August 2008.

¹⁵ The actual place of the meeting was Freemasons' Tavern, part of the Freemasons' Hall complex but let out and run as a commercial enterprise, and was much used for large meetings.

¹⁶ MEPO 2/68 Metropolitan Police: Office of the Commissioner: Correspondence and Papers: Meetings and Demonstrations at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

with an online search and a copy obtained – it runs to 171 manuscript pages! Holyoake describes the event graphically.

On Monday evening when we arrived, the Freemasons' Hall was so crowded that the conveners of the meeting were unable to get in. Mr Stansfeld spoke to the manager of the hall, who conducted us through the wine cellars to a private passage that led on to the platform. In a small gallery on the opposite side of the hall, fronting the platform, were two French spies, disguised as gasfitters – assumed to be placed there by the manager in case their services should be required.¹⁷

The Chairman of the meeting was Mr Alfred Bale Richards and the Secretary Mr Wyld and the meeting opened with the Secretary reading apologies and rhetoric sent to him by letter. Then on to the main event, a Mr Lawrence in proposing the resolution said: 'we cannot help it if France has found her weaknesses in driving from her bosom her best and noblest citizens to find refuge amongst us ...'¹⁸

The resolution was "That any alteration of the laws of England, under the menacing dictation of a foreign power is calculated to endanger the national character and independence".

A Mr Sexton said '... let us not forget that Louis Napoleon himself in 1831 attempted to overthrow the Papacy pretending as he did on that occasion that his object was the welfare of Italy and the establishment of freedom' and 'Oh Italy is trodden down and trampled under foot by priestly despotism ...'¹⁹

Mr Ernest Jones "This new Alien Act is not yet law and yet what do we find? A reward of £200 promised for the arrest of one man – We find the house of another man searched at midnight, we find a third man arrested in broad day in the midst of the inhabitants of London on suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy. I ask what more is wanted? (Loud Cheers)²⁰

And a Mr Macintosh: '... so cunningly devised but so widely spread that its meshes will ensnare any man or woman in this country who will become obnoxious to the government however innocent they may be of any evil intention towards the French Emperor ...'²¹

Mr George Leveson describes Dr Bernard and his situation:

You have seen a fat harmless French refugee, a Doctor of Medicine, a man of science who, I'm told is 41 years of age, but to look at him you would think he was three score years and ten – that man whose cheeks are furrowed and his hair white from his country's woes had been dragged from home and brought before a Police Magistrate

¹⁷ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 49.

¹⁸ MEPO 2/68, 29.

¹⁹ MEPO 2/68, 36–37.

²⁰ MEPO 2/68, 50–51.

²¹ MEPO 2/68, 87.

and remanded and I distinctly say, as it was said by his learned counsel in the presence of the magistrate, there is not one bittle of evidence against him (Cheers)" and he goes on to say '... some months ago, I believe, he had openly, in the broad face of day taken to the booking office of the South Eastern Railway a parcel addressed to a friend in Paris. When asked by the Clerk at the booking office the contents and value of that parcel as is their custom he replied that the value was £12, the contents two pistols ...' and because pistols were found (not the identical pistols) on the persons of Orsini and Pieri in Paris, therefore, according to the sapient wisdom of a British magistrate that man is remanded for a week (Cries of 'Shame, Shame')²²

There are in principle 170 pages of rhetoric and from the records of cheers, hisses, boos, etc. it is clear that the audience had a thoroughly entertaining evening. At the end of the meeting there is a need to advise the meeting of the meeting at Hyde Park and a curious case of diffidence strikes those on the platform:

The audience in the hall was tumultuous, and, fearing I might not speak with sufficient loudness for every one to hear, I asked several gentlemen to make the announcement for me. They, however, proved unwilling to take the responsibility of it. I explained that the committee took the onus, and merely wanted to borrow a voice. Mr Mackintosh, who wrote as 'Northumbrian' in *Reynolds Newspaper*, who had been a schoolmaster and had stentorian lungs, finally complied with my request. For a time he demurred; but on my saying 'Use my name. And say you give the notice at my request,' he consented.²³

The Metropolitan Police shorthand writers, who normally note cheers, boos and hisses and the like do not record any delay before Mackintosh's speaking and he does not refer to Holyoake at all.

A demonstration should be held next Sunday in Hyde Park (Loud Cheers). The object is to protest against this Bill and as the sacred cause that we all have at heart might be endangered by any violence every man I trust will regard himself as a special constable for the express purpose of conserving order and peace and law – I may also tell you that towards defraying the expenses of that demonstration ... the sum of £15 has been subscribed already on this platform.²⁴

On Friday, 19 February, two days before the Hyde Park meeting, the second reading of the bill took place and was defeated by 234 votes to 215 and with that defeat the Palmerston government resigned. As Holyoake observed:

I have witnessed many great debates in Parliament, but I never saw the same vehemence and national spirit as was displayed from eleven o'clock till twenty minutes past two o'clock on Saturday morning ... When the division came the 200 majority

²² MEPO 2/68, 121–122.

²³ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 50.

²⁴ MEPO 2/68, 168–169.

of the Government changed sides or vanished, and, instead a majority was recorded against the 'Colonels' Bill ... and the Palace Yard contained a large throng of publicists and patriots waiting to learn the decision. They went huzzaing along the streets, and people leaned out of their bedroom windows to learn and cheer the good tidings²⁵

There were probably no people more surprised than the committee who organized the meeting at Freemasons' Hall. They clearly capitalized on the mood of the country and so rapidly did the sentiment change that they never even got their demonstration at Hyde Park, and Holyoake comments wryly that they spent more on trying to stop the Hyde Park meeting than they had advertising it.

The Trial of Dr Bernard

Dr Simon Bernard was born in Carcassonne in 1815 and wherever he went he seemed to attract trouble and "Eight prosecutions had spent their rage on him"²⁶. He arrived in London in 1851, took up practice as a physician especially in the treatment of speech impediments; but by 1853 he had already served a term in Newgate. He had been arrested and charged while the Palmerston government was in power but his trial was under the following government of Lord Derby. The indictment had been prepared, the defendant had pleaded not guilty and the trial would thus follow with inevitability.

The case was prosecuted by the Attorney General, Sir Fitzroy Kelly, with Edward James defending. The opening day of the five day trial was attended by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Chief Baron, Lord Mayor, and several Aldermen in state. Bernard who, as a foreigner, had the right to a jury of six Englishmen and six foreigners probably chose a jury of Englishmen declaring 'I trust my case to a jury of Englishmen.' There were no witnesses for the defence, and even James did not have much to say of a factual nature. Typical of the orations was

Tell him that though 600,000 French bayonets glittered before you, though the roar of French cannon thundered in your ears, you will return a verdict which your own breasts and consciences will sanctify and approve, careless of whether the verdict pleases or displeases a foreign despot ...²⁷

The judge summed up for a guilty verdict and just as the jury were about to retire, Bernard addressed them ending his remarks with the words: 'I have conspired – I will conspire everywhere – because it is my duty, my sacred duty, as of everyone; but never, never, will I be a murderer.'²⁸

²⁵ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 33.

²⁶ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 31.

²⁷ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 33.

²⁸ Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, Vol. II, 33.

Even Holyoake could not have been confident because he records James's closing address to the jury as 'I was in court and heard with amazement his ornate appeal so materially destitute of facts.' Bradlaugh had taken the opportunity to get a sympathetic juror to fill his pockets with sandwiches so that the jury might not feel pressed by hunger to reach a too rapid verdict. However after two hours the jury returned with a verdict of Not Guilty. Bernard's comment was, 'I do declare that this verdict is the truth, and it proves that in England there will always be liberty to crush tyranny. All honour to an English jury.'²⁹ On the acquittal Holyoake describes the scene as men waving their hats, the members of the bar cheered, ladies stood on their seats and waved their handkerchiefs or bonnets, and cheered again, and again, the crowd outside catching indications of the nature of the verdict, sent back in still louder cheers.

Loge des Philadelphes

The early years of the *Loge des Philadelphes* is well described by Ellic Howe in his paper 'The Rite of Memphis in France and England 1838–70.'³⁰ The entry in Wikipedia under 'Philadelphes'³¹ may make delightful reading but as it comments at the end 'All articles lacking sources' – it is however typical of the conspiracy theories that seem to abound in relation to many of the characters who feature in these events, and contains many clear inaccuracies.

What is clear however is that the majority of French *proscrits* did not leave France till after the *coup d'état* of December 1851. Louis-Napoleon, as President of the Republic, staged a coup and declared himself Emperor. Howe comments that most of the *proscrits*, whether members of the *Philadelphes* or not, would have been largely preoccupied with earning a modest living. It would appear that a warrant was received from France in 1850 and that the Order of Memphis was closed down by the French state subsequent to the 1851 coup.³² In 1853 the first Rite of Memphis lodge *Sectateurs de Menes* took up the Grand Lodge role from France and restyled itself as the *Grand Loge des Philadelphes*. Several lodges were opened across the country and abroad in New York, Belgium, Switzerland and in Ballarat, Australia.

The Lodge did continue in existence till around 1870 and did have Garibaldi as a member (whether a paying or honorary member is unclear) and that some of its members were actively involved as social radicals and with the Italian cause. The difficulty is

²⁹ M. C. Finn, *After Chartist: class and nation in English radical politics, 1848–1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 183, viewed on www.books.google.com, August 2008.

³⁰ E. Howe, 'The Rite of Memphis in France and England 1838–70', *AQC* 92 (1979), 1–15.

³¹ *Philadelphes* viewed at www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphes, August 2008.

³² Anon., *Masonic Intolerance – An Appeal to the Conscience of Enlightened Masons* (London: Truelove, 1869), a copy of a Communication from 'The Grand Lodge of Philadelphes' addressed to the Grand Lodge of England, and in the British Library, Shelfmark 4784.aa.38.(7).

in trying to determine how all their activities were linked. What is clear is that social and political radicalism among this group was not felt to be incompatible with membership of fraternal organizations in this period.

Perhaps the ethos of the lodge is epitomized by the 1857 change in its statutes whereby the first one now read:

Freemasonry is an institution essentially philanthropic, philosophical and progressive. It has for its object the amelioration of mankind without any distinction of class, colour or opinion either philosophical political or religious, for its unchanging motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.³³

Who Was Who in the 1858 Events?

The more one looks at the individuals involved in these events the harder it becomes to put them into particular niches; they were all social radicals. It would seem that each held radical views on a variety of causes, and probably to varying degrees of conviction, and that when a particular cause came to the top of the list a temporary coalition of individuals would form to deal with it. When the crisis or urgency for action had passed the individuals would then move on to other causes.

The Library at Great Queen Street contains a printed list of the members of the *Loge des Philadelphes* for the year 1863–64 and some entries are relevant to this paper, they are:

Bradlaugh (Charles) né a Londres, avocat 12, St Helens Place, Bishopsgate Street

Garibaldi (Giuseppe) né a Nice, general, île de Caprera

Holyoake (Austin) né a Londres, imprimeur, 32 Florence Street, Islington

Montague-Leverson, né a Londres, avoué, 12, St Helens Place, City³⁴

Those at the meetings which raised funds for the meeting at Freemasons' Hall, or took to the platform or spoke, are also worth some examination, and it proved possible to track most of them down. The following brief details give a clear impression of the varied interests of the group.

W. H. ASHURST was an eminent City solicitor, colleague of Rowland Hill, legal adviser to Robert Owen, Founder of the Society of the Friends of Italy 1850, Anti-slavery sympathizer and Chartist.

³³ A. J. Prescott, 'In the Cause of Humanity: Charles Bradlaugh and Freemasonry', *AQC* 114 (2003), 31.

³⁴ *Grand Loge des Philadelphes Annuaire 1863–1864* (1864) in the Library of Freemasonry, London, under BE682 PHI being a list of all the members with addresses and place of birth.

JAMES STANSFELD (1820–1898). Born in Halifax, studied law at University College London and called to the Bar in 1849. He was introduced to Mazzini in 1847 by his father-in-law W. H. Ashurst. Adviser to Garibaldi while he was in Britain in 1862. Experienced legal trouble regarding plots in France and was defended by John Bright (who spoke at the Freemasons' Hall meeting) and William Edward Forster. A champion of sexual equality and a Chartist.

PETER ALFRED TAYLOR. Scion of the Courtald family

SIR JOHN BENNETT (1814–1897). Politician and Watchmaker. Knighted for providing the Navy with chronometers.

WILLIAM SHAEN (1821–1887). Radical and lawyer, much concerned with the rights of women and prostitution and child abuse and at one time articled clerk to W. H. Ashurst. Founder of 'The Peoples' International League' in 1847 together with William Shaen, James Stansfeld, and Peter Alfred Taylor. The League's objective was 'to embody and manifest an efficient Public Opinion in favour of the right of every People to self-government and the maintenance of their own nationality'. A friend of Mazzini.³⁵

GEORGE LEVERSON. It has not proved possible to identify this individual; one might assume he was related to the Montague Richard Leverson, the patent agent and *Philadelphes'* member or indeed that he was Montague but was incorrectly named by Holyoake.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH (1833–1891). Taken in by Elizabeth Carlisle, widow of Richard Carlisle, he soon became well versed in radical politics. He joined the army in 1850 and was discharged after three years.

In 1858 he replaced George Holyoake as Chairman of the National Secular Society, played a role in the trial of Dr Bernard, became an articled clerk to Montague Leverson. Together with Annie Besant he republished an American work on contraception, in those days a radical and bold move. Although he had stood for Parliament many years before he was elected as Member of Parliament for Northampton but as he refused to take the oath on the Bible, desiring instead to affirm, he was not admitted. There were several repeat elections and he was not allowed to take his seat; eventually in 1885 he was admitted and the law changed to allow affirmation.

He was initiated in the *Loge des Philadelphes* on 9 March 1859 and subsequently joined a Paris lodge of the Grand Orient de France, *La Perseverance Amitié*, on 11

³⁵ Finn, *After Chartistism*, viewed on www.books.google.com, August 2008

March 1862. This seemingly did not stop him remaining a member of the *Philadelphes* for he was in their list in 1863–64. He then became a joining member of High Cross Lodge No. 754 on 27 September 1865, as joining from a French lodge³⁶ rather than the *Loge des Philadelphes*.

JOHN BAXTER LANGLEY. Surgeon, Unitarian, Freemason,³⁷ Reform League activist, pro North supporter in the American Civil War. He was Chairman of the Artizans Labourers and General Dwellings Company, whose objective was the provision of good quality working-class housing. The company developed the Shaftesbury Park Estate in Battersea, and it was planned that the public hall planned for the estate would also be the meeting place for a Lodge, primarily for the estate residents, and a warrant was granted. Alas, as a result of financial irregularities, the Company Secretary and Langley were imprisoned for eighteen months and expelled from Freemasonry.³⁸

MONTAGUE RICHARD LEVERSON (1830–1925). Born into a family of diamond merchants and his brother James continued in that trade. Described as a firebrand in his younger days he also claimed acquaintance with Louis Blanc (a Philadelphian). In 1848 he appeared in court on a charge of shooting and wounding. In 1852 he was listed in Directories as a Patent Agent and he later took on Charles Bradlaugh as an articled clerk (although this was elsewhere described as to a solicitor).

He left his wife and emigrated to Lincoln (Nebraska?) where he got involved in some well recorded wild west epics.³⁹ He later moved to California serving in the legislature there, and after became a Doctor of Medicine at Baltimore. Naturalized an American citizen in 1867, he returned to Britain in 1900, being later readmitted as a British subject in 1922. He remarried at the age of 70, lived in Bournemouth and died aged 95.

It is clear is that the members of this circle knew each other well. They switched between causes and groups supporting them as they chose and according to need. Largely they stood up for social and radical causes and for some of them fraternalism was part of that set of values, but it is almost impossible to estimate to what extent the *Loge des Philadelphes* was actually involved as a unit.

³⁶ A. J. Prescott, 'In the Cause of Humanity: Charles Bradlaugh and Freemasonry', *AQC* 114 (2003). Bradlaugh's life and Masonic interests are examined in great detail, otherwise he would have deserved considerable more commentary here.

³⁷ A. J. Prescott, 'Freemasonry and the history of the Labour Party in London: Some approaches' (2002). Viewed at www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/prescott08.html, August 2008. Prescott identifies Langley as a Freemason.

³⁸ A. J. Prescott, 'Freemasonry and the history of the Labour Party in London'

³⁹ F. W. Nolan, *The West of Billy the Kid* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), viewed on www.books.google.com, August 2008.

The Italian Risorgimento

While it might appear that these events were purely concerned with matters of internal British societal and political issues, the background is that one way or another they were all involved in supporting the progress towards the unification of Italy. Today detailed and fervent British concern with Italian politics might seem strange but back in the mid-19th century in Britain as well as elsewhere in Europe, it was a big issue and Garibaldi in particular a genuine popular celebrity. When he visited London in 1864 his popularity was such that between 100,000 and 500,000 people were said to have filled the streets. It was recorded that the children chanted ‘We’ll get a rope, And hang the Pope, So up with Garibaldi.’⁴⁰ Such were the tensions of the times!

To Brother Giuseppe Garibaldi also goes the distinction of being the only Freemason to have a food named after him. The Garibaldi biscuit was manufactured by the Bermondsey biscuit company Peake Freans, founded in 1857, in 1861 following the recruitment by the company of one of the great biscuit makers of Scotland, James Carr.

Giuseppe Garibaldi⁴¹ (1807–1882)

Born in Nice, Garibaldi joined the Carbonari while in his twenties and he played a role in the Uruguayan Civil War. This it was in 1844 that he became a Mason in Lodge *L’Asil de la Vertud* in Montevideo, this being an irregular lodge and an offshoot of Brazilian Freemasonry. Later the same year he joined Les Amis de la Patrie Lodge also in Montevideo but under the regular Grand Orient de France.

In 1848 he left Latin America after 14 years and his final words in a letter to his lodge members included, ‘... always ready to dedicate myself to the Sacred Rite to which I have the honour of belonging.’

In December, 1861 he was voted the title of ‘First Freemason of Italy’ by the Italian Grand Orient. The Supreme Council Grand Orient of Italy nominated him as Most Potent Sovereign Grand Commander Grand Master on 11 March 1862, an office he resigned on 7 July 1868.

In the 1863–64 list of members of the Loge des Philadelphes in London he is listed as a member. His relationship with the Rite of Memphis did not end there for very much later in 1881–82 he was Grand Hierophant of the Sovereign Sanctuary of Memphis-Misraim.

Garibaldi never joined a Lodge in Italy and took no direct interest in the Craft, but did accept some positions in Masonic bodies. He viewed Freemasonry as an organization he might bend to his particular political desires and was frustrated by his inability to use it as such. Masonry in its turn used Garibaldi as an exemplar to further their own cause.

⁴⁰ Garibaldi: The first global action hero. In *The Independent*, Saturday, 30 June 2007.

⁴¹ G. Raffi, ‘Garibaldi, The Mason’, in *Hiram* 2007, Issue 1, 9–14.

On the matter of religion he had expressed quite clear views: 'It is in vain that my enemies try to make me out an atheist. I believe in God. I am of the religion of Christ, not of the religion of the Popes.'⁴² Others were of a different opinion and he has been elsewhere described as a 'sentimental atheist'.⁴³

Of Garibaldi's Italian campaigns and vicissitudes much can be read elsewhere but he spent most of his later years on the Isle of Capri where he died.

Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872)

Mazzini was born in Genoa (then part of the French Empire) and his father was a professor and Jacobin.⁴⁴ He was admitted to Genoa University at the age of 15 and studied law. In Tuscany in 1830 he became a member of the Carbonari, was arrested and chose exile. In Marseilles he organized the political society La Giovine Italia whose objective was the union of the states and kingdoms of Italy into a single republic. Subsequently several similarly named organizations were formed in Germany, Poland and Switzerland. After a series of failed uprisings he ended up in London in 1837 on the first of several stays. It was during these periods in London that he met and mixed with the social activist intellectual group which included Holyoake and Bradlaugh; while earning his living as a journalist. He was also an atheist and republican.

While his ideas proved popular they were perhaps the cause of his being unwelcome in many places in Italy, especially his republican views. Such men of ideas are often unwilling to bend to the needs of political expediency. There is no substantive evidence that he was a Freemason, in spite of some claims that he was.⁴⁵

The English 'Excursion to Sicily' 1860

Support for the Italian cause continued and in 1860 upon a request from Garibaldi to send out an English contingent a Committee was formed. Holyoake was the secretary, W. H. Ashurst the treasurer and one of the members W. J. Linton who recorded events.

A Committee was quickly formed, and measures were promptly taken to enrol volunteers, for what was called an Excursion to Sicily, so called to keep clear of proved illegality ... Captain de Rohan (a native of Jersey) has already from his own means chartered the three steamships which took Garibaldi's force to Sicily. He helped us in the purchase of arms and organising, with advice and money, and as friend and agent

⁴² G. Garibaldi, *The Rule of the Monk; or Rome in the 19th Century* (London: Cassell, 1870), Vol. II, 91.

⁴³ E. Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement 1791–1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), 252. Viewed online at www.books.google.com, August 2008.

⁴⁴ The term Jacobin was in the context of the French Revolution related to membership of the Jacobin Club but is also used more generally to describe those who hold more extreme political views of revolutionary tendencies.

⁴⁵ There is actually no firm evidence that Mazzini was a Freemason, claims that he was tend to appear from sources that would not reference sources.

of Garibaldi took charge of the Expedition. In twenty-three days we had enrolled and were ready to despatch a thousand men, armed and equipped. I went with the main body of them by a night train to Harwich, where a steamer was provided to carry them to Sicily... The legion arrived in Sicily too late to be much needed, except as an expression of British sympathy, but its behaviour was good and it was honourably reported.⁴⁶

However raising such a force was contrary to the Foreign Enlistment Act and J. Baxter Langley, a Freemason, was brought before the Newcastle Police Court charged with violating this Act. He was found Not Guilty, and this was taken by the planners of the expeditionary force that the attitude of the government would be one of benevolent neutrality towards them.⁴⁷

Italian Risorgimento

It is appropriate to finish off this paper with a short, and inevitably deficient, summary of the events of the following decade, as this provides the context. It was probably inevitable that Italian Unification would take place. The north-west of modern Italy – Lombardy, Venetia, Parma, Modena and Tuscany – were Austrian, Savoy, and Sardinia were French; the Papal States straddled the Peninsular; and only in the south was there any Italian rule in the Kingdom of both Sicilies.

The Papal States were ruled by the Pope who was both a religious and political ruler. From 1831–46 Pope Gregory took a very conservative view of technological progress, for example he was opposed to gas lighting, banned railways from the Papal States calling them '*chemins d'enfer*' (ways of hell) in a parody of the French *chemin de fer*. The basis of this was that he felt they would promote commerce and thus increase the power of the bourgeoisie; in that he was right, but ultimately this was a battle that would always be lost as the forces of change proved remorseless.

In 1848, the year of upheaval and revolution across Europe, a representative government was installed in Rome, but it did not last long and the Pope returned. The Second War of Independence in 1859 saw Napoleon III accepting that Piedmont was to become part of Italy. The following year Naples fell to Garibaldi who after greeting Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy rode with him into Naples and afterwards he retired to the Isle of Capri. In 1866 while Austria was preoccupied with the Austro-Prussian War Italy seized Venetia from the Austrians. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 forced Napoleon III to withdraw his troops from the Papal States. A plebiscite was held in October 1870; the Papal States became part of Italy. Thus Italy, more or less as we know it today, was formed, although the exact story is of course very much more complicated. The full

⁴⁶ W. J. Linton, *Memories* (London: 1895), Chapter XXIV. Viewed at www.gerald-massey.org.uk, August 2008.

⁴⁷ E. Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 255.

sequence of events is much more complicated and not dealt with here but is an attempt to provide the conclusion to the events dealt with in the paper.

CONCLUSION

It is perhaps easy to forget that the weave and texture of Freemasonry varies from country to country and is very much a product of the history of each country. Thus in England where the monarchy broke with the Roman Catholic Church in the time of Henry VIII, the issue of the Divine Right of Kings resolved by beheading Charles I and experimenting with a Commonwealth, all before Freemasonry established itself. Consequently England did not need to create the concept of *laicite*.⁴⁸ In France and Italy they addressed these issues much later and thus their Freemasons had to decide how to address those issues – they had no choice because they were part of the events, and their Freemasonry has that as part of its heritage.

Perhaps Margot Finn says it better than I could:

For if the historiography of the mid-Victorian period is a historiography of liberalization, the history of liberal radical and chartist relations in the fifties was a history of tumultuous dissent. Manchester Liberals, Christian Socialists and ardent Unitarian radicals displayed diverse and often mutually antagonistic responses to commerce, industry, war and religion, but they enjoyed a common worldview nonetheless.⁴⁹

Thus perhaps it should be no surprise that we find men like Bradlaugh and Holyoake holding radical social and political ideals and at the same time being Freemasons or Oddfellows – they certainly did not see any incompatibility.

They were attacked at the time, Bradlaugh as to how as an atheist he had become a member of High Cross Lodge and Holyoake at the time of his prize winning essays for the Oddfellows because of his imprisonment for atheism. Worthy members of fraternal organizations? That is something we each can take a view on, however it is for their contributions to society in general that are still remembered today. What is certain is that all these people cared greatly about Britain and what it was and what it should become. They also saw Europe as the stage upon which the greater struggle was to be enacted.

⁴⁸ The choice of England is quite specific because the situation in Scotland was quite different, and not considered here.

⁴⁹ Finn, *After Chartism*, 187. Viewed on www.books.google.com, August 2008, 14.