

## **The Fabian Society and Europe during the 1940s: The Search for a ‘Socialist Foreign Policy’**

### **I The Fabian Society’s Roots and Early Ideas**

The Fabian Society is Britain’s oldest surviving left-of-centre political tendency. Founded in 1884, the Society was formed to bring about ‘the reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities’.<sup>1</sup> Taking its name and tactics from the Roman General Fabius in his struggle with Hannibal, the founders of the Fabians envisaged a long and gradualist fight against the evils of late-nineteenth-century capitalism. Furthermore, the struggle was against the other left-wing political currents of the period: social democracy, in the shape of the H.M. Hyndman’s Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF); William Morris and the Socialist League; and the anarchist tradition in Britain which had been swelled by refugees from European oppression. The 1880s also witnessed the rise of ‘new unionism’ which in essence sought to organize workers in large industrial trades unions, as opposed to the previously dominant craft-based unions.<sup>2</sup>

The Fabian Society therefore came into existence at a time of political ferment, and its founders positioned themselves against the revolutionary politics and tactics of the SDF and constructed a doctrine combining the positivism and utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. The first General Secretary of the Society, Edward Pease (1857–1955), noted that ‘the Fabians realised from the first that no such revolution was likely to take place, and that constant talk about it was the worst possible way to commend socialism to the British working class’.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as Tony Wright has noted, Fabianism meant a special kind of

socialism: 'A collectivist kind that emphasised the organisational attributes of socialism in arranging efficient production and egalitarian distribution through its control of the national and local state.'<sup>4</sup> Centrality was given to matters of economics and to the 'permeation' at national level (mainly Liberal MPs at first) and local government, through the election of Fabians to municipal positions, and by the influence of the ideas of the Society.

The Society always had a propensity to publish its ideas for a wider audience. The first rules, or 'basis', of the Fabians written in 1887, stressed the goal of socialism 'by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and society in its economic, ethical and political aspects'.<sup>5</sup> The *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, published in December 1889 brought the Society to the attention of the public and by March 1893 over 25,000 copies had been sold.<sup>6</sup> As the Fabians primarily focused on economic matters, publications of the Society reflected this bias. Between 1884 and 1924 the Society published 212 tracts, 34 books and pamphlets and 13 Research Department publications (259 in total), of which the predominant issues were economic and/or manifestos of 'practical socialism': only 10, or roughly 4%, covered issues of an international dimension.<sup>7</sup>

The Fabians' first major sortie into foreign affairs came when George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) was charged by the Executive Committee (EC) of the Society with writing a study of the Boer War. His resultant piece, *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto* (1900), caused great consternation within the Society: thirteen Fabians resigned, including the future Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. In essence, Shaw argued that imperialism was an established fact and therefore Britain should maintain and develop her Empire but along the lines of a 'great socialist Commonwealth'. Unlike many socialists at this time, who supported the enemies of British Imperialism, or those such as the recently formed Independent Labour Party (ILP) who saw war as an inevitable feature of capitalism and suggested steering clear of any such 'ruling class' conflict, Shaw suggested that Fabians should support the side of 'progress' — the British Government — and ruled out any championing of the Boers.<sup>8</sup>

Three factors fundamental to the beliefs and nature of the Fabian Society during its formative years were to interplay around Shaw's work. Firstly, as Bernard Porter notes, the early

Fabians 'always believed themselves to be rather above other socialists', more worldly-wise and with a deeper political insight. Pease made a similar point when he considered that 'we regarded membership as something of a privilege', which made the Society appear middle-class and elitist.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, Fabians adhered to the precepts of necessity, hence the support for British Imperialism in South Africa which was seen as basically more 'progressive', than the 'reactionary' nature of the Boers. Moreover, Empire-building, by its very nature, meant larger and larger units of diverse peoples under one government, which in turn was one step nearer the Society's ultimate desire of internationalism. Pease again provides a pertinent analysis from an early Fabian. Discussing Shaw's work, he noted that, 'we must accept the most responsible Imperial federations available as a substitute for [internationalism]'.<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, the acceptance of the Empire was based on the Fabian desire to organize British capitalism along better — Fabian — lines; the end result could of course be support of the economic and imperial *status quo*.

The débâcle over the Boer War left a deep mark on the Fabian Society in terms of its international work. As Porter comments it was 'not until well into the Great War' that the Society published 'another Tract on foreign or imperial policy'. Leonard Woolf, who had joined the Fabians in 1913, developed the concept of a 'world government' in his book *International Government*, which was issued in 1916 at the height of the First World War. Primarily, Woolf argued the case for establishing a supranational machinery that could prevent future conflicts. As Porter points out, Woolf's argument was very highly regarded, due in part to the 'internationalist mood' of the time.<sup>11</sup>

One of the key problems that the Fabians perceived with foreign affairs was the lack of direct control over the factors that governed international relations. Unlike domestic-policy issues, such as 'gas and water', where Fabians could seek to permeate policy, many agencies within the foreign-policy arena remained ideologically and, more pertinently, geographically outside the realms of the Society's influence. Despite this handicap, during the inter-war period the Society continued its interest, research and publications into foreign affairs.

A key element crucial to any analysis of the Fabian Society's European ideas during the 1940s was added towards the end of the previous decade. The acceptance by the Society of the

famous 'self-denying ordinance', which forbade a single political 'line', signalled the Society's recognition of its own changed circumstance. 'Objective research' had become the Society's *raison d'être*; Rule 3 of the Fabian basis of 1939 read as follows:

The Society as a whole shall have no collective policy beyond what is implied in Rule 2 [i.e. that all Fabians were socialists]; its research shall be free and objective in its methods. No resolution of a political character expressing an opinion or calling for action . . . shall be put forward in the name of the Society.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this self-proclaimed attempt at forbidding any move that may have been deemed a 'Fabian-line', the Society by its very nature strove for definitive conclusions on a range of issues. The search during the 1940s for an effective socialist foreign policy for the Labour Party, and by implication any Government that the Party formed, was one such subject. Essentially the Fabians' thinking in relation to Europe can be divided into two clearly demarcated periods: the war years (1939–45), and the period of the first Attlee Government (1945–50). It is to the first of these which we now turn.

## II The Fabian Society during the Second World War

One of the central tenets of the Fabian Society was the 'furtherance of socialism . . . [through] the publication of books, pamphlets and periodicals'.<sup>13</sup> During the 1940s the Society published a number of pieces relevant to Europe. All indicate the common points held by members of the Fabians — questionably the 'political line' of the Society — and the issues on which agreement proved increasingly difficult. Moreover, the authors of the pieces elucidate who attempted to exert influence upon whom within the Fabian Society.

During the depths of the Second World War, members of the ginger group Socialist Clarity (SCG) wrote *Labour's Next Step: A Wartime Strategy*. Its four authors (Austen Albu, William Warbey, Patrick Gordon Walker and Beatrice Kelly) stressed that as the British Labour Movement was the only democratic force free of Nazism it should be the 'vanguard of the forces of progress'. As past Labour Governments had demonstrably failed in defining a lucid foreign policy, clarity, the authors continued,

was needed if the future stability of Europe was to be guaranteed, as:

the fate of Europe will rest upon the complexion of the Government in power in this country at the end of the war . . . Labour's aim to secure a democratic and largely socialist Europe in which national sovereignty will be curtailed will, again, correspond much more closely with the profound desires of the people.

For the members of the SCG, therefore, the evolution of an integrated Europe where the powers of the nation state were limited was a clear desire which fitted the 'popular mood' of the time. To this end a Labour Government committed to Europe was a prerequisite.<sup>14</sup>

Within the pages of the Society's theoretical journal *Fabian Quarterly*, evidence can be found of the wartime search for a viable and stable solution to Europe's long-term problems. During the summer months of 1940, Barbara Wootton, a leading member of Federal Union (FU), and D.N. Pritt, MP, recently expelled from the Labour Party for his pro-Communist views and support for the Soviet Union's invasion of Finland, and a member of the Society, debated 'Socialism and Federation'.

The FU, as its title suggests, was created in 1939 to further the cause of federation on a world-wide scale. In Britain the surge of interest in federalism was at its height between the Munich agreement of 1938 and the fall of France in the summer of 1940: as is shown by the SCG's call for a limit upon national sovereignty. A Penguin Special, *The Case for Federal Union*, written by W.B. Curry, sold in excess of 100,000 copies within six months of its publication.<sup>15</sup>

Wootton stressed that federation was the only possible safeguard against war; probably based on Anglo-Franco-German co-operation, which, given the 'gloomy' war mood of 1940, was a surprising combination, but is indicative of the FU's goal of the widest possible federation. To safeguard against this three-nation alliance being seen as a bloc against the Soviet Union, Wootton continued, would require a world-wide federation, but not necessarily based on socialism. 'Federal Planning' of economic resources, social services, international public works, industry and agriculture were seen by Wootton as 'positive and constructive' measures to be enacted by a federal state. Socialists needed to support federation to ensure that the latter was developed in the correct manner.

Pritt countered by stressing that the real debate after the war would be between those who wished to re-establish capitalism and those who would 'seek a ring of Socialist states'. For Pritt, socialism was the only force capable of eliminating war between national communities, and between classes. Any potential combination of nations would require some sense of commonality and loyalty, which could only be engendered by the establishment of socialist states that were 'international in spirit and outlook', thus giving the protagonists a common identity and therefore a reason to join together.<sup>16</sup>

As part of the Fabians' research series of publications, Doreen Warriner examined the question of Eastern Europe post-war. *Eastern Europe After Hitler* (1940) sought to investigate the different economic and social developments of the eastern and western parts of the European continent. Interestingly, the author listed Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia (*sic*) and the Soviet Union as the former. Whereas, Britain, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, France and Belgium comprised the latter. The placing of Czechoslovakia (and Hungary) in the eastern sector did, of course, differ from many conceptions held during the war and post-war. Sentimentality over the Czechoslovakia débâcle of 1938 clearly mattered little to Warriner.<sup>17</sup>

Warriner categorized Eastern Europe's economic structures as primitive, which in turn had made political instability endemic; this revealed the attitude of superiority held by many socialists in the western half of Europe. In addition, Warriner questioned the viability of a large number of nation states, noting that, the Versailles settlement after the First World War, had 'allowed national self-determination to stand in the way of economic co-operation'. She agreed with the SCG in its condemnation of national sovereignty. Warriner's proposed solution to the problems of the Eastern European states was a major economic reconstruction involving their 're-integration with the life of the large industrial [i.e. Western] states and their colonial empires'. If eastern unity in the shape of a Customs Union, was established, allied with a similar unity of Western Europe, a successful federation of industrial and agrarian Europe could be instigated. Therefore, Eastern Europe was to be saved by the more 'advanced' Western sector of the Continent, whilst at the same time remaining agrarian.<sup>18</sup>

Periodically, the Fabian Society issued publications under the auspices of a committee. *A Word on the Future to British Socialists* was issued by a 'Committee of the Fabian Society' in May 1942 'for the purpose of drawing the attention of British socialists to certain conditions, arising out of Great Britain's changed world situation'. Recognizing that Britain's involvement in the war had brought attendant economic costs, the authors examined 'A Policy for the New Europe'. The economic unification of Europe forced by Nazism was seen 'in itself . . . [as] largely good'. Further, it was imperative that 'insane' trade barriers and lack of economic co-ordination did not reappear in post-war Europe. The authors stressed, that:

the remedy for this danger is internationalism — the unification of Europe . . . under a common Covenant with enough central power to secure the adoption of a common plan . . . [we must] create the international organisations of economic co-operation *before* we set about any rectification of political boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

Economic stability and co-operation were to be the foundation of any unified Europe post-war. The pamphlet continued that any moves toward unity would require the fullest agreement between the Soviet Union and Britain. Following a similar line to G.D.H. Cole in *Europe, Russia, and the Future* (1941), the authors stressed that the division of Europe was inevitable as 'the Soviet Union . . . is bound to play the premier part in Eastern Europe, on the morrow of victory as Great Britain is in the West'. Furthermore, a socialist government in Britain would allow a common policy to be developed with the Soviets, thus removing the 'perpetual threat of war'. Conversely, if Western Europe were instead rebuilt on capitalist lines, friction would remain between the competing ideologies.<sup>20</sup>

Contributions to the debate concerning Britain's new role post-war also came from exiled socialists. Wenzl Jaksch, representative of the Sudetenland German Social Democrats, writing during 1943 in *Fabian Quarterly*, raised a number of key questions. Recognizing that talk of 'world association' and 'federation' was in vogue, Jaksch asked a number of perceptive questions of the Fabians and the wider British Labour Movement: 'What was a socialist attitude to these type of organisations?' 'What form of supranational authority could socialists adopt?'. And, 'are we ready to prepare the ground for a European federation of Labour?' Europe, according to Jaksch, was to be

the battleground between new and old ideas post-war; old was seen as sprouting from the negative features of the Soviet Union, whereas, Britain could choose to be in the former camp if the attachment to the nation state could be broken. Jaksch's attitude could probably be explained by the fact that he wanted his homeland to break from Czechoslovakia.<sup>21</sup>

The Fabian Society acted during the war years as a focal point for many exiled socialists. Crucially, as Margaret Cole notes in her study of the Society, unlike the 'Labour Party, the Fabian Society looked for no "orthodoxies" among the socialists to whom it issued invitations. "Enemy" and "Allied" were alike treated as socialists.' This gave the Fabians a wide-ranging input from the London-based exiles and added an extra dimension to the 'European' ideas that circulated within the Society. Accordingly, during the early part of the Second World War, Rita Hinden and Margaret Cole 'called together a group of European socialists in exile with the purpose of making plans for an after-war map of Europe'. The consultative committee comprised socialists from France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, Norway and Italy. Unfortunately, the exercise was deeply unsuccessful as the exiles 'quarrelled violently between themselves'. Nevertheless, the intention of some members of the Society was clear: to act as a forum and meeting place for socialists from all European nations to discuss post-war plans.<sup>22</sup>

Within the orbit of the Fabian Society a working group composed of exiled socialists from Central and Eastern Europe was also formed. After much discussion an agreed statement on the future development of these parts of the Continent was issued in May 1942. Members of the group incorporating socialists from Croatia, Rumania, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria, gave wide support for the formation of Yugo-Bulgarian and Czech-Polish federations based on common Slavonic brotherhood. The fear that the latter pair — being more industrially developed — would dominate other Eastern European nations led delegates to additionally propose a European-wide federation, incorporating the Slavonic federations. In turn the continental settlement was to 'include Great Britain and the USSR if a stable peace was to be established in Europe and if the USSR was to have its suspicions of an East European Federation removed'.<sup>23</sup>



Furthermore, the Society acted as a link between many of the London-based exiles and members of the wider British Labour Movement in the country. A Fabian report dated 20 September 1941 commented that 'local labour parties have been circulated about the foreign speakers who are willing to give lectures on international subjects' and that more significantly, 'this move has brought a wide response from all over the country'. This is an indication of a wider interest in foreign affairs and Europe among Labour Party members in the non-metropolitan area than is usually acknowledged.<sup>24</sup>

### III The Fabian International Bureau

A new section of the Fabian Society had been formed during early 1931 which aimed to carry on one of the historical functions of the Fabians. The New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB) was to 'follow the Fabian tradition of socialist research'.<sup>25</sup> As part of the NFRB, a Committee for International Affairs was instituted in May of the same year. It was presented with a plan to research 'into the basis of internationalism, international economic relations and the prospects for a planned world economy, together with a survey of existing international agreements'.<sup>26</sup> The Committee functioned for nearly a decade and was eventually superseded by the Fabian International Bureau (FIB) in early 1941.

The FIB was instituted as a result of the success of its sister organization, the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB). According to Margaret Cole, on the suggestion of Hinden during 1940, and after the failure of the exiles to agree upon a common statement for Europe's future, the discussion of foreign affairs within the Fabian Society was to be separated into two distinct spheres: one dealing with the problems of post-war Europe; the other focusing on the problems of the British Empire. Hinden further suggested a 'special section [of] the Society in order to get into touch with the leaders of the colonial peoples [and] to work out policies for the redevelopment and ultimate "freeing of the Colonies" '. The FCB was a result of the latter suggestion, and the Bureau held its first meeting on 26 October 1940, at which Hinden was elected secretary and Arthur Creech Jones, MP, became chair.<sup>27</sup>

Despite initial hostility from the Colonial Office, the FCB was

perceived a success by the Fabians and led to a proposal to form an International Bureau to address the non-colonial arena. A recommendation by Warriner to the EC of the Fabians, of early 1941, suggested the following potential scheme of work for the FIB:

The function of this body [the FIB] will not be to formulate policy since that is the function of the International Department of the Labour Party, but to act as a *stimulus to discussions on socialist questions* . . . (1) to clarify the conditions of a new epoch of socialist co-operation in Europe through personal contacts and discussion between members of the Fabian Society and the representatives of European socialist movements now in this country . . . (2) [to look at] (i) the position of labour organisations in post-war Europe . . . (iv) the relationship of post-war Europe with the USA . . . [and] (3) To prepare the ground for an international labour strategy . . . and to *secure the support of public opinion in this country for revolutionary socialism in Europe*.<sup>28</sup>

The outline was accepted by the EC on 5 March 1941 and the FIB was created with Warriner as honorary secretary, Delphine Chitty as her assistant and a working committee drawn from the NFRB's International Affairs Committee (IAC).<sup>29</sup> Mildred Bamford acted as secretary from August 1941 until March 1946 and Philip Noel-Baker, MP, chaired the FIB until 1943 when Woolf took over. The inaugural public meeting of the Bureau held at Caxton Hall, London, on 24 January 1942 was addressed by two prominent international labour movement figures, Noel-Baker and Louis de Brouckère, with in excess of 200 delegates in attendance.<sup>30</sup>

The scope of work suggested for the FIB detailed above shows the wider perception the Society had of its own role during the Second World War. Firstly, as an adjunct to the Labour Party; secondly, as a forum for exiled continental socialists, in fact members of the consultative committee who had failed to agree a common plan for post-war Europe joined the Bureau; and lastly, as an active force in the galvanizing of public opinion. Interestingly Warriner's scheme suggested support for revolutionary socialism as opposed to the parliamentary form usually associated with the Fabians, perhaps an indication of the 'revolutionary' nature of British politics during the Second World War, and the influence of exiled socialists such as Jaksch. Certainly, the extraordinary conditions of the war were noted by the editor of the Society's monthly newspaper — *Fabian News* — who suggested that the war could be won by a twofold strategy: 'a

revolution in our internal economic life which can sweep aside the obstructive barriers of vested interests, and a revolution of the peoples of Europe against Hitlerism'.<sup>31</sup>

The FIB also brought together existing bodies focused on international matters within the Fabian Society. The IAC had attempted to establish concrete Anglo-French co-operation. A committee comprising Konni Zilliacus, G.D.H. Cole, Margaret Cole, Leonard Woolf, Henri Hauck, W.E. Williams and William Pickles was formed in June 1940, and published the journal *France and Britain*. This was initially a supplement to *New Statesman and Nation* (29.6.40), then became a part of the Worker's Educational Association periodical, *Highway*, and was finally an independent publication until it finally ceased in August 1945.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the IAC (and later the FIB) held weekly meetings during the war, which covered a variety of topics and countries, reflecting the interests of Fabian members. For example, the following topics were discussed during the period January 1940–December 1943: 'Federal Union' (April 1940); 'How To Win The Peace' (September 1940); 'Revolutionary aspects of the war at home and in Europe' (November 1940); 'The progressive mood in Britain' (February 1941); 'The Socialist International' (March 1942); and 'Post-war Relief and Reconstruction' (April 1943). The subjects under discussion also reveal the different stages of the conflict and how Fabians viewed the matters of urgency within British political life. Federal Union was a common call around the time of the fall of France and exhibits the potential to look for alternative visions for Europe. Similarly, the realization of the revolutionary nature of the war and the growing swing to the left, indicates the state of politics in Britain and on the Continent during the war. Later meetings (March 1942, April 1943) display the shift towards addressing practical post-war measures such as a reconstructed international socialist movement.<sup>33</sup>

During the same thirty-six months the IAC/FIB discussed the following European countries: Soviet Union (8½ times); Germany (7 times); France (6 times); Italy, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Spain and Czechoslovakia (3 times each). The discussions held are also a reflection of who operated within the Fabian-orbit, both exiled and British socialists and progressives. Three meetings of January 1941 are indicative: Dr Adam Pragier

on 'The Present and Future of Poland' (on 6 January); Paolo Treves on 'Whither Italy?' (13th); and W.N. Ewer on 'Labour and Foreign Policy' (28th). All of these figures were well known in left circles during the war years. Pragier (1886–1976) was a leading Polish socialist politician and Professor of Economics in Warsaw. Whilst in London he was a member of the Polish National Council and a member of the anti-German Fight For Freedom Group. Treves (1908–) meanwhile was a long-term member of the underground Italian Socialist Party. When exiled to London he worked for the BBC and lectured at the University of London. Ewer (1885–1977) was a figure of long-standing repute on the Left in Britain and had been the foreign editor of the *Daily Herald* from 1919.<sup>34</sup>

The FIB continued to meet throughout the remainder of the war, working on aspects of how post-war Europe could be redeveloped. Additionally, on the suggestion of Zilliacus, study groups were set up in 1942 to examine a number of topics: Anglo-American relations; Germany; Anglo-Soviet relations, international economic reconstruction; France; and, International Authorities. At its height, towards the end of the war, the FIB could claim in excess of four hundred members: a relatively large number of socialists expressing an interest in international affairs.<sup>35</sup>

Partly as a result of this success, the FIB became more positive in its outlook and proactive in its work. To this end Woolf wrote a pamphlet critical of the Labour Party's official statement of 1944 on the post-war settlement. His brief was to prepare a 'restatement of socialist principles', and according to Woolf's own papers he sought to redress the absence of a socialist foreign policy in Labour's document. In *The International Post-War Settlement* Woolf made two basic and key points. Firstly, peace could only be maintained through the co-operation of the Big Three (America, Britain and the Soviet Union); and secondly, the 'economic anarchy' of Europe which had caused two wars in the twentieth century, could only successfully be replaced by the implementation of a united socialist Europe.<sup>36</sup>

The latter point of Woolf's statement went much further than the Labour Party's official statement also titled *The International Post-War Settlement*, which focused upon a new United Nations allowing economic prosperity to flourish in Europe and world-wide. The debate at the Labour Party's Conference in 1944 is

also indicative of disagreements within the Labour Movement. Clement Attlee, when moving the report of the National Executive Committee (NEC) that contained the Party's official foreign policy statement, stressed that it was 'time that the nations of Europe should settle down as good citizens in a world of states'. Resolutions were moved by delegates which sought to go further than the NEC's position. For example, the delegate from Birmingham Moseley DLP, Henry Osborne, stressed his endorsement of the attempts to achieve a 'United States of Europe' which in turn required the immediate and full support of the leadership. Hugh Dalton, who had prepared the Party's official statement, replied for the NEC and asked for the resolution to be withdrawn but guaranteed that the matter would be subject to a 'close and careful study' involving 'consultation with our comrades drawn from other countries'.<sup>37</sup>

The FIB's optimism for the post-war world was further shown by the organization of a number of regional conferences in late 1944. Again on the subject of the International Post-war Settlement, successful gatherings were held in Bristol, Leeds, Watford, Reading, Birmingham, Sheffield, West Hartlepool and Preston.<sup>38</sup> During 1944 the FIB also formed a study group to examine, and possibly publish a pamphlet on, 'International Political Authority' (IPA). As part of the Society's research series the group produced *Labour and Europe: The Need for a Socialist Strategy*. The authors — Albu, Parker, Warriner, Paul Yates and Lillian Chase — sought to develop a socialist foreign policy with particular reference to Europe. Soviet influence on the eastern part of the continent was again recognized but, argued the authors, '[it was] impossible to divide the two spheres (East and West Europe) geographically . . . [as] Germany and Central Europe would fluctuate between them and would be a permanent cause of instability'. Therefore, Europe should be treated as an organic whole, and Anglo-American-Soviet relations had to put the Continent first. Europe in this example was seen by the authors as a potentially independent entity without Britain and the Soviet Union, and indicates the clear development from Warriner's 'industrial-agrarian' conception which included Europe's two wartime allies.<sup>39</sup>

Socialism was again charged with establishing and maintaining Europe's future peace by removing economic insecurity and poverty, in *Labour and Europe*. Better food, full employment and

a rise in living standards, planned through a European Economic Council, were envisaged to aid Europe's stable reconstruction and development. Britain had a major role in Europe through the election of a government committed to socialism, argued the authors, and, 'unless Labour can carry through a social revolution and economic planning in England, it will not be strong enough to build up the Socialist forces in Europe'.<sup>40</sup>

A Political Authority was also envisaged, with power passing from individual nation states to a supranational body, although which parts of a government's control were to be surrendered were not indicated. Background papers written by Woolf and Noel-Baker for the IPA Study Group suggest that members favoured a functional authority as the only viable alternative; federal union was deemed impractical as democracy was not yet sufficiently widespread in Europe. Furthermore, the negative experience of the failures of the League of Nations, witnessed at first hand by Noel-Baker for example, added support to the implementation of a less grandiose functional IPA post-war. The issues raised in *Labour and Europe* were to set the tone for the Fabian Society in the post-war years.<sup>41</sup>

#### IV The Fabian Society and the FIB, 1945–50

The Fabian Society in 1945 had an unprecedented opportunity to influence, or 'permeate' the new Labour Government's European policy. As Margaret Cole has noted, of Labour's 394 MPs elected in 1945, approximately 229 (58.1%) were Fabians, 'including the Premier, thirty-five under-secretaries and other officers of State, and eleven parliamentary private secretaries'. Although the extent of influence is hard to gauge, the Fabian Society and its International Bureau had a potentially advantageous opening.<sup>42</sup>

With the election of the Labour Government in July 1945 the FIB hoped to further cement the contact between itself and the Party. To this end several new members were accepted into the Bureau. The MPs Richard Crossman, Michael Foot, James Callaghan, Warbey and Ernest Davies were co-opted during December 1945 and were expected to liaise between the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and the Bureau. Noel-Baker, who had resigned as chair of the FIB in 1943, was anticipated to

maintain a positive contact from his new position as Minister of State at the Foreign Office.<sup>43</sup>

The leading role for British social democracy through the agency of the Labour Government *vis-à-vis* European socialists and socialism, which had been expressed by the International Authority Group of the FIB, was reiterated by Bamford, secretary of the Bureau, at a meeting of January 1946:

one of the important things at the moment is for European socialists to understand fully how the Labour Government intends to transform Britain into a Socialist country. . . [through] the great experience of democratic socialism through Parliamentary democracy . . . [the Government requires] a socialist attitude towards European functional organisations [as they] cannot be discussed and determined if the British attitude is not clear.<sup>44</sup>

Bamford recognized that the above was a task for the Labour Party rather than the FIB, but it was hoped that the Bureau through its parliamentary members could in some way influence the Government's European policy. The above statement also indicates the preference of the FIB's secretary at least, and one can safely assume for others within the Bureau's orbit such as Noel-Baker and Woolf, for functional co-operation rather than a federal approach to Europe. Opting for the functional route was a clear development from early published statements of the FIB and Society, for example Warriner's *Eastern Europe After Hitler* (1940), and *Labour's Next Step* (1940) written by members of SCG, which had tended to favour limits on national sovereignty and in some cases a federal Europe.

Any residue of 'federalism' within the Bureau could only result in tension between FIB members, and between sections of the Bureau and the Labour Party in Government. Two separate, but linked, incidents of 1946 and 1947 demonstrate this issue. Both concern the publication by leading Fabians of pamphlets that were critical of aspects of the Government's foreign policy, particularly in relation to Europe.

## V Labour's Foreign Policy (1946)

G.D.H. Cole was charged by the FIB soon after Labour's election victory, with preparing a statement on 'British foreign policy in relation to [available] resources and manpower'.<sup>45</sup> His

work was published in April 1946 as a *New Statesman and Nation* pamphlet under the title *Labour's Foreign Policy*. The author was unequivocally in support of Britain as the leader of a 'Western Group' of nations. Cole's criteria for inclusion in this group were: realism and morality in international affairs; the sound development of limited economic resources; democratic participation and consent of a country's electorate; and, for the Labour Government the leading role in strengthening 'liberal socialism', or democratic socialism. The use of 'liberal socialism' by Cole can be seen as an attempt to distance the 'Western Group' from the 'non-liberal' tradition of the Soviet Union — an important consideration within the emerging Cold War tension. Further, the use of the adjective 'liberal' created an historical link to the values of a 'good and fine' political tradition, values which Cole hoped would be carried into the 'new [socialist] society that is being born'. Cole, though, maintained and stressed his long-standing positive view of the Soviet Union by suggesting that this group of Western nations would seek friendship with Russia to further 'the Socialist cause'.<sup>46</sup>

For Cole the states to be included in his group, or 'Western Union', were: Britain, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and France. With the future possible addition of Italy, Austria and 'other nations' once they had demonstrated their adherence to the principles of 'the West European way of life', one would assume that Cole was alluding to Germany, Spain, Portugal and Greece in this statement. The unity which Cole envisaged was to follow 'supra-national lines' — as national sovereignty had proved itself obsolete — but importantly only within the economic sphere. Once the economic base was sound, political developments could proceed. Moreover, Cole stressed that a federal government or a European parliament were unnecessary as, 'the whole thing could be done by treaties, filled out by agreements for close economic collaboration; and the political machinery could be no more than a periodically meeting West European Congress'.<sup>47</sup>



## VI A Socialist Foreign Policy and The Labour Party's Dilemma (1947)

One of the yawning gaps in the Government's policy perceived by many of the Labour Party's rank-and-file and backbench MPs was the absence of a coherent overseas policy. More importantly, a socialist foreign policy was seen as an urgent requirement. The tension that arose from this issue led to various public and private demonstrations by both left-wing MPs and the Party's local activists. Most prominent within this discontent was the pamphlet *Keep Left* which was published in May 1947.<sup>48</sup>

The FIB meanwhile, had formed a sub-committee in March 1946 to discuss the wider implications of Cole's work. Members were charged with developing ideas in three areas:

- (a) an alternative approach to the problem of reconstruction in Europe should be worked out on the basis of the 1942 Anglo-Soviet Treaty at a practical level . . .
- (b) a study should be undertaken to show in detail how problems in the economic field could usefully be tackled on a *European as distinct from a West European* basis. . .
- (c) how far specific European economic arrangements were *compatible with existing Commonwealth arrangements*.<sup>49</sup>

Point (a) was suggested by Zilliacus who was renowned for his favourable attitude towards the Soviet Union. More importantly, according to Zilliacus, this facet mirrored the Labour Party's agreed international position which had been set out in *The International Post-war Settlement* (1944) and agreed by the Party's conference of that year. The latter two points — (b) and (c) — are both symptomatic of the Fabians' economic bias and show the absence of any examination of political developments. However, point (b) is of wider interest as it suggested that the FIB should maintain a transcontinental view and not limit itself to Cole's restrictive 'Western Union'. The last point, however, indicates the pre-eminence given to pre-existing economic relations with the Commonwealth, over any *potential* European economic developments. Therefore, for some members of the FIB, any development of intra-continental co-operation was to be secondary to Britain's primary economic relationship with the Commonwealth.<sup>50</sup>

Few concrete conclusions were forthcoming from the FIB's discussions and towards the end of 1946 Bosworth Monck and

Anne Whyte, secretaries of the Fabian Society and the FIB respectively, produced a paper for the Bureau's meeting of December 1946 which sought once again to develop the foundations of a 'socialist foreign policy'. The principles that formed the basis of the paper were essentially twofold. Firstly, neither the Soviet Union, or the USA, could be blamed solely for the aggression evident within the Cold War. Secondly, Britain, although no longer a leading power in the superpower category, could and more importantly should, follow an independent line combining the twin pillars of social democracy: political democracy and economic planning.<sup>51</sup>

Interestingly, at the same December meeting a paper prepared by Hinden — FCB secretary and shortly to join the Socialist Vanguard Group (SVG) (an ethical grouping which operated from within the Labour Party throughout most of the 1940s) — which examined the principles of a socialist foreign policy was not discussed, despite having been previously circulated to FIB members. The author stressed that 'equality of opportunity' had to be the basis of any foreign policy for socialists, as it was within the domestic arena. If a Labour Government was to intervene in another nation's affairs, a criterion on which to base judgement was needed. For Hinden, 'what is the purpose of intervention?' remained key. Britain could only maintain her influence in the world by adhering to her principles and, crucially, her morality. Any pursuance of power politics was unjustified as it was immoral. The stress on the moral dimension to socialist politics and the negative features of power politics was a central tenet of the SVG's ethical socialism, and, of course, was also at the root of Fabian philosophy. By Hinden's reckoning, intervention in Spain during the Civil War, or Czechoslovakia in 1938, would have been justified, whereas the bolstering of Britain's power position in Greece post-war was not. Ultimately, any one country's judgement would be subjective and therefore, argued Hinden, an effective international organization was required.<sup>52</sup>

Bureau members were encouraged to write criticisms of the Whyte/Monck thesis and to come up with their own versions of what should constitute the basis of a socialist foreign policy. By February 1947 a number of contributions had been made. Papers were received from Zilliacus, Ewer, Denis Healey, Margaret Cole, Woolf, Helen Grant and Warriner. Zilliacus stressed the need for Anglo-Soviet (and Franco-Soviet) co-operation and

friendship to aid European reconstruction; Ewer agreed with the main points made by Whyte and Monck, but stressed a realistic acceptance of the international situation which meant accepting Anglo-American co-operation to resist Soviet expansionist policies; Healey, International Secretary of the Labour Party, followed a similar line to Ewer; alternatively, Woolf suggested an absolute position of neutrality for Britain with the ultimate aim of the Government's foreign policy being the promotion of socialism abroad; Grant and Cole both stressed the lack of examination by Monck and Whyte of the economic policies to be pursued. In essence the divergent positions centred on who was to blame for the breakdown in Big Three relations and the emerging Cold War; and by implication whether Britain could, or should, play an independent role with possible concomitant economic co-operation with other West European nations.

Of course all such debates were to become increasingly academic. The economic weakness of much of the European Continent meant either financial reliance upon the USA, or economic ruin. Concretely this led to the announcement by George Marshall (US Secretary of State) in June 1947 of an extensive aid programme for Europe: what commonly became known as the 'Marshall Plan'. Any political and economic independence for Britain and other European nations had become no more than a 'pipe-dream'. However, this does not downplay the significance of the ideas that were discussed by members of the Society and FIB.<sup>53</sup>

After several months of dispute the members of the FIB failed to resolve their fundamental differences over the direction of the Government's foreign policy. At the suggestion of Grant, Woolf was given the unenviable, and probably impossible task of editing all of the contributions, whilst maintaining their various interpretations but, 'without attempting to reconcile the various points of view'. The document that Woolf eventually produced not unsurprisingly met with criticism from his fellow FIB members. At a Bureau meeting of September 1947, Healey moved that Woolf's paper be rejected, Monck meanwhile, suggested the publication of a symposium. Both resolutions were lost and it was agreed, by seven votes to four, that the paper be published under Woolf's name. The EC of the Fabians agreed with publication but suggested the addition of an appendix written by Ewer, or alternatively a separate pamphlet.<sup>54</sup>

Following nearly twelve months of discussion, *Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma* was published in November of 1947. The pamphlet was issued with a critical comment by Ewer which repeated his call for 'realism' in Britain's policy, and a foreword by Harold Laski, who was chair of the Fabian Society. Laski's comments attempted to act as a 'mediating' voice between the positions taken by Woolf and Ewer. The need for Laski's 'placatory' voice was indicative of both the Society's differences in relation to the Government's foreign policy and the internal disagreements of the Fabians; clearly the dilemma also belonged to the Fabian Society.

Woolf's main criteria for an independent socialist foreign policy for Britain were: economic independence, the absence of power politics, and a call for an improvement in the machinery of the recently created United Nations Organisation (UNO), which in turn could secure peace. Moreover, Britain should 'refuse absolutely to take any part in the wrangles and recriminations of the [UNO's] Security Council and Assembly', stated Woolf. The UNO should be extended into 'every sphere of action', especially economic matters. Woolf went on to suggest, partly as an antidote to the machinations of the superpowers at the UNO, a Western Group of nations 'anxious to stand outside the new power politics' and willing 'to create a solidarity, both economically and politically, of the smaller powers'. The author also argued for the necessity of Britain accepting its position as a second-class power, the liquidation of the old-style Empire and its replacement by a 'Commonwealth of Free Nations . . . and association based upon international friendship and co-operation for economic and peaceful ends'. The ultimate benefit of this policy for Britain, and the Western Group, would be the economic recovery of Western Europe.<sup>55</sup>

As part of the FIB's protracted discussions around the Whyte/Monck socialist foreign-policy thesis and Woolf's subsequent pamphlet, Warbey, previously a member of SCG, developed a common area for the Fabian Society: namely economic policy. *Can Britain Recover? A Survey of Foreign Economic Policy* (1948) examined the economic problems that the author thought would impact on *all* of Europe: a possible slump in the American economy, and the knock-on effect to commodity prices for primary products. Warbey noted that:

These complementary problems, experienced by a large number of countries in Europe, and by their overseas territories, might well induce them to come together for mutual aid and protection. In these conditions it might be possible for Britain to take the lead in the formation of a kind of 'Regional Trade Club', embracing as much as possible of Europe, the British Dominions . . . and Europe's overseas territories.<sup>56</sup>

He was stating a clear economic case for the 'third force' of European nations and their respective 'Empires': a common argument on the Labour Left in the early post-war period. Club members were expected to maintain fair prices for manufactured and primary products, guarantee markets for set minimum periods, maintain full employment and production, and form Joint Purchasing Commissions for external buying.

Warbey also argued for the inclusion of Eastern European countries, if they could be persuaded to join. Most importantly, Warbey recognized that the economic co-operation he proposed would lead to some surrender of a nation's self-government as 'economic integration inevitably involves a *de facto*, if not a *de jure* surrender of national sovereignty'. A clear contrast with the limits placed on European co-operation/unity by the 'functionalists' such as Healey who stressed that the inter-governmental approach pursued by the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, was sufficient in itself. Interestingly, the Government's functionalism conflicted somewhat with strong US pressure for closer European integration.<sup>57</sup>

Writing in *Fabian Quarterly* during the last months of 1947 Warbey, when reviewing Woolf's pamphlet on Labour's foreign policy, stressed the non-confrontational nature of his 'middle' group of nations. Britain was to lead this assembly of like-minded countries in a mediating role, rather than as a third power bloc between the increasingly hostile superpowers. Warbey's conception was to incorporate at base an Anglo-French Union which could act as a focal point for other democratic socialist nations of Western and Northern Europe, whilst maintaining strong ties with the Commonwealth and other European empires. *Keep Left* had suggested a similar formulation more than twelve months previously. At the level of governments post-war Anglo-French co-operation this had been signalled by the Dunkirk Treaty in 1946 which tied the two nations together in a military alliance. This in turn was a precursor to the larger and grander treaties of Brussels (1948) and the North Atlantic (1949).<sup>58</sup>

## VII The Fabian Society and Western Union

The Foreign Secretary gave a speech to the House of Commons on 22 January 1948 in which he detailed a somewhat ephemeral perception of a 'Western Union' (WU).<sup>59</sup> Bevin's pronouncement gave the FIB a new impetus in its search for a socialist foreign policy. Moreover, the Bureau and the Society now had a Government policy statement, however imprecise, to argue for and against.

Whyte, the new secretary of the FIB, suggested, in a memorandum of 4 March 1948, that a study group was required to define more closely how the WU concept could be developed and possibly translated into a Fabian pamphlet. Several areas were to be covered: the meaning of WU; the motives for WU; steps already undertaken; possible economic and/or political developments; and, the implication for Britain's standard of living and relations with the Dominions and Colonies.<sup>60</sup>

As part of the FIB's WU discussions Allan Flanders, who was also a leading member of SVG, drafted a paper entitled 'A Socialist approach to Western Union'. The author suggested that WU could be 'the first important step towards creating a Third Force in world affairs, independent *in its policy* of both Russia and the US'. Flanders was quick to recognize the existing economic and military dependence on America but hoped that WU could be a major factor for peace by not being 'demonstrably . . . directed against Russia or Eastern Europe'. Stability could only be maintained through the common planning of the economies of Western Europe, through 'binding decisions' and 'stable economic and political systems'.

The countries to be included in Flanders's conception of WU also reveal some interesting points: Norwegian and Danish membership was questioned, as they would fall outside of the geographical scope of WU; Portugal and Spain were to be excluded as they did not exhibit the basic 'civil liberties' required, thus incorporating an ethical judgement rather than economic and/or political considerations; neutrality would probably prohibit the participation of Sweden and Switzerland; and WU needed a stable German government. Finally, the question of a common Western European parliament, or some form of federal government, was deemed inessential by Flanders. WU should have greater flexibility and need be no more than an 'inter-

national club'; the similarities with Cole's concept of a 'European Congress' reveal the common solutions arrived at by persons of very different political traditions and sympathies.<sup>61</sup>

More widely, the search for an effective socialist foreign policy in the form of a WU is indicative of the Fabians' search for a strong philosophical foundation for democratic socialism, to resist the perceived Communist threat. The Cold War therefore forced non-Communist socialists to rethink their own basis and define more concretely the factors that underlay their political perspective: political democracy and economic planning. One could argue that the roots of the revisionism of the 1950s, usually associated with Hugh Gaitskell, and in which the successor to the SVG — the Socialist Union — played a major role, were to be found in this reappraisal.<sup>62</sup>

The FIB organized a conference during 1948 in response to Bevin's Western Union speech which attempted to analyse how the Foreign Secretary's pronouncement could be made more concrete. 'Western Union and European Recovery' was held at Beatrice Webb House, Pasture Wood, from 30 April to 2 May. Topics addressed were: the Socialist Approach to Western Union (Flanders), the Political Issues (Healey), the Economic Issues (David Worswick), and the Imperial Aspect (Hinden). The calibre and esteem of the speakers is revealing: Flanders and Hinden were both well known within their individual fields, industrial relations and colonial matters respectively, and of course both were also members of the SVG; Healey was the secretary of the Labour Party's International Department, whilst, Worswick was a leading economist.<sup>63</sup>

Synopses of the speeches are of interest in relation to the Bureau's attempt to develop the Western Union concept and to widen the discussion to the Society as a whole. Worswick in essence restated in great detail the economic arguments prevalent within the Fabian Society, and made previously by G.D.H. Cole in *Labour's Foreign Policy*. Flanders, meanwhile, desired 'to protect the possibility for democracy and socialist development'. This was to be achieved by reducing the threat of totalitarian politics of both left and right, an idea which was long-standing within the SVG tradition. For Flanders the Labour Government was the only force capable of rallying 'a third force in world affairs'. To achieve this end would require the further development of the 'beginnings of economic union and [the] Brussels

Treaty' which were emerging. Coincidentally, the papers of the SVG show a similar shift from an independent grouping of Western European nations to a reliance on the military-based Brussels Treaty. The stress from Flanders on economic and military issues was not wholly unexpected, due to the SVG's propensity to defend a 'realistic' attitude in its political position. The similarities with Cole's points in *Labour's Foreign Policy* are again revealing.<sup>64</sup>

Healey raised a number of issues concerning membership of WU. Although, he noted, the nations of Western Europe now shared common experiences through the Marshall Plan, difficulties were still apparent with more in-depth association. Following a similar approach to that of Flanders in the FIB WU Study Group, Healey suggested that undemocratic regimes such as Portugal, Greece and Turkey should be excluded: again an ethical judgement. Ex-enemy nations — Italy and Germany — also raised problems — the former was still 'tainted' by Fascism, whilst the latter was occupied by the Allies and was not yet therefore a free nation. The adherence to neutrality meant that the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland would stay outside of WU. Therefore, as with the SVG, we again see the preference amongst socialists within the Fabian orbit for a grouping of countries within the western corner of Europe. In addition, according to Healey, only the Benelux grouping wanted any form of supranational settlement. Whereas, Healey suggested, any 'progress towards unity [depended] first on creating an over-all level of economic stability'. Echoes of Cole's stress on economic security are again interesting. Furthermore, the Fabian 'economistic' tradition remained strong.<sup>65</sup>

On the issue of WU and the colonies, which by its very inclusion at a conference on 'European recovery' indicates its importance to the European debate, Hinden suggested a more progressive line than hitherto employed by the Labour Government. She stressed the need to combine economic development with self-government whilst avoiding the danger of treating the colonial areas as mere appendages to Britain and the other countries with dependent territories. Delicacy was required, according to Hinden, when dealing with the dominions in relation to the possibility of Britain joining any WU. Self-governing members of the Commonwealth needed to be kept abreast of, and 'on board' with, the Government's decisions. The links



between Dominions and mother country were therefore to remain a key component of any WU.<sup>66</sup>

The attendees at this gathering are revealing. In total sixty-one persons are listed as present and they included: the MPs John Hynd, Lucy Middleton and Arthur Palmer; James Middleton who was the ex-General Secretary of the Labour Party; and Mary Saran of the SVG. Interestingly thirty-four (57.6 %) of the conference delegates were women.<sup>67</sup>

Correspondence between Whyte and members of the FIB WU study group reveal the growing realization that the opportunity for developing an independent Fabian 'WU-line' had quickly disappeared. As the boundaries of the Cold War became more fixed and the tension between the superpowers more apparent, Whyte wrote to the MPs R.W.G. Mackay and Christopher Shawcross stating that specific memoranda were to be drafted by members of the FIB on subjects such as coal, steel, agriculture, automobiles and potential political structures, thus confirming the Fabians' adherence to a more functionalist approach.<sup>68</sup> Whether the project progressed any further is unclear as records do not survive, but the implication that the study group should limit itself to concrete individual issues rather than an overall view of WU would suggest that members were in general agreement with the Government's line: all that needed developing were the details. In essence, these were the reconstruction of the economies of Western Europe and the acceptance of the military structures which were defined by the Brussels Treaty signed in March 1948. Or it may have indicated a general acceptance of the inevitable, and the predominance of security concerns during the early stages of the Cold War.

### VIII The Fabian Society and the Strasbourg Assembly

The last Fabian items to be discussed date from 1948–9 and deal with the debate around the possibility of a political authority for Western Europe and its impact on international relations. Mackay, a long-time keen federalist and founder of the unofficial PLP Europe Group in December 1947, argued within *Fabian News* during September 1948 for a thoroughgoing merger of national sovereignty and the establishment 'of a new state with power to plan [the] economic resources of Western Europe'. He

also went further and suggested that 'political union' of the European nations receiving aid as a result of the Marshall Plan was urgently required. A constituent assembly should be convened by the end of 1948, continued Mackay, as 'a European Federation' was the only guarantee against the 'economic and political ruin with which the states of Western Europe are today confronted'.<sup>69</sup>

Mackay's article provoked a number of critical replies, two of which were printed in the following month's edition of *Fabian News*. The political economist Thomas Balogh and E.T. Lewis made similar points in response to Mackay. Both essentially argued that only 'economic collaboration' was viable, as the nations of Western Europe did not share the necessary 'similar social structures' required for successful political union. For Balogh the 'real third solution of combining economic democracy with political liberty' was the only viable answer to Western Europe's problems. Hence, all participating countries required socialist governments first. The rise of *laissez-faire* policies, allied to Christian Democratic parties in France and Germany, were antithetical to the programme followed by the Labour Government since the 1945 election and made political union grossly impractical. Lewis stressed the pertinent, and oft-raised point of many on the Labour Left, that Britain's stability would be jeopardized by the fragile situation in France if political union were implemented. The spectre of 'communist dictatorship' was also raised: Lewis stated that introducing a federal parliament with proportional representation would bring a 'chaotic cure', that is Communist deputies, to Europe's problems.<sup>70</sup>

Mackay was to return to the fray concerning a political union in 1950. Commenting on the Strasbourg Assembly, three Labour MPs who had been part of the British delegation — Mackay, Seymour Cocks and Maurice Edelman — published their observations for the FIB.<sup>71</sup> Cocks recognized that the superpower-dominated world required military alliances in Western Europe, such as the Brussels Treaty and NATO, coupled with 'gradual progress to closer [economic] integration'. Furthermore, Britain's relationships with the Commonwealth and Europe should not be irreconcilable. The ultimate aim remained 'the United States of Europe', but not in the foreseeable future as economic compatibility had to be established first. The added complication of the

Pound and the Sterling trading area also had to be resolved before further unification could be attempted, he continued.

Not unsurprisingly Mackay continued to stress his favourable opinion of a 'European Federation' as the only possible solution to what he perceived as the impending economic catastrophe in Europe. Economic decisions would have to be made by a political authority if this crisis were to be avoided. Furthermore, Mackay stressed that the post-war economic superiority of the USA was due to its large internal market, which was governed by a single political authority. Links with the European empires were also a central component of Mackay's conception as, 'it will have very close preferential agreements with the British Commonwealth; the French, Belgian and Dutch Empires'.

Edelman stressed the diverse meanings that were applied to the term 'unity'. The idea had many meanings to 'mystics, federalists and functionalists'. Additionally, the MP for Coventry West again raised the important question alluded to by Balogh and Lewis: was unity to be achieved by *laissez-faire* or planned economics?<sup>72</sup>

## IX Conclusion

From the outset the Fabian Society concentrated on matters of economics; in relation to Europe, any post-war plans reflected this bias. Calls for European Unity, although containing some political dimensions, particularly when the 'popular mood' was more favourable towards federalism, or a restraint on national sovereignty, stressed the need for economic stability and co-operation. Moreover, the emergence of defensive configurations to resist Communism involved ethical or moral judgements of the nations suitable for such groupings. As with economics, morality formed a key component of the Fabians from the outset.

Part of the nature of the Fabian Society was the dissemination of ideas formulated by members to the wider labour movement and public. The array of published views within the Society's periodicals and pamphlets reflect this tendency. Additionally, the propensity to act as a forum for ideas led to the establishment of the FIB in 1941. The FIB in turn concentrated specialists in this area, creating an arena for the heated debates on the attributes of a socialist foreign policy during the post-war years.

The self-denying ordinance introduced in 1939 was formulated to stop any political line being ascribed to the Fabians, but, directly added to the variety of opinions on Europe at play during the 1940s within the Society. For example, the war years witnessed the publication of a wide range of ideas including: a federal Europe; a Europe led by Britain; a socialist Europe; an economically planned Europe; and conceptions of the Continent both including, and excluding Britain (and the Soviet Union). After 1945, economic planning through functional bodies, and an alliance of an ever decreasing number of (Western) European nations dependent on Atlantic ties became the majority opinion within the Society. Dissident voices, though, were still apparent. Warbey for example, still envisaged a 'mediating' third force. Whereas Mackay held firm to a federal vision for Western Europe. This diversity was also the result of the different political complexions of the groupings and individuals who sought influence within the Fabians: SCG, SVG, FU, Healey, Warriner, Woolf and exiled socialists.

Lastly, during the second half of the decade the quest for a socialist foreign policy gathered pace and urgency with the development of the Cold War. Consequently, members of the Fabian Society attempted to reformulate a complete vision of their perspective of socialism, starting in 1946 — in the overseas arena — with G.D.H. Cole's *Labour's Foreign Policy*. As a result, the search for a socialist foreign policy became entwined and eventually submerged within the growing conflict between the superpowers, whilst Europe became the crucible for an ideological battleground rather than a safeguard for peace.

### Notes

I would like to thank Isabelle Tombs, Karl Koch and Graham Higgins for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Place of publication in the following references is London unless otherwise stated.

1. Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (3rd edn 1963), 31.
2. *Ibid.*, 53–68. Social democracy in this context equates to the Marxism of the SDF rather than the Labour Party's later 'reformist' guise. For a recent re-examination of the Fabians, SDF and Socialist League, see Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain, c.1881–1951* (Stroud 1997), 1–24.
3. Pease, *History*, 61. Part of the rationale for this article is to show who was discussing the question of Europe with whom within the Fabian Society during the 1940s. Therefore, where available, brief biographical details are given within the footnotes.

4. Tony Wright, *Socialisms Old and New* (1997), 81.
5. Taken from the basis of the Society (1887–1919) as reprinted in Margaret Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* (1961), 338.
6. Laybourn, *Rise of Socialism*, 23.
7. Pease, *History*, 289–302 lists all of the Society's publications from 1894 to 1924.
8. G. Bernard Shaw, ed., *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society* (1900), 3–4, 46, 58; Bernard Porter, 'Fabians, Imperialists and the International Order', in Ben Pimlott, ed., *Fabian Essays in Socialist Thought* (1984), 54. For a description of the debate within the Society at the time, see Pease, *History*, 135–7.
9. Porter, 'Imperialists', 56; Pease, *History*, 102.
10. Pease, *History*, 136–7.
11. Porter, 'Imperialists', 59–61. The Union of Democratic Control established in August 1914 and the League of Nations Society which followed in May 1915 are indicative of this 'internationalist' mood. See the work of the FIB's study group on international political authority, c.1944 for Woolf's continuing concern in this area. Leonard Woolf (1880–1969), Fabian member (1913–69), chair of Fabian International Bureau (FIB) (1943–53), Editor of *The Nation* (1923–30), joint-editor of *Political Quarterly* (1931–59).
12. Cole, *Story*, 248, 339. For the various bases and rules of the Society, see 336–41.
13. *Ibid.*, 339.
14. Socialist Clarity Group (SCG — Austen Albu, Beatrice Kelly, Patrick Gordon Walker and William Warbey), *Labour's Next Step: A Wartime Strategy* (Tract No. 252) (May 1940), 3, 9, 12. The SCG published the influential *Labour Discussion Notes* during the war years. For more on the SCG see Isabelle Tombs, 'Les Exilés Socialistes À Londres, 1939–1945', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* Vol. 46, 2 (Avril–Juin 1999), 263–79. Austen Albu (1903–94), SCG founder-member, Deputy President of Governmental Sub-Commission of Control, Germany (CCG) (1946–7), Deputy Director of British Institute of Management (1947–8), Labour MP, Edmonton (1948–74), Fabian. Patrick Gordon Walker (1907–80), SCG founder-member, BBC European Service (1940–4), Labour MP, Smethwick (1945–64), Fabian, Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to Herbert Morrison (1946), Parliamentary Under-secretary Commonwealth Relations Office (1947–50). William Warbey (1903–80), SCG co-founder, Chief Press Officer Norwegian Government (London) (1941–5), Labour MP, Luton (1945–50).
15. W.B. Curry, *The Case for Federal Union* (Harmondsworth 1939); Martin J. Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union, 1945–95* (1996), 19.
16. 'Socialism and Federation', Barbara Wootton, reply by D.N. Pritt, *Fabian Quarterly* No. 26 (Summer 1940), 10–17. Interestingly, the basic difference between Wootton and Pritt — was socialism required for effective federation? — was to reappear most vividly within Labour Party circles in 1947–8, when the unofficial Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) Europe Group sought to define its own position in relation to European integration/co-operation. See Jonathan Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left, 1945–51* (1988), 65–71. Barbara Wootton (1897–1988), Research Officer, TUC and Labour Party (1922–6), Fabian, member of Federal Union, Professor of Social Studies University of London (1948–52). Denis Nowell Pritt (1887–1972), lawyer, Labour MP, North

Hammersmith (1935–50), expelled from Labour Party (March 1940), stood as Labour Independent (1945), National Executive Committee (NEC) of Labour Party (1937–40), Fabian (1932–41).

17. Doreen Warriner, *Eastern Europe after Hitler* (Research Series No. 50) (June 1940), 5.

18. *Ibid.*, 35–6. The place of agriculture within post-war Europe was also covered by Margaret Digby, 'Agriculture in the Post-war European Settlement', *Fabian Quarterly* No. 33 (Spring 1942), 27–34, and No. 34 (Summer 1942), 16–24.

19. *A Word on the Future to British Socialists*, issued by a Committee of the Fabian Society (Tract No. 256) (May 1942), 17–18.

20. *Ibid.*, 19.

21. Wenzl Jaksch, 'New Deal for Europe?', *Fabian Quarterly* No.38 (July 1943), 5–12; see also an article by Jaksch, 'Can Europe Revolt?', *Fabian News* (November 1940), 35–6. Wenzl Jaksch (1896–1966), member of Sudeten-German Socialist Party, MP in Prague Parliament (1929–38), President of Sudeten SPD, Britain (1939), member of FIB, returned to Germany (1949).

22. Cole, *Story*, 263, 267. For a list of the delegates see British Library of Political and Economic Science, Fabian Society Archive (FSA), J57/1, File 'Consultative committee of European Socialists', 13 March 1941. The committee was also known as the International Labour Club. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between exiles and Fabians, see Isabelle Tombs, 'Socialist Politics and the Future of Europe: The Discussion between British Labour and Continental Socialists in London, 1939–45' (PhD, Cambridge 1988), 81–90. Margaret Cole (1893–1980), secretary of Fabian (later Labour) Research Department (1917), jointly organized Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP) (1930), and New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB) (1931). Rita Hinden (1909–71), born Cape Town, Palestine (1927), England (1939), Fabian Society (1939), secretary of Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB) (1940–50), joined ethical grouping Socialist Vanguard Group (SVG) (1947).

23. University of Sussex, Leonard Woolf Papers (LWP), SxMs13: File 'An agreed report arising out of the discussions of the Eastern and Central European Group', 1 May 1942.

24. FSA, J57/1, 'Report on the International Bureau', 20 September 1941.

25. Cole, *Story*, 225.

26. Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 years of Fabian Socialism* (1984), 174.

27. The FCB's first meeting was attended by Hinden, Arthur Creech Jones, John Parker, Margaret Cole, Professor William Macmillan and Wilfred Benson of the International Labour Organisation. See Cole, *Story*, 267; Pugh, *Educate*, 188–9. Arthur Creech Jones (1891–1964), National Secretary of TGWU (1919–29), Labour MP, West Riding (1935–50), Fabian Society (1915–64), chair FCB (1940), PPS to Bevin (1940–4), Parliamentary Under-secretary of state for the Colonies (1945–6), Secretary of State for the Colonies (1946–50). John Parker (1906–), General Secretary of NFRB (1933–9), General Secretary of Fabian Society (1939–45), Vice-chair (1946–50), Labour MP, Romford (1935–45), Dagenham (1945–74).

28. FSA, J57/1, 'Suggested scope of work of the International Section of the Fabian Society', Doreen Warriner (n.d., 1941?). Italics added for emphasis.

29. *Ibid.*, C20, Executive Committee (EC) minutes, 5 March 1941.

30. Cole, *Story*, 289; FSA, J57/1, 'Inaugural Meeting of the FIB'. The FIB was further publicized in the pages of *Fabian News* (April 1941 and January 1942). Philip Noel-Baker (1889–1982), League of Nations (1919–22, 1929–30), attended Geneva Disarmament Conference (1932–3), Labour MP, Coventry (1929–31), Derby (later Derby South) (1936–70), chair of Labour Party (1946–7), chair of FIB (1941–3), Minister of State at the Foreign Office (1945), Secretary of State for Air (1946–7). Louis de Brouckère (1870–1951), President of the Labour and Socialist International (1934–8), Britain (1940), Belgium (1945).

31. 'Now is the Time', *Fabian News* (November 1940).

32. Cole, *Story*, 264; Pugh, *Educate*, 187–8. Konni Zilliacus (1894–1967), League of Nations, Information Section (1919–39), Labour MP, Gateshead (1945–50), expelled from Labour Party (1949), Labour Independent group (1949–50), Fabian Society (1936–67). George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959), Fabian Society (1893–1900, 1908–14, 1928–59), chair (1939–46, 1948–50), President (1952–9), chair of Nuffield Social Reconstruction Survey (1941–4). Henri Hauck (1902–), Left French Socialist, Labour attaché in London (1940), Director of Labour in National Committee (1940–3), Director of Commission of Social Affairs, Algiers (1943–4), Director Ministry of Labour (1944–7). William Emrys Williams (1896–1977), staff tutor in literature, Extra-Mural Department, London University (1928), Secretary, British Institute of Adult Education (1934–40), Editor of *Highway*, Director of Army Bureau of Current Affairs (1941–5), Director, Bureau of Current Affairs (1946–51).

33. Details of IAC/FIB meetings were published in *Fabian News*, *passim*, 1940–43. The IAC meetings were merged into the FIB's orbit from January 1942, see *Fabian News* of that month. For an explanation of the Federal Union's case, see W.B. Curry, *The Case for Federal Union* (Harmondsworth 1939) which sold in excess of 100,000 copies within six months of publication.

34. *Fabian News*, *passim*, 1940–3. For the Soviet Union a discussion was held which covered both Russia and America (17 November 1941), hence the crediting of one half to the total. For more on the FFF Group, see Isabelle Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism": Labour and the German Question, 1941–5', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1996), 287–309.

35. FSA, J57/1, 'Report of Work of the Bureau January 1942–June 1943', July 1943; J52/1, Guiding Committee of the FIB minutes, 8 January 1942; C20, EC minutes, 28 April 1942; J57/1, 'Summarised Report, January 1942–October 1944', 31 October 1944; J52/2, FIB Advisory Committee (AC) minutes, 27 January 1944. Membership of the Society as a whole for 1945 was 2904, see C20, EC minutes, 29 May 1945.

36. FSA, J52/2, FIB AC minutes, 20 June 1944; see also Woolf's papers: LWP, SxMs13, Part 1, Section O, File 2, Woolf's notes for a talk on socialist foreign policy (n.d.); Leonard Woolf, *The International Post-war Settlement* (Research Series No. 85), (1944), 1, 3.

37. The Labour Party, *Report of the Forty Third Annual Conference* (1944). For Attlee's speech, see 131–3, Osborne, 137, Dalton, 139–40. Dalton's request for withdrawal was carried by Conference. For other resolutions, 133–9. Similar 'official' arguments can be found in The Labour Party's election manifesto of 1945, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 11. Clement Attlee (1883–1967), Deputy Prime Minister (1942–5), Prime Minister (1945–51), Leader of Labour Party (1935–55), Labour MP, Limehouse (1922–50), member of Fabian Society

(1907–67). Henry Osborne (1909–96), Labour MP, Birmingham, Acocks Green (1945–50), Birmingham, Yardley (1950–9), World Government Movement. Hugh Dalton (1887–1962), Minister of Economic Warfare (1940–2), President Board of Trade (1942–5), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1945–7), Chancellor Duchy of Lancaster (1948–50), Minister of Town and Country Planning (1950–1), Labour MP, Peckham (1924–9), Bishop Auckland (1929–31, 1935–59), Fabian.

38. FSA, J52/2 FIB AC minutes, 31 October 1944.

39. International Authority Group of the FIB, *Labour and Europe: The Need for a Socialist Strategy* (Research Series No. 71) (1944), 7, 11. The authors were Albu, Parker, Warriner, Paul Yates and Lillian Chase. For the wider work of this group see FSA, J52/2, FIB AC minutes.

40. *Ibid.*, 11, 19–21, 25.

41. LWP, SxMs13, File 'Plan of work on IPA prepared by Woolf and agreed by the meeting of the group, 5 April 1944'; *ibid.*, Noel-Baker, 'The League of Nations: The Lesson', paper for IPA group meeting, 18 July 1944.

42. Cole, *Story*, 301. During the war years Fabians were asked to 'permeate' all levels of national and local government and the wider labour movement, see *Fabian News* (January and February 1941).

43. FSA, J52/3, FIB AC minutes, 17 September 1945. Richard Crossman (1907–74), Ministry of Economic Warfare (1940–4), Psychological Warfare Division (1944–5), Labour MP, Coventry East (1945–74), Deputy editor *New Statesman and Nation*, Fabian. Michael Foot (1913–), Editor *Evening Standard* (1942–3), political commentator *Daily Herald* (1944–64), Editor of *Tribune* (1944), Labour MP, Plymouth, Devonport (1945–55). James Callaghan (1912–), Labour MP, Cardiff South (1945–50), PPS to Parker (1945–6), parliamentary secretary Ministry of Transport (1947–50). Ernest Davies (1902–), Labour MP, Enfield (1945–50), Enfield East (1950–9), PPS Minister of State, Foreign Office, (1946–50), Editor of *Clarion* (1929–32), BBC (1940–5).

44. FSA, J52/4, FIB AC minutes, Bamford, 'Secretary's Report', 23 January 1946.

45. FSA, J52/4, FIB Special AC minutes, 11 March 1946.

46. G.D.H. Cole, *Labour's Foreign Policy* (1946), 3–6, 10.

47. *Ibid.*, 12, 14, 15.

48. Richard Crossman, Michael Foot and Ian Mikardo, *Keep Left* (1947). For a wider examination of the discontent felt at local and parliamentary levels towards Bevin's foreign policy, see Mark Minion, 'From a "subtle magnet" to the Schuman Plan: The Labour Party and Europe, 1945–50', (PhD dissertation, South Bank University, London 1999).

49. FSA, J52/4, FIB AC minutes, 25 March 1946. Italics added for emphasis.

50. For a recent re-examination of Zilliacus and his supposed 'fellow travelling', see Don Watson, 'From "Fellow Traveller" to "Fascist Spy": Konni Zilliacus MP and the Cold War', *Socialist History* No. 11 (June 1997), 59–87.

51. FSA, J52/4, FIB AC minutes, 9 December 1946, Monck and Whyte 'A Socialist Foreign Policy', 3 December 1946.

52. *Ibid.*, Hinden, 'Principles of a Socialist Foreign Policy' (n.d.). For more on the SVG see Mark Minion, 'The Labour Party and Europe during the 1940s: The Strange Case of the Socialist Vanguard Group', issued by the European Institute, South Bank University, London (Nov. 1998).

53. FSA, J52/5, FIB AC minutes, 12 March 1947. Denis Healey (1917–),



international secretary of Labour Party, 1945–52. For more on the Marshall Plan, see Alan Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945–51* (1984).

54. FSA, J52/5, FIB AC minutes, 15 September 1947; C20, EC minutes 15 September 1947.

55. Leonard Woolf, *Foreign Policy: The Labour Party's Dilemma* (1947), 14, 17, 26. Woolf had been a long-standing supporter of machinery for an international government; see his 1916 work of the same title. In response to the unresolved issues between FIB members, a conference was held at Conway Hall, London, in December 1947. Crossman and Healey defended the Woolf and Ewer positions respectively; see FSA, J52/5, FIB AC minutes, 10 November 1947. In excess of 450 people attended the public meeting. Harold Laski (1893–1950), Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics (1920–50), NEC of Labour Party (1937–49), chair of Labour Party (1945).

56. William Warbey, *Can Britain Recover? A Survey of Foreign Economic Policy* (Research Series No. 127) (June 1948), 18–19.

57. *Ibid.*, 19, 21.

58. William Warbey, 'Foreign Policy', *Fabian Quarterly*, No. 56 (Winter 1947), 18–23.

59. *Hansard*, Vol. 446:383–409, 22 January 1948. Ernest Bevin (1881–1951), Minister of Labour and National Service (1940–5), Foreign Secretary (1945–51), Forefront of Brussels Treaty (1948), NATO, (1949), Labour MP, Central Wandsworth (1940–50), East Woolwich (1950–1), General Secretary of TGWU (1922–40), chair of TUC (1936–7).

60. FSA, J67/6, Whyte memo 'Western Union Study Group', 4 March 1948.

61. *Ibid.*, Flanders memo, 'A Socialist Approach to Western Union', 12 April 1948. Italics added for emphasis. Allan Flanders (1910–73), member of SVG, (c.1930–51), research assistant TUC (1943–6), head Political Branch CCG (1946–7), Senior Lecturer Industrial Relations, Oxford (1948–69).

62. For more on this rethinking, see the 'Problems Ahead' conferences involving leading Fabians held during 1949–50: Nuffield College, Oxford G.D.H. Cole papers, D1/14–20 incl. For the revisionism of the 1950s, Gaitskell and the SVG see, R. Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: 'Social Democrats' and the Labour Party* (1994).

63. FSA, J62/5, File 'Conference on Western Union and European recovery, 1948'. The FIB organized a number of conferences during the 1940s; for further details see FSA, J61–J63 incl. G.D.N. (David) Worswick (1916–), Oxford Institute of Statistics (1940–60), Fellow and Tutor in Economics, Magdalen College, Oxford (1945–65).

64. *Ibid.*, J67/6, Flanders synopsis, 'The Socialist Approach to Western Union' (n.d.). The Brussels Treaty was signed on 17 March 1948 by Britain, France and the Benelux countries and engaged the nations in a mutual collective self-defence for fifty years. The North Atlantic Treaty followed on 4 April 1949 and incorporated the Brussels Powers, the USA and Canada. Essentially the Brussels agreement was Bevin's 'Western Union' in practice, see Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power* (Oxford 1986), 274–6.

65. FSA, J67/6, Healey synopsis, 'The Political Issues' (n.d.). For a restatement of Healey's argument see, 'Western Union — The Political Aspect', *Fabian Quarterly*, No. 58 (Summer 1948), 3–8.

66. FSA, J67/6, Hinden synopsis, 'The Imperial Aspect' (n.d.). For a restate-

ment of Hinden's argument see, 'Western Union — The Imperial Aspect', *Fabian Quarterly*, No. 58 (Summer 1948), 15–19.

67. FSA, J67/6, Memo (n.d.). John Hynd (1902–71), Chancellor Duchy of Lancaster (1945–7), Minister of Pensions (April–Oct. 1947), Labour MP, Sheffield, Attercliffe (1944–70), member of National Union of Railwaymen (1925–62), Close to SVG. Lucy Middleton (1894–1983), Labour MP, Plymouth, Sutton (1945–51). Arthur Palmer (1912–94), Labour and Co-op MP, Wimbledon (1945–50), Town Councillor, Brentford and Chiswick (1937–45). James Middleton (1878–1962), General Secretary of Labour Party (1935–44). Mary Saran (1897–1976), exiled German socialist, France (1933), Denmark (1933), Britain (1933), SVG member, Editor of *Socialist Commentary* (journal of the SVG) (1941–55).

68. *Ibid.*, J67/6, File 'Correspondence re. Western Union Draft Pamphlet'; J52/6, FIB AC minutes, 28 June 1948. R.W.G. (Kim) Mackay (1920–60), born in Australia, Labour MP, Hull North West (1945–50), Reading North (1950–1), founder of PLP Europe Group, Secretary of Common Wealth Party (1940–5). Christopher Shawcross (1905–73), Labour MP, Widnes (1945–50), Secretary of PLP Europe Group.

69. R.W.G. Mackay, 'The Brussels Agreement and Western Europe', *Fabian News* (September 1948), 38. For the development of the Marshall 'Plan', see Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 269–72. The PLP Europe Group met during the winter and spring months of 1947–8, finally fracturing over which approach to take towards Europe: federation, functionalism or socialism first. See Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, 65–71.

70. T. Balogh, E.T. Lewis, 'Western Union', *Fabian News* (October 1948), 43. Thomas Balogh (1905–85), born Budapest, political economist, Lecturer University of London (1934–40), Balliol College, Oxford (1939), founder member of Institute of Statistics, Oxford (1940).

71. The Strasbourg Assembly had been set in train by the Council of Europe and first met in August 1949, see Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 389–98.

72. Seymour Cocks, MP, R.W.G. Mackay, MP, and Maurice Edelman, MP, *Europe's First Parliament: Reflections on the Strasbourg Assembly 1949* (Tract No. 280) (1950). Seymour Cocks (1882–1953), Labour MP, Broxtowe, Notts. (1929–53), chair PLP Foreign Affairs Group (1945–7), part of Labour delegation to Council of Europe (C of E) (1949); Maurice Edelman (1911–75), Labour MP, Coventry West (1945–50), Coventry North (1950–74), Labour delegation to C of E (1949–51).

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