

working class that could defend itself and protect their liberty against despotism. Dechesne's own analysis asserts that the "effects of the movement were weak and neglected key groups within the nation", which he identifies as peasants and women (p. 190). Indeed, it is difficult to see the extent to which these ideas permeated wider society. Dechesne suggests at least some success by equating the number of antimilitarist pamphlets and newspaper issues distributed within French military barracks as evidence of the popular embrace of antimilitarist arguments and by mentioning, as one example, some popular demonstrations and unrest within the French barracks in 1913. Still, when combined with the lengthier discussion of the mutinies in 1917, the context for this unrest appears to be influenced less by antimilitarism as a movement and more by the length of service and the conditions under which soldiers had to serve. By and large, antimilitarism remains a movement largely confined to an intellectual elite within the socialist, anarchist, and some feminist circles.

Dechesne's conclusion that antimilitarists failed to focus sufficiently on women might come as a surprise to the reader, as one of the notable strengths of *Un siècle* is its inclusiveness. Women are fully present as actors who shape the various interpretations and evolution of antimilitarism within this period. Dechesne's equal treatment highlights the ways that female antimilitarists saw women as a fundamental part of antimilitarist goals and consistently situated larger antimilitarist arguments in the context of women's lives. In turn, feminist antimilitarism drew attention to the centrality of women within the nation.

Dechesne allows the antimilitarists and their opponents largely to largely for themselves, and the narration skilfully allows the reader to see the ways that their ideas flowed or broke from each other. In the process, Dechesne reveals the complexity and layers of many antimilitarisms that shifted in response to the world around them. What brought all of these ideas together was a common understanding that military service, the employment of the military as a police force at the national level, and war among nations all reflected the same sense of injustice and inequality that brought these thinkers to socialism and anarchism, and gave them some shared visions as to what they hoped to achieve. Antimilitarism, in all of its conflicting forms, offered one way of explaining injustice and their imagined picture of liberty and equality.

Elizabeth Propes

Tennessee Tech University, Department of History, Cookeville, TN, United States

E-mail: EPropes@tntech.edu

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IMLAY, TALBOT. *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism. European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960.* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018. xi, 480 pp. £100.00.

On the eve of World War I, the network of socialist parties known as the Second International brought together millions of working men and women from almost all European countries and, to a much lesser extent, other regions of the world, such as the

United States, Argentina, and British colonies in Australia and Southern Africa. As is well known, however, the story of its heyday overlaps with that of its major crisis. Against the background of growing international diplomatic tensions, the International openly declared its opposition to war: in 1912, a large-scale congress was organized in Basel and in the last days of July 1914 an emergency meeting discussed the peril of imminent conflict. A few days later, however, German and French socialists hastily supported their national governments and backed the war effort. The next congress of the International, which was to have been organized in Vienna a couple of weeks later, never took place.

The events of that summer, the war itself, and, of course, the Russian Revolution shortly afterwards left a permanent mark on the history and traditions of the labour movement. For the Bolsheviks and those who defended the Soviet experience, 1914 epitomized the betrayal of a group of leaders who, by siding with their own national governments, rejected in practice the proletarian internationalism they had promoted in so many resolutions and demonstrations. For their part, those who opposed the Soviet Union and tried to reconstitute the Second International after the war, later to create a reformist, anti-communist “Labour and Socialist International”, looked back at the period 1889–1914 as a forgettable and uncomfortable political past. The year 1914 appeared as the moment in which the reality of war showed the failure of the internationalist ambitions of the labour and socialist movement, when national solidarities proved to be more relevant than class ones. This framework also shaped the twentieth-century historiography. Whereas scholars of the Second International set out to explore the “roots” of the schism of 1914, the transnational links among socialist parties *after* the outbreak of World War I attracted less attention. After the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, moreover, interest in the history of socialism, let alone in its internationalism, seemed to decline altogether.

Things are changing, however. In the Global South, the history of labour and leftist organizations has been thriving for quite some time in the past few decades, and lately European and North American scholars, too, have been revisiting the history of socialism. Authors such as Jean-Numa Ducange, Kevin J. Callahan, Pierre Alayrac, and Elisa Marcobelli have recently published insightful books that shed new light on the history of the Second International, with an eye on cultural history and transnational experiences. As this new research focuses less on the failures than on the achievements of socialist internationalism at the turn of the century, 1914 seems to have lost centrality as a turning point against which everything needs to be explained.¹ By claiming that socialist internationalism continued to exist after the summer of 1914, Talbot Imlay’s *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism* proves that these new perspectives are not limited to the study of the Second International and encompass the international endeavours of socialists for a good part of the twentieth century.

Based on research at archives and libraries from twelve countries – the list of repositories on pages 471–475 will become a helpful source for librarians – the book masters the secondary literature and draws on a plethora of primary sources, including party newspapers, brochures, internal documents, policy papers, correspondence, minutes, and resolutions of international meetings. Despite its subtitle, the book focuses on

¹Kevin J. Callahan, “A Decade of Research on the Second International: New Insights and Methods”, *Moving the Social*, 63 (2020), pp. 185–199.

three parties: the British Labour Party; the German Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); and the French Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (SFIO), arguably the most important social democratic organizations during the period under study. Imlay acknowledges that the “resulting perspective is admittedly Eurocentric, (but) it is also true that socialism was first and foremost a European phenomenon” (p. 5). Readers of the *International Review of Social History* will remember, in any case, the author’s recent study on Asian socialism,² a topic that also features in the monograph and allows for a less European-centred approach.

Following a first chapter devoted to international socialism between 1914 and 1918, the book is divided into two parts, one for each post-war period. Both parts comprise four chapters each and share a similar structure, starting with narrative chapters that thoroughly examine the process that led to the reconstruction of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) in 1923 and the Socialist International in 1951. Later, Imlay opts for a synchronic approach and devotes several chapters to examining the initiatives and discussions of socialists with regard to different topics, such as the question of disarmament, the establishment of a new international order, the problem of empire and decolonization, and the building of European unity.

Carefully examining these issues, the author provides a detailed account of how mutual relationships, and the relationship with the International as a whole, shaped the policies of the French, British, and German parties throughout a period of half a century. To do so, Imlay studies the relationships at the level of the Internationals, but also through more informal exchanges among leaders. Though he also examines many internal discussions within each party, the reader will hardly find the socialist rank-and-file in the volume’s 500-odd pages: Imlay’s is a book of political history “from the top”, a very detailed and precise narrative that reconstructs discussions and exchanges about policy among high-level leaders of these three parties – for the same reason the book is mostly a story of conversations between (white) men.

The core of Imlay’s argument is that internationalism remained an important factor in socialist politics throughout the twentieth century. Criticizing Donald Sassoon, among others, Imlay argues that “contrary to numerous claims, socialist internationalism did not die in August 1914 but survived the outbreak of war and afterwards even flourished at times” (p. 463). The author acknowledges that European socialists “were strongly attached to their nations”, but claims that this was “not incompatible with the sense of belonging to a larger international community” (p. 13). To make sense of this argument, Imlay contends that “to argue that a commitment to socialist internationalism demanded that socialists oppose their country’s war efforts is to set the bar impossibly high” (pp. 18–19).

Where does Imlay “set the bar” then? In other words, what does he mean when he talks about “internationalism”, or at least the “practice” thereof? Certainly, Imlay does not understand internationalism as a sentiment and a practice opposed to nationalism, let alone as the idea that international working-class solidarity is more decisive than national allegiances. He refers to the practice of socialist internationalism as a

²Talbot Imlay, “Defining Asian Socialism: The Asian Socialist Conference, Asian Socialists, and the Limits of a Global Socialist Movement in 1953”, *International Review of Social History*, 66:3 (2021), pp. 415–441.

“shared commitment of the parties to cooperate on international issues” (p. 3), explaining that it was “not an inexorable force but clusters of activity, some interconnected and some not, occurring in multiple spaces, at various speeds and intensities” (p. 12). Later, he defines internationalism as the act of “working together to identify “socialist” solutions to the pressing challenges of the post-war period” (p. 264) or “a web of mutual expectations and obligations that, while by no means formally binding, implied some limits on their freedom of action” (p. 308).

Once internationalism is defined in such a way, Imlay contends, the transnational links of Western European socialist parties in the twentieth century can be seen in a more positive light. Even admitting that the international dimension was not decisive in shaping the policies of national parties, Imlay claims that “the international policies of any one socialist party cannot be fully understood in isolation from the policies of other parties”. To be sure, he acknowledges, “European socialists instrumentalized internationalism for their own ends”, but this only shows that “such attempts would be inconceivable unless socialist internationalism meant something to European socialists” (p. 463). Throughout the book, the reader gets the feeling that Imlay is always looking for the glass half full.

Overall, Imlay’s conclusion is that this practice of internationalism grew in the wake of both world wars but waned thereafter, by the late 1920s and the late 1950s. Despite this “ultimate failure”, Imlay argues that studying the efforts to build transnational relationships is indispensable to properly understanding not only the history of the LSI and the Socialist International but also of Labour, the SPD, and the SFIO themselves. According to the author, these three socialist parties “remained embedded in their nations [but...], the practice of internationalism did prod socialists from one country (and party) to define national interests in interaction with socialists from other countries” (p. 464).

With its thorough and detailed overview of the history of international relationships among European socialists between 1914 and 1960, Imlay’s book will certainly become a standard reference for academics and students of socialism, although it will be perhaps less attractive for activists and the general public due to the density of its prose and abundance of scholarly references. It is also to be expected that his interpretation of internationalism and his sympathetic approach to the social democratic tradition will spark further debate, thus fuelling the rejuvenated vigour of the history of socialism.

Lucas Poy

Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands;

International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

E-mail: lucas.poy@iisg.nl

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STANZIANI, ALESSANDRO. *Les métamorphoses du travail contraint. Une histoire globale XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*. [Domaine Histoire.] Presses de Sciences Po, Paris 2020. 328 pp. € 24.00.

Alessandro Stanziani’s *Les métamorphoses du travail contraint* is highly innovative in a number of ways. Chief among them is its ambition to construct a Global Labour