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Marx, the Irish Immigrant-Workers, and the English Labour Movement

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Abstract

Karl Marx had to deal with a situation that bears an uncanny resemblance to the current predicament of trade unions regarding immigrant workers. The First International faced the threat of an internal division along ethnic and national lines around the Irish question, and more specifically around the role played by Irish immigrants in England. Firstly, I will argue that Marx's late work on Ireland, and especially his change of opinion on its tactical importance, cannot be isolated from his vigorous manoeuvring within the International to prevent an internal rift over the question of immigrant workers. Secondly, I will contend that Marx's theoretical contribution on the Irish question fails to consider that class politics are not only international in nature, but also transnational. Consequently, Marx overlooks the tactical importance of immigrant workers who could play a pivotal role in challenging exploitative and oppressive ties on the international scene.

Keywords

immigration – Marx – First International – Ireland – labour movement

Introduction

In his capacity as general secretary and *de facto* leader of the International Working Men's Association (hereafter 'the International'), Karl Marx had to

deal with a situation that bears an uncanny resemblance to the current predicament of trade unions across Europe regarding immigrant workers. Despite its attempts to unite the workers into a single labour movement based on a common revolutionary agenda, the First International faced the threat of an internal division along ethnic and national lines. This parallels to a certain extent the unease of contemporary trade unions over immigration issues, best illustrated by their unwillingness to engage in any meaningful debate on the issue. And when aloofness is not a possible option, the integration of immigrant workers into their struggle and political agenda often proves to be a delicate matter that generates significant internal controversy.¹

With regard to the British case, and as Satnam Virdee has recently shown, the singling out of ‘racialised outsiders’, though far from deliberate, has nonetheless been a central instrument of the construction of the British working class in more than a few instances throughout its history.² One of these cases, to which this article is dedicated, occurred during the industrial revolution, as a huge number of Irish peasants were fleeing the horrendous economic conditions that affected post-Great Famine Ireland. As those immigrants came to work in the booming English economy to improve their living conditions – often with little success –, prejudice against Irishmen reached new heights among English industrial workers. The motive of this resentment was first and foremost material. As Engels put it in an 1847 newspaper article: ‘Irish emigration to England is becoming more alarming each day. It is estimated that an average of 50,000 Irish arrive each year; the number so far this year [due to the 1846 Famine] is already over 220,000. [...] This means that the competition between the workers is increasing.’³ Indeed, since this incoming industrial reserve army had no choice but to work longer hours for lower wages, English workers (and notably those close to trade unions) were infuriated to see their own working conditions deteriorate as a result. Irish workers became the target of bitter criticisms that took little time to spill over into outright animosity between national and immigrant workers. On Marx’s own admission:

[...] in all *the big industrial centres in England* there is profound antagonism between the Irish proletariat and the English proletariat. The average English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers wages and the *standard of life*. He feels national and religious antipathy

¹ See Castles and Kosack 1974, pp. 497–514, or Barron, Bory, Chauvin, Jounin and Tourette 2011.

² Virdee 2014.

³ Marx and Engels 1975–2004a, p. 309.

for him. He regards him somewhat like the *poor whites* of the Southern States of North America regard their black slaves.

A few days later, Marx would add for good measure in a letter to Vogt and Meyer, the emissaries of the International in the United States: ‘The Irishman pays [the English worker] back with interest in his own money. He sees in [him]₅ at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the *English rule in Ireland*.’ This statement, made in the context of Marx’s discussion of British colonisation of Ireland, should not be read as the gloomy conclusion that this antagonism could never be overcome. Rather it stresses the dialectical relationship between the forced deindustrialisation of Ireland and the emigration of its workforce to England.

The International, despite the worldwide scope of its political agenda, could not avoid being affected by this emerging national antagonism. Since its political leadership was based in London and more tightly connected to the English political issues of the day than it was prepared to admit, it soon got engulfed in the debate over Irish national independence that was raging in the late 1860s. This episode is scrutinised at length by Kevin B. Anderson in *Marx at the Margins*. In this painstakingly documented book that focuses on Marx’s later writings dedicated to the periphery of the industrialised world, Anderson expresses the ambition to ‘move toward a twenty-first century notion of Marx as a global theorist whose social critique included notions of capital and class that were open and broad enough to encompass the particularities of nationalism, race, and ethnicity.’⁶ In the context of this project, Anderson judges that ‘Marx’s writings on Ireland, especially those around 1870, are the culmination of the interweaving of class, nationalism, race and ethnicity.’⁷ And indeed, Marx, whose sympathies for the progressive nationalism of the Irish are clear enough, refrained from reducing the multi-layered Irish question to a single dimension while always reminding his audience of the crucial role played by class struggles in the matter. Anderson’s reconstruction of Marx’s take on the Irish question is brilliant but, thorough as it is, I will nonetheless argue that it overlooks one captivating subplot of this historical narrative. Indeed, Marx’s involvement in the debate over Irish national independence was also of the

⁴ Confidential communication to a few representatives of the International, written on 28 March 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, p. 120). The emphases are Marx’s.

⁵ Marx to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 475).

⁶ Anderson 2010a, p. 6.

⁷ Anderson 2010a, p. 115.

utmost interest because ‘*what role should immigrant workers play in international working-class politics?*’ was an unprecedented question in the history of communist thought.

To be sure, Marx had already stated two decades previously in the *Communist Manifesto* that, since proletarians have nothing left but their bare humanity, they belong to no country and therefore are better off uniting all over the world. But this optimism was turning out to be either misleading or plain mistaken in the face of empirical realities. Workers in England in fact seemed to find it more difficult to sympathise with poor Irish immigrants who affected their material interests than with their fellow countrymen. When this hard truth became a pressing issue, it sparked a fierce political controversy among English radicals, in which Marx was one of the main and most innovative protagonists.

Through a careful delineation of the stakes and the arguments involved in this epoch-defining debate, this article has two main aims. Firstly, I argue that it is misleading to approach the texts that Marx wrote on the Irish question through the prism of a single conceptual issue such as imperialism, colonialism or nationalism. Anthony Brewer, Edward Said or L.I. Gol'man (the editor of a volume collecting Marx and Engels's writings on the Irish question), to name just a few, have made these texts respectively into the embryo of a Marxist ‘dependency theory’, into evidence that Marx is guilty of ‘orientalism’ given his differentiated treatment of the Indian and Irish colonial cases, or into Marx’s plea in favour of a general principle of national self-determination.⁹ This abstract type of interpretation has until now prevailed and, although it might be regarded as a creative attempt to extrapolate on the basis of some of Marx’s relatively unknown writings, it nonetheless fails to take into account their original intention. A context-sensitive approach to this corpus shows that Marx’s late work on Ireland, and especially his change of opinion regarding its tactical importance, cannot be isolated from his vigorous manoeuvring within the International both to prevent an internal rift over the question of immigrant workers and to oppose the reformism of English trade unionists. Secondly, I will argue that Marx’s theoretical contribution on the Irish question suffers from one shortcoming. It fails to consider that class politics are not only *international* in nature, but in fact *transnational*. Consequently, Marx overlooks the tactical importance of immigrant workers who, given their border-crossing biographies and the strength of their commitments to various political locations, could play an integral role in challenging exploitation and

⁸ Marx and Engels 1969, p. 123.

⁹ Brewer 2002; Said 1978; Gol'man in Marx and Engels 1972, pp. 17–30. See also Lim 1992, pp. 163–78.

oppression internationally.

The article is comprised of two parts. In the first section, dedicated to Marx's early texts on the Irish question (1853–65), I will give an overview of how he initially approached the issue. Framed as an intricate interplay between colonial, religious and economic factors, Marx argues that Ireland was purposely prevented from having an autonomous capitalist development through international class politics (in which immigration flows play a predominant role). In the second part of the article, I will show how the conjunction of a renewed Irish popular activism (be it on the part of immigrant workers in Britain or peasants in Ireland) and an increasingly widespread reformism in the English labour movement led a politically concerned Marx to amend his initial approach and to propose a new political agenda for the Irish and English working classes. But while this tactical revision moved away from his previous Anglo-centrism and laid a greater emphasis on the revolutionary potential of Irish peasants residing in Ireland, it still failed to consider that Irish immigrant workers enjoyed a unique socio-political vantage point that cut across national boundaries.

Ireland in the Midst of International Class Politics

Marx's writings on Ireland can be neatly divided into two parts. Marx first wrote about the Irish question in a handful of newspaper articles and pamphlets dating back to the 1850s. They display a surprisingly good knowledge of the local social and political situation for someone who had never set foot in Ireland, and propose a complex synopsis of British colonialism in Ireland from which Marx would never deviate:

England has subverted the conditions of Irish society. At first it confiscated the land, then it suppressed the industry by 'Parliamentary enactments', and lastly, it broke the active energy by armed force. And thus England created those abominable 'conditions of society' which enable a small caste of rapacious lordlings to dictate to the Irish people the terms on which they shall be allowed to hold the land and live upon it.¹⁰

Marx regards the Irish situation as an uncommon case of class struggle in which the labouring class (that is, the small peasantry) is oppressed by a reactionary class of foreign landlords that have held the country's economic

¹⁰ 'The Indian Question – Irish Tenant Right', *New-York Daily Tribune*, 11 July 1853 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004c, p. 159).

development back. Most of these observations are collected and aptly summarised in the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, in a subsection of the twenty-fifth chapter dedicated to the (mostly external) causes of Ireland's failure to develop beyond the stage of an agrarian economy.¹¹

Colonialism as a Dynamic Social Process

The first merit of these early writings is that, in Slater and McDonough's words, they define the colonial relationship between Ireland and England as a 'social dynamic process'.¹² Instead of 'reducing the dynamics of the colonial relationship to the working out of an "essential" prime mover',¹³ they invite us to read Marx's writings on Ireland as paying attention to the multiplicity of factors and to their ever-evolving interplay. As we shall later see, this wide-ranging view sheds new light on the underlying causes of Irish emigration. It also foreshadows classical Marxist theories of imperialism in framing the question of Irish immigrant workers neither as a national issue nor as a class issue but rather as a complex combination of both. For, in Ireland, class struggle takes on a nationalistic form due to the land question that involves not only an open struggle between landlords and tenants but also an anti-colonial struggle against British rule in Ireland.

In Marx's view, English colonial rule in Ireland should not be characterised bluntly as a stable political domination of an imperial nature. Indeed, the dynamics of the colonial regime changed significantly over time, and in large part due to economic and social factors attached to the land question. But Marx was an avid observer of British politics and could not refrain from commenting prolifically on its daily developments. As far as the Irish question is concerned, he showed no shortage of contempt for the 'Irish brigade', a group of moderate Irish representatives elected to the British Parliament in the second half of the nineteenth century. Marx considered their constitutional negotiation with the English ruling class an ineffective (and cowardly) attempt to haggle their way out of subjection.¹⁴ He judged this strategy as doomed to

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that the historical accuracy of Marx's depiction of the Irish socio-economic relationship in *Capital* – and especially the status of the agricultural proletariat – has been debated. See Hazelkorn 1980, pp. 326–56, Hazelkorn 1981, pp. 284–315, or Mathur and Dix 2009, pp. 97–107.

¹² Slater and McDonough 2008b, p. 153.

¹³ Slater and McDonough 2008b, p. 157.

¹⁴ 'Debates in Parliament', *New-York Daily Tribune*, 21 February 1854 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004d, pp. 11–25), and 'Ireland's Revenge', *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, 16 March 1855 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004e, pp. 78–80).

failure, since the roots of the Irish question were in his view economic and colonial in nature rather than political. Consequently, he spent much more time discussing the social issues raised by the different bills tabled at Westminster on the Irish land question than commenting on the perpetual petty negotiation aimed at forming or preserving unstable parliamentary coalitions.

In various newspaper articles, Marx scrutinised at great length the social and economic consequences of the *Landlord and Tenant Bill*, the *Leasing Power Bill* and the *Encumbered Estates Act*.¹⁵ In their clumsy and eventually counter-productive attempts to resolve the land question in Ireland, those bills highlighted the peculiarities of the Irish economy and inadvertently underscored the crucial fact that the 'needy Irish tenant belongs to the soil, while the soil belongs to the English lord'.¹⁶ In other words, they show that the dominant form of entitlement to land-use in Ireland, the leasing agreement between the landlord and his tenant, could not have been further removed from the liberal fiction of a trade agreement between equal partners. The land-tenure system in Ireland – made up of a privileged caste of large English landowners renting their land to some relatively wealthy Irish middlemen, who will in turn sub-lease smaller over-priced plots of land to the mass of small tenants too poor to provide for their family in any other way – was actually better described as a feudal system in which no effort was made even to pretend that both parties were on an equal legal footing.¹⁷ To add insult to injury, previous to these Acts, the small tenants were not even entitled to any rebate from the landlord for the investments they might have made in their plots. An industrious small tenant wanting to irrigate, drain or improve their land in any other way, before the Acts Marx discusses, had no other option but to invest the capital themselves, only to be stripped of it at the end of their lease. As a result, virtually no capital accumulation had taken place in the Irish agrarian economy, which partly explained its low productivity.¹⁸ Given the size of the land plots and their low productivity, it is no surprise that poor Irish tenants could barely survive and were constantly on the brink of starvation. The potato blight proved sufficient to push them over the edge and led to dramatic consequences. The Irish population shrank, either through emigration or death,

¹⁵ 'The Indian Question – Irish Tenant Right', *New-York Daily Tribune*, 11 July 1853 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004c, pp. 157–62), and 'The War Question – British Population and Trade Returns – Doings of Parliament', *New-York Daily Tribune*, 24 August 1853 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004c, pp. 245–56).

¹⁶ Marx and Engels 1975–2004c, p. 160.

¹⁷ Slater and McDonough 2008a, pp. 1–35.

¹⁸ Marx 1972, pp. 625–6.

by an estimated 2 million over the years 1845 and 1846.¹⁹

The first conclusion to be drawn from Marx's analysis of English colonialism in Ireland is therefore that, since the English landlords acted as a hindrance to the indigenous accumulation of capital in Ireland, they prevented Irish labourers from finding any secure source of income and therefore forced them to emigrate (or pay an increased rent, which few of them could afford). This remains in many respects a fairly standard account of the causes of migration. Anticipating the classic 'push and pull' theories of migration, Marx turns the economic differential between the two areas into the main cause of migration flows.²⁰ Interestingly enough, however, he quickly amends this approach. While the land question remains central throughout Marx's writings on Ireland, it is not primarily the feudal redistribution of land or the backwardness of productive forces that he links to the emigration of the workforce. Rather, he stresses the effects of the abrupt introduction of capitalism by exogenous forces into an agrarian economy.

Surplus-population and Emigration

What is new in this second phase of colonisation? Due to the depopulation caused by the famine, a large part of the land was taken out of cultivation. Moreover, the Peel government passed the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, a bill that removed the high tariffs on the import of corn and consequently abolished the Irish privilege that had secured the free import of Irish corn into England.²¹ As a consequence, landlords suffered a double economic blow. They could no longer rely on tenants to exploit their land, and at the same time lost their monopoly on corn. Therefore, economic power started to slip from their hands and both English and Irish modern capitalists were keen to seize this opportunity to step into the landlords' shoes. Moreover, the repeal of the Corn Laws had far-reaching implications as it triggered a revolution in Irish agriculture. Facing new international competition for its export crop and being short on labour-force, the capitalists investing in Ireland decided to turn most of its

¹⁹ As according to Marx in 'The Crisis in England', *Die Presse*, 6 November 1861 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004f, p. 53). Senia Paseta acknowledges that there is a debate about the exact figure among modern scholars, but estimates that around one million died from starvation, while 1.5 million left the country between 1845 and 1849 (see Paseta 2003, pp. 34–7).

²⁰ See, for instance, the 'push-pull' theories of migration that prevailed in the field of migration studies for a long time. An excellent overview is given in Castles and Miller 2009, pp. 21–7. For an illustration, see the model of the 'immigration market' in Borjas 1989, pp. 457–85.

²¹ 'Outline of a Report on the Irish Question', 16 December 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, pp. 201–3).

originally arable land into pastures.²² This greatly affected the redistribution of land, since sheep and cows require large grazing meadows rather than small fragmented pieces of land, and this led to the massive eviction of the remaining small Irish tenants.

This change, however, happened gradually. For a while, Ireland was thus submitted to a double-bind form of exploitation. While some elements of feudalism remained, an embryonic form of capitalism was also being introduced forcefully into agriculture. This led, according to Marx, to a strange economic paradox that no classical theory could satisfactorily explain. Indeed, according to Malthus, Ireland should have been a textbook case-study. As a poor country suffering a rapid decrease in its population, Ireland should have witnessed an improvement in the living and working conditions of its remaining agricultural workers.²³ However, this failed to happen. The decrease in population due to the famine was instead followed by a worsening of the labourers' material conditions and by an even greater fall in population due to massive emigration. According to Marx, the explanation lies in the primitive accumulation of capital in Ireland under the guise of a change from tillage to pasture. The post-Famine landlords continued to 'rackrent' and the feudal tenantry remained, albeit fewer of them, as livestock producers. But given that pasture land requires less labour than arable land, and that the accumulation of capital brought in new machine technologies (plough husbandry rather than spade husbandry), the wage-labourers were cleared from the landed estates. Thus the relative surplus-population kept growing and concomitantly the downward pressure on wages kept mounting.²⁴ Thrown into the midst of this socio-

²² '[...] Irish society is being radically transformed by an Anglo-Saxon revolution. In the course of this revolution *the Irish agricultural system is being replaced by the English system, the system of small tenures by big tenures, and the modern capitalist is taking the place of the old landowner*' (in 'Ireland's Revenge', *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, 16 March 1855; Marx and Engels 1975–2004e, p. 80).

²³ '[...] nothing more excellent could be wished for by orthodox economy for the support of its dogma: that misery springs from absolute surplus-population and that equilibrium is re-established by depopulation' (Marx 1977, p. 658).

²⁴ In 1853, Marx had already written: 'But with modern compulsory emigration the case stands quite opposite. Here it is not the want of productive power which creates a surplus population; it is the increase of productive power which demands a diminution of population, and drives away the surplus by famine or emigration. It is not the population that presses on productive power; it is the productive power that presses on the population' (in 'Forced Emigration – Kossuth and Mazzini – The Refugee Question – Election Bribery in England – Mr. Cobden', *New-York Daily Tribune*, 22 March 1853; Marx and Engels 1975–2004b, p. 531).

economic spiral, Irish peasants were forced to either leave the country to become industrial workers in England or migrate to urban Ireland on account of the Poor Law.²⁵ Mocking the orthodox economists, Marx delineates with Swiftian sarcasm the solution put forward by some English liberals: '[Ireland's] depopulation must go yet further, that thus she may fulfil her true destiny, that of an English sheep-walk and cattle-pasture.'²⁶

Ireland as an Obstacle to Open Class Warfare in England

The complex structure of class relationships tying together the fates of Ireland and England brought little hope of an imminent overthrow of capitalists anywhere. As a matter of fact, the asymmetrical relationship between the two countries at this time was reflected in the relative positions of their respective classes. The Irish landlords were not nearly as close to bringing capitalism into its mature stage as were the English entrepreneurs of the time, and the Irish peasantry trailed behind the more politically-organised and better-structured English proletariat, putting both Irish classes in a weak position relative to their English counterparts. The contrast between the two working classes and their respective political prospects was particularly sharp. While the English proletariat had been seen by Engels, ever since *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, as the most likely agent to overthrow capitalism in the near future – a thesis that Marx came to embrace fully – the Irish peasantry first appears as unlikely to ever embody this revolutionary vanguard.

In his study of the English working class, written in his youth, Engels dedicates a whole chapter to the lot of the Irish immigrant-workers in England. Though Engels chastises Carlyle for describing the Irish only by way of an imaginary national character and is at pains to stress that the peculiar position of the Irish depends upon social factors, he himself does not always avoid falling into the trap of crude essentialism. The Irish, referred to as a 'race' that is 'little above the savage',²⁷ are depicted as having inherited from their rough rural origins, and having brought into the industrial cities of England, the custom of living with nothing but the barest of necessities. Due not only to the sheer number of Irish coming to work to England but also to their acquiescence to terrible living conditions and their inclination to drink, the Irish immigrant-workers drag English workers downwards in two respects. They

²⁵ Marx 1977, pp. 652–66. For an exegesis of this particular chapter, see McIntyre 2011, pp. 1489–1515, or Harvey 2005, pp. 87–9.

²⁶ Marx 1977, p. 665.

²⁷ Engels 2005, p. 47.

provide unskilled labour for lower wages and they establish low civilisational standards that the English working class is quick to emulate.²⁸ Engels concludes: ‘the degrading position of the English workers, engendered by our modern history, and its immediate consequences [that is, industrialisation and pauperism], has been still more degraded by the presence of the Irish competition.’²⁹

This matters for, in his early work on the English working class, Engels attributes to the latter a unique strategic position that coheres with Marx’s – initially unilinear – description of the stages of economic development. Since in Marx’s view England is the most advanced capitalist economy in Western Europe, the ‘metropolis of capital’,³⁰ it is also the country where the bourgeoisie had inadvertently produced the greatest number of ‘its own grave-diggers’.³¹ In a prime example of dialectic, Marx sees England as both the impregnable citadel and the soft underbelly of capitalism. England has no rival in terms of its industrial power, but at the same time no other country has to face such a strong and well-organised working class. Therefore, the solution to the Irish conundrum is logically expected to come from what is, in Engels’s and then later Marx’s opinion, the only real historical agent: the English proletariat.

Two factors explain Marx’s original lack of trust in the revolutionary abilities of the Irish workers, be they industrial workers in England or peasants in Ireland. Firstly, in Marx’s view, the Irish parliamentary party was in part responsible for the Lib-Lab spirit³² that permeated progressive elements in England at the time and thus postponed the advent of a sharp and explicit conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.³³ The problem is that Irish representatives and English liberals could make common cause on the basis of their shared opposition to the aristocratic landlords. This conjectural coalition is anathema to Marx’s plan, since it keeps pushing back the tipping point beyond which a proletarian revolution is to be expected. Second, and as stated earlier,

²⁸ Engels 2005, p. 46.

²⁹ Engels 2005, p. 48.

³⁰ Confidential communication of Karl Marx to a few representatives of the International, 28 March 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, p. 119).

³¹ Marx and Engels 1969, p. 108.

³² Sometimes used to indicate the willingness of some accommodating politicians and trade unionists in both the Liberal Party and among would-be parliamentary representatives of the labour movement to form local coalitions both to defeat the Conservatives and to push a common progressive agenda. Marx suspected the English members of the International of being prone to strike this sort of deal.

³³ Coquelin 2007, p. 682.

Irish immigrant-workers undermine the working-class solidarity of all the workers residing in England and render the organisation of the working class more difficult. Marx even claims that: '*This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.*'³⁴ Marx, otherwise charmed by what he sees as the passionate temperament of the Irish – a trait he regards as a welcome addition to the more stable and reasoning temperament of the English in the perspective of a revolutionary struggle³⁵ – judges that the situation of the Irish immigrant-workers in this colonial web of class relations undermines their capacity to trigger revolutionary actions. It is rather up to the English working class to free their Irish brothers, first by getting rid of their own capitalist masters and then by returning sovereignty to Ireland. Prior to 1867, Marx's theoretical position thus remains heavily Anglo-centric and leaves little room for any form of Irish involvement in the class struggle in Britain. Somewhat surprisingly, Marx's international strategy focuses almost exclusively on England, 'the most important country for the workers' revolution, and moreover the *only* country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed up to a certain degree of maturity.'³⁶

The 'Fenian Affair' and the International Solidarity of the Proletariat

After neglecting it for almost a decade, Marx suddenly picks up the Irish

³⁴ Marx to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 475). It is worth noting that Lebowitz himself refers to this very sentence to develop the idea that purely economic exploitation is insufficient for capital to reproduce itself. For capital to be true to its accumulative logic, it must also take advantage of each and every antagonism between workers (including, for instance, national hostilities) to divide them. Capital, in other words, cannot restrict itself to being a purely economic force and must develop a divisive *politics* to prevent workers from claiming the surplus-value generated by their collective labour, and ensure the accumulation of capital. See Lebowitz 2006, p. 39.

³⁵ Marx to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 474). In this regard, Marx was probably influenced by Engels 2005, p. 60: 'Irish immigration further contributes by reason of the passionate, mercurial Irish temperament, which it imports into England and into the English working-class. The Irish and English are to each other much as the French and the Germans; and the mixing of the more facile, excitable, fiery Irish temperament with the stable, reasoning, persevering English must, in the long run, be productive only of good for both.'

³⁶ Marx to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 475).

question again in 1867 and studies it in a thoroughly new light. This abrupt revival of his interest and change in perspective is due to some extraordinary circumstances. In order to get a better grasp of Marx's new approach, let us recall briefly what was then called the 'Fenian affair'. The Fenians were a revolutionary oath-bound secret society, also known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood.³⁷ The nationalist organisation was founded in Dublin and New York simultaneously in 1858 and went on to have significant connections among Irish workers living in the United States and England.³⁸ Its predominant goal was the overthrow of English rule in Ireland by any means necessary, including violence and terrorist actions. This readiness to resort to violent action was not exceptional as such. The Fenians were just one of many movements that considered conspiratorial methods and armed resistance as the shortest path to Irish independence. However, they distinguished themselves from other violent but disorderly activist groups by their discipline, their lower-class origins, their independence from the Catholic Church, and the boldness of their political actions. A couple of particularly risky skirmishes with the English authorities in the early 1860s yielded little concrete military or political success but nevertheless contributed to their growing fame among Irish people both in Ireland and abroad. This popular support – and a stable financial inflow coming from the Irish diaspora – turned them into the most important Irish movement of political opposition to the rule of Westminster in the 1860s and '70s.³⁹

In 1867, after an armed uprising of several thousand men in Dublin and Cork had ended in a complete fiasco, Colonel Thomas Kelly and Captain Timothy Deasy, both leading Fenians who had provided the military expertise for the uprising, were arrested in England. However, on 18 September 1867 a band of about thirty Fenians ambushed a police van in Manchester and freed the two high-profile prisoners. In the course of the operation, an unfortunate policeman was shot dead. Following what was regarded by the English authorities as an outrageous provocation, the police went through the 'little Ireland' neighbourhoods of several cities⁴⁰ and rounded up a handful of suspected Fenians

³⁷ For a general overview of the Fenian movement, see Comerford 1998 and Newsinger 1994.

³⁸ Newsinger 1982, pp. 156–7.

³⁹ Paseta 2003, pp. 48–63.

⁴⁰ These would probably be better characterised as slums if the vivid description by Engels of their advanced decay is to be believed: 'The cottages are old, dirty, and of the smallest sort, the streets uneven, fallen into ruts and in part without drain or pavement; masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth lie among standing pools in all directions; the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these, and laden and darkened by the smoke of a dozen chimneys.'

in each place. Eventually they retained five of them to stand trial, who were swiftly condemned to execution by hanging.⁴¹

The First International and the Fenians

The International in general and Karl Marx in particular took an active part in the amnesty campaign that was to follow this collective death sentence. The General Council of the International, under Marx's initiative, issued the following official statement: 'the execution of the Irish prisoners condemned to death at Manchester will greatly impair the moral influence of England upon the European Continent. [...] It will bear the stamp not of a judicial act, but of political revenge. [...] The commutation of the sentence for which we pray will be an act not only of justice, but of political wisdom.'⁴² A letter from Marx to Engels attests to the fact that the former had had to strong-arm the English representatives into signing the motion. Understandably, the English trade-unionists active in the International were reluctant to sign a blank cheque granting legitimacy to any kind of Irish political violence.⁴³ A compromise was nonetheless reached when Marx, himself not very fond of the Blanqui-inspired tactics used by the Fenians, suggested supporting their political claims while condemning their terrorist methods.⁴⁴ What is noteworthy is that Marx saw in this amnesty campaign an occasion to be seized in order to promote solidarity between the two working classes. He states joyfully in a letter to Engels: 'This business is boiling up in the intelligent section of the working class here.'⁴⁵ And, as he acknowledges, he is no stranger to this state of affairs: 'I sought by every means at my disposal to incite the English workers to demonstrate in favour of Fenianism.'⁴⁶ In the minutes of the General Council meetings of the International held in November 1867, indeed we read that 'Citizen Marx proposed discussion of the following questions: (1) The attitude of the British government on the Irish question (2) The attitude of the English working class towards the Irish.'⁴⁷ Marx wasted no time in putting the Irish question back at

(Engels 2005, p. 34.)

⁴¹ Newsinger 1982, p. 160.

⁴² Marx, 'The Fenian Prisoners at Manchester and the International Working Men's Association', *Le Courrier français*, 24 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, p. 3).

⁴³ Boyle 1972, p. 47.

⁴⁴ Marx to Engels, 28 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 478). See also Collins and Abramsky 1965, p. 132.

⁴⁵ Marx to Engels, 7 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 464).

⁴⁶ Marx to Engels, 2 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 460).

⁴⁷ Marx, 'On the Refusal by the English Press to Take Notice of the Growth of Sympathy with

the top of the International's political agenda even though, as the phrasing of the second question suggests, he was acutely aware of its controversial nature among his fellow revolutionaries.

Despite the vocal opposition emanating from the left wing of the English labour movement and the massive Fenian rallies held in Ireland, on 23 November 1867 three of the accused were publicly hanged in Manchester, prompting Engels to write to Marx the next day: 'The *only thing* that the Fenians still lacked were martyrs. They have been provided with these.'⁴⁸ Engels regarded the ensuing popular indignation amongst both Irish *and* English workers as an unprecedented event: '[...] every day the London proletarians are more openly declaring their support for the Fenians, in other words, and this is without precedent here and really splendid, for a movement that firstly advocates the use of force and secondly is anti-English.'⁴⁹ Given its openly international nature, the 'Fenian affair' was too good an opportunity to pass up. It would trigger an intellectual offensive led by Marx and meant to overcome the mutual mistrust between Irish and English proletarians within the International. Marx would busy himself with the Irish question until the events of the Paris Commune ousted it from the International's immediate political concerns.

In order to win over the English workers to the cause of their immigrant co-workers, Marx knew he had to fight an uphill struggle against some condescending prejudices. He was also aware that this would be no easy task. While the 'martyrs of Manchester' had generated a temporary wave of sympathy for the Irish proletarians and opened up the possibility of forming a strategic alliance between both working classes, the road to reconciliation was still littered with treacherous obstacles. First, the Fenians all but nullified the previous efforts to build public support for their cause when later in 1867 they exploded a barrel of gunpowder against a wall of the Clerkenwell prison to free some of their men. The plot went terribly wrong, the explosion demolishing a row of houses located on the opposite side of the street and killing twelve innocent people.⁵⁰ The English radicals who had previously supported the Fenians found themselves extremely isolated after this incident. Marx reacted angrily to the news in a letter to Engels:

This latest Fenian exploit in Clerkenwell is a great folly. The London masses, who have shown much sympathy for Ireland, will be enraged by

Ireland among English Workers', speech delivered at the General Council meeting of 26 October 1869, collected in Marx and Engels 1972, p. 151.

⁴⁸ Engels to Marx, 24 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 474).

⁴⁹ Engels to Kugelmann, 8 November 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 468).

⁵⁰ Newsinger 1982, p. 161.

it and driven into the arms of the government party. One cannot expect the London proletarians to allow themselves to be blown up for the Fenian emissaries. Secret, melodramatic conspiracies like this are, in general, more or less doomed to failure.⁵¹

This gloomy forecast was shortly to be confirmed. Sectarian riots broke out in Birmingham and in Lancashire that summer, requiring the intervention of no less than 400 troops. The following year, an English working-class mob would rampage through the Irish neighbourhood of Ashton-under-Lyne, randomly destroying shops and killing one man.⁵² This would deal a great blow to Marx's hopes of a quick solution to the Irish question but would also reinforce his conviction that the question of the immigrant workers was no peripheral concern for the revolutionary labour movement.

The Irish Question and the Internal Conflicts of the International

Besides this large historical picture, there is also a biographical dimension to this narrative. As John Rodden points out: 'Marx and Engels's special personal relationship with Ireland contributed to Ireland's special theoretical status in the First International strategic program for international revolution.'⁵³ Marx's daughters and wife had been ardent supporters of the Irish cause for most of their adult lives, while Engels's partners, Mary and, later, Lizzie Burns, were themselves of Irish descent. Infatuation with the Irish cause was customary in both Marx's and Engels's households. This fact is worth mentioning, but I nonetheless disagree with Rodden's general line of argument and would be reluctant to turn this personal element into the prime motive for Marx's theoretical and political involvement with the Irish question. My view is that, regardless of his family and entourage, Marx would have tackled this issue *because he was aware of its significance for international class politics*.

As Gareth Stedman Jones argues, it is precisely around the late 1860s that Marx started to worry about the rampant reformism in the English labour movement.⁵⁴ In a confidential communication sent to some delegates of the International, he admits that to his despair, 'The English have all the *material* necessary for the social revolution. What they lack is the *spirit of generalization*

⁵¹ Marx to Engels, 14 December 1867 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004h, p. 501).

⁵² Newsinger 1982, p. 161.

⁵³ Rodden 2008, p. 622.

⁵⁴ Jones 1984, pp. 124–37.

and *revolutionary ardour*.⁵⁵ Around this time, Marx's authority was also increasingly being challenged by Bakunin and his followers. One of their main reproaches was that, under Marx's direction, the International was involved with issues more nation- than class-based (the Irish question being the most obvious case in point).⁵⁶ Marx could sense that his previously firm grip over the International was slipping and that he had to act swiftly. Disappointed by the idleness of the English radicals and pressured by the anarchists, he looked desperately for a new revolutionary spark that could set Europe ablaze. This led him to make an unexpected tactical revision:

For a long time I believed it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. [...] Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will *never accomplish anything* before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general.⁵⁷

But how could an agrarian economy become the hotbed of a European revolution if industrialisation is the prerequisite of a proletarian revolution? Marx claims that Ireland is the weakest point in the capitalist chain⁵⁸ and therefore a prime target for the international workers' movement:

If England is the bulwark of landlordism and European capitalism, the only point where official England can be struck a great blow is Ireland. In the first place, Ireland is the bulwark of English landlordism. If it fell in Ireland, it would fall in England.⁵⁹

With the benefit of hindsight, we now see that this was a gross overestimation of Ireland's trade relationship with England and therefore a serious political miscalculation. However, my intention is not to assess the adequacy of Marx's political propositions but rather to highlight how their inner logic is

⁵⁵ Confidential communication of Karl Marx to a few representatives of the International, 28 March 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, p. 118). Cf. footnote 2, to put this quote back into its context.

⁵⁶ Anderson 2010b, pp. 19–20. On Marx's conflict with Bakunin in the international labour movement, see the vivid depiction of their ambivalent relationship in Berlin 2013, pp. 211–47.

⁵⁷ Marx to Engels, 10 December 1869 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 398).

⁵⁸ Which can be read as an anticipation, or at least as one of the prime sources, of Lenin's theory of the weakest link that features in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917).

⁵⁹ Confidential communication of Karl Marx to a few representatives of the International, 28 March 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004g, p. 119).

interwoven with their political context. And from this point of view, the explanation has at least one merit. It responds to the anarchists' concerns and frames the Irish national question in class terms. Marx reiterates that the Irish question rests on a class conflict with a colonial twist and should not be regarded, as it usually was and still is today, as a struggle between a national-liberation movement and an empire. As a consequence, Ireland should not be freed for its own sake, and nor should national liberation be endorsed as an abstract principle. Ireland should rather be freed in order to precipitate class warfare in the metropolis of capital. Since the division of the British proletariat into two national working classes which holds this process up is a by-product of the Irish question, the latter should be solved first.

Though the Irish question is now put in the foreground of international class politics, England remains in Marx's view the core of the capitalist world and the ultimate target of proletarian revolution; the political unrest among Irish workers is but a tool to achieve that goal. As he says in a letter to Kugelmann in 1869: 'And this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes, because it will have to join with them in a common front against Ireland.' In this sense, Marx proves himself to be as much an astute politician as a sharp theoretician. He concedes no philosophical ground to his opponent yet still leaves room to adapt the International's strategy to some unpredictable circumstances. As remarked above, Marx grossly overestimates the Irish proletariat's leverage, and the degree of penetration of socialist ideas among predominantly Catholic Irish workers in Britain and peasants in Ireland; but what is important to us is that Marx breaks out of the rigid vision of an unilinear historical development *and* reaffirms at the same time that an efficient political strategy must be backed up by knowledge of the dialectic of historical materialism.⁶⁰ In other words, Marx hints at the possibility of an overdetermination of the economic infrastructure by factors emanating from the superstructure and peculiar to some local case, such as political domination through colonial rule or the ideological division of the working class along national lines.⁶¹

*The Return of National Class Politics and the Vanishing of
Immigrant Workers*

But what, then, of the Irish immigrant-workers? So far we have established that they brought about Marx's reassessment of his tactical orientation in

⁶⁰ Anderson 2010b, pp. 7–8.

⁶¹ On the intricacies of the concept of overdetermination, see Althusser 2005, pp. 85–116. Cf. pp. 161–224. [no such reference in bibliography – MC]

international class politics. But this does not really answer our initial question. What role did Marx advocate for immigrant workers in the international labour movement? There is a textual reason for this ellipsis in our analysis. What is astonishing in the corpus considered in this article is that although the presence of the Irish immigrant-workers disrupts Marx's political plans, they progressively vanish from his writings. Marx is briefly excited about the Fenian affair in which he sees a catalyst for transnational working-class solidarity. As a consequence, he is highly active within the International with an obvious aim: showing the English representatives of the proletariat that their apparent conflict of interests with Irish immigrant-workers is a mere illusion due to their short-sightedness. He wants to demonstrate that, in the long term, their class interests are aligned and that they would consequently be better off leaving aside their national differences. As he put it eloquently in *Capital*:

With the accumulation of the rents in Ireland, the accumulation of the Irish in America keeps pace. The Irishman, banished by sheep and ox, reappears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian, and face to face with the old queen of the sea rises, threatening and more threatening, the young giant Republic.⁶²

The strategy of estate clearances was depopulating the Irish countryside but the price paid by the British colonialists was notably the emergence of the Irish-American Fenians as an international political force operating in the USA (and financing the various anti-colonial revolts in Ireland) against Britain and even within Britain itself (through their support for the organisation of Irish workers). This new political force was undeniably transnational but would prove to be an uneasy ally whose relationship with the International, though episodically strong, would nevertheless be short-lived.

But, in spite of his initially enthusiastic embrace of transnational class struggle, Marx eventually falls back upon a conception of class struggle that accepts rather than challenges the pre-existing framework of the nation-state. Since the English proletariat proves unable to live up to Marx's high expectations, he foists these expectations instead on Irish peasants *residing in Ireland*. The new historical agent is the Irish national proletariat, but not in any case Irish immigrant-workers. Shortly after the dust had settled on the Fenian affair, there is almost no mention anywhere in Marx's writings of Irish *immigrant* workers (except some passing and embarrassingly essentialising references to their passionate temper). To dispel any ambiguity about his position, Marx stresses during his speech at the London conference of the International in

⁶² Marx 1977, p. 666.

1871 that

the competition which Irish workers created in the labour market [...] constitutes an obstacle to the revolution in England and is, consequently, skilfully exploited by the government and the upper classes, who are convinced that no bonds are capable of uniting the English workers with the Irish. *It is true that no union would be possible in the sphere of politics*, but this is not the case in the economic sphere and the two sides are forming International sections which, as such, will have to advance simultaneously towards the same goal.⁶³

The scenery of class struggle is thus firmly located within one nation or the other, but never across them; the struggles of the two working classes should run in parallel rather than be intertwined. In this regard, Marx is right to have coined the term ‘proletarian *internationalism*’ to denote the kind of cosmopolitan solidarity he envisions for the working class.⁶⁴ For the solidarity he mentions operates between self-contained communities of workers organised into nations, and not as a transnational solidarity that would cut diagonally across those divides. Since the immigrant worker falls in the interstices of this political project, s/he is never taken seriously into consideration as a potential revolutionary actor. As the history of the First (and even more dramatically, the Second) International would show, this type of wishful call for solidarity between national working classes proved insufficient for overcoming national antagonisms.

One caveat should, however, be added to nuance this intermediary conclusion. Though he had a long-lasting interest in the Irish question, Marx never actually wrote the comprehensive analytical piece on the socio-political history of Ireland he claims to be working on in some of his letters. We should therefore be careful as to what Marx could have concluded in such a work, notably regarding the Irish diaspora. What we know, however, for a fact is that Marx valued transnational ties as an important vehicle of working-class activism in a few instances. Though saddened by the loss of a collaborator and friend, he is enthusiastic on the occasion of Feargus O’Connor’s 1855 funeral in

⁶³ Speech of 22 September 1871 at the London Conference, collected in Marx and Engels 1972, p. 301. The emphasis is mine.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the conceptual relationship between cosmopolitanism and internationalism, see Achcar 2013, pp. 103–55. See also Balibar 2006, pp. 37–64. [no such reference in bibliography – MC]

London that brought together a massive crowd of Irish immigrants and English workers, notwithstanding fierce police repression.⁶⁵ He also famously urged Vogt and Meyer, two German political exiles in the United States who organised the American sections of the International, to build a strategic alliance between two of the strongest and most highly politicised contingents of immigrant workers in the USA: '*A coalition of the German workers with the Irish workers* (and of course also with the English and American workers who are prepared to accede to it) is the greatest achievement you could bring about now. This must be done in the name of the International.'⁶⁶ So, while this article focuses mostly on the role in international class politics of Irish immigrants residing in England, one should not lose from sight that in *Capital* Marx endorsed the powerful and well-organised Irish diaspora in the US and invited it to take advantage of its location in the 'young giant Republic' to confront their former English masters.⁶⁷ We should therefore not conclude too quickly that his appraisal of immigrant workers and their revolutionary potential was unequivocally negative. All things considered, it remains nevertheless striking to note that, with regard to the Irish question, he overlooks the strategic vantage point offered by Irish immigrant-workers in England for international class politics and systematically falls back on solutions framed in terms of national classes.

Conclusion: The Revolutionary Potential of Immigrant Workers

It would appear, therefore, that Marx saw poor immigrant workers as being more part of the problem than part of the solution. If we were to conclude on this last note, our historical enquiry would be deceptively disappointing to the modern reader. For, in our globalised world characterised both by large flows of immigrant workers and by their intensive exploitation, what would still be alive in Marx's approach? For the current labour movement, is there more to learn from this historical reconstruction than the fact that Marx showed a relative disregard for immigrant workers? I would like to anticipate these objections and address them in two steps. Firstly, let us not forget that Marx made some valuable theoretical contributions to this debate. He went against the grain of a strictly political interpretation of colonial relations between the different classes and highlighted the economic causes, rooted mostly in the land

⁶⁵ Marx, 'O'Connor's Funeral', first published in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, n^o 430, 15 September 1855 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004e, p. 524).

⁶⁶ Marx to Meyer and Vogt, 9 April 1870 (Marx and Engels 1975–2004i, p. 475).

⁶⁷ Marx 1977, p. 666.

question, of migration flows. While he was painfully aware of the problems this immigration created for the English labour movement, he deliberately switched the International's attention back to the original cause of emigration, that is the British colonisation of Ireland and its economic consequences. He later followed up with an original in-depth analysis of the Irish economic situation showing that feudal landlordism was not the only cause at blame for the backwardness of its agrarian economy, but that the land question had actually been aggravated by the primitive accumulation of capital that took the guise of an agrarian revolution and led to massive land clearances which contributed to the creation of a growing surplus-population. This theoretical effort was thus not only a polemical contribution to the historiography of Ireland, it was also written with the deliberate purpose of overcoming the national antagonisms between working classes through an exposition of the common cause of their trouble. And, if we are to judge by the immediate reaction of the English representatives in the International to the Fenian affair, we can say that Marx succeeded to a certain extent. Nonetheless, in spite of some sophisticated late tactical revisions to his international class strategy, what remains missing in Marx's political theory is a real attempt to grasp the potential of a *transnational* class politics that would raise immigrant workers to the status of an historical agent. The latter find themselves squeezed between the blocs formed by the two national classes to which they no longer or never will entirely belong.

Secondly, I would like to conclude by highlighting a small and almost bureaucratic issue that stirred the feelings of some members of the International in 1872 and that resonates interestingly with our initial concern. The question bears on whether the Irish immigrant-workers living in England should be integrated into the English sections of the International or should rather be allowed to form their own sections. The British Federal Council of the time was unhappy that some Irish sections had been formed independently on English territory and wanted to reintegrate them within its own structures. Marx did not get involved in this issue, but Engels appears to have felt strongly about it.⁶⁸ We read in the minutes of a General Council Meeting in 1872 the following

⁶⁸ One may wonder whether Engels's intervention perhaps reflected Marx's final view on the topic. Unfortunately, Marx no longer showed interest in the Irish question or, to be more accurate, no longer put pen to paper to share his thoughts on the topic. Moreover, since Engels had moved to London in 1869, his correspondence with Marx dried up from then on and we are left wondering whether they could have discussed this administrative issue during one of their frequent conversations. At the very least, Marx did not publicly dissent with Engels on this point.

harsh words from him: 'If the motion [in favour of the dilution of the Irish sections in England] was adopted by the Council, the Council would inform the Irish working men in so many words, that, after the dominion of the English aristocracy over Ireland, after the dominion of the English middle class over Ireland, they must now look forth to the advent of the dominion of the English working class over Ireland.'⁶⁹ According to Engels, the English labour movement cannot just brush aside centuries of English colonial domination and expect Irish immigrants to participate happily in the English sections of the International. It must acknowledge that, while in the long run their interests meet, at present the Irish contingent has different issues on its mind and therefore needs a certain amount of freedom to formulate its own demands.

What is noteworthy is that the general image emerging from Engels's speech substantially amends Marx's international vision of the labour struggle and provides immigrant workers with a specific role in class warfare. Engels exposes in a few words his own strategy regarding Irish immigrants: 'The Irish sections in England were our base of operations with regard to the Irish working men in Ireland; they were more advanced, being placed in more favourable circumstances, and the movement in Ireland could be propagated and organized only through their instrumentality.' Accordingly, Engels no longer sees the immigrant strictly as a surplus labour force whose presence embarrasses the labour movement: rather, they are an actor in their own right, with a specific agenda. The immigrant worker is now endowed with the task of taking advantage of their transnational vantage point. They will act as the transmission belt between the two national classes. The diaspora of migrants is turned into a unique tool to bring the best of both worlds together, since it is at the same time familiar with the advanced condition of the working class in industrialised England and still in close contact with its original country. Engels does not challenge Marx's assumption about the primarily national character of the class struggles, but he adds a new transnational layer to it. The immigrant workers are assigned with a clearly defined mission: they will act as the middle-men of the class struggle, the go-betweens located in the interstices of international class politics. We know today that this failed to materialise and that the International neither established itself sustainably in Ireland nor had a significant impact on the course of Irish politics.⁷⁰ I nevertheless hope that this short enquiry will have shown that immigrant workers were not altogether absent from Marx's political theory and that they actually triggered an interesting process of revisions and amendments of his previous positions,

⁶⁹ 'Relations between the Irish Sections and the British Federal Council', Engels's record of his report at the General Council Meeting, 14 May 1872, collected in Marx and Engels 1972, p. 304.

⁷⁰ Boyle 1972, pp. 53–62.

which eventually culminated in Engels's attribution of a decisive role (as middle-men of international class politics) to immigrant workers.

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